RACHEL BROWNE (1934 – 2012)

Canadian dance icon and acclaimed choreographer Rachel Browne was born Ray Minkoff to Russian-Jewish immigrants in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her life’s journey as a dance artist began with ballet lessons as a child. After graduating from high school, she moved to New York City to study ballet and expand her horizons. She was a soloist with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet (RWB) from 1957-1961, when she left to start her family.

Rachel founded Winnipeg’s Contemporary Dancers in 1964, Canada’s first professional modern dance company. Rachel served as the company’s Artistic Director, resident choreographer, and teacher for over 20 years. Her work was instrumental in the development of modern dance in Canada and by 1970 she had brought Winnipeg’s Contemporary Dancers to national recognition.

In 1972, she founded the School of Contemporary Dancers, renowned as one of Canada’s foremost professional modern dance training programs. Rachel resigned from Winnipeg’s Contemporary Dancers as Artistic Director in 1983, but remained closely tied to the company and the School for the remainder of her life, while setting works on other companies and dance artists throughout Canada.

Rachel became a Member of the Order of Canada in 1997 in recognition of the significance of her leadership in establishing and developing modern dance across Canada. She was awarded the 1995 Jean A. Chalmers National Dance Award for Creativity in Dance, the 2000 Canada Council Jacqueline Lemieux Prize, and the 2001 Manitoba Arts Council Great-West Life Lifetime Achievement Award. In her honour, Winnipeg’s Contemporary Dancers renamed its performing venue The Rachel Browne Theatre in 2008. Rachel’s biography, Dancing Toward the Light, by acclaimed dance artist and writer Carol Anderson, was published in 1999. The feature documentary, A GOOD MADNESS - The Dance of Rachel Browne by filmmaker Danielle Sturk was released in the Fall of 2014.

More at [www.rachelbrowne.org](http://www.rachelbrowne.org)