

## Dancer brings two premieres, fundraiser, to Philly

by [Angela Thomas](#)



LAR LUBOVITCH (LEFT) AND A 2008 PERFORMANCE OF "CONCERTO SIX TWENTY-TWO"

Out dancer and world-renowned choreographer Lar Lubovitch is celebrating his 50th year in the dance world — and will do so with a number of local events.

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company will perform Oct. 11-13 at The Annenberg Center. The performances will be part of Dance Celebration, sponsored by The Annenberg Center and Dance Affiliates.

Lubovitch also will take part in Annenberg’s Artists and Audiences Changing Lives program at 7 p.m. Oct. 12. The talkback program will allow audience members to listen to a live chat about the intersection of HIV/AIDS and performance art with panelists Chris Bartlett, executive director of the William Way LGBT Community Center; Kevin Burns, executive director of ActionAIDS; and Philadelphia choreographer Brian Sanders.

Ten percent of proceeds will benefit ActionAIDS.

Despite his accomplishments in the dance world, Lubovitch’s life didn’t start with dance.

He attended the University of Iowa in 1960 as a freshman art major and gymnast — and left as a dancer.

“I discovered dance there, and it combined the two things that I loved the most and was good at — art and gymnastics,” Lubovitch said.

He moved to New York City and enrolled in The Julliard School, where he studied with teachers who became his dance mentors.

“I think it’s fair to say that my first teachers in dance were very good, powerful, long-lasting influences,” Lubovitch said. “I had the good fortune that my teachers were very remarkable people.”

He studied with the likes of Martha Graham, José Limón and other influential figures of the dance world at the time.

Lubovitch started his company in 1968 because he wanted his own place to dance and to

choreograph.

“I had been with some companies but I hadn’t felt gratified as a dancer,” he said. “So I decided to gather together a group of friends so that we could have a place to dance that we could believe in and satisfy our own beliefs in dance. That became the foundation of our company.”

When the HIV/AIDS epidemic struck, Lubovitch’s company took to the stage.

“I was the person who created the first reaction to AIDS in dance,” Lubovitch said. “In the early ’80s I recognized that AIDS was ravishing the art community and nobody was really talking about it.”

Lubovitch’s “Dance for Life,” which was staged at the New York State Theater, was a call to action.

“It featured six major American dance companies and raised over a million dollars for AIDS,” he said. “More importantly, it presented AIDS as a very public issue for the first time and as a public issue concerning the arts.”

In 1986, Lubovitch choreographed “Concerto Six Twenty-Two,” a duet between two men.

“For many years, it became emblematic of a moment of time concerning AIDS and its presence in the world,” he said of the dance.

In 2011, Lubovitch received the dance field’s highest award, Dance/USA’s Honor Award. United States Artists also named him a Ford Fellow.

“It was very gratifying to be recognized,” Lubovitch said. “The Dance/USA Honors Award is a very esteemed thing to receive in dance. It says that your career has mattered.”

The Ford fellowship comes with a financial award, which helped Lubovitch’s company afford dancers, costumers, music and other financial obligations.

“It has had a huge impact on creating the work that I do,” Lubovitch said. “It is very gratifying to be able to open the door to making art.”

The coming months mark the 45th anniversary of Lubovitch’s dance company, as well as his 50th year as a dancer and his 70th birthday.

“What that really means above all else is that I’ve had the ability to survive in a very challenging world and a very challenging field,” he said. “Nothing has ever really stopped me and I think that is probably, in the field of the arts, my biggest accomplishment.”

The program that Lubovitch is bringing to Philadelphia will include two early works and two recent works, including “Crisis Variations,” which premiered in New York City less than a year ago and which will see its Philadelphia premiere.

Lubovitch said the dance doesn’t tell a story of crisis but is meant to capture the emotional sensation of crisis.

The 2010 piece “Legend of Ten,” a 10-person dance to Brahm’s Piano Quartet, will also have its Philadelphia premiere.

“It is the map of the music, and the dancers, in a sense, are like cartographers, drawing a map of the

music and physicalizing the sound, which is what I do. I draw motion pictures of sound,” Lubovitch explained of his role.

He will also conduct two outreach activities: a student discovery program at 10:30 p.m. Oct. 12 at Annenberg, and a master class taught by a company member at 1 p.m. on the same day at the University of Arts. Advance registration is required for the master class.

“We’re going to perform for children and treat them like adults by performing for them the same way we do for adults and hopefully open their minds and eyes,” Lubovitch said.

Tickets for the performances are \$20-\$55 and can be purchased at Annenberg Center’s box office, online at [www.AnnenbergCenter.org](http://www.AnnenbergCenter.org) or by calling 215-898-3900.

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