

The Symphonic Body

By Ann Carlson

is a performance made entirely of gestures. It is a movement based orchestral work performed by people gathered together in any work place, institution, business, corporation, city or county. Instead of instruments, individuals in this orchestra perform gestural portraits based on the motions of their work day. To build this project, Carlson becomes an “embedded artist” in the workplace and through a process of observation and interview, she works one on one with each participant to build a choreographed portrait from the gestures they use everyday.

The movement based “music” made in the Symphonic Body is a blend of unwitting everyday gestures transformed into a kind of dance. For the culminating performance event of the Symphonic Body, Carlson conducts the worker/performers as all come together in concert to expand, renew and re-experience the artistry embedded in the everyday.

The Symphonic Body project is a social sculpture, a dance performance, a process that makes dances from gestures of labor, and dancers out of everyday laborers. The Symphonic Body brings attention to the aesthetic of the everyday and celebrates the cacophony of action, passion and attention of each individual's contribution to the whole. To date there has been four iterations of **The Symphonic Body**. **Stanford University** commissioned the first performances of Symphonic Body at the new Bing Concert Hall in May, 2013. The Center for the Art of Performance commissioned **The Symphonic Body/UCLA** in 2015, with the culminating performances at Royce Hall in November of that year. In 2016, The Symphonic Body project was awarded a Creative Capital Award towards the development of future Symphonic Body performances; these funds made possible the **Symphonic Body/APAP**, a 9 minute chamber version that was performed in January, 2018 and performed by the board of directors, staff and artist members of the Association for Performing Arts Professionals.

In April, 2018 Carlson traveled to Children's Theater Company, Minneapolis, MN to work with the staff to build an "in house" version of **The Symphonic Body/CTC** for an end of the year staff meeting. In July, 2018 Carlson traveled to Gallatin County, Montana to build the **The Symphonic Body / Water**. Commissioned by Mountain Time Arts in Bozeman, Montana, The Symphonic Body/Water showcased the diverse gathering of individuals working to protect, educate, legislate and enjoy Montana's water.

Most recently, The Wexner Center for the Arts commissioned The **Symphonic Body / Food**, performed in April, 2019. This iteration of the Symphonic Body was performed by people connected to the food system in Columbus Ohio and brought attention to food equity, cultivation, distribution, consumption and celebration.