

## **LA MAMA**

**Category : Who's Who:In American Theatre**

**Published by [Dobey](#) on 2004/4/5**

What is the La MaMa Experimental Theatre?

Much can be learned from this company...

Summary of La MaMa (from website)

"La MaMa Experimental Theatre is a world-renowned cultural organization led by founder Ellen Stewart. For 41 years La MaMa has passionately pursued its original mission to develop, nurture, support, produce and present new and original performance work by artists of all nations and cultures. We believe that in order to flourish, art needs the company of colleagues, the spirit of collaboration, the comfort of continuation, a public forum in which to be evaluated and fiscal support.

Since La MaMa's doors first opened in 1961, our primary dedication has been to new works. Many of the best plays and playwrights of the 60's and 70's have come from our lower East Side stages and workshops. The face of Theatre as we now know it on Broadway and beyond was influenced by and infused with the spirit and work of La MaMa artists. Not only is the work we do experimental because of new directions in writing, but also because of the exciting collaborations that we foster, especially musical ones. To date we have presented over 1000 original scores on our stages. Creative risk-taking, experimentation, and challenging artistic boundaries have always been the focus of the work created and performed at La MaMa. La MaMa envisions art as a universal language. Cultural pluralism and ethnic diversity have been inherent in the work created at La MaMa. To sustain this global vision, La MaMa has become one of this country's foremost presenters of international performance. We are delighted to call artists from over seventy nations part of the La MaMa family. La MaMa has been honored with over thirty Obie Awards, dozens of Drama Desk Awards, Bessie Awards and Villager Awards. La MaMa has an incredible roster of theatre, movie and multi-media luminaries for whom La MaMa was an early artistic home.

La MaMa was one of the first "non-mainline" theatres to support full-time resident companies. This list includes: The La MaMa Troupe directed by Tom O'Horgan; Mabou Mines, directed by Lee Breuer; The E.T.C. Company directed by Wilford Leach; La MaMa Plexus directed by Joel Zwick; The Great Jones Repertory directed by Andrei Serban and Elizabeth Swados; The Jarboro Troupe directed by Hugh Gittens; The Third World Theater Institute, T.W.I.T.A.S (Philippines); Theatre of the Eye directed by Tom Eyen; The Play-House of the Ridiculous, directed by John Vaccaro; The American Indian Theatre Ensemble directed by Hanay Geiogamah; La MaMa Chinatown, directed by Wu Jing-ji and Ching Yeh of Taiwan -- out of which grew The Pan Asian Repertory directed by Tisa Chang; Ping Chong and Company; Laughing Stone directed by Sin Cha Hong; The Trocadero Gloxinia Ballet directed by Larry Ree; The Yara Arts Group (Mongolia) directed by Virlana Tkacz, which introduced the Buryat; Slant (Asia), created by Rick Ebihara, Wayland Quintero and Perry Yung; Otrabanda directed by Roger Babb; and The Shaliko Company directed by Lee Shapiro. These companies have served as ambassadors of experimental culture in all corners of the world.

La MaMa began as a tiny basement theatre dedicated to the playwright and all aspects of the

theatre. In the past 40 years, La MaMa has grown into an arts complex of national and international celebrity. La MaMa houses three theaters, "The First Floor Theatre", "The Club" and "The Annex", an art gallery, a 7-story rehearsal/studio building, and an extensive archive documenting the history of off-off Broadway theatre. The La MaMa facilities are still located on the Lower East Side where they provide dozens of jobs and bring goodwill and health to the neighborhood.

Ongoing activities at La MaMa include the presentation of new works thereby creating opportunities for new playwrights, directors, designers and performers; an American showcase for the international avant-garde; and a performance venue for composers and choreographers. We offer an educational internship program at both the high school and college level that allows students to gain invaluable experience. A ticket subsidy program enables students, senior citizens, the physically and mentally challenged and those undergoing rehabilitation to attend La MaMa performances at no cost. Each year we distribute 5,000-6,000 free tickets to nonprofit social service organizations.

Still under the directorship and helm of the founder and artistic director, **Ellen Stewart**, La MaMa continues its original vision and mission of bringing artists, dancers, writers, musicians, actors, puppeteers, choreographers, directors and technicians together in order to gather, to investigate and create. In 1986, with the proceeds from her MacArthur "Genius Award," Ellen Stewart founded La MaMa Umbria, an international artist retreat and residence in the hills of Umbria, Italy in Santa Maria Reggiana. Workshops and mini-festivals are held each summer in a haven of nature, nurture, creativity and community."

-Read More about La Mama at  
<http://www.lamama.org/>