

**ACCLAIMED THEATER LIGHTING DESIGNER JENNIFER TIPTON
TO BE HONORED WITH THE 2001 DOROTHY AND LILLIAN GISH PRIZE**

One of the Largest Awards in the Arts, the Annual Gish Prize

Pays Tribute to Outstanding Talents Across Disciplines

Acclaimed lighting designer Jennifer Tipton, one of the stage's most distinguished artists, will be recognized with the 2001 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize for her creative vision and innovative work on productions of all scales in drama, opera and dance. Tipton will receive the honor - a silver medallion and approximately \$250,000 at an awards ceremony to be held on Thursday, November 1, 2001 at 6:30 p.m., at the Hudson Theatre, Millennium Broadway, New York City.

One of the largest awards in the arts, the Gish Prize, now in its eighth year, recognizes outstanding talents from a spectrum of disciplines. Tipton is the latest to join the select assembly of Gish Prize winners that includes dancer/choreographer Merce Cunningham (2000), author/playwright Arthur Miller (1999), author Isabel Allende (1998), singer/songwriter Bob Dylan (1997), artist/director Robert Wilson (1996), film director Ingmar Bergman (1995), and architect Frank Gehry (1994).

The annual Gish Prize has no application process and is not determined through a competition. Each recipient is chosen by a Gish Prize Selection Committee, a group that changes every year. Composed of leaders in the arts community, the committee for this year includes Tony Award-winning director Lloyd Richards, who is this year's chairman of the selection committee; dancer/choreographer Trisha Brown; composer John Duffy; playwright and novelist Romulus Linney; and Ned Rifkin, director of the The Menil Collection in Houston.

"I am truly overwhelmed," said Ms. Tipton, upon hearing of her selection. "We lighting designers learn to practice our art virtually unnoticed. To receive this amazing prize is almost unimaginable. The art of lighting has been elevated to such a height; I am humbled by this distinguished honor."

Born in Columbus, Ohio, Tipton entered Cornell University in 1954 to study astrophysics, but graduated in 1958 with a degree in English and a resolve to dance. She moved to New York where she studied at the Martha Graham School and eventually performed with the Lucas Hoving Company and the Merry-Go-Rounders. Along the way, Tipton became interested in how performances looked and especially how they were lit. To learn more, she took a course with the eminent lighting designer Thomas Skelton. This led to an apprenticeship that would eventually launch her own distinguished career.

Tipton began by lighting what she understood best – dance. She has worked with the Paul Taylor Dance Company since 1965, when she created the lighting for Taylor's *Orbs*. But it was her lighting of Jerome Robbins' high profile *Celebrations: The Art of the Pas de Deux* (1973) at Spoleto, Italy, that first won Tipton attention in theatrical circles. Over the years, she has become regarded as one of the most versatile lighting designers in dance. Her achievements range from the forceful, sculptured effects in *Fait Accompli* (Twyla Tharp, 1983), to the subtle, shimmering vision for *In Memory of ...* (Jerome Robbins, 1985). Among the other choreographers she has maintained long alliances with include Dan Wagoner, Robert Joffrey, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Jiri Kylian, Elliot Feld, and Dana Reitz.

(more)

Besides dance, Tipton has also brought her flair for evocative lighting to other art forms. By the mid 1970s, she was regularly engaged by Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival, and had also made many inroads on Broadway. Tipton's outstanding designs have won her numerous awards, including a Drama Desk Award for Ntosake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf* (1976); a Joseph Jefferson Award for John Guare's *The Landscape of the Body* (1976); a Drama Desk and Tony Award for *The Cherry Orchard* (1977), directed by Andrei Serban; an Obie for "Sustained Excellence at the New York Shakespeare Festival" in 1979; another Obie for Lifetime Achievement in 1998; and three Bessie Awards – the first for "Sustained Achievement" in 1984, and the latter two for her collaborations with Dana Reitz on *Circumstantial Evidence* (1987) and The Wooster Group designers for *Houselights* (1999).

Since 1981, Tipton has been a Professor-Adjunct at the Yale University School of Drama.

"Ninety-nine and nine-tenths percent of the audience is not aware of the lighting," Tipton has stated, "... though 100 percent is affected by it."

Like her work, Tipton is an unseen master. From behind the scenes, she weaves her magic and breathes a forceful gust of creative energy onto whatever production she touches, heightening the theater going experiences for all involved.

Established in 1994 by the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize Trust and administered by JPMorgan Chase and Nathan Hale as trustees, the Prize is given annually to "a man or woman who has made an outstanding contribution to the beauty of the world and to mankind's enjoyment and understanding of life." In her will, Lillian Gish stated: "It is my desire, by establishing this prize, to give recipients of the prize the recognition they deserve, to bring attention to their contributions to society and encourage others to follow in their path." Lillian Gish died in 1993 and Dorothy Gish, also an actress, died in 1968.

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