

The Arts in Every Classroom: A Workshop for Elementary School Teachers
Reading

Alwin Nikolais

Alwin Nikolais (1910/12?–93) was a dancer, choreographer, director, teacher, and composer. He began his professional career in the theatre as a musician, then became a puppeteer, and finally a dancer. His principal dance teacher was Hanya Holm, and he also studied with Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Louis Horst. He attended Bennington College Dance Sessions (1937–39) and Colorado College (1947). He had his own studio from 1938 to 1942.

In 1948, Nikolais was appointed director of the Henry Street Playhouse in New York City. He built a company of dancers, later known as the Nikolais Dance Theater, for his very special form of abstract dance-theatre, in which lights, props, and sounds were of equal importance with the dancers. He frequently used electronic music, which he composed himself. The dancers themselves are dehumanized and become wonderful instruments for the formation of ever-shifting patterns.

Works of interest:

- *Tensile Involvement* (1953)
- *Mask, Props, and Mobiles* (1953)
- *Kaleidoscope* (1956)
- *Totem* (1960)
- *Imago* (1963)
- *Structures* (1970)
- *Crossfade* (1974)
- *Talisman* (1981)