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## Lee Nagrin, performance artist, 78

### Director part of Off-Broadway scene for decades

By [VARIETY STAFF](#)

Performance artist and director Lee Nagrin died June 7 in New York of colon cancer. She was 78

Nagrin was one of the first American women to embrace the field of performance art. Raised in Seattle, she attended the U. of Washington and worked with the Seattle Repertory Playhouse.

Nagrin moved to New York in 1950, where she was influential in the Off-Broadway theater scene for more than 40 years.

She produced, directed or performed in several Off-Broadway productions between 1950 and 1963, and was first to produce the work of Ionesco in the U.S. In 1958, Nagrin appeared alongside Steve McQueen in the cult film "The Blob," and was offered a contract from Paramount, but decided to stay in New York.

From 1971 to 1981, she was a member of Meredith Monk's company the House, with whom she developed and performed in a number of works, including "Vessel," "Education of a Girl Child" and "Ellis Island."

Other notable productions she directed included "Bird/Bear," which won an OBIE award for new American play; "Pathways" and "Valley of Iao."

A video of her work "Sky Fish" is represented in the Museum of Modern Art Film Archive Collection. Currently being performed in Manhattan is "Behind the Lid," a production chronicling Nagrin's life, at the Silver Whale Gallery.

She is survived by her longtime companion Bruce Hutchinson.