

Colloquium panelists express new use of narrative in dance

■ **BALLET:** Proto-narrativity is the cutting edge in choreography, opening new avenues for dancers

By Jennifer Haliski
Freelance Reporter

The University dance department hosted a Dance Research Colloquium last weekend in which three panelists offered their insights into the use of narrative in dance.

Senior University Dance Instructor Susan Zadoff, University Associate Professor of Dance Sherrie Barr and local freelance writer Phillip Lewin presented summaries of their research on this topic to an audience in Gerlinger Lounge.

Zadoff combined video clips, quotes from artists involved in the original 1841 production of *Giselle* and her own performance experiences to explain the use of narrative and characterization in the 19th-century ballet.

It is "the *Hamlet* of ballets," Zadoff said.

This short ballet requires the ballerina to be both technically brilliant and emotionally eloquent. In the first act *Giselle* is a simple peasant girl whose trusting nature leads to her insanity. In the second, she must rescue her lover from a band of ephemeral nymphs who try to dance him to death.

Dancing the character of *Giselle* is "the Mt. Everest of all roles," said Zadoff, because the dancer must internalize challenging themes such as temptation, deceit, jealousy, love, forgiveness, betrayal and the tension between the natural and supernatural.

The ballerina teeters on a fine line of expression. She must allow the audience to identify with the narrative but never overplay the sentiment.

Ballet dancers use mime to tell a story and to communicate emotion. At one point in her highly academic but also interactive and intimate demonstration, Zadoff demonstrated some commonly used mime gestures.

"She was very poetic in her word choices," said Kristin Hapke, a senior majoring in dance. "My favorite part of the presentation was when she was miming the word gestures. She really expressed the emotion of *Giselle*."

Zadoff shared personal anecdotes from her performance in *Giselle* 38 years ago and from her 1988 performance as *Giselle's* mother. The former was her first professional ballet performance. Her stories elicited both laughter and awe from the audience.

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ences," said Amy Dore, also a senior dance major.

"The ballet *Giselle* has something for all of us — dance, drama, magic, and for me personally, memories," Zadoff said. "We, as artists and students, study the past in the search for ourselves, to confirm what we already know: that the answers are in the endless questions."

During the second half of the colloquium, Barr and Lewin presented their work, "Straddling Borders: The Proto-Narrative Unit." Originally presented last April at the University of Surrey, their presentation relied heavily on video clips to explore and explain the themes, gestures and postures that suggest narrative possibilities in late 20th century dance.

Lewin, whose articles have appeared in *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, *Issues in Integrative Studies* and *Soundings*, explained the concept of proto-narrativ-

ty, in which gestures suggest recognizable meaning, but their exact meaning is left open to interpretation. According to Lewin, such subtle gestures are often taken for granted.

"We all, from early on, exist in a world of gesture, of timing, of rising and falling, of vitality effects," said Lewin while Barr illustrated the point by showing the work of choreographers Susan Marshall and Bill T. Jones.

Barr explained how the two dancers, dangling from harnesses in Marshall's work, "The Kiss," suggest the most private moments of personal relationships. The prop helps to contextualize the situation. As the dancers swerve together into embraces or veer apart from the momentum of the harnesses, the audience is allowed to inject themselves and their own ideas into the dance.

After an era of postmodernism, where choreographers insist that there is nothing new to create, proto-narrativity is becoming a source of vitality for exploring universal truths in dance.

"An attempt to rediscover meaning on an individual level, proto-narrativity takes the gesture and, instead of making grand, sweeping generalizations, makes very specific, intimate comments. It is, in many ways, a correct response to postmodernism," Lewin said.

Tombstone seized for four-year old unpaid bill

PINE BLUFF, Ark. (AP) — To the dismay of those who loved Nolan Parks III, there's no longer a tombstone marking his grave at Graceland Cemetery.

"I didn't know what happened to it," his grandmother, Mable Parks, said.

What happened was that the monument was repossessed by Dunlap's Pine Bluff Monument Co., which said the family still owed \$152.

"I never heard of a monument company repossessing a headstone," Parks' sister, Kathleen Ladd, said.

Parks, 24, was buried in October 1992, a homicide victim.

Ladd said she paid \$549 for the granite monument and had his picture added for an additional \$300. She said she thought she had paid the bill.

Mable Parks and Ladd said they never received any letters from the company. Ladd said that since her brother's death, she has continued to live at the same address, and has provided her address and telephone numbers to Dunlap's.

The president of Dunlap's, David Dunlap, said Ladd moved and didn't leave a forwarding address.

"It's her own fault," Dunlap said. "We do this as a last resort. ... I don't snatch people's monuments."

Last week, Mable Parks paid the balance.

Dunlap said he didn't know when the monument would be returned.

Study: coffee lowers suicides among women

CHICAGO (AP) — Women who drink coffee are less likely to commit suicide than those who do not, suggests a study being published Monday.

The author cautions, however, that the results may not be significant because doctors might have told depressed patients not to drink coffee, a factor that wasn't studied.

The study of 86,626 female nurses from 1980 to 1990 found



11 suicides among those who drank two to three cups of caffeinated coffee per day, compared with 21 cases among those who said they almost never drank coffee.

"Coffee drinkers seem to do everything that seems to put them at risk for depression and suicide, but they are highly protected," said the study author, Dr. Ichiro Kawachi of Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

He noted that many coffee drinkers lead stressful lives, smoke and drink alcohol heavily. Kawachi's study did not examine whether respondents were told not to drink coffee, nor did it question the effect of caffeine on people who attempt suicide. Kawachi said these issues merit further study.

A 1990 study found that as little as 100 mg of caffeine per day could produce increased feelings of well-being, energy and motivation to work. A five-ounce cup of coffee contains 40 to 180 mg of caffeine, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

Kawachi's study was criticized by Dr. John Greden, an expert in depression at the University of Michigan.

Greden said researchers should have examined the effect of antidepressants and blood pressure medication, which tends to be a depressant. He said they also should have looked at how many suicide victims tried to stop smoking, which also can trigger depression.

"The findings could have nothing to do with caffeine," he said.

Kawachi's study appears in Monday's issue of the *American Medical Association's Archives of Internal Medicine*. It is consistent with a 1993 Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program study of 128,934 men and women, which also found a lower risk of suicide among people who drink more caffeine.

Kawachi's study was funded by the National Institutes of Health.



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