

Portugal welcomes dance professor

Sherrie Barr is the first UO dance teacher to receive Fulbright honors

By Sara Jarrett
Oregon Daily Emerald

Sherrie Barr, associate professor of dance at the University, will soon witness the changing world of dance in Lisbon, Portugal.

Barr is the recipient of a Fulbright Scholar Lecturing/Research award that will take her to the Technical University of Lisbon in the fall.

"She is clearly a master of dance education," said Jenifer Craig, associate professor and head of the dance department. "Her strength as a teacher is insistent on the student-centered approach she has developed. Students at the Technical University of Lisbon will thrive after her tutelage," she said.

Barr is the first dance professor at the University to win a Fulbright. Upon her return, the students here will benefit greatly from her experiences abroad, Craig said.

Gaining a better understanding of cultural influences on narrative is especially intriguing to Barr.

"Two people can watch the same dance and be moved by it in very different ways according to their personal experiences," she said.

She said she wonders if her experience as an American woman will cause her to "be totally off base" when trying to relate to her Portuguese students.

"I am who I am. No matter what step I'm trying to teach, it's still me," she said.

She said she hopes her dancers embrace their unique experiences and utilize them in class

and rehearsal.

"Choreography for Sherrie is a creative process — it doesn't end," said Erin Landaker, a student of Barr's. "You never stop digging in and finding emotional aspects to explore. She leaves room for you to find your own way."

Dance in Portugal is so exciting right now because the country is in the wake of achieving freedom from dictatorship, Barr said.

The Communist Party was eliminated from power in 1975, according to an educational exchange program Web page called AIESEC. With its elimination, the citizens gained freedom to embrace the individual creativity that was suppressed for so long, she said.

The dance currently being produced in Portugal is "really a post, post-modern style influenced by text and theater" in an effort to find their own identity, she said.

She said she wants to see the link between the traditional and the post-modern dance of that country.

Straight from folk dance to performance art and skipping everything in between, Portugal's dance history is much different from the United States'. The United States' lineage can be traced from Isadora Duncan in the early 1900s, to Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey in the 1920s. Each codified their own innovative modern dance technique in a rebellion against ballet.

"Maybe [Portugal's] dance lineage is just beginning," Barr said.

Her teaching in Lisbon is not about making the students American dancers. She is interested in how tradition and innovation are integrated and influence each

other, she said.

"The more I teach, the more I learn from my students," she said.

According to the Fulbright Program Web page, its function is to increase the mutual understanding between people of the United States and other countries in an aim to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations.

"I was interested in the Fulbright Scholar Program because I thought, what a golden opportunity to live abroad and have functions other than a tourist," Barr said.

The Fulbright doesn't always have a definite winner. If the American Fulbright Commission and the Portuguese Fulbright Commission couldn't agree on an applicant, there just wouldn't be one for that year.

"It was really freaky," Barr said. "[The award] really had my name on it."

In Lisbon, Barr will teach dance composition, Laban Movement Analysis (a technique to analyze the space, time, shape and effort of movement) and body fundamentals. She will also advise graduate students on their theses.

The award includes a housing subsidy and a monthly salary while encouraging teaching, researching and traveling through the fall. It's mainly teaching with a little researching, Barr said, who will continue with a research sabbatical through the remainder of the 1999-2000 academic year.

In the winter she said she hopes to travel to the more rural areas of Portugal and out of the country.

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Instructor

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July Session:

ART 408 = CRN 43217, 3 credits

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August Session:

ARTS 408 = CRN 43194, 3 credits

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Margaret Prentice will take up to eight students from UO to join students from the Umatilla Indian Reservation for a one week intensive workshop in artists' books. Students will use book arts and printmaking techniques to create their own books around shared themes.

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Instructor

Kate Wagle,
Associate Professor of Fine Arts

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ART 408 = CRN 16410, 2 credits

ART 508 = CRN 16411, 2 credits

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Course Description

Please contact Kate Wagle of the Fine and Applied Arts department at (541) 346-1571 for more information about this opportunity.



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