



Ryan Starkweather Emerald

The Oregon Gospel Ensemble rehearses for tonight's show, which will pay homage to gospel's greatest artists.

Music

with a *message*

Gospel ensemble's sound will shake the soul and 'put a smile on your face'

By Yael Menahem
Oregon Daily Emerald

The University's Gospel Ensemble is bringing uplifting messages through its concert tonight as part of Black History Month.

The performance schedule features contemporary gospel songs, said Cedric Weary, director of the ensemble, because today's gospel music blends different styles of music like rhythm and blues, hip-hop and rock 'n' roll.

"Gospel is more contemporary; it's more diverse," Weary says. "It's not just 'clap your hands.'"

This gospel concert "cross[es] that line and blend[s] all the sounds together," Weary says.

In addition to directing, Weary has written several original songs that will be performed tonight. "I'm So Grateful" and "Blessed Assurance" reflect artists that have influenced his style, he pointed out. Among those inspi-

rations are Walter and Edwin Hawkins and Andre Crouch.

The performance also includes "God Can" and "Saints Let's Dance" by Hezekiah Walker, and songs by Lawrence Matthews and Greg O'Quinn.

To put the concert together, Weary says, "I did a lot of listening. I bought a lot of CDs and I tried to pick the [songs] that would be most interesting for the choir to sing. I want to challenge them and challenge their [singing] range and ability."

Although gospel music is usually related to the church, it crosses religious boundaries and its appeal is gospel music's message.

"It's a happy message," he says. "Always put a smile on your face no matter what you're going through. There's always going to be tomorrow — it will be a brighter day. It's always an upbeat kind of feeling in gospel."

The University Gospel Ensemble performs tonight at 8 p.m. in Beall Concert Hall. Tickets range from \$3 for students and senior citizens to \$5 for general admission. All tickets can be purchased at the door before the concert.

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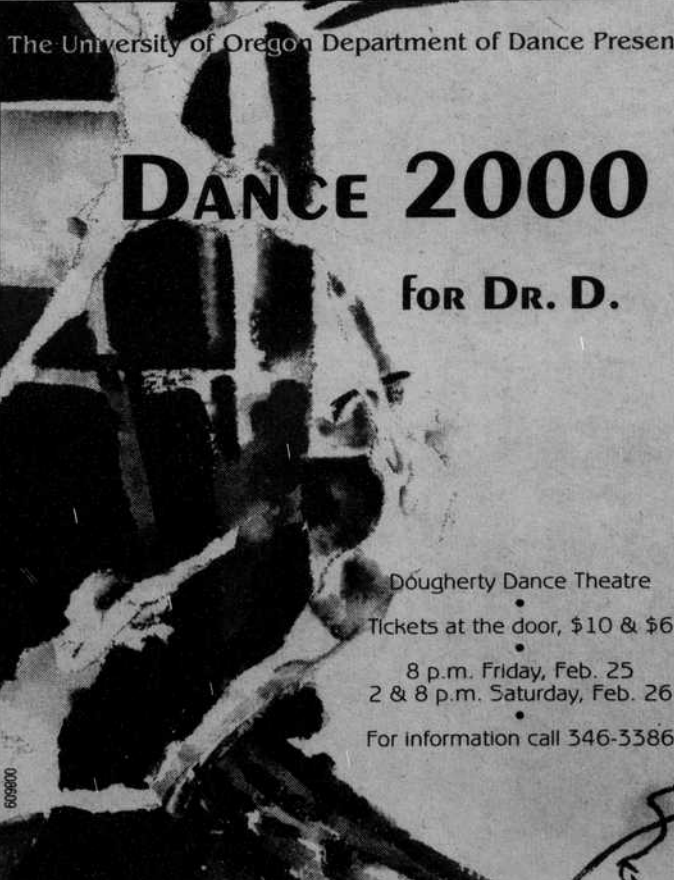
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