

# Faculty FINESSING

Six dance pieces,  
choreographed by  
University  
professors, give  
students a chance to  
strut their stuff in  
the renovated  
Dougherty Dance  
Theatre

By Jack Clifford  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The art of dance is such an emotional undertaking on its own, one can only imagine what levels of passion and sentiment will be reached this weekend in the Dougherty Dance Theatre during "Dance 2000 ... for Dr. D."

The six-piece performance serves as the annual showcase for the University dance department's faculty and doubles as a dedication to the late M. Frances Dougherty, founder of the department and a leader in dance education in Oregon. Dougherty retired from the University in 1974 and died last November at the age of 88 in Tucson, Ariz.

"Dr. Dougherty would be very pleased about the level of professionalism in the show," says Jenifer Craig, current head of the dance department. Craig was also one of Dougherty's students and Dougherty served as Craig's thesis instructor. "She had a vision about making it possible for people to learn the professional, technical, academic, spiritual [aspects], everything about dance, based on dance as a performing art."

"We still work with her philosophy."

"Dance 2000" certainly seems to cover the range of perspectives on Craig's stated list of Dougherty's musings.

Audience members will soak in everything from assistant dance professor Pamela Geber's dancer-rich offering, titled "The Ambrosia of Amnesia" — which centers on 16 dancers twirling about in duets and trios, motivated by two tangos by Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla — to a saucy solo performance by assistant professor Amy Stoddart.

Stoddart's dance piece, choreographed by dance senior instructor emerita Susan Zadoff, is titled "Encounter in Solitude" and is influenced by tango and flamenco. Stoddart calls it a "very difficult, 10-minute, throw-myself-around-the-stage piece."

Stoddart also choreographed

"Transfiguration," which features an ensemble of nine dancers en pointe, a rather uncommon feat, Craig says.

Stoddart laughs when asked about her double duty as dancer and choreographer.

"It's total split personality and a little bit of schizophrenia," she says.

As a dancer, however, Stoddart doesn't have to worry about the lights or sound, and says, "I can just do it, and I'm really free that way."

On the other hand, Stoddart admits that it's sometimes hard to get into the mindset of a performer and still be a support for her dancers in getting them prepared their roles in "Transfiguration," which took approximately 60 hours of preparation over the past 10 weeks to perfect.

The story of "Transfiguration" is a common ballet theme, Stoddart says, similar to one of a toymaker who locks up the shop at night, allowing the toys inside to come alive, before they return to an inanimate state the next morning.

This piece substitutes puppets for toys and emulates a German puppet show called "Puppen Körper." Stoddart chose a medley of electronic music arranged by John Schaefer, a friend of hers who lives in Boulder, Colo., to stimulate the metamorphosis.

The "puppets kind of break out of their shell, break out of their skin and then are very free and dancing in the rainforest, dancing in this mist kind of feeling," Stoddart explains. "There were images in a magazine article I saw of two-headed women and lots of extra arms and fingers everywhere, and that inspired me quite a bit."

The focus becomes fairly detailed during the piece, she says, with dancers examining their fingers and then transforming that concentration into "more suppleness and freedom in the chest and torso."

Senior dance major Laura Nash leads the ensemble through its movements and she appreciates the contrast in dynamics, from

stilted to free. Nash says she allows herself to really let go during the freer moments in the piece, and her mind wanders to a more abstract place.

"I am thinking about eating up space with my body and letting energy flow out all of my limbs, so that the movements look really big," she says, describing her approach. "I'm sort of imagining that 'This is my time, this is me in my element, this is everything I can be.'"

Stoddart's third choreographed contribution to "Dance 2000" is "The Sleeper," a distorted ballet-based piece, woven with symbolic gestures.

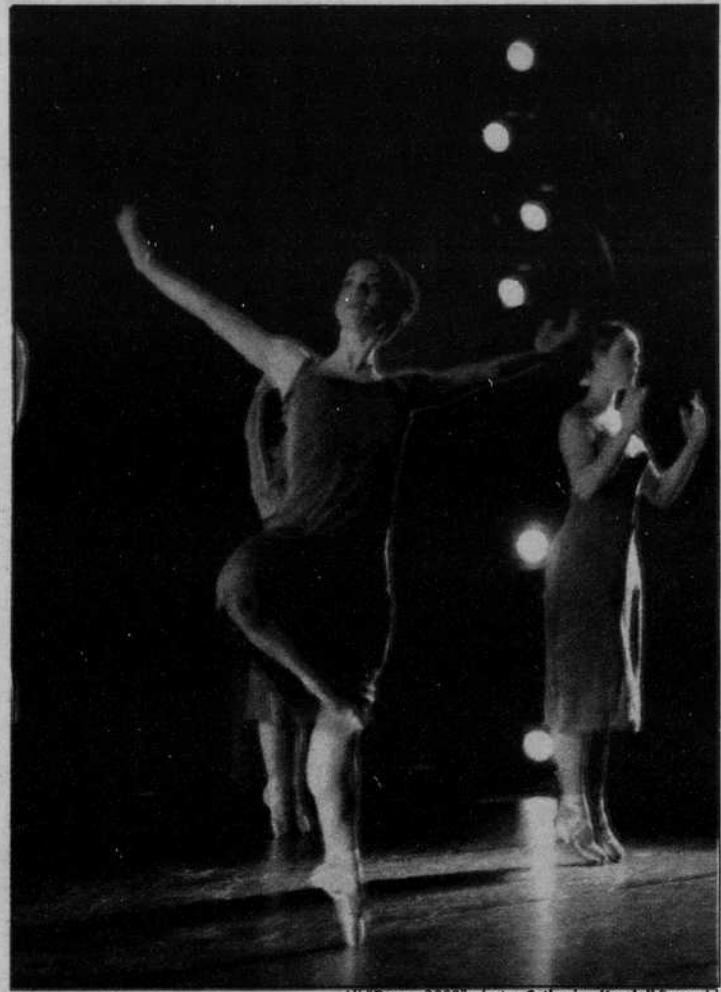
One of Stoddart's colleagues, Steven Chatfield, took a more down-to-earth path to reach his desired result in "Bending Redwoods." Segmented into four separate scenes — called "Bio Couple," "Dwelling," "Bending Redwoods" and "Bio Couple" again — this material has a simple inspiration: nature.

"It's about the nature of humanity, the nature of the earth, the nature of the elements and the harmonies of those things," Chatfield says.

Two dancers, Wind Kim and Dawn Tuman, moving to an original score by associate music professor Jeffrey Stolet, contort and twist around each other's bodies during the movement. Starkly dressed in black and bathed in a soft light, the pair take on a "nature spirit" quality, Kim says.

"We needed to really familiarize ourselves with each other's bodies, instead of letting that happen on stage," he says, sharing rehearsal techniques. Kim has been dancing for 10 years in the community, and he performs with several modern dance companies in town. He enjoys alighting on campus to work with what he calls a "comparable" level of talent to professional dancers.

"Here [at the University], you have a variety of styles, whereas in the community each company has its own look and style," Kim says. "It can be pretty eclectic here on campus because you have so many



All "Dance 2000" photos Catharine Kendall Emerald  
Laura Nash (center) leads nine dancers in "Transfiguration," a dance choreographed by assistant dance professor Amy Stoddart.

individuals choreographing."

Chatfield agrees with Kim's perception, adding that "Dance 2000" is not a coordinated body of work per se, but it is more the "next step in every choreographer's personal progression."

"For a dance professor, this show is tantamount to a publication in a journal and so basically is just a reflection of the ongoing nature of our research," he explains. "Each one of us has accumulated ideas and material and ways of working that have led us these pieces in particular."

One piece in "Dance 2000," Geber's "Within," premiered in fall 1999. That work uses two large frames to create dancer snapshots for the audience.

"This particular concert has really strong dancing — I don't want to say that it's the strongest ever — but it's a really good representation of the range of dance that we see in our students and the choreography is very strong," Craig says. "It's just a really solid show."

Craig is anticipating quite a flood of memories before and after the three weekend performances. She expects a mini-reunion with dance alums in attendance

and is also excited to unveil to the public renovations made to the Dougherty Dance Theatre. A new, comfortable seating system has replaced a 20-year-old set of bleachers, cultivating what Craig calls "a true dance theater environment."

"In some ways ['Dance 2000' and the renovations] are starting a new era, but we're also remembering where we come from and how we got this far and how much further we can take this," Stoddart says.

Although Dougherty will not be in attendance to see the transformations and these new concepts carried out on the dance floor, Craig laughs when she imagines that "Dr. D." will be watching from somewhere anyway.

"And she probably has a couple of criticisms for me, which I'll take if I could just hear them."

"Dance 2000" opens Friday night at 8 in Gerlinger Annex. Two Saturday shows are scheduled for 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Tickets are \$6 for students and senior citizens, with general admission priced at \$10.

A reception to honor Dougherty will be held in Alumni Lounge after the evening performance on Feb. 26.

