

# Dancers to mix jazz, ballet, African

■ A Philadelphia dance troupe brings its eclectic style to the Hult Center on Monday

By Jen West  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Dance often expresses much more than the movement of feet. It can explore the artistic characteristics of a simple handshake.

Philadanco (Philadelphia Dance Company) incorporates such cultural idiosyncrasies into its performances. The Hult Center for the Performing Arts will present Philadanco on Jan. 21 at the Silva Concert Hall.

Joan Myers Brown, who serves as both the troupe's executive director and artistic director, said she founded Philadanco in 1970 for young African-American dancers who had little or no opportunity to perform without leaving the community. She said she enlisted her friends' and relatives' help, and they all worked together to start up Philadanco.

Philadanco has now grown to include dancers from many cultur-

al backgrounds and performs for audiences around the world, according to Dawn Marie Watson, one of the dancers in the company.

Brown said Monday's performance will consist of two ballets from "Messages from the Heart" and two other selections.

*"The audience is going to expect high energy — but we surprise people."*

**Gabriele TesfaGuma**  
dancer, Philadanco

"It was supposed to be a full evening of four ballets, but two of the ballets (from "Messages from the Heart") were not to my liking," Brown said.

The program will also include musical selections from Zap Mama, an Afro-Euro a cappella women's ensemble; Led Zeppelin; The Mysterious Voices of Bulgaria, a Bulgarian female choir; and an original score by composer Michael Wimberly.

Brown said the company's goal is to "expose the audience to the work of many choreographers."

Watson described the company's style of dancing as a mix of ballet, jazz, modern and African dancing.

"You can expect a very energetic performance," she said. "You always get your money's worth. We dance all night long."

She said one of her favorite dances in the show is called "Hands Singing Songs," which explores how handshaking has evolved and changed. The slang term for the hand gestures is "dap," she said, and it is the way many African Americans shake hands.

"It shows how expressive we are," Watson said.

Gabriele TesfaGuma has been dancing with Philadanco for five years.

"The audience is going to expect high energy — but we surprise people," he said.

He predicted that audiences will be left wondering how the dancers maintain such high energy throughout the performance.

"There's always something new happening, and it keeps performing fun and exciting," TesfaGuma said.

He added that in his experience, the dance world is changing to emphasize more of the technical aspects of dancing.

A dancer's personality shines through the performance, he said, and "all the dancers (in Philadanco) are very well trained, but it's still important to be able to touch people — bring emotions to performance."

The performance will begin at 8 p.m. following a preconcert lecture by Brown. The lecture is free and open to the public. It will begin at 7 p.m. in Studio One at the Hult Center.

Tickets are \$18 to \$26 for the general public and \$14 for youth and students. Tickets may be purchased at the Hult Center box office by calling 682-5000, at the EMU Ticket Office or online at [www.hultcenter.org](http://www.hultcenter.org).

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shows recipients that many people are thinking of them.

"The cranes are usually given to someone who is sick or has suffered misfortune," Honda said.

An origami booth will be one of the activities open to visitors after the formal events of the evening conclude. There will also be tradi-

tional Japanese games with prizes, a Japanese club with a nonalcoholic bar and a Japanese haunted house.

The \$6 student admission (\$7 general) includes the bento dinner, one free drink, cotton candy and entrance to all entertainment. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and close at 9:30 p.m.

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