

Dance troupe mixes ballet, modern dance for diversity

The ballet-based company Dance Theatre of Harlem will perform three works at the Hult Center on Feb. 4

By **Natasha Chilingirian**
Pulse Reporter

Dance Theatre of Harlem's ballet company will perform a "crowd-pleasing" classical ballet-based program Feb. 4 at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts. The New York-based company, which tours globally, stresses the importance of education and multiculturalism through its performances, classes and lectures.

Company manager Liz Magnuson said the company's dance style fuses several forms of ballet.

"We can do any kind of ballet we want — African ballet, jazz ballet — but we are based in classical ballet," she said.

The 45-member company will present three works in their performance: "South African Suite," "Return," and

"Dougl" (pronounced "doog-la"). Company dancer Preston Dugger said the first number was inspired by a past company trip to South Africa.

"('South African Suite') is kind of abstract," Dugger said. "You have to let your imagination run free and pretend you're in an environment like South Africa."

He described "Return" as a "hit piece" that mixes contemporary ballet and social dance to the tunes of James Brown and Aretha Franklin. Company dancer Melissa Morrissey added that the number is an audience favorite.

"Its fun and upbeat," she said. "It mixes ballet and street moves; it's kind of a funky ballet."

"Dougl" tells the story of a pre-wedding ceremony between two spouses of Caribbean and African descent. Dugger said he saw "Dougl" before becoming a company member, and the performance convinced him to join Dance Theatre of Harlem.

"The piece is so powerful," Dugger said. "Especially live, because we have

live drums."

Dance Theatre of Harlem founder and artistic director Arthur Mitchell started the dance institution in 1969 as a service to Harlem children as a reaction to Martin Luther King Jr.'s death. Today, the institution includes the ballet company, a school of dance for students at community through professional levels and a secondary company called Dancing Through Barriers. In addition to performing, Dancing Through Barriers has a strong focus on providing workshops, demonstrations and classes for schools and communities around the world.

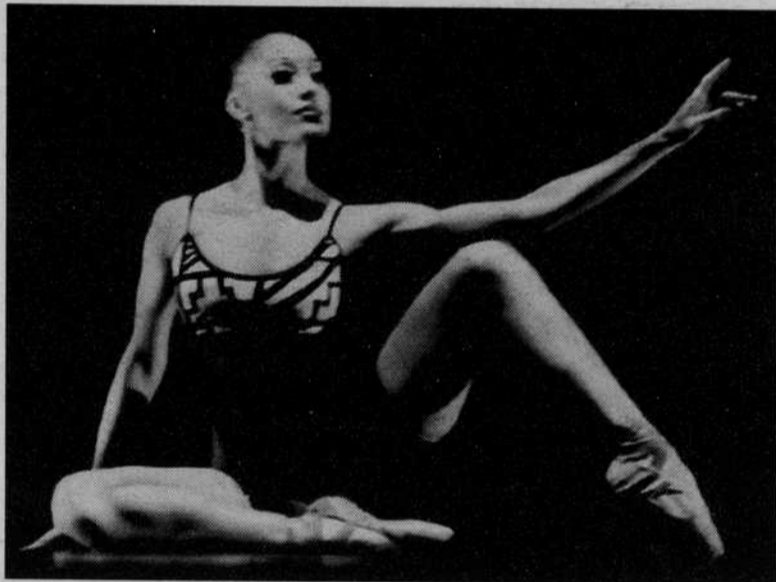
Dugger participated in Dancing Through Barriers before joining the ballet company. He said the experience was "humbling" because dancers were responsible for all technical aspects of performing, such as costumes and sets. He said members in the ballet company focus solely on their dancing.

"I learned a different aspect about how the company works and operates (in Dancing Through Barriers)," he said.

Company dancers were attracted to the institution for a variety of personal reasons. The focus on the works of renowned choreographer George Balanchine appealed to Morrissey, and Dugger admired the dance theater's cultural diversity.

"I love to be well-rounded and feel different cultures," Dugger said. "There are so many colors and cultures here."

The Hult Center for the Performing Arts is located at the intersection of 7th Avenue and Willamette Street. Tickets for the 8 p.m. show are available at the UO Ticket Office, and prices range from \$20-\$44. The dancers will lead a pre-show discussion at 7 p.m. in Studio 1 of the Hult Center. The ballet company will lead a free discussion about the Dance Theatre of Harlem on Feb. 3 at 7 p.m. at the Eugene Public Library, located at 100 W. 10th Ave.



Courtesy

Dance Theatre of Harlem brings its program to the Hult Center on Feb. 4 at 8 p.m.

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Web site serves as forum for sharing artistic projects

Ever since I discovered Napster during my freshman year, I've been embracing the digital age with open arms. Thanks to computers, I'm able to discover a new band every day, and my CD collection has doubled for the price of only three or four discs. Really, it's my bank account that has been embracing the digital age. Like most people, I can't afford to spend \$16.99 on a CD that only has three good tracks. It makes sense to burn a friend's copy of an album or download a couple of songs off the Internet.

Nonetheless, I do miss the packaging. I miss the physical unwrapping of a new CD, opening the inside cover for the first time and reading the lyrics while listening to the music. The CD cover has creative merit all by itself, and I'm sad to see this art form die out.

However, this digitization of art also has created new forms. The Internet is one obvious example, serving as a forum for sharing ideas and connecting artists. An excellent example of this trend is Miranda July's Web site, "Learning to Love You More."

July is a Portland-based artist who has been creating interesting and challenging multimedia works for about 10 years. She makes movies and spoken word/performance albums. In 1995, July started Joanie 4 Jackie, a distribution system to help independent women filmmakers network with each other. A little more than a year ago, she created another artist

network of sorts with the Web site "Learning to Love You More."

The site, which is a collaboration



Helen Schumacher

Notes from the underground

with artist Harrell Fletcher, posts assignments and invites visitors to complete them. The results are then posted with other submissions from around the world.

Some examples of assignments include: record your own guided meditation, take a picture of strangers holding hands, hang a wind chime on a tree in a parking lot, draw a constellation from someone's freckles and make a documentary video about a small child.

Assignment No. 27 is to take a picture of the sun. Just a picture of the sun, nothing extra or fancy. More than 50 people have submitted pictures. With every submission, there is also a chance it will be selected for gallery and museum exhibitions. Sun pictures submitted by the deadline were featured in an

exhibit called "Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast in Contemporary Art" at the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego. Selected submissions from another assignment are scheduled to be featured in the Whitney Biennial in New York this March.

I think my favorite assignment is the one that asks people to design a flier describing a typical day in their life and then make 100 copies of it to post around town. Some of the fliers are in black and white, others in color. Some have photos and drawings. Others are simply text. It's fascinating to see the different ways the assignments manifest themselves. Despite the strict instructions of the assignments, each participant produces a unique result.

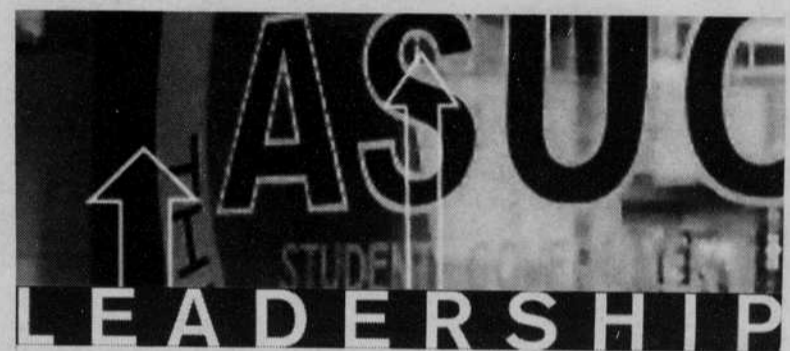
Unlike most Web sites, "Learning to Love You More" actually inspires people to back away from their computers and be creative. I'm in love with the idea that I can collaborate with other people whom I'll never meet to create a piece of art. The Web site prods people to forget about expectations of what the final product should be and create for the joy of the process.

July and Fletcher's Web site can be found at <http://www.learningtoloveyoumore.com>.

Contact the Pulse columnist at helenschumacher@dailymerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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