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Reinhart to bow out after 2011 ADF

43-year American Dance Festival leader’s farewell includes favorites

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Special to The Herald-Sun

DURHAM — Charles Reinhart plans to step down after 43 years at the helm of the American Dance Festival but not before one last season that includes some of his favorite dances.

The upcoming June 9-July 23 season at Duke University and Durham Performing Arts Center, features some dances Reinhart especially treasures. One of those works, Bill T. Jones’ 1989 “D-Man in the Waters,” was reconstructed especially for this season.

“I think it’s one of the greatest works ever choreographed,” Reinhart said in a telephone interview Wednesday from his New York home. “It’s extraordinarily moving emotionally and extraordinarily exciting and interesting choreographically with an incredible message of despair and hope which is what life’s all about.”

The ADF director also asked Eiko & Koma to reconstruct their 1995 “River,” performed at ADF that year in the Sarah P. Duke Gardens pond. “I think it’s a sensational piece. It was extraordinarily moving to me ... I close my eyes and I still see it,” Reinhart said. He attended all three performances that summer but he noticed that one evening, Eiko suddenly started

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Charles Reinhart is pictured in The Ark at Duke during the 2006 American Dance Festival season.

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thrashing about with her arms. Only later, did he learn that she had slipped off the underwater platform and was struggling to find footing again because she cannot swim, he said. That’s just one of many stories Reinhart has of his many ADF seasons.

At Reinhart’s request, Pibolobus will reconstruct their 1975 “Untitled.” The work premiered in 1975 at ADF then located in New London, Conn., where Reinhart’s tenure as ADF director began in 1968. “I was really blown away by it,” Reinhart said. The work spans life’s relationships between men and women from birth to old age and includes the image of women, who appear to grow taller, thanks to their hidden male partners.

Reinhart also wanted Pibolobus to collaborate with Japanese butoh artist Takuya Muramatsu for an ADF-commissioned world premiere this summer.

“I think it really reflects his years at the festival,” ADF co-director Jodelle Nimerichter said of this 78th season.

The season not only pays attention to the treasures but also continues to support such choreographers as Shen Wei and Rosie Herrera as well as introduce new artists, Nimerichter added in an interview Wednesday.

In addition to including some of Reinhart’s favorites,” Company B” and Prometheus Fire,” Paul Taylor wanted to create something special for Reinhart’s last season and will premiere a new work, “The Uncommitted,” Nimerichter added.

The season also ends with the Paul Taylor Dance Company to signify the full circle of Reinhart’s career that began as manager of Taylor’s company, she said.

The festival begins with a gala that honor’s Reinhart’s continued vision and commitment to the field. Since 1968, Reinhart has helped bring 337 commissioned works and 484 premieres to ADF. Following the festival’s move to Durham in 1978, he and his late wife, Stephanie Reinhart, began to advance the ADF onto the global state. So far, 426 choreographers from 88 countries have studied, choreographed and presented work at ADF.

The June 9 gala and reception at the Durham Performing Arts Center will feature performances by Mark Dendy (as Martha Graham); Durham’s African American Dance Ensemble in the first section of “Celebration”; the ADF premiere of the Scottish Dance Theater in their 2010 “Drift” a reconstruction of Martha Clarke’s 1980 “Pagliaccio,” performed by John Kelly; and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago’s performance of an excerpt from Ohad Naharin’s “THREE TO MAX.”

“Charles has been an extraordinary leader of ADF by serving the needs not only of the field but also by discovering and supporting talented choreographers,” Nimerichter said. “I feel so honored to have had him as a mentor and partner.” Nimerichter will follow Reinhart as ADF director after this season. “I have big shoes to fill,” she said.

When asked what he plans to do in retirement, Reinhart said, “I’m just going to look for the small happiness.” Then, he added “reading, tennis, walking and more reading.”

But Nimerichter is convinced there will be more dance in Reinhart’s future. “Charles will never be able to stop dancing. It’s in his blood,” she said.