Growing up in Colorado, Jodee Nimerichter was a serious bunhead: a driven young ballet dancer, whose dedication had landed her in a conservatory program. And then one day, in 1992, for reasons she still can’t fully explain, she quit. Full stop.

“Everything had been all about dance,” she said. “I wasn’t even sure what to continue majoring in.”

A woman she worked for (at a dance store, naturally) suggested arts management, which made sense to Ms. Nimerichter. Fast forward to 2012, and, well, everything has remained all about dance. More specifically, everything has remained all about the American Dance Festival. Ms. Nimerichter, 42, arrived at the festival, a six-and-a-half week juggernaut of performances and classes in Durham, N.C., as an intern two decades ago and, save for one four-year break, has spent her entire career there. In January she became the festival’s director.

“This is what she was born to do,” said Charles L. Reinhart, her predecessor and mentor, with whom she directed the festival from 2007 to 2011. Chuckling, he added, “If they were interviewing me and interviewing Jodee for that job, I would have lost.”

Mr. Reinhart ran the festival for 43 years (his wife, Stephanie, shared those duties from 1993 until her death in 2002), a tenure that spanned sweeping change and growth in an institution that helped to incubate virtually all of the modern dance giants, including Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and José Limón.

After so many years, Mr. Reinhart had become something of an institution himself. He brokered influential international exchanges and aligned the wide-ranging festival with a core group of artists, many of whom returned year after year, making the festival an important supporter of modern dance but also sparking criticism that it had grown moribund in its programming.

Durham remains a magnet for young dance artists from around the world (last year, 425 students came from 19 countries and 34 states), and a place where important connections are forged. But the festival’s offerings have grown stale in the eyes of many. As Donna Faye Burchfield, an esteemed figure in the dance world who left her position as dean of the festival’s school last year after 28 years, said, it has become a “fixed institution” — the very thing that Mr. Reinhart cautioned against early in his tenure.

Now, as Ms. Nimerichter prepares to oversee her first solo season, the dance world is wondering where, and to what extent, she will put her stamp on the American Dance Festival, which has a budget of about $3.5 million and will, as of next month, own studio space for the first time.

“Jodee was mentored by Charles Reinhart, and also has an affinity for his vision,” said Ishmael Houston-Jones, a curator and highly regarded choreographer who has been a longtime teacher at the festival. “But my hope would be that as time goes on she would find her own voice.”

He added: “Durham is a university town but it’s still in North Carolina; they have to bring in things that are sure to bring in an audience. So it’s a balancing act that she has to perform. But I think some bolder choices could be made.”

In interviews in New York and on the telephone, Ms. Nimerichter kept her cards close to her chest, speaking with the polished cordiality of a public figure. She said she could not identify a personal aesthetic, asserting that, “I value all of it and I enjoy all of it.”

When asked what she saw as her mandate, she spoke in broad strokes about feeling particularly responsible for supporting “an indigenous American art form” and “the creative sparks” generated internationally by that form.

But we can glean a sense of her taste by looking at the program for the coming festival, which begins on June 14. It features 18 companies and choreographers and offers some glimpses into how Ms. Nimerichter will balance continuity with change. Many of the names in the lineup are familiar: Pilobolus, Paul Taylor and Shen Wei (all three have been at every festival since 2000), as well as Larry Keigwin and Mark Morris.

“I thought it was important to bring them back this year, to let people know it wasn’t just Charles who believed in them,” she said, smiling and speaking carefully. “If they will return each and every year — that will be something to be determined each and every year.”

There are also seven festival debuts, though three of them (Reggie Wilson, Jodi Melnick and Helen Simoneau) are creating
works with the festival students and will be presented in one evening. One of the full company debuts belongs to the Stephen Petronio Company, which was founded in 1984. “My god,” Mr. Petronio said, laughing, when congratulated on finally making it to the festival. “I guess the stars are in the right alignment — or maybe it has something to do with the new director.”

Over the years, he added, in various conversations, Ms. Nimerichter “didn’t give me false hope about coming and was very respectful of her boss.” But, he added, “within seconds of the shift, she called me.”

The performance duo Eiko and Koma are now widely celebrated in America, but they had only a few years earlier arrived in New York from Japan when Mr. Reinhart showed up at their loft for a sparsely attended show on a snowy evening in 1983, and promptly offered them a gig at his festival. Since then, the couple has returned 18 times.

His continued support has been “tremendous,” Eiko said.

Now, Mr. Reinhart said, it is his protégé’s turn to find the 21st-century versions of Eiko and Koma, those younger artists who deserve to be supported and granted access to a wider audience. “Jodee is so much more attuned now with the younger generation, as it should be,” Mr. Reinhart said.

But not everyone is convinced.

“I am not expecting any radical shifts,” said Ben Pryor, an arts manager who created the American Realness festival in 2009 to address what he saw as a lack of contextualization and support for how artists are working today. American Realness has since become an important shopping center for a wide array of artistic directors; Ms. Nimerichter, perhaps tellingly, called it the “Reality Series.”

Ms. Nimerichter’s lineup, Mr. Pryor added, seemed very much in keeping with previous festivals.

“For me,” he said, “American Dance Festival is not a very exciting program. But for others it could be seen as an anchor of this certain vein of dance, it’s really following a modern dance tradition and not what I would refer to as contemporary dance and contemporary performance.”

Ms. Nimerichter defended her curatorial choices, pointing to artists like Miguel Gutierrez and, making his debut this year, Kyle Abraham (both have also been at American Realness). “People who think we’re not” supporting “more avant-garde choreographers,” she said, “have not paid close enough attention.”

Cathy Edwards, who has been an artistic director at Dance Theater Workshop and the Time-Based Art Festival in Portland, Ore., and is director of programming at the International Festival of Arts and Ideas in New Haven, agreed, describing her colleague as “a very considered expert.” Working outside of New York, Ms. Edwards added, means making more measured choices.

“Primarily you’re introducing artists to your community — and your community is not in New York every week and they’re not connoisseurs of dance,” she said. “I do think that she is also interested in work that’s more overtly challenging.”

Time, of course, will tell how firmly the American Dance Festival remains tilted toward blue-chip modern dance. No matter her plans, Ms. Nimerichter, you suspect, will have decades in which to develop them.

“I’m just thrilled about the possibilities,” she said.
A fresh start

New director hired, new partnerships formed for dance festival

BY SUSAN BROILI
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD-SUN

What’s new at the American Dance Festival’s 79th season this summer takes on a whole new meaning. This season marks Jodee Nimerichter’s first as festival director.

“It has been 20 years since I walked in the ADF door as an intern and this summer I’m simply thrilled to have the honor to carry on the wonderful legacy of the festival,” Nimerichter said in a recent interview.

After serving as associate director since 2003, Nimerichter became co-director in 2007 and director at the end of last season when Charles Reinhart retired after 43 years at the ADF helm.

“This season, I hope we’ve put together a stellar line-up of performances and activities that bring confidence to long-time ADF patrons that the festival is in good hands,” she said. Nimerichter also noted other aspects geared towards drawing new audiences.

Two – a collaboration with American Tobacco and a video project, Inside Insights – happen to be new this year.

The ADF will join forces with American Tobacco
to offer the free, public ADF Musicians Concert as part of the American Tobacco Music on the Lawn Series on July 13.

Inside Insights enables prospective audiences to get a preview through video clips of performances to decide if they want to attend. This new preview can be found on the festival’s Website at www.americandancefestival.org.

Nimerichter also brings five companies and three choreographers to the festival for the first time this season.

The Footprints program (formerly called Past/Forward) July 23-25 features new work by three contemporary choreographers — Helen Simoneau, Jodi Melnick and Reggie Wilson — that will be created during the festival and performed by ADF students.

The Stephen Petronio Company performs “Underland” Friday and Saturday at the Durham Performing Arts Center.

Other companies making ADF debuts are the Kyle Abraham/Abraham In Motion; Ragamala Dance; Vertigo Dance Company and Scottish Dance Theater.

“I’m excited to bring the full company for its U.S. debut,” Nimerichter said of Scottish Dance Theater. “They have incredible physicality and range.” Two dancers from the company performed “Drift” as part of last season’s opening gala. That duet will be part of the company’s program here June 22-23.

Nimerichter first saw the company two years ago in Scotland, where she also saw soloist Aparna Ramaswamy from the Minneapolis-based Ragamala Dance. The company has trained local dancers to perform a version of the South Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam that carries the form into the 21st century. The troupe performs the 2011 “Scared Earth” July 10-July 12.

The Israeli troupe, Vertigo Dance Company, performs the “stunningly beautiful” “Mana,” this season, July 13-14. The work features the front of a house that moves throughout the production, Nimerichter said.

Kyle Abraham/Abraham In Motion rounds out the U.S. debuts with the 2010 hit “The Radio Show” June 26-28. The work depicts the loss of communication in a community from the closing of a radio station to the onset of Alzheimers and aphasia in a family. “It’s a very powerful work,” Nimerichter said.
GRAND OPENING OF SAMUEL H. SCRIPPS STUDIOS

The American Dance Festival (ADF) is proud to announce the official grand opening of the Samuel H. Scripps Studios, located at 721 Broad Street, Durham, NC. The opening of the studios marks the first time in the Festival’s celebrated 79-year history that the organization will own real estate and be able to provide year-round programming at its own facilities. The ADF will host a ribbon cutting ceremony on Monday, July 2 at 12:00 pm to celebrate the grand opening with the Durham community. Durham Mayor Bill Bell, as well as ADF Director Jodee Nimerichter, SHS Foundation President and ADF Board Member Richard Feldman, building developer Arthur Rogers of Eno Ventures, LLC, building architect Sasha Berghausen of BLOK Architecture, and ADF’s design consultant Oswald Nagler, among others, will be present to cut the ribbon.

As part of Ms. Nimerichter’s vision to expand the ADF’s reach into the community and dance world at large, and through an incredibly generous donation from the SHS Foundation, the ADF will begin providing year-round dance classes and workshops to the community and will have the opportunity to host choreographic residencies in the new beautifully designed studios.

“As a long time supporter of ADF, the SHS Foundation saw the importance of supporting this initiative by providing the lead gift to take advantage of this incredible space. This space will allow ADF to continue the invaluable work they do within the dance world, as well as in the Durham community. This is another example of new ADF Director Jodee Nimerichter’s leadership and vision, and commitment to the organization’s overall mission,” said SHS Foundation President, Richard Feldman.

Classes will be offered for all ages and ability levels, taught by distinguished faculty that have been hand selected by the ADF. The classes and workshops provided through this new studio will play an integral part in supporting the ADF’s continued commitment to providing a sound scientific/aesthetic base for professional education and training of dancers. Additionally, the ADF is excited to be able to use these studios to mark their commitment to Durham and to build an even larger dance community in the Triangle.

Marking her place in ADF’s history, new ADF Director Jodee Nimerichter is delighted to head this expansion of the ADF’s renowned programming.
“Having a permanent space has been one of our longtime dreams. It will allow ADF to expand and reaffirm its commitment to making Durham its home and to provide the community with the very best in modern dance training. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have a space so close to Duke University’s East Campus and our current offices presented itself and we had to take it. We are indebted to our board member Richard Feldman and the SHS Foundation for providing the initial support we needed to take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity for the ADF, and hope that the community is as excited as we are,” said Nimerichter.

ADF expects to launch a capital campaign in the coming months to complete the funding for this initiative, as well as sustain and support the ADF Educational Programs and Endowment. Community members are invited to walk through the new studios following the ribbon cutting. For detailed information on fall class registration, please visit our website at www.americandancefestival.org.
DURHAM -- The American Dance Festival will dedicate a new space, the Samuel H. Scripps Studios at 721 Broad St., Monday. The opening of the studios marks the first time in the festival’s 79-year history the organization will own real estate and be able to provide year-round programming at its own facilities.

The ADF will host a ribbon cutting ceremony at noon Monday to celebrate the grand opening. The public is invited to attend. Durham Mayor Bill Bell, as well as ADF Director Jodee Nimerichter, SHS Foundation President and ADF Board Member Richard Feldman, building developer Arthur Rogers of Eno Ventures LLC, building architect Sasha Berghausen of BLOK Architecture and ADF’s design consultant Oswald Nagler, among others, will be present to cut the ribbon.

Community members are invited to walk through the new studios after the ribbon cutting.

As part of Nimerichter’s vision to expand the ADF’s reach into the community and dance world at large, and through a donation from the Scripps Foundation, the ADF will begin providing year-round dance classes and workshops to the community and will have the opportunity to host choreographic residencies in the new studios.

“As a long time supporter of ADF, the SHS Foundation saw the importance of supporting this initiative by providing the lead gift to take advantage of this incredible space,” said SHS Foundation President Richard Feldman.

Classes will be offered for all ages and ability levels. The classes and workshops provided through this new studio will play an integral part in supporting the ADF’s continued commitment to providing a sound scientific and aesthetic base for professional education and training of dancers, according to a written statement from ADF.

“Having a permanent space has been one of our longtime dreams,” said Nimerichter. “It will allow ADF to expand and reaffirm its commitment to making Durham its home and to provide the community with the very best in modern dance training. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have a space so close to Duke University’s East Campus and our current offices presented itself and we had to take it,” she said.

ADF expects to launch a capital campaign in the coming months to complete the funding for this initiative, as well as sustain and support the ADF Educational Programs and Endowment.

For detailed information on fall class registration, visit www.americandancefestival.org.
DURHAM, N.C. — Were Monica Bill Barnes a more venomous artist, you might suspect her of laughing at her audience's expense. During her performance at the American Dance Festival here on Monday she got the crowd in the Reynolds Industries Theater to applaud her for — among other cheap tricks — balancing a chair between her teeth. Her calls to clap or laugh were overt and eagerly answered. It all could have been a cruel experiment in audience manipulation.

But Ms. Barnes isn’t that mean-spirited or uncompromising. She wants to tease the amateurishness of provincial recitals — the baton twirling, the tinsel, the begging for a hand. But she also needs the hand. She isn’t going to bite it.

At the start of “Luster,” a new duet for Ms. Barnes and her longtime sidekick, Anna Bass, the two women, dressed in floor-length parkas, haul onstage a puppet-show curtain-and-frame.

The women do a hand jive typical of Ms. Barnes to the beat of Tina Turner’s “Proud Mary.” It’s tongue-in-cheek, quite literally: the dancers’ cheeks sometimes bulge as if there were wads of tobacco in there.

The next section gets more interesting. To mournful music by Olafur Arnalds, the women go in circles, accelerating and decelerating, their sneakers squeaking. This image is also commonplace, but their unison stumbles give glimpses of pathos beneath the light amusement.

Though “Luster” reverts to manic, “Mostly Fanfare” (2010) offers more of those glimpses. Ms. Barnes, Ms. Bass and now Christina Robson all wear feathered headaddresses, cockatoo crests that are silly but also sad when they droop. Working on a diagonal, the women keep gesturing stage right, heralding the entrance of someone who never enters (the star? Godot?). Ms. Bass, capable of subtle touches, has a solo of real lyricism, but she is distracted by boxes that keep flying in from offstage for her to catch.

That’s a joke with some teeth. And there’s an elegiac quality to the chair-in-teeth balancing that follows, as Nina Simone sings of undying love. Wind machines...
The Chinese-born choreographer, artist and director thinks all of the arts should be experienced in one place. He will put that theory into practice this week at the N.C. Museum of Art in Raleigh with five performances, co-sponsored by the American Dance Festival, of his “Undivided Divided,” a work that will weave dozens of dancers among the paintings and sculptures in the galleries of the museum’s West Building.

He formed his company, Shen Wei Dance Arts, at the American Dance Festival in Durham in 2000. Over the past dozen years, he has built an international reputation with his mysterious and mesmerizing stage works, and, more recently, with his site-specific pieces in venues ranging from the Beijing Olympics to New York City’s Guggenheim and Metropolitan museums of art.

“Undivided Divided” was first presented last fall in the 55,000-square-foot Drill Hall of Manhattan’s Park Avenue Armory. During the 45-minute piece, audience members wandered among minimally clad dancers perched on canvas-covered platforms or enveloped by large acrylic-glass boxes. Most of the dancers were covered in various colors of paint, their bodies daubing designs as they twisted and undulated. Dramatic lighting, video projections and a musical score added to the effect.
Shen Wei, winner of a prestigious MacArthur “genius” grant, is adapting the piece for the performances here, a process he discussed recently by phone from his home in New York City.

“I will have to make a lot of changes because of the limited space at the NCMA,” he said. “We can’t do the projections that we did at the armory, but that will encourage more focus on the dancers. It will also give me an opportunity to figure out how to show off the art works as well.”

Because the museum is divided into a dozen galleries, Shen Wei will array his dancers among them, their performances playing out simultaneously in each.

Audience members can start in any gallery and decide when to move on and where to go next. Each will have a different experience of the piece, depending on the choices made over the 45-minute period.

These performances are a coup both for the museum and for the dance festival.

This is only the third time Shen Wei has staged performances in a museum and the first time in one outside New York City. Based on his experiences here, Shen Wei will offer performances to other museums around the world.

Although audiences are limited to 190 for each performance, having crowds of that size gathered around performers in the galleries brings up concerns about the safety of the art works in them. But those concerns haven’t dampened museum director Larry Wheeler’s enthusiasm for the project.

“I had no hesitation when ADF approached us with the idea,” he recalled. “I knew I’d have to convince my curators and conservators, but my ammunition was that there had been full-scale choreography by Shen Wei in galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art without any negative results. Besides, I think the performances will liberate the art and enliven it.”

Wheeler isn’t discounting the risks involved, but after meeting with Shen Wei and the ADF technical crew, he was convinced that things would go well.

“They are professionals, and they are as sensitive to safety as any of us,” he said.

The performances are particularly gratifying for Jodee Nimerichter, head of ADF, where many of Shen Wei’s works have premiered.

Shen Wei had expressed interest in doing a site-specific work locally, and Nimerichter had long wanted to collaborate with the Museum of Art.

“It seemed a good venue to combine Shen Wei’s skills as visual artist and choreographer,” she said, “and to surround him with breathtaking art works, which basically become the set design for his piece.”

Shen Wei is eager to foster new audiences for dance and visual arts.

“One of my main goals is to inspire people to open their senses and minds,” said the choreographer, who sees an intimate connection between the audience and the performers as one way to accomplish that goal. “When you are so close to the dancers, you can’t just observe; you are drawn into the dancers’ energy and notice details much more than when sitting in a theater.”
Each summer, selected students at the American Dance Festival get to work with professional choreographers in performances at season’s end. This year, the program has changed from a mix of old and new works to all-new choreography. Renamed “Footprints,” this edition has engaging moments and creative ideas, but also an overall sameness that makes the evening less intriguing than those in recent years.

Guest choreographers Helen Simoneau, Jodi Melnick and Reggie Wilson have chosen particularly large groups of dancers (19, 21 and 20, respectively) deployed in pieces lasting about a half-hour. Although the choreographers’ styles vary, each makes extended use of similar elements: walking around, lying on the floor and stage-filling tableaus of repetitive movements.

Simoneau’s piece, “Paper Wings,” is the most satisfying. She gives her all-female group clean, clear patterns, juxtaposing order with chaos, conformity with individuality. Clad in similar tops and skirts, the dancers gaze intently at the audience as they rock back and forth in unison, drop and roll as one and rush together suddenly like birds in flight. Short, intense solos that break from the pack eventually get reabsorbed into the group. David Ferri’s lighting adds pleasing luminosity to specific images, including dancers balancing on one leg with extended arms undulating.

Melnick’s “The Darling Divide,” set to Michael Wall’s computer-generated score, uses dancers in smaller groupings. Dressed in white and khaki with gauzy grey overlays, they repeat small sets of gestures ranging from lyrical to spasmodic. Several diverse groupings are onstage at any one time, their sudden entrances and exits diffusing the focus and their short stays allowing for little investment in what they do. There are some arresting moments near the end when some gentle interaction begins to take place, but overall the piece feels like rehearsal experimentation.

Wilson’s “Akulalutho” has high-octane energy and intense athleticism, fueled by African drumming, Indian sitars and Donna Summer disco. The sassy character displayed at the beginning and end, accompanied by Kurt Weill songs, makes one wish for more such individual moments in an otherwise repetitive ritualistic display.

Each piece has elements of classroom exercise. Shortening each work by eliminating generic filler would help audiences focus on the choreographers’ more viable ideas.
Jodee Nimerichter, seen here or Tuesday, has been chosen as the new director of the American Dance Festival after the departure of Charles Reinhart, who recently retired at the end of his 43rd season with ADF.

A NEW CHAPTER

American Dance Festival welcomes Jodee Nimerichter as new director

BY SUSAN BROILI
Special to The Herald-Sun

DURHAM — At age 16, when Jack Anderson’s book, “The American Dance Festival,” landed on her parents’ door step, Jodee Nimerichter had no idea that one day she would direct that festival.

Nimerichter, 41, recently took over as ADF director when former director Charles Reinhart retired at the end of his 43rd season.

When the ADF first came to her attention — Anderson’s book was a Book Club selection of the month — she was living in a suburb of Denver, Colo., and was into ballet, not modern dance, she said in a recent interview.

“I grew up as a pretty serious ballet dancer,” Nimerichter

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said. She almost went to a conservatory after high school. But she decided she didn’t want to perform. So, she enrolled at New York University Gallatin School of Individualized Study and majored in performing arts administration. That program required several internships. One was in 1991 at the American Dance Festival’s New York office.

The next year, she was hired as Charles and Stephanie Reinhart’s assistant and eventually became director of international programs until 1997 when she became associate producer of ADF’s Emmy Award-winning “Free to Dance” series. In 1999, she left ADF to work for Dance in America at New York City’s public television station, WNET. There she facilitated the broadcast of “Free to Dance” through 2002. After Stephanie Reinhart’s death in 2002, the ADF invited her back in 2003 as associate director. In 2007, she became co-director.

Now that she’s director, Nimerichter has some ideas for future festivals.

“I have a deep passion for expanding community programs on a year-round basis for young people to have the opportunity for exposure to dance,” she said.

She would also like to have more dance companies in residence at the festival. This summer, China’s Tao Dance Theater’s six-weeks residency included performances on ADF’s Reynolds’ Theater ticketed series. Members also took ADF classes. Such residencies allow companies to create work and get feedback without the pressure to produce something for the stage, she added.

She wants the festival to showcase emerging artists in free performances. “This gives a platform for some young artists, who are not yet ready to do their own program, to share their work with the community,” she said.

From Charles Reinhart, she learned things that will serve her well as director, she said. “I learned to really always listen to the artists. If they ask for something, say ‘Why not?’ instead of ‘It’s not possible,’” Nimerichter said.

She also related to Reinhart’s passion for modern dance. “We share that passion to serve the art form. It’s not a learned thing. You either have it or you don’t. That passion gives you the energy and devotion to really want to serve the art form,” she said.

Just the travel time takes a lot of energy. As co-director, she’s already traveled in this country and abroad to scout for talented choreographers. Now, as director, the travel time increases. She has to figure out where she’s going this year but knows she’ll be making two to three trips a month starting in the fall and continuing through January or February, she said.

She also has a family to consider. She and husband Gaspard Louis, a former Pilobolus dancer, have two young children, Dahlia, 3½, and Preston Gaspard, 4½ months. Louis directs the ADF’s creative movement outreach program for young people.

When searching for choreographers to invite to the festival, Nimerichter looks for “new directions, interesting ideas, movement that hasn’t been seen before, overall elements of production,” she said.

Then, there’s the personal response. “At the end of a performance, deep down there’s a visceral feeling. When you’ve been moved like you’ve never been moved before, you never want it to end,” she said. On the other hand, Nimerichter always wants it to end so she can rush out and tell people about it. “When it’s so powerful, you want to share it,” she added.

Since ADF landed on her doorstep in the form of Anderson’s book 25 years ago, Nimerichter has become familiar with every chapter in it. As ADF director, she will, no doubt, add some chapters to the festival’s history starting with the 79th season next summer.
Ending Up All Alone, 
And Making It Beautiful

DURHAM, N.C.—When it comes to peeling away the surface of a relationship to expose its defects — or that especially aggressive point where tension turns to hostility — the American choreographer Paul Taylor has a way of ripping off the bandage. Through his dances he reveals the meat of the human condition, and he likes it raw.

Arvo Pärt, the Estonian composer, has become a popular choice for many choreographers because of his Minimalist, spiritual sound. If you’re searching for something suitable for an angst-filled duet, he’s your man.

In that sense, Mr. Taylor’s decision to set his 134th dance to music solely by Mr. Pärt is curious. But “The Uncommitted,” unveiled at the American Dance Festival here on Thursday, is a haunting work with so many moments of beauty — structurally alone, it’s like being on a visual treasure hunt — that the music, while familiar, becomes a pure, new voice for the body.

In “The Uncommitted” Mr. Taylor uses four short works by Mr. Pärt: “Fratres,” “Mozart-Adagio,” “Ricercar” and “Summa.” The dance, which is roughly separated into three sections — the first is a steady stream of solos, the second highlights an array of duets and trios, and the final shows off the entire cast of 11 — suggests a world in which loneliness is not exactly the same as being alone. As in many of Mr. Taylor’s works, the dividing line is smudged.

With lighting by Jennifer Tipton and set and costumes by Santo Loquasto, the production has a somber atmosphere that makes it clear that these dancers are stuck in limbo. The back of the stage quivers with moving panels of fabric to represent a darkened sky. Bizarrely enough, the dancers wear costumes that, if you squint, resemble an unfortunate 1980s-era floral sofa, though not in a fashionably knowing kind of way. The men look a little better than the women, but that’s not saying much.

In “Fratres” Mr. Taylor constructs nine solos that mirror the music, which shifts between a recurring percussive beat and shimmering strings. A structure soon emerges that is too spooky...
to become dull. As the austere pulse sounds, the dancers briskly dash through patterns, where lines turn into circles and back into lines, swirling on the stage like mist that then dissipates. Each time this motif repeats, a new soloist is left behind, like a survivor from a storm.

Within these quick squalls of movement are flashes of anger, remorse, resignation and longing. As Laura Halzack stretches in an arabesque, her arms dangle in front of her body. Suddenly her wrists flop down, and her palms face out.

Throughout his dance Mr. Taylor reveals such sharp cracks in the psyche. Eran Bugge, another dancer, senses the lushness of the music without forcing emotions on it, and just as exacting is Michael Novak, who more and more resembles a young Mr. Taylor. For the final solo the silken Michael Trusnovec is grave and slightly foetid: his solo echoes Ms. Halzack’s, but it is more frantic and, in a darker way, more knowing.

In the middle section, “Mozart-Adagio,” Mr. Taylor vacillates between the air — Amy Young leaps into Mr. Novak’s arms, and he catches her under the knee — and more grounded moments of tension. At one point Robert Kleinendorst and Ms. Bugge kneel on the floor; he touches her stomach, but she flings his hand away with disgust.

When the music switches to "Ricercar," the mood turns ugly, and a cheap fight erupts between Francisco Graciano and Mr. Kleinendorst. It’s odd and slightly immature, as if Mr. Taylor were showing what happens when no one has a real reason to take a stand.

Abundant dancing returns in the final "Summa," in which, one by one, the group shrinks, leaving two performers — Ms. Halzack and Mr. Trusnovec — behind. After they part ways for the last time, she turns to look at him, while he lowers his head. In "The Uncommitted" the dancers start out alone and end up alone. It's just like life.

The premiere, performed along with "Company B" and "Promethean Fire," came in the final presentation of the festival under Charles L. Reinhart, who has been its director since 1968. Mr. Reinhart's connection with the Taylor company also runs deep: he was its manager from 1962 to 1971. "The Uncommitted" was created in his honor.

During the performance's first intermission, American Dance Festival students and faculty members paid their own homage to Mr. Reinhart with a flash mob. As he looked on in earnest wonder, an enthusiastic group had a ball dancing to Hall and Oates's "You Make My Dreams Come True." As Mr. Reinhart swayed along to the music, it was clear that he was tickled. And what's more, he could still move those hips.
DURHAM, N.C. — Rosas is the name of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker’s company which she started in Brussels in 1983. The title of its inaugural work, “Rosas Danst Rosas,” suggested a kind of manifesto: this is what we are; this is what we do.

That uncompromising sensibility is still clear, almost 30 years and a famous career later. The revival of “Rosas Danst Rosas,” which opened on Friday night at the Reynolds Industries Theater at Duke University, in Durham, N.C., as part of the American Dance Festival, reminds us why this work immediately established Ms. De Keersmaeker as a new force on the European contemporary dance scene. It hasn’t lost anything of its original power. Riveting and exhausting, fascinating and relentless, brilliant and tedious, it is a mesmerizing exploration of synchronicity, patterning and rhythm.

“Rosas,” in which Ms. De Keersmaeker uses blocks of repetitive movement phrases for four women over a minimalist-industrial score by Thierry De Mey and Peter Vermeersch, is a complex, haunting work, still difficult and unsettling in the way emotional resonance and tension accrues from its severe formalism.
versions of the earlier material begin.

The play between synchronization and desynchronization is Ms. De Keersmaeker's fundamental organizing principle in "Rosas"; each of the remaining three sections is similarly constructed. But it is never predictable. In the second section, set to a propulsive, ticking, machinelike rhythm, the women sit on chairs placed in a diagonal row. (The transitions between the sections are matter-of-fact; there is much retying of hair and adjusting of clothes; here the dancers don brown brogues.) At first slumped, they suddenly sit up alertly, twitching their heads around in unison, or toward one another with quick, complicit nods, smoothing hands through their hair, crossing their legs and slumping chins into palms, wrapping their arms around their waists and folding forward, pulling their tops on and off shoulders. The contrast between the quotidian gestures (I'm bored, I'm despairing, I'm flirting, I'm cool, I'm angry) and their relentless repetition is extraordinarily compelling.

At one moment the women are mean schoolgirls, establishing alliances and factions; then they are an oppressed female community expressing life's frustrations; or images of sexy femininity; or factory workers forced to repeat the same tedious actions over and over again. Yet the feat of memory and discipline, the driving repetition and algorithmic evolution of sequences suggest the pure expression of choreographic form.

That tension is sustained through the third and fourth sections, which utilize the upright, swinging, half-turning steps that characterize an earlier work, "Fase." Ms. De Keersmaeker juxtaposes unison and dissidence with brilliance here, weaving the women in and out of kaleidoscopic patterns as their movement links up, metamorphoses into canon structure, then subtly changes again.

The fourth movement, with its driving score that contains an overlay of jazzy unpredictability, feels like the natural end, and the audience applauded wildly (perhaps with relief, too) as the music and dancers abruptly stopped. But Ms. De Keersmaeker doesn't let us off there. There's an epilogue in dim gray light, in which the dancers, spread across the stage, lie down, turn away, walk. Ms. Youn, at the front, twitches her jersey off her shoulders, stares forward.

It's not over yet. And then it is.
Human memory – taking in information, storing it and retrieving it accurately – is key to a variety of crucial decisions made in medicine or law and physical movements like dance. Cognitive scientist Ruth Day wants to understand it better.

"I see people who are doing well but not well enough," she says. "Maybe they prescribe or dispense the wrong drug. Maybe they can't remember what they've just seen." Or maybe a dancer twirls to the left when all the other dancers are going right.

Day wants to understand cognitive processes in the everyday world and give people techniques to improve their memory, whether to reduce medical mistakes or to increase enjoyment of a dance performance. "People need cognitive tools," says Day, director of both the Medical Cognition Lab and the Memory for Movement Lab in Duke's Department of Psychology and Neuroscience. "Just because you can't do something well now doesn't mean you can't learn to do it better later."

This summer, she is mounting an ambitious effort to study how audiences perceive and remember dance performances during the American Dance Festival (ADF), June 10-July 24 at Duke and at the Durham Performing Arts Center (http://americandancefestival.org/). "During a dance performance, you're seeing something wonderful -- it's like a stream that flows by, but then it's gone," she says. "If people can remember it better, they can continue to appreciate it later."

Day has studied memory for dance inside and outside of ADF to understand the different types of cues that dancers use to learn and remember choreography. She has also studied how martial artists, aerobics instructors, and musicians learn and remember sequences of movement.

After performing hundreds of lab experiments, class observations, surveys and interviews, Day found that dancers use three basic types of cues to remember movements: words, visual images and movement-based cues.

Words include names for movements (e.g., run-run-LEAP), counts (e.g.,1-2-3), and nonwords (dee-dee-DAH). Visual cues include an image of the dancer's own body, the teacher demonstrating the movement and everyday images such as walking on hot sand. Movement-based cues include rhythm (but not actually counting) and the feeling of the movement, called kinesthetic feedback.

There's no right or wrong strategy, Day says, but certain strategies work better in certain situations and the more memory tools a dancer has, the better. "The end goal is not memory in and of itself, but to get past the learning and worrying about it -- to do the movement well and enjoy it," she says.

This summer's American Dance Festival also includes some research on how audiences remember the dances they've seen.

Duke cognitive scientist Ruth Day has prepared a dance perception quiz that is available on the ADF website and is open to everyone -- from professional dancers to those with no dance experience.

Viewers watch short clips of dance then answer questions about what they've seen. In addition to providing data about how dancers and non-dancers perceive and remember dance, she hopes the quiz will encourage people to think about dance in new ways.

"I can't wait for the conversations once people start taking the quiz and going to the workshops. It's going to be incredibly stimulating," says ADF Co-Director Jodee Nimerichter, who has taken the dance perception quiz herself. "I already know that when I go into the theater this year I'm going to be able to recall things I didn't necessarily try to in the past."
Day's research with professional dancers at ADF has found that companies use different naming practices. Pilobolus, the company famous for making incredible shapes with human bodies, explicitly names the different shapes -- "shooting seagulls," "fat gnomes" -- to facilitate conversation and memory. The Merce Cunningham company, on the other hand, discourages dancers from labeling dance moves with words, which the company sees as limiting.

She also has found that if there is a mismatch between a dancer's preferred memory cues and those used by a particular dance company, the dancer's tenure with that company may be shorter and less satisfying. Day, who says she danced before she walked, first became interested in cognitive aspects of dance at age 6 when she noticed that some students in her ballet class were better at remembering the choreography than others.

Her interest was rekindled as an adult, when she made her first foray into modern dance while on the faculty at Yale University. In the studio, Day could perform the moves but struggled to remember them. "The music would start and the other students were moving, and I was not," Day recalls. "I got stepped on a lot."

She finally realized the problem: unlike ballet, most moves in modern dance do not have names, and Day's habit of making up her own names was slowing her down. As a language-based person, she discovered she was more successful learning tap dance, where every step has a name -- flap, ball-change, shuffle.

Gerri Houlihan, a professional dancer, teacher and choreographer who has taught at ADF for 25 years, says she uses kinesthetic feedback. "People invariably ask, 'How do you remember all the steps?' My connection is very much about music. I can remember dances that I've danced or choreographed in the past incredibly well if I have the music available. The minute I hear the music, this flood of movement comes back."

Houlihan says Day's research has illuminated her teaching. "I really try to make sure I cover as many different approaches to learning movement as I can because I'm much more aware now of how diverse people's ways of approaching movement are."

ADF Co-Director Jodee Nimerichter says Day's research and teaching have done wonders for the program. "She's been such a valued member of our community, we named her our Cognitive Scientist in Residence this year."

Day's current project on audience memory is supported by Dance/USA with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to increase audience engagement. Out of the nine projects funded nationwide, Day's is the only one focusing on research and audience cognition.

Day is also offering multiple free workshops this summer, where participants will hear about her research and learn tips for watching and remembering dance performances. Those who want even more involvement are invited to come to a memory enhancement program in Day's lab.

"It's an incredible joy to be able to study something as interesting and challenging as dance, to understand how cognitive processes play out in the real world," Day says. "I can't say how much I appreciate ADF being here. They have been wonderful to me and it's a fantastic opportunity."

She's also working on a book called "Memory for Movement" that will pull together the results of all her movement research. "The book will provide a better understanding of cognitive processes in human movement," she says, "and it will help people perceive, remember and enjoy movement activities better."

http://research.duke.edu/stories/dance-memory
Gaspard Louis, center, director of creative movement and community outreach with the American Dance Festival, dances with Jaire Martinez, left, 7, of Durham, during a workshop at El Centro Hispano.

STAFF PHOTOS BY JOHN ROTTET
ADF makes outreach part of its routine

Program holding dance workshops

BY REBEKAH L. COWELL
CORRESPONDENT

Inside the citrus-colored lobby of El Centro Hispano, a twopiece percussion band is hitting the beat, and more than 20 kids ages 5-7 are following the creative lead of former Pilsbolus dancer Gaspard Louis.

"Make a gesture," Louis called out. One mischievous dancer takes the cue and waves his arms frantically over his head.

"OK," said Louis, who repeated the gesture and added it to the improvised dance, "let's add that after the slide."

In less than an hour, Louis has managed to spark the creativity of his young Latino students' imaginations, and create a choreographed dance routine.

The American Dance Festival (ADF) has officially kicked off its 32nd year in Durham and 75th anniversary in existence.

This year's sixweek program highlights community-based projects, including workshops at El Centro Hispano, ADF's first partnership with the center.

"Personally, I think culture is an important piece of helping our kids immerse themselves in the Durham community and to make them feel connected."

Under the guidance of ADF, Louis kicked off year-round community outreach projects (including ones at Hayti Heritage Center, Rogers-Herr Middle School and Walltown Children's Theater) this past January, bringing dance to a broader cross-section of the community.

"We've spent the last four years doing community outreach," said Jodee Nimerichter, ADF co-director. "This year is unique. We've been able to build upon and expand on what we were already doing by adding Gaspard, our full-time director of creative movement and community outreach."

A long journey to now, Louis was born in Haiti and moved to Newark, N.J., as an adolescent. His personal expe-

Katy Schoetzow, left, a production coordinator with the American Dance Festival, shows some dance moves to Alex Navarro, 6, of Durham at El Centro Hispano.

El Centro Director Pilar Rocha Goldberg says the workshops, which coincide with the center's summer camp, are an important step in connecting the Latino community with the Durham community.

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rience of being uprooted culturally has given him an intimate understanding of bridging cultures through dance.

Louis, who brings dance to kids who have never been exposed to the art form, did not begin dancing himself until college.

"I was always athletic," he said, "playing soccer and doing martial arts training, but I had no dance background."

Leaving high school, Louis entered college with a businesswoman's vision.

"When I entered Montclair State University, I went in as a business major," he said. "It was very important to my mom that I become a businessman, and so that was what I thought I would do."

Life had another path for Louis, and in his sophomore year he was introduced to dance by a "young lady in the dance program."

The relationship did not last, but Louis' passion for dance was sparked.

With ADF receiving the funding to hire a full-time director, Louis was hired and moved with his wife and child to Durham.

"It is the best thing ever to happen to me," he said. "This is my passion, it's my soul."

"Deeper and broader"

Back at El Centro, the kids are taking a break and Louis explains aspects of creative movement dance.

"I'm coaching kids to form their own creative movements through shapes and gestures," he said. "This is all about collaboration. It's not about me telling them how to move. I can guide, but the creativity comes from within."

Nimerichter calls community collaboration the key to ADF's future. "Our goal is to go deeper and broader and to reach more people," she said, "and just share the joy of dance."

Rocha Goldberg is excited with the Center's partnership with ADF.

"This isn't just about today," she said. "At the end of these workshops, ADF has performance spaces for the kids so that they can go with their families to live performances, which are an

Gaspard Louis, center, director of creative movement and community outreach with ADF, teaches kids during a workshop at El Centro Hispano.

*STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN ROTTET*
By JENNIFER DUNNING

What is the American Dance Festival?

It began in 1934 at Bennington College in Vermont as a place where modern-dance pioneers had an unparalleled chance to choreograph almost undisturbed in a bucolic summer dance-school setting. When the festival moved on to Connecticut College in New London in 1948, the emphasis was on presenting new works, many of them now classics of American modern dance.

At Duke University in Durham, N.C., where the festival moved in 1978, its mission expanded to include reviving nearly lost modern-dance classics and commissioning and producing choreography from around the world.

But to Charles L. Reinhart, co-director of the festival with Jodee Nimerichter, the question has a much simpler answer. The festival has always been the equivalent of a cafe for choreographers, he said in a recent telephone interview in New York, similar to the artists' hangouts he remembers in Greenwich Village decades ago.

Musicians, painters and writers all had their own places after a day of solitary work. But there was nothing for choreographers, who had spent their days with dancers.
“I’ve got to go out and have a drink with someone who understands me,” Mr. Reinhart imagined those other artists saying. “The choreographers say, ‘I’m so sick of these people that I’m going home to eat and go to bed.’” Even at Bennington, he added, the choreographers were never there at the same time.

The festival is a good deal more convivial today, though Mr. Reinhart says the rivalry has persisted. The atmosphere may also be even more hectic this summer than the usual mix of classes, film showings and awards, performances, student presentations and minifestivals of foreign choreography, this year from Japan. In celebration of its 50th anniversary, the festival will blend the old, the new and the recent in “Split Scenes,” a series that mixes a sometimes dizzying variety of dance and shared programs.

The kaleidoscope shifted into its spin this past weekend with work by Shen Wei, a festival discovery; David Parsons’s strobelight “Caught”; and a rare performance of Alvin Alley’s “Revelations” by the young Alley II company. This week sits together classics by José Limón and Jiri Kylian, danced by the Limón troupe; and by Eleo Pomare, Tally Beatty and Asadata Dafora, performed by the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company.

What is perhaps the unlikeliest mix of all comes at the end of this week (June 12 through 14), with three signature pieces by Trisha Brown, performed by her company; and two by Alwin Nikolais, danced by the Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company of Salt Lake City.

The companies of Martha Graham and Lar Lubovitch will perform on the same nights (June 26 to 28). Paul Taylor and Twyla Tharp, once a Taylor dancer, will share a program (July 3 to 5), with her works performed by the Aspen Santa Fe Ballet. And dances by Meredith Monk and Bill T. Jones are paired (July 10 to 12), with the culminating mix of “Split Scenes” occurring in this year’s “Past/Forward” program (July 14 to 16), when student dancers will perform revivals of Laura Dean’s “Tympani,” Erick Hawkins’s “New Moon” and Hansy Holm’s “Joose,” as well as a new work by Mark Dendy.

One of Mr. Reinhart’s great regrets, he said, is that no companies were available to perform dance by Merce Cunningham this summer. He had also hoped to revive dance by the neglected Doris Humphrey, but the Limón troupe has promised a Humphrey piece within the next two years.

How did the odd programming idea come about? “Well, I’m not going to be alive for the 100th anniversary, so this is it,” Mr. Reinhart said cheerfully. “Jodee and I thought that having great works by different choreographers on the same program would bring special attention to them.”

At 77, in his 40th year as the festival director, Mr. Reinhart is as focused on the future as on the past. Look at the political clout the American Association of Retired Persons brought to elderly Americans, he said. Why not an American Association of Arts Lovers?

“Studies have been done which show that 50 percent of our population over the age of 18 is involved in or goes to the arts,” he said. “If we were able to form this type of organization for them, they would get all these benefits for their $10, in their own and other towns they travel to, where they could get all these things that happen when you have 10 million people or more belonging to an organization. That would change the landscape of how we view the arts in this country.”

Then it was back to the past for a moment, to the perhaps not so idyllic days at Bennington, where choreographers and dancers are always depicted gamboling on green lawns.

“People today look at the films and photographs of Bennington, and they say, ‘Oh, my God, they didn’t even need studios,’” Mr. Reinhart said, laughing. “The reality of that was that photographers would say it was too dark inside to photograph. Practicality can weave through the years into beautiful fantasy, can’t it?”

An undated photo of dancers in a Graham formation at Bennington College in Vermont, where the festival began in 1934.
A crucible of modern dance, American Dance Festival celebrates 75 years.

A woman in a red dress changed Paul Taylor's life his first summer as a student at the American Dance Festival. Celebrating its 75th season this summer, the six-week modern dance festival offers a double bill of potentially life-changing experiences: a diverse performance lineup and a school that promises a wide range of learning opportunities.

Taylor credits the festival with setting him on the path to choreograph. His memories of that first summer at ADF in 1952 remain vivid despite the fact that more than half a century has passed since he struggled to learn modern dance technique at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut. (The festival started at Bennington College and moved to Connecticut College in the 1940s, and on to Durham's Duke University campus in 1978).

"I'll never forget it. It was a very formative time for me," Taylor said in a telephone interview from his Long Island home. He can still see Martha Graham in a red dress, walking across the lawn towards him. A red parasol bathes her face in pink light. When she reaches him, she gives him her New York phone number and invites him to join her company—a heady moment for the 22-year-old student.

In addition to Graham, the faculty included Doris Humphrey, Louis Horst (Graham's musical director, who taught choreography), and Merce Cunningham. "It was my first real exposure to dance," Taylor said, "and I decided that's what I wanted to do." He took Martha Graham up on her offer and counts her as an influence to this day—especially when it comes to theatricality.

Taylor is just one of a long list of former ADF students-turned-professional dancers who have premiered work at the festival. Taylor's many ADF premieres began in 1961 with Insects and Heroes, followed by Ascore in 1962. This summer, his company performs a new work, Changes, to music by The Mamas & the Papas. "They gave me a chance," Taylor said of ADF's early support.

Choreographer Shen Wei, recently chosen to create the Olympic Opening Ceremonies in Beijing in August, also had ADF support early on. It began with a 2000 commission in which students performed and became members of the company he formed at the festival that summer. Mark Dendy, Larry Keigwin, and Charlotte Griffin are some other choreographers who got their start at ADF.

"Where's the talent? How can we help the talent?" ADF director Charles Reinhart asks when describing the festival's mission. "It's still possible for the hair to rise on my head from seeing a choreographer do an incredible work.

Shen also represents the international arm of ADF's reach. He received his modern dance training at the Guangdong Dance Academy in Guangzhou, China, where ADF sent teachers for its first international exchange in 1987. Shen became an original member of the Guangdong Modern Dance Company, China's first modern troupe. Since then, the festival has established similar programs in Russia, Korea, and India.

Reinhart and his late wife Stephanie took the festival to new levels. Stephanie was instrumental in globalizing modern dance. She received the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres award from the French government for her role in bringing French modern dance to the rest of the world. Under the Reinharts' leadership, the festival's international flavor included foreign companies on the performance lineup and commissions for choreographers to study and create work at the festival.

In 2001, Stephanie Reinhart won an Emmy Award for her PBS series "Free to Dance: The African-American Presence in Modern Dance," which grew out of ADF's Black Tradition in American Modern Dance project. Initiated by the Reinharts in 1987, this series aimed to honor and preserve the work of black choreographers. The project has set historic pieces by Donald McKayle, Pearl Primus, Eleo Pomare, and Talley Beatty on the Joel Hall Dancers, Philadanco, and Dayton Contemporary Dance Company.

Many esteemed teachers have imparted their knowledge to students over the years. Betty Jones is one fondly remembered by many students. Jones, who danced leading roles with the Limón Dance Company, taught at ADF for 42 years, the last time in 2001. "For me, ADF was probably the best teaching I was able to do. I had the students for six weeks," Jones said in an interview from her home in Honolulu, where she co-directs Dances We Dance. She advised students to take their studies seriously, to dance out of love, and to respect their individuality. "José used to say, 'We are all unique and we should not try to be like everyone else,'" Jones said.

Current ADF dean Donna Payne Burchfield remembers her first classes with Betty Jones in 1982. "I can still see
Clockwise from top left: Mark Dendy in Drum (1995); Erick Hawkins Dance Company in New Moon (1989); Tharp's dancers in Medley (1969); Paul Taylor in his Insects and Heroes (1961); G.O. Harris of Dayton Contemporary Dance Company in a reconstruction of Asadata Dafora's Ostrich (1932); Shen Wei Dance Arts in his Rite of Spring (2002); José Limón and Betty Jones in The Moor's Pavane (1949).
her hands moving," Burchfield says. "It was in large part because of her that I continued to go back. It was transforming."

Year after year, the festival creates an atmosphere in which dance thrives. Four days a week, students take three classes chosen from many technique and composition options. At other times, they may participate in opportunities such as archive projects and yoga. "You see dance, talk about dance, and dance," Burchfield says. "It’s a ritual that enacts something very powerful. After 75 years, we’re still coming together to do that."

That immersion appeals to Asheville, North Carolina, native Myra Scibetta, who spent her fourth summer as an ADF student last year. "There are so many options. You take classes, see performances by professional dancers, meet people from all over the world," Scibetta says. "There’s definitely a connection that will exist for a long, long time. I want to pursue dance as a career." For her ADF work/study job last summer, Scibetta served as Martha Clarke’s assistant for the rescaling of Clarke’s acclaimed Garden of Earthly Delights. During three weeks of rehearsal, Scibetta kept a daily log of decisions made in the collaborative effort with musicians and dancers. She also took care of Clarke’s Pomeranians, Pie and Sofie, who came to rehearsals with the choreographer. "They slept a lot," Scibetta says. "They’re theater dogs, truly."

A new MFA dance program, developed by Burchfield and sponsored by ADF and Hollins University, where Burchfield heads the dance department, has enriched the festival experience in unexpected ways. Initially designed to help older dancers continue as professionals beyond the stage, the program brings these MFA candidates to the festival to show their work, take classes, and teach. Their presence has piqued students’ interest in the history of modern dance—something noticeably lacking in recent years. "History gives you something to push up against," says Burchfield. "It helps you to find your own place."

For choreographer Mark Dendy, his first summer at ADF in 1981 helped him find his place as an artist. "It changed the creative direction of my life. It opened my mind," Dendy says. Prior to ADF, he had studied dance at the North Carolina School of the Arts, where he felt he got excellent training. But, he says, "At NCSA, you got red, yellow, and blue, and at ADF, you got the whole box of 64 crayons. From ADF, I have an appreciation of every dancer and choreographer alive or dead and that is a shared heritage. I get something from all of it."

This summer, Dendy will work with 16 ADF students to create a world premiere. He’s thinking about forming a company again while there. "I’ve found so many of my dancers at ADF over the years," he says.

In the festival’s future, Reinhart sees a continuation of the global focus that could include international residences throughout the year at Durham’s new performing arts center, scheduled to open next year.

This summer the festival will acknowledge the past as well as embrace the startlingly new, just as Reinhart did his first year as festival director in 1969 when he made good on his promise “to shake things up.” He presented Twyla Tharp’s Medley (1969), performed outdoors until mosquitoes forced dancers inside.

As Reinhart has put it, the festival will continue to move “outwards and sideways” in order to support modern dance.

Charlie’s Hit Parade

To celebrate the 75th anniversary, director Charles Reinhart started with a list of his 40 favorite works from years past, commissioned 11 world premieres, and added mini-festivals of Japanese and Turkish companies. Due to the complicated nature and expense (not to mention headache), says Reinhart, this type of programming is unlikely to be seen at the festival again.

Some programs feature all works from the past while other programs mix the new with the old. These include the Past/Forward program, July 14–16, with Mark Dendy’s premiere and ADF students performing vintage dances; Laura Dean’s Tympni; Erick Hawkins’ New Moon; and Hanya Holm’s Jocose. Pilobolus will perform a new piece as well as Nocturne by Martha Clarke, June 19–21.

The June 12–14 program consists of all historical works with the Trisha Brown Dance Company’s performance of Present Tense, Accumulation, and Spanish Dance; and the Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company’s rendition of Alwin Nikolais’ Tensile Involvement and Crucible.

Another such program, June 8–10, reconstructs work from ADF’s Black Tradition in American Modern Dance project: Dayton Contemporary Dance Company performs Eleo Pomare’s Las Desenamoradas; Talley Beatty’s Moorer’s Bench; Asadata Dafora’s Awassa Astraphe/Ostrich. It also includes Limón’s The Moor’s Pavane and Chaconne, plus Kylían’s Evening Songs. —S.B.

Susan Broili is a journalist with The Herald-Sun in Durham, N.C. and a contributor to Dance Magazine.
Lines of Shuffling Bodies Pulse With Life and History

DURHAM, N.C., July 18 — How very new the old can look, and how persistent good ideas may be. That was the message of "Past/Forward," presented on Tuesday night at the American Dance Festival at Duke University here, and in particular of "How Long Brethren?" a 1937 dance by Helen Tamiris. In this reconstruction by Dianne McIntyre, a choreographer in her own right and a Tamiris specialist, "Brethren" is an extraordinarily powerful experience. A dance of social protest, it works not only as an indictment of inhuman conditions suffered by Southern rural blacks of the time, but also as starkly minimalist abstract movement.

Tamiris, who died in 1966, was a pioneering modern-dance choreographer of the second generation of innovators that included Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey. "Brethren" was created for the W.P.A. Federal Theater and Dance Project and restaged for the Federal Theater Project program of George Mason University in 1991. No films or notes survived from the original. Ms. McIntyre worked from photographs, which were all that remained, along with the score and costumes. She found four members of the original cast, and together they brought "Brethren" back to life.

And life pushes out of the piece’s shuffling, leaping, milling formations of 15 women, clothed in drab homespun field-workers’ dresses, set to traditional songs of Southern

Dancers in the American Dance Festival’s training program in "How Long Brethren?" by Helen Tamiris.
laborers performed on tape and live by Mavis Kashanda Poole and Ariane Reinhart, the dance’s seven episodes make their effect through lines of women, bodies pressed tight, and individuals who become sculptural totems as they slip away from the trudging, propulsive flow. The traveling bodies, hunched yet quick to spring, were startlingly different from today’s lithe uprightness and made these dancers’ accomplishment all the more impressive.

The striking visuals — the softly geometric juxtapositions, arms raised and reaching like silent cries, black-and-white striped fabric stretched across rounded hips in one episode, and gray box pedestals — are all of their time, recalling similar effects in dances by Graham and

*The American Dance Festival continues at Duke University in Durham, N.C., through July 31; americandancefestival.org or (919) 684-6444.*

‘How Long Brethren?,’ a 1937 dance of social protest, is still starkly powerful.

Humphrey. But “Brethren” pulses with distilled history in its suggestion of killing work that fails to sustain life, of grinning minstrel-show exuberance and of hope and despair.

The soloists — Meegan Bruskewitz and Candace Thompson — serve as solitary embodiments of those emotions, with the effect of almost churchly call and response.

The program’s revival of Laura Dean’s 1952 “Sky Light,” in an exciting reconstruction by Rodger Belman, was another triumph. Set to drum music by Ms. Dean, who appears to have settled into near-retirement in North Carolina, “Sky Light” is also a classic in danger of being lost. It is pure, heady Dean: a thing of fast-footed shifts of rank and travel, of hypnotic spinning and of in-place dips and tilts by spotlighted individuals with every part of the body, including the mid-torse, working to full capacity. The mesmerizing beauty of the dance lies largely in its repetitions and in the ways it breaks from them.

Here, as throughout the evening, the performers were young dancers enrolled in the festival’s training program. These six — Andrew Champlin, Hsiao-Jung Huang, Meghan Milam, Matthew Reeves, Hsiao Tzu Tien and the warmly authoritative Domingo Estrada Jr. — were miracles of focus, clarity and endurance. The drummers were Jason Cirker and Matt Spataro.

Rudy Perez’s new “I Like a View but I Like to Sit With My Back to It,” a festival commission, suffered from its placement after “Brethren” and perhaps from its very large cast and expansive vision. Mr. Perez moved to Los Angeles in 1978, where one of the great minimalist pioneers and choreographers of avant-garde dance in New York in the ’60s and ’70s. You could see that pov in sections of “View,” but it was also not only by the size of the 21-mover cast but also by the number of its dancers that were assigned.

Tamiris once proposed form a repertory company that would form works by the major artist of the time. Nothing came of that; perhaps her idea, more practical, more urgently needed now, can be taken up by the festival, which such a troupe in the 1970s. At the very least there should be a “Fly Forward” program every summer, before it is too late to save this rich heritage.
The Slowness of Motion, and What It May Reveal

DURHAM, N.C., June 28 — Few things in the performing arts are more marvelously strange than the way the Japanese-American choreographers and performers Eiko and Koma, having started a slow phrase of movement, take it, and with it a whole work, in dramatic directions you could never have seen coming.

Their “Quartet,” which had its world premiere this week at the American Dance Festival here, ends as it begins, and this proves to be a real shock.

At the start Eiko and Koma flank the two Cambodian teenagers with whom they are working, Charian and Peace. The teenagers lie “dead” in the center; the two seniors, heads raised, are on either side, like parents mourning their children. Gradually they rise and drag their children’s bodies to the rear of the stage as if to a more private domain.

These images of death and grief recall the last Eiko-Koma-Charian-Peace work, “Cambodian Stories Revisited” (in a New York performance I greatly admired in May). And there is an impasse when nobody visibly moves a muscle for perhaps two minutes. Amazingly, this works, not least because of the thick sound score of birds and insects, gradually supplemented by bells and other instruments. Then Eiko and Koma slowly rise in a new numb phase of loss.

But Charian and Peace do finally rise from their “death” and move into fabulous, one-legged, statuesque, balanced positions; these recall other moments of “Cambodian Stories Revisited.” Meanwhile, Eiko and Koma don’t react but carry on their grief-laden intensity regardless, and the situation starts to suggest that they’d rather their children were dead, that mourning matters to them more than children and that they take no pleasure in their offspring being alive. It’s possible to read the children now as ghosts moving among the living, but what’s striking is how soon they are variously oppressed or shunned or diminished by their parents.

There are multiple permutations, but all too suddenly we’re back where we began. The parents are again mourning their children, but now we can’t help feeling that was how they wanted it and, worse, that they drove them to extinction, that they never knew how to help them flourish. Your ends were our beginnings: if not, your beginnings would have been our ends.

Other interpretations of the 35-minute “Quartet,” other narrative readings, are possible, but, I think, kinder ones. Eiko and Koma, famous for moving slowly, are dance-actors of expressionist urgency. The slowness and the intensity are odd, disarming bedfellows.

“That was the fastest I’ve ever seen them move,” the man behind me said afterward. “Last time, they spent the whole piece just getting from one side of the stage to the other. And it was great.” I love that, but I hope he didn’t mean that the pleasure lay in their slowness alone.

It’s still not unusual for Eiko and Koma to be connected to the slow-motion modern Butch style of Japan, where the slowness is the point.

But with Eiko and Koma the sculpture-in-motion urgency is such that one’s brain tends to accelerate rather than decelerate while watching them: they give you so much to see. They are masters of fragmentation, of poetic distortion, of making even the slowest movement become a psychodrama leading us not where.

This was evident decades ago in their “Grain,” a 35-minute work new in 1983 that was performed as part of the program by Charian and Peace (aside from the first scene, still beautifully performed by Eiko and Koma at their most entralling).

The young performers give it a quality quite unlike that of their elders: tragic they know-not-what-they.

A dance suggests a grief so intense that may have been what was wanted.

The American Dance Festival continues through July 11 at Duke University in Durham, N.C. Program and ticket information: (919) 684-4444 or americandancefestival.org.
A Spotlight on African-Americans in Modern-Dance History

“Dance in America: Dancing in the Light,” the fourth and final program in the American Dance Festival’s Emmy Award-winning “Free to Dance,” brings this documentary series to a rich and satisfying close tonight. The one-hour show, part of “Great Performances” on PBS, chronicles more than a half-century of American modern-dance history, from Asadata Dafora’s “Ostrich” to the first section of Bill T. Jones’s “D-Man in the Waters.”

The choice of classics and their range suggest not only the contributions and influence of choreographers who happen to be black, but also some cultural forces that helped to shape their work.

Dafora, who came to New York from Sierra Leone in 1929, rode in on a small wave of ballet and modern dance by black choreographers and dancers. It had begun nearly a decade earlier as the old stereotypes of “natural” dancing, whether in vaudeville or musical theater, began to fade, and concert dance came to the fore. Dafora’s “Ostrich” drew from traditional African dance, but it was distilled for the modern-dance stage and offered the opportunity for a male star turn.

Katherine Dunham made American traditional dance popular and theatrical in pieces like her 1932 “Barrelhouse Blues,” seen in excerpt here. Like Dunham, Pearl Primus straddled the divide, but her solo “Strange Fruit” is pure modern dance, as are Talley Beatty’s “Mourner’s Bench” and Donald Mc-
Great Performances
Dance in America.
Dancing in the Light

On most PBS stations tonight (check local listings).

Madison D. Lacy Jr., director and writer;
Charles L. Reinhart, executive producer;
Jodee Nimerichter, producer; Barry Schulman, series executive producer; Bill O'Donnell, director of program development; David Horn, series producer. Produced by The American Dance Festival in association with WNET, New York.

cumming to the pull of the earth in American modern and traditional African dance.
The same feel of reined-in physical power and control is evident in the Dunham excerpt, whose slow-drag dancing, by a saucy-eyed Cleo Parker Robinson and two of her performers, teasingly hints at delicious sensuality.

There is less intensity in performances of the Primus piece by Dawn Marie Watson of Philadanco and of the McKayle piece by members of the Dayton troupe. But the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company pulls out all the stops in “D-Man,” pushing, struggling and resting in the tides of Mendelssohn string music in a joyously defiant affirmation of life.

The American Dance Festival in North Carolina has enabled these classics to come alive and continue to live in recent decades. It is time now for those energies to be devoted to preserving dying classics of other masters, among them Doris Humphrey and Ted Shawn.
Choreography
Beyond
The Great Wall

BY CLAUDIA LA ROCCO

OUR groups to China don’t always
take in performances of the highest
level. Technicolor acrobatic spectacles
and vendors’ relentless song-and-
dance routines along the Great Wall
don’t quite cut it.

But on Wednesday, the Joyce Theater ar-
rievs in Beijing for a two-week fund-raising trip
that promises to marry typical tourist pleasures
with serious dance encounters. The $8,850 price
tag (not including airfare) ensures participants
access to wonders like the labyrinthine ancient
world of the Forbidden City. It also offers a
glimpse into the equally dizzying world of con-
temporary Chinese dance, through talks and
performances in several cities. Ten donors have
signed up to join Linda Shelton, the theater’s ex-
ceutive director, and Richard Ablon, a board
member who has helped organize international
Joyce forays since a 2001 trip to Cuba.

“One of our selling points for the trip,” Ms.
Shelton said, “is that the people that travel with
me will be looking at dance the same time that I
see it, and then will possibly see it on a Joyce
stage down the road. That’s very exciting, for me
and for them.”

In recent years, the Joyce has shown Chi-
nese troupes like the Guangdong Modern Dance
Company (the nation’s first modern company,
-founded in 1990), the Beijing Modern Dance
Company and the New York-based Shen Wei
Dance Arts. Ms. Shelton sees the trip as a fact-
finding mission, one she hopes will lead to sur-
prises for her theater.

“There’s a little China boom going on,” said
Ralph Samuelson, the director of the Asian Cul-
tural Council in New York. “It’s somewhat remi-
niscent of the Japan boom of the ’80s.” For many
American arts organizations, he added, “this is
new territory.”

But not for all. Charles L. Reinhart, who di-
egrects the American Dance Festival in Durham,
N.C., first led a delegation of choreographers to
China in 1980. His voice still drops to an awe-
struck whisper when he describes how the di-
rector of the Guangdong Dance Academy, Yang
Mei-qii, approached him in 1986 after watching a
modern dance class at the festival, which she
was attending as part of its International Chor-
eographers Workshop.

“We do not speak a word of each other’s lan-
guage,” he said recently from the festival’s Man-
hattan office. “But boy, did we connect.”

By now the story is dance lore: Ms. Yang
and Mr. Reinhardt hatched a plan to send American teachers to China over a three-year period with the goal of introducing modern dance to Ms. Yang's students. The Guangdong Modern Dance Company, which counted Shen Wei among its original members, was born of this effort.

Ms. Yang endured many growing pains with her fellow dance pioneers, from uninterested audiences to a government that was at times all too interested in monitoring this Western import. In a 1992 article for Contact Quarterly, Roger Copeland, who teaches dance and theater at Oberlin College in Ohio, described choreographers' struggle to create in the repressive years after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. Certainly censorship still exists. But so do the beginnings of a framework for understanding and supporting independent dance. Mr. Reinhardt has been invited to send teachers and companies to Shanghai for two weeks in August. His Chinese colleagues are particularly interested in Shen Wei and Pilobolus.

New companies are springing up, and Chinese choreographers are gaining more exposure to international works. Last year, the Tibetan choreographer and dancer Sang Jijia returned to China after an apprenticeship with William Forsythe's company in Germany.

As in other sectors of Chinese culture, foreign visitors say, the rate of change is mind-boggling. “These younger 30-year-olds who were in middle positions have now moved up to higher positions, and they are much more open,” Mr. Reinhardt of the American Dance Festival said. “It was impossible to talk about doing an A.D.F. Shanghai in 2000, and it’s possible now.”

If that is, his hosts can raise the money. These days, the main hurdle faced by contemporary dance in China is far more familiar to Western artists: financing.

“The idea of arts as propaganda no longer prevails,” Willy Tsao, who runs three dance companies in China, wrote in an e-mail message. “The government sees that art serves more the purpose of entertaining the public than of education, thus wants the art groups to get more support from the audience through box office and commercial sponsorship. I see that this is a natural transition when the Chinese government is adjusting its policies, shifting from a totalitarian state to a freer society. To me, this is a period of true test; only those who are truly devoted will stay away from the entertainment trap.”

While supporters of China's contemporary dance scene are optimistic about its progress and its future, most say the choreography has a way to go before it can hold its own on international stages.

“I'm extremely pleased,” Lan-Lan Wang, a native of Taiwan and a dance professor at Connecticut College, said of China's progress. Ms. Wang has been active in modern dance in China since the late 1970s, traveling there to teach and working to foster ties with American companies and institutions.

“However,” she added, laughing, “the works are not good. I hope, for presenters, it’s not about ‘We're bringing these works to America because China is popular right now.' I think still we have to look at the art.”

Criticism in China remains a fledgling trade. But American critics have often agreed with Ms. Wang's assessment. Reviewing the Beijing Modern Dance Company’s debut at the Joyce Theater in 2005, Robert Greskovic, in The Wall Street Journal, described its production “Rear Light” as “earnest, contemporary dance with little color or distinction.”

Shen Wei was more diplomatic in assessing his countrymen, who have yet to achieve anything like his recognition. His newest dance, “Re-11,” was given its premiere by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal last week alongside works by Christopher Wheeldon and Jiri Kylian. His dance-theater work “Second Visit to the Empress,” based on Chinese opera, will be presented at the Lincoln Center Festival in July. He will contribute choreography for the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

“I just think they need more education,” Mr. Shen said of the Beijing troupe. “They need more research. They just need to do more work. You can't say bad or good. It's just that they don't yet have much experience.”

The Joyce Theater explores new territory: an ancient world.
It All Began With a RainDance on a Sunny Day

By JENNIFER DUNNING

CHARLES REINHART'S CAREER in dance has been one long series of happy, intriguing encounters. Or so it seemed. "I could tell you stories," Mr. Reinhart exhaled during a recent conversation about his 25 years as director of the American Dance Festival, midway through the festival's busy season of performances, lectures and dance classes in Durham, N.C.

He and the festival have become institutions. But that is a mantle Mr. Reinhart wears lightly, even though he has played a major role in the popularizing and legitimation of modern dance.

At 63, he has retained all the enthusiasm of his youth and an apprenticeship served in the heady adolescence of American modern dance. Since beginning his career in 1955, Mr. Reinhart has served as a dance producer, a company manager, a director of festivals and a consultant. He helped put together important modern-dance seasons at City Center, on Broadway and at Lincoln Center in the late 1960's and early 70's. He was instrumental in developing the Dance Touring Program and Arts in the Schools, both projects of the National Endowment for the Arts, which brought dance into regional theaters and schools across the nation.

In the mid-1960's, Mr. Reinhart worked with the Asia Society in New York and with the United States Department of State on programs that imported and exported major dance attractions. And he opened up the American Dance Festival to neglected forms of modern dance, whether the work of avant-gardists in the festival's early days or of black American and international choreographers in the last few years.

Mr. Reinhart's involvement with dance began early. As a second grader growing up in Summit, N.J., he had the first of many revelations about the power of dance when a sunny day clouded over during a class performance of an American Indian rain dance. He got his first taste of fame with a fourth-grade performance of "Aida." "We were so good we filled two classrooms twice," he said. "They sent us to the World's Fair. Wow!"

And he experienced censorship when his high school principal banned an autobiographical work about a boy in love with two girls that Mr. Reinhart had choreographed for the senior-class variety show.

After that, Charles Reinhart was prepared to take on the world of dance.

That did not happen right away. One day, when he was working for a steno service to support himself, he was sent to the jumbled, Dickensian office of Isadora Bennett, an early dance consultant and publicist, and her partner, Richard Pleasant, a founder of American Ballet Theater. "Izzy," as Bennett was known, was a flame-haired, canny, irresistible visionary, and she liked Mr. Reinhart immediately. In the late 1950's and early 60's, he traveled the world for her, seeking out and managing dance attractions.

When a young man named Paul Taylor wandered into the office one day in search of a company manager, Bennett told him to "check out the kid in the closet." Soon Mr. Reinhart was managing not only the Taylor troupe but Meredith Monk, Glen Tetley, Donald McKayle and others.

"The 60's were so incredibly important," Mr. Reinhart said. "And I just happened to be on the spot." It was in the 60's that he encountered Norman Singer, a dance producer who is another of Mr. Reinhart's unsung dance heroes. Armed with a half-million dollars from the Ford Foundation, Mr. Singer, Mr. Reinhart and others began storming legitimate theaters with the idea of opening them up to choreographers who had hitherto been limited to one-night stands in worthy but small theaters like the 92nd Street Y.

Mr. Singer further obliged by being appointed director of City Center. "Norman opened the door and allowed modern dance in," Mr. Reinhart said. "He was like a breeze of fresh air. He didn't get territorial about things outside City Center. The important thing was to get something going."

Dance even bloomed in mini-performances outdoors along Avenue of the Americas one spring, just as it spilled out over the lush lawns of the prestigious Connecticut College Summer School of Dance when Mr. Reinhart took over the school's small festival in 1969. The most reverent of dance revolutionaries, his motto was "Blow it up, but pay respects" as he booked not only the Martha Graham but also the Twyla Tharp.

In its 1977-78 season, the festival was moved to Duke University in Durham, where Stephanie Reinhart, whom he married in...
1977, serves as co-director with her husband. The festival is now a mecca of modern dance. And the Reinharts spread the gospel throughout the world, familiarizing dancers and choreographers with modern dance but careful to discourage the wholesale adoption of American styles. In August, they will travel to Seoul to work with Korean dance students.

Mr. Reinhart may now be a part of the establishment, but he is not one for prolonged solemnity. "Institutional linkages?" he said when asked about one new festival program. "The Government gave it that name. Sounds like sex between buildings, doesn't it?"

Although he talked sadly of how American modern dance has become a victim of its own success, its creators struggling so hard financially that they have little time to concentrate on creating, he soon brightened, suddenly the keen young dreamer that he was when he first fell in love with dance. What about a dance center in New York City? A place where companies could work, audiences could see performances, and visiting artists and students could study and live?

"A permanent edifice," he explained. "We have the content without the edifice. It's usually the other way around. And look at what Lincoln Center did for ballet and opera."