EDITORIAL

ADF shines

The American Dance Festival, which has been in existence since 1934, has been a point of pride for Durham. Recognized internationally, the festival showcases innovative choreography and top-flight dancers. It couples the art of dance with interesting ideas.

The risk with a longtime festival like ADF is that, over time, it loses some of its edge and becomes a bit stale. The offerings may change, but it develops the feel of routine.

As the curtain falls on the 2013 season, it certainly seems that ADF is at no risk of falling into that category. Routine is not part of its character, and appears to be nowhere near the fringes, thanks largely to the current leadership.

There’s been more outside-the-box thinking with the festival. The 2013 American Dance Festival brought some wonderful new ideas, including using music venue Motorco for a performance. It did this while continuing to celebrate its roots. Tonight’s Forces of Dance performance, for example, features work from four choreographers — all of whom are Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement winners.

The interesting avenues ADF is exploring as it exits the 2013 and looks toward 2014 largely begin at the feet of Jodee Nimerichter, who was tapped as the ADF director in January 2012. Although she has long been a part of ADF, since taking its helm, Nimerichter has brought a new sense of freshness and excitement.

The performances are accessible, ranging from the aforementioned Pony-dance pub experience at Motorco to the likes of Tyla Tharp’s works being showcased at the Durham Performing Arts Center to performances on Saturdays that were geared toward kids to engage new generations of modern-dance fans.

The programs, ADF states on its website, are developed based on its mission, which includes training young dancers; encouraging and supporting creation and presentation of new modern dance works; to preserve modern dance heritage; and to build a wider audience for modern dance. The ADF also sees as part of its mission to better the public’s understanding and appreciation of the art.

The staff at ADF and Nimerichter, in particular, have aggressively pursued those goals. We are excited to see what next year’s performances will bring to fans, old and new. We also hope Nimerichter continues to find off-beat ways for ADF to have a presence around town. The festival is one of our treasures, and it seems to have a new shine to it. We look forward to a host of innovative ideas in 2014.
Mark Dendy creates a ritual for Lincoln Center Out of Doors

Mark Dendy talks about Ritual Cyclical, his new site-specific dance for Lincoln Center Out of Doors

By Gia Kourlas
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Choreographer Mark Dendy talks about his new site-specific work, Ritual Cyclical. The premiere features 80 dancers and takes place at the Hearst Plaza as part of Lincoln Center Out of Doors. Initially a member of Martha Graham’s second company, Dendy was part of the downtown scene before working on Broadway. Ritual Cyclical marks the 80th anniversary of the American Dance Festival, the 40th anniversary of the Kronos Quartet and a new beginning for Dendy.

After spending nearly a decade working on Broadway, beginning with Taboo, the choreographer Mark Dendy—fed up with the commercial-theater world—decided to change his life. His new approach is magnified in Ritual Cyclical, a site-specific production featuring 80-odd dancers set to music by the Kronos Quartet. Part of Lincoln Center Out of Doors, the production takes over Hearst Plaza to create a ritual for our day, featuring a wide range of dancers—including K.J. Holmes, Michelle Boulé and Antonio Ramos. The piece also marks the 80th anniversary of the American Dance Festival. Dendy spoke about his fresh outlook.
**Time Out New York: What is the history of this project?**

**Mark Dendy:** I started doing site-specific work years ago with Ruby Shang, and I’ve always made one every now and then. In about 2009, I decided I wanted to start doing more site-specific works—it has to do with the notion of performing in a public space inherently being a political act, and occupying that with movement and making it accessible to everyone. I was making one in Durham at the American Dance Festival in 2009 when a woman walked by with her child and said, “Excuse me, my daughter is watching you and she said, ‘That’s what I want to do.’ How do we get her involved in this?” The kid was, like, nine years old, and she was bugging her mother to talk to me. And this is a girl who wouldn’t step into that world if she hadn’t seen that. It got me back into thinking about arts in the schools when I was a kid in fifth grade in the South, and how these memes came to our school, and I was like, I want to do that. So I decided to start doing these regularly in new places and old places. I did one in a tobacco factory in Durham; the next summer, we opened the DPAC [Durham Performing Arts Center]. I reopened the North Carolina Museum of Art. I’ve done one in Seattle. I’ve done a couple at Bates over the years, and I wanted to do one in New York. Jodee [Nimerichter] was like, “I want ADF to start having a New York presence, and what would you do?” I said, “Well, I love that Hearst Plaza and I know Bill Bragin, so why don’t we do something together?” I really hadn’t taken a good look at it since it had been redone. That big green and the 30 trees...

**Time Out New York: It’s pretty, right?**

**Mark Dendy:** It’s really beautiful, and it lends itself to movement. I saw those corrugated cement things that come out of the side of the Met, and I was just like, Wall Street people belong in there being smashed up by concrete. [Laughs] Bill said, “We have this Kronos anniversary too, in addition to ADF’s 80th,” so thought, I’ll do 80 dancers and I’ll use 40 pieces of Kronos music. That didn’t turn out—what could fit into an hour? But I listened to the Kronos Quartet’s entire catalog over a period of three months, and this scenario just kind of came about constructing a ritual for the city and our time, and for it to start at the water. I want to have demigods up on that green and who would those be? K.J. Holmes and Michelle Boulé—elemental archetypes. I got this idea that I should put some National Guard people in there because they’re such a part of our lives now. I’m hoping that you don’t even know they’re in the piece at the beginning. If I can pull that off, it’ll be nice.

**Time Out New York: They aren’t real National Guard people, are they?**

**Mark Dendy:** No, dancers. I roomed with a vet a couple of years back in a hospital situation, and this guy was just shattered. I was like, How can I ever complain about anything? To see these kids that wanted to get an education because they come from middle-class or working-class families—they had no idea that they were going to end up over there not even trained to do the job. So that really touched me, and when I was listening to the catalog, there was a Charles Ives piece from 1917 called “They Are There!” It was a soldier’s song from World War I that [Ives] revised for World War II. I rewrote some of the lyrics and recorded it in the ’40s at his piano—like kind of old and bedraggled and yelping it out with slurred words. Kronos took it and put their strings on top of it, and it’s just eerie and freaky, but it was originally, like, a real pep song for the boys. I’m using that in the finale. And they recorded Hendrix’s “Star-Spangled Banner” on the night that Bush invaded Iraq. It’s live. So I want to use that. The finale gets a little heavy. It’s on a stage; there’s a 12-minute finale and 45 minutes in the site, so I’m ending it with that and with a piece called “Elvis Everywhere,” which is a tongue-in-cheek, really sardonic thing about celebrity culture; they take all of Elvis’s most famous sayings like, “Thank you very much” and “Good evening, ladies and gentlemen” and deconstruct them. There are three different voices as they’re whacking away at the violins. Then I took some [Philip] Glass and more traditional pieces. They have a real international breadth to their work as well—Latino, Indian-inspired, Turkish stuff. I’m using a lot of that and pulling out different things in different areas.

I decided, at 50, that I was going to start doing what I wanted to do and just forget about success and popularity. How can I be relevant? How can I be a part of, or at least try to do something, in a world that’s spinning out of control? And not just be like, How did it end up, all of a sudden, that I’m only doing the Rockettes? How did that happen? I didn’t even come here for that. I think those are 50-year-old questions. One day, I was crying, and my shrink was like, “I think you have the answer.” I was like, “There’s that whole thing, and the ego wants to be fed and I want to go into Bloomingdale’s and buy a $750 sweater sometimes!” She’s like, “I think we have the answer.” [Laughs] And I was like, “I think we do have the answer.” So I’m just back to doing what I want to do.

**Time Out New York: That’s fantastic.**

**Mark Dendy:** I do opera sometimes, and I love that because it’s mythic and big. I read somewhere, “If you chase two dogs, you won’t catch either one of them.” I was like, I’m chasing two dogs and one of them’s a hellhound. [Laughs] I
might as well let him go and go back to the mutt that loves me.

**Time Out New York: What is the hellhound?**
**Mark Dendy:** Broadway. Entertainment. Some people can tame a hellhound. I couldn’t.

**Time Out New York: Most people can’t.**
**Mark Dendy:** It’s hard. It’s insanity to ask somebody to work six days a week with one day off and to be creative and to put something together in six weeks. I’ve been working on this piece for a year, and it’s been such a relief. We went out to Silo [at Kirkland Farm], and made a lot of it on that farm—it’s Robin Staff’s [artist retreat], but Gelsey was born there. That’s the Kirkland part of it. Robin and her husband bought it, and she runs DanceNow out of there. I adopted a little puppy that she brought me.

**Time Out New York: How are you dealing with ritual in the piece?**
**Mark Dendy:** We don’t have a lot of meaningful ritual, and people don’t go out and get it. It’s either superspectacle, like [for a] football stadium, or rock & roll. Or it’s attached to religious dogma or it’s all about, in its most ancient sense, the conformity of the tribe. How do you do new ritual? You have to celebrate the individual and do the collective. We’re disconnected from the earth and because of technology we’re spread so horizontally, but we’re not connected vertically. We’re losing that vertical connection. I’ve been reading a lot of Jeremy Rifkin, and he talks a lot about how you have to go down to go out; otherwise, you don’t have a root. That’s been weighing a lot on my mind.

**Time Out New York: How do you celebrate the individual while honoring the collective?**
**Mark Dendy:** I’ve worked in so many different idioms over the years—Pooh Kaye, Martha Graham, improvisation, performative stuff and ballet, so I’m going to celebrate some of the different styles. I’m taking some Ailey dancers, I’m taking some Ballet Hispanico dancers, I’m using some real movers and shakers of what my proclivity is—authentic movement and more release stuff. There’s a lot of unison, a lot of repetition and rhythm; that’s the collective part of ritual, and then I’m finding space for the individuals to come out. I’m following one story of a boy; at one point, the National Guard comes to the edge of the pool and takes him away. And when we next see him onstage, he’s been changed into a National Guard. We’ll see if it works. You know, I bash all that stuff I did uptown, but I learned a lot about theatricality and storytelling. I have seven core people and nine guests. The seven people will each know a section so when the 80 people come on site, they will each teach one of the sections, and then they will each be in one of the sections leading it and those seven people are also in the finale with the guests. The guests are interspersed in different places, with some surprises.

**Time Out New York: Does the cast total 80?**
**Mark Dendy:** I think I have 92. You almost always lose people. If it ends up being 83, I’m not going to make a big deal about it, but there are always some people that can’t handle concrete or sweat. Then you always have a couple of injuries with 80 people. So we’re starting with 92 and however close we get to 80 is how close.

**Time Out New York: That’s your uptown brain working.**
**Mark Dendy:** [Laughs] Yeah, exactly.

**Time Out New York: Are you using repetition and unison because that’s the most efficient way to work with so many people, or is that just something that you love?**
**Mark Dendy:** I love that. Seeing Laura Dean’s early work really influenced me. The simplicity of that spinning and those unison steps was kind of earth-shattering back then—all that minimalism. I was coming from a Graham background; Dean’s work was [about] postmodern rituals, and that stuff really affected me. And then there’s the whole other track of my work, which is the autobiographical, multigenre thing, like what Dream Analysis was. I’m making another one of those pieces next year. But ritual and repetition have always been important to me. And all that unison in the Graham work—the women in Night Journey, that one beautiful part in Acts of Light where they do the class material in gold. That was also a big influence. With Pooh Kaye, we were really doing choreographed chaos with release and improvisation, and there wasn’t so much unison at once. But I think Laura Dean had a profound influence on me.

**Time Out New York: What do you mean when you talk about rhythm?**
**Mark Dendy:** A rhythm that comes from the pelvis and the spine and a beat that’s in the body that can either be in three—one, two, three—or it can be in five or it can be in four, and it’s syncopated. I’m using one piece of Sculthorpe. And Glass
has that ongoing, cyclical rhythm. The name of the piece is Ritual Cyclical, so everything’s in a cycle. I’m very much exploring the whole thing of the paradox—rather than seeing these different aesthetics as opposing aesthetics, I’m seeing them as paradoxical aesthetics that together make up this multifaceted whole for the 80th anniversary of ADF. I’ve never really been an aesthetic fascist. I appreciate Revelations, and I can appreciate Dance, meaning Laura Dean’s dance called Dance. I can go to anything, and if it’s good, I like it. I appreciate a good ballet. And I abhor a bad any of it. And we’re all subjective about what we like and don’t like. I had this conversation with [Elizabeth] Streb recently; we were on a panel, and there was a woman who was taking Indian dance out of its sexual roles and splitting up the male and female parts and putting them in pedestrian clothes, so all the makeup and the faces were gone, but the structures and the rhythm were very there. I said that for Indian dance, that is major. I was trying to fight for her to get some money, and I said, “She’s got an Islamic woman in a hijab in a dance, and those people hate each other over there, so she’s making a statement and that’s how minds get changed.” Elizabeth was like, “I’m not so sure that we’re so important that we can change things like that.” I was like, “Don’t we have to try? Don’t they have to think that you maybe could, and it’s done one person at a time and that art can do that? Or else, why do it?” Sometimes everybody comes together in one of these things, and we have a moment of, Oh, we all are together, we are the human race—people get inspired to do or to be better.

**Time Out New York: And you’re right—it is one person at a time.**

**Mark Dendy:** And you never know who you’re going to change, or who you’re going to get out of a rut, or who’s not going to go home and kill himself that night.

**Time Out New York: Or whose imagination you’re going spark, like that nine-year-old girl.**

**Mark Dendy:** Yeah. It’s true. And that means so much more than a paycheck or a $750 Bloomingdale’s sweater. Although those are nice, too. [Laughs]

**Time Out New York: You spoke about how you wanted to create a postmodern ritual that connects us to our tribal and primal selves. Could you elaborate?**

**Mark Dendy:** I think we’re separated from the earth, from the biosphere, from the elements right now. We’re really not connected to the magnetic core that is gravity; we’re up there in buildings and spread out with technology. We’re disconnected from the planet, so anytime we connect back to that energy down into the ground or down into the water and pull it up, everybody gets some of it, and I really believe we become more psychically aware, like doing Body-Mind Centering work. In modern dance, your first partner is the floor. We go barefoot for eight hours a day. Regular people don’t do that unless they’re at the beach once in a great while. So it’s an important thing that modern dance has to bring to the table, and there is a movement to get people more connected to the biosphere, to be reminded of it and to do better by it. I really do think that’s starting to shift even as things are going out of control with corporations and pollution—there’s an equal amount of energy going in the right direction, and I just decided I want to be a part of that. I read a lot about it and I try to put it in my work. Hopefully people will get that connection of dancing with a tree and dancing on the ground and dancing in and next to water and way up on the grass, and they’ll see the juxtaposition of people in suits in between the concrete walls. I hope it’s going to make a statement. But the dancing will be abstract; it’s not going to be a hard-hitting thing. It’s going to be, Oh that’s how we are most of our day. Maybe I’ll go to the beach next weekend. [Laughs] On many levels, the structure is very simple, but choreographically it’s very complicated because there’s a lot of phrase work, a lot of solo work within the unison, and there’s a loose narrative of this youth who gets taken away and used for dark purposes. World War II was about something—it was about defeating real darkness, and this whole thing with the oil and corporations and going into places where there’s really nothing going on and tearing countries apart… I ask myself all these questions, but I don’t have any answers. Once you topple those places, most of them become theocracies, and it’s worse for everybody involved. We’ve opened this Pandora’s box, and then we’re supposed to hide behind this patriotic thing and say it’s right? It’s insanity. And those are hard subjects to tackle as a choreographer without being didactic or clichéd or emotional or just totally missing it—thinking that having the emotion is enough to sustain the craft of it. I’m taking on some big issues and we’ll see how it goes.

**Time Out New York: Is Robert La Fosse going to be one of your guest dancers?**

**Mark Dendy:** No! His schedule wouldn’t let him. It’s breaking my heart. K.J. Holmes, Adam Weinert. Michelle Boulé. I take classes with K.J. sometimes. Last August, I took a workshop with her at the beach where we, like, devolved into the ocean and came back out into the sand and buried each other. Michelle was in that group. I was like, Whoa, I have missed doing this kind of stuff so much. I always have improvisers in these pieces and put them in special places, so I wanted them to be in it. Michelle just slays me. She’s just one of those incredible dancers. And K.J. is such a power and a force. I
want to put them in the green and connect K.J. to the earth. I’m doing Michelle as the air—lightning. And I have Anto-
nio Ramos, a beautiful dancer who goes all the way back to [Ballet] Hispanico. We share a lot in that we started in these
hyper-traditional performative things and ended up not going that way. He will be on the green with them. He’ll be the
guardian of that fence area—kind of a Hermes and a Dionysius, but a new version of that. Ryan Page, Leslie Cuyjet, Sean
Donovan. There’s a downtown performer named Alice Klugerz. I’m going to have some indigent people, and hopefully
you don’t know that they’re in the piece at all. They’re just indigent and in weird places. Anna Schon is going to be in it.

**Time Out New York:** You spoke about living vertically. What effect did working at Silo have on the piece or the
process?

**Mark Dendy:** Oh my God! I came out and meditated for an hour to start the day; one morning, the horses were in this
pasture, and they started running around me in this big circle. It was just so powerful. I had some moments like that out
there. Big sky. It freed me up spaciwise. And the other thing about Silo is that you’re with your company; you’re cook-
ning meals, eating together, waking up—you’re living together, so you’re talking about the piece all the time and ideas are
shared for 24-hour periods, not for four hours. Then you go back to the stress of New York. One day we were at DANY
[Studios]: Just the amount of energy that it takes to get to 38th Street, through the subway and the heat and the amount
of drama that happens before you even get to the studio. It is so different than rolling out of bed, meditating and cooking
gluten-free waffles and going to the studio and doing yoga and then working all day. [Laughs] Ideas flowed out there. I
took Colette Krogol and Matt Reeves, who [portray] the couple in the water. They’re also the assistant choreographers on
this.

**Time Out New York:** In order to understand what you’re making now, it’s good to know what you’re reacting
against. Could we go back a little bit? Tell me about your dance history: You started in traditional forms.

**Mark Dendy:** I started traditionally. Graham, Nikolais. I went to North Carolina School of the Arts, which is a conserva-
tory. I came to New York; I worked with Graham. I was 22. I got very disenchanted at Graham because of that Ronald
Protas guy and all of that.

**Time Out New York:** Was Graham alive?

**Mark Dendy:** She was alive. I was in the second company, and I was like, Am I going to stay and wait another year or
two? No. I was coming downtown and working with Ruby Shang site-specifically and dancing for Pooh Kaye and already
showing work my first year, so I just eased into downtown and P.S. 122 and Dixon Place. I started doing drag and decon-
structing performance and mixing genres and acting in my work and creating characters. I was always interested in sexual
politics, social politics and gender, and I was always interested in psychology, but at a deeper level. Not to do any disser-
vice to Graham, because what she did in her time was deep, but I wanted to go deeper than that and not be representative about psychology, but to really delve into it and work with text in a different way. Then I did a lot of gesture work with Jane Comfort. When I got to New York and was at Graham, I realized, Oh this has already happened. I didn’t realize that at North Carolina School of the Arts. [Laughs] This is over and everything’s really happening down there, so I got my ass downtown. I had moved to midtown when I got here; I was going to be a Graham person. I was like, This is not what’s going on.

**Time Out New York: Isn’t that funny?**

**Mark Dendy:** It is funny. You’re from North Carolina. What do you do? But I came out of it with a mean Martha Graham impersonation.

**Time Out New York: How frequently was she around?**

**Mark Dendy:** She taught 6pm class often. You never knew when she was going to show up. And some days she was on, and some days she was out of it; she’s a human being and she was in her late eighties and nineties. It was just a scene there. Probably the most meaningful part was studying with Yuriko, because she was the director of the second company and that was a real-deal thing. And dancing for Pearl Lang and her company. Pearl was very much alive. And then [companies] wanted me to start doing ballets.

**Time Out New York: How did you get into that?**

**Mark Dendy:** Pacific Northwest Ballet invited me out. Lila York was heading the new-choreographer scene out there for them, and they liked the first one that I made, so I went back and made four. I enjoyed the vocabulary bit, and I did some commercials and a couple of films and then I was doing all that stuff. [Screams]

**Time Out New York: Why were you drawn to Broadway?**

**Mark Dendy:** I’m still trying to figure that out. Well, people came asking. They think they want what you have, but then you get there, and they really don’t. They want you to do what they want and what they have already.

**Time Out New York: With maybe a little bit of you.**

**Mark Dendy:** With maybe a little bit of you, and you realize, oh my God, I’m just being a whore. The first one I did was Boy George/Taboo, and I really believed in that project. It was Leigh Bowery and Boy George and a transgender thing. It didn’t work out for a lot of reasons. And that’s another thing about it: It’s a crapshoot, and you spend two years of your life and you have no way of knowing how it’s going to come off. If it’s good, if it’s going to work or, if it’s a really good show, if people aren’t going to come to it….You can’t make Midwesterners buy tickets to a double drag-queen show when it’s the first one of its kind. I was thinking the other day, What if Kinky Boots was then and this was now? But you can’t think like that. The first one I did, I did because I believed in it and then I was up there, and people started asking for more. Most of what I did never made it to Broadway. Or I would turn down Wicked to do a workshop of Camille Claudel. [Laughs] I worked on that for a year and a half, believing in it, because I love the story, and I love the idea of bringing sculptures to life in dance. Wah, wah, wah. It didn’t make it. Three tryouts later…and I turned down Wicked because I thought the music sucked, and I didn’t like Joe Mantello. I would be so penthouse right now if I had done Wicked. They have six shows around the world. I didn’t go in for Rent because I didn’t like that the drag queen died. I didn’t think it really followed Bohème because Mimi lived in their version, and the drag queen died. I’m like, Why? In the opera, Mimi dies. [Laughs] I said no. I said no to Avenue Q.

**Time Out New York: God. Why?**

**Mark Dendy:** Because they wouldn’t give me an assistant. And they were like, “It’s just puppets,” and I’m like, “I don’t care—I have to have an assistant because I don’t work without somebody to go back and forth with.” That’s how I make work—with another voice. I’m a collaborator. Yeah, I turned down a lot of good stuff. And I did The Pirate Queen. [Laughs] Oh my God. Eleven ballads. It was bad. What are you going to do? I finally was like I’m not going to stay up here and hope for a hit.

**Time Out New York: You spoke about it a little, but how did you make that decision?**

**Mark Dendy:** It was a nervous breakdown. It was, you’re in over your head doing something you hate doing and working for people you don’t like, and you’re miserable even though you’re making money. What is a $400 dinner if you’re miserable? What is going to the Hamptons on the weekends if you’re not happy? I just had to change everything. And it’s really
hard, because you put all your eggs in this basket, and for your ego to say, This isn’t important anymore, I don’t care about this anymore, I just want to be happy—I want my life back. It is a really hard battle. To relinquish all that and go, I don’t care, I need help, and I’m going to go away. I’m going to change everything. I’m really going to meditate twice a day. I’m really going to feed homeless people on Sunday mornings so that I don’t complain about my stupid problems and so I know what a real problem is. I changed everything. It gives a rich, full life. Having a puppy is something I would have never done before—taking care of something completely or being there to help people. Counseling kids with problems. And that enriches the work because you meet an Iraqi vet and then all of a sudden you’re making a piece dealing with war. It’s a richer life. It’s richer than having a $750 Bloomingdale’s sweater.

**Time Out New York: What is your new character piece going to be about?**

**Mark Dendy:** I’m doing it at Abrons next year. It’s [The] Labyrinth. It’s Theseus from Athens, Georgia, and all of the different monsters in my life. [Laughs] One of the therapeutic tools I used was walking a labyrinth during my period of convalescence, of getting my shit back together. The labyrinth is walking these coils—they’re not trapdoors like in a maze. It’s a circuitous path that winds and there are different kinds, but they all end up in the middle, and they all lead out; there aren’t traps, and it’s said that they correspond to the coils in the intestines and the coils in the brain, that—physiologically—has an effect on you coming into yourself. Of course, in the story, the monster is in the middle. Psychologically, that’s like a shadow or our dark self, or our primitive self as opposed to our mind self and so when I was walking this labyrinth in these workshops, things just started coming up—ideas and abuse things that I didn’t even know what happened. I was remembering stuff. I was like, I think I’m going to use this as a theatrical construct, and I started writing about monsters. I have one character that is a prostitute-hooker–heroin addict–transgendered street woman, so I’m making her Ariadne. I think Penny Arcade is going to play Mother Earth if the schedule works out. So it’s all the monsters that you meet in the center of the labyrinth, and getting there. I have an old Southern grandmother who I’m playing who was a Jew whose family converted to Christianity and married her to an anti-Semitic Christian minister. So she’s a closeted Jew as a minister’s wife. It’s another example of someone who wasn’t being who they were, so it’s a parallel to this guy Theseus, who isn’t being who he is. I have this one thing where I just stand there to Ethel Merman’s “There’s No Business Like Show Business,” and all I have to do is stand there and tears come rolling down my face because I think of the ten years that I spent doing it. [Laughs] I don’t know if it’s going to end up getting taken out of the piece because it’s indulgent, but it sure feels good.

**Time Out New York: How long have you been working on it?**

**Mark Dendy:** I’ve been writing it for two and a half years. I probably have seven hours of material. I’m trying to decide whether to do one of those four-or-five-hour performances, or to make it a 90-minute piece and save a lot of it for another piece. I’m torn. I don’t have to start on it until after Lincoln Center, but it’ll be at Abrons in March. I’m doing it in that cement space downstairs because it’s kind of like a Greek amphitheater and a fallout shelter at the same time. The climax happens during Hurricane Sandy in Bellevue Hospital during the evacuation. I saw that space a couple of years ago and thought, I want to do Labyrinth in here. I don’t care if it’s 60 people. I’m going to run it three weeks. And I get to play three ladies. I’m looking forward to that.

**Time Out New York: When did you stop doing Broadway work?**

**Mark Dendy:** I left that altogether by 2008. I stopped in 2006, kind of, and I kept doing it; by 2009, I was back doing site-specific stuff and working on my own thing again.

**Time Out New York: Is it hard to support yourself now?**

**Mark Dendy:** It’s not hard, but it’s not the same. You have to live on a budget. You have to decide what you’re going to buy at the grocery store. I feel so freed from the other thing that I would never say it’s hard; it’s challenging, but it’s kind of easier than the alternative. I enjoy my free time. I didn’t have time to read books or take walks or to do anything about life things. I was just working, working, working.

**Time Out New York: How is having a free performance a political act?**

**Mark Dendy:** Because the audience is across-the-board equal: Nobody has to be able to afford $100 or $60 or even $24.

**Time Out New York: Why are you spending money on costumes?**

**Mark Dendy:** [Sighs] Bobby Pearce, who did the costumes for Taboo, is donating his talent, but not his expenses. There are going to be eight operagoers who are waiting on their dates and eight Brooklyn hipsters; there are eight National
Guards; there are the demigods and the water people. I’m working on an idea around cobalt blue for blue-collar workers that dance on the steps, because I want to pay tribute to the people that build New York and keep it running with athletic hard movement. Show some sweat. There are the hidden indigents. In my notes, I call them tsadik, which is a Yiddish word; it’s what the Hasidim call their beggars, and it means “an angel who is sent here to test your compassion.” I love thinking of homeless people like that. I just thought, Let’s do some costumes. Let’s put that ten years of theatricality to work in a good way. That’s what I’m going for.

Mark Dendy Dance & Theater Projects is at Hearst Plaza (at Lincoln Center) July 24 and 25.
American Dance Festival (1)
Lightsey Darst
Posted: 07/16/2013 1:01 pm

If the mention of a summer dance festival and school conjures up fame-like visions for you -- long-legged lovelies stretching in crowded halls, ragged leg warmers, bare shoulders and naked ambition -- getting to know the American Dance Festival may take a little adjustment. For one thing, ADF focuses on modern dance, as it has since its inception in 1934, when Martha Graham, Hanya Holm and other modern dance pioneers taught and performed at the very first festival. This means, for one thing, that the dance students here have more meat on the bone; they eat yogurt and peaches while they stretch. They’re older, too, mostly in college, which they expect to finish before they launch dance careers. (Ballet dancers still often go straight to work from high school, but modern dancers rarely do). They relish the chance to meet and be seen by dance professionals, but they know they’re some distance from being “discovered.” In all dance forms, but especially in modern dance, a body alone won’t cut it: you need a dancing mind, an imagination, a sense of meaning in motion or motion in meaning -- and it’s this the students have come to ADF to hone.

ADF also does a lot more than the summer school. The festival’s programs are so numerous that a week here, a conversation with director Jodee Nimerichter and a lot of time parsing the website has mostly left me with an impression of a giant octopus. The summer six-week school, a three-week school for younger dancers, year-round classes for community; performances by national companies (Paul Taylor, Shen Wei, Trisha Brown), screen dance events, commissions from up-and-coming choreographers; ADF events in New York and abroad; ADF-sponsored films; grants for choreographers; studies of dance memory; extensive archives -- ADF is a powerhouse. And with new studios, ADF’s first permanent dance space in its eighty-year history, the festival is signaling its own ambition.

It’s a good time, then, to look closely at ADF -- what’s it like here? what gets made and what gets taken apart? -- because I have the sense that a look at ADF is a look at America’s dance future.

1. WARMUP

ADF’s six-week school takes place at Duke University’s campus in Durham, North Carolina, amid Southern heat, blooming magnolias and a tobacco town gone through dust and lurching into its next life. Hair with any nap blossoms in this humidity, so halo-headed dancers troop around under feathery willow oaks or scatter in the ever present rain, which can drop right out of a sunny sky. In top-knots and droopy layers, their lines are calligraphic in motion, though when they stand still, you might not take them for dancers; they’re too various. What they all have in common is health (bright, line-less faces) and a certain sense of weight; you can see they’re happy on their feet.

The professional dancers -- teachers, choreographers, visiting company members -- move among the students like swans among geese: They look at once bigger and more detailed. Look long enough and you get it: they are more themselves. This difference can seem insurmountable, and yet many of these professionals were once students here. ADF is a place of coming full circle, and full circle again: arrive as a student, return as a company member, then a teacher, a choreographer, an audience member. (You can find the stories of notable ADF alumni on the festival’s 80 Faces project here).

The fuzzy feeling of community you get from ADF press and from the students themselves can belie the hard work required to make that circle, though. Movies about dance tend to shortcut that work in one of two ways: either with a workout montage (Flashdance) or a sex scene (Black Swan). In reality, the work that makes a dancer out of a student and a dance out of movement is subtler, stranger and far more interesting -- and that’s what I’ll be studying in my dispatches from ADF.

ADF Director Jodee Nimerichter: “They don’t choose it [dance] unless they truly truly have to do it. It’s too hard.”
ADF 3: Building the Big Show

Lightsey Darst
Posted: 07/23/2013 2:21 pm

“The ground is shifting.” Students hurl-y-hurl across the dance floor, legs flying out from under them. “Birds are diving,” the tall woman at the center of the whirlwind calls out. Hands shield the students’ heads; they duck and skitter. “Water is spraying,” she adds, tossing her fall of fine dark hair away from her face. She wears a black racerback maxidress over wide-leg pants, the folds of jersey showing her lines like wet-look drapery away from a Greek statue. She’s rangy, quiet, intense, immediate, her body revealing riverine shifts her quiet Dutch face conceals. This is Vanessa Voskuil, one of three choreographers making new work on ADF students for the Footprints concert (the other two are Rosie Herrera and Adele Myers).

She and her cast of 24 have been together for four weeks when I first see them, and the students are still feeling their way towards what she wants from them. Asked to bounce loosely, they jig up and down like little jackhammers. Some students wear dance techniques on the outsides of their bodies: this girl wears ballet in her wrists, in the set of her sternum. Others have the opposite effect, their bodies so open and empty I can barely tell anyone’s in there. My gaze is attracted to the quietly self-possessed ones, the students who do and then return to themselves.

“A boulder is moving towards you.” This direction, added to the three above, causes chaos; if the students can show two conditions and sketch a third, four is entirely beyond them. They flail. But I see how Voskuil is pushing them, trying to get them to think the difference, even if they can’t show it yet. “I’m trying to get a specificity out of you that is unique to you,” she says. Note that Voskuil doesn’t mean to show an audience ground shifting and birds diving: she’s feeling for steps, or feeling for the sensibility from which interesting motion arises. The new American dancer, in Voskuil’s version, has a kinesthetic imagination that fires your kinesthetic imagination. Can you make a shape? Can you be in a moment? Can you show something you’ve never seen -- something in particular, new, yet resonant? Voskuil’s exercises ask and reveal.

The Footprints concert opens the last week of dance and performance here at ADF: Forces of Dance, a concert in which ADF students will perform masterworks by Bill T. Jones, Martha Graham, and Twyla Tharp, closes it. In my next reports from ADF, I’ll visit rehearsals for both concerts, chat with students, teachers, and choreographers, and finally view the performances themselves. Question and revelation – that’s what this next week is all about.

After the workout, Voskuil’s rehearsal settles into quiet. She arranges some dancers like stones in a rock garden; they rehearse solo material, highly-wrought winding phrases. Others sit around, stretch, chat, check messages, write in journals. What you do on the sidelines matters, because professional dancers spend an astonishing amount of time watching and waiting, and they have to figure out how to watch and wait productively and socially, how to balance patience and perpetual motion. I zero in on one student, a cursive sketch in sweatpants. He’s playing with the coolest new toy in these modern dancers’ kits: hip-hop cause-and-effect that turns the body into a Rube Goldberg machine. I watch him build a sequence of falls and folds. He’s a magician, spinning motion scenarios from thin air. It’s mind-boggling work; I can almost see him growing new synapses.

Another dancer is absolutely still until called upon. Stolid, she doesn’t look promising. Then Voskuil places her and she springs into life, conducting an imaginary orchestra, marching backward. Looking at any of Voskuil’s individuals is like tumbling into a well, a well as deep as the student’s experience can make it.

Voskuil rehearses in the Ark, an open two-story rectangle with windows all around and a balcony circling the space at the second floor level. The room feels like a hollowed paddle-wheeler, and it’s easy to imagine it taking off on the flood, rocking in a storm. Today, though, the air’s hot, heavy, still. The room has no air conditioning; fans stir in the windows. But despite the sluggish atmosphere, the name suggests what the students need to do: they need to make themselves Ark worthy, their own species, rara avis. Of course we all are -- so maybe the work is to uncover, find or free what’s there.

Later, watching Sue Healey’s documentary Virtuosi as part of ADF’s International Screendance Festival, I notice how almost all the dancers profiled refer to moments of change, moments in which they got past obstacles to their dancing. Now, Ross McDonald says, “I’m really okay with getting things wrong in front of strangers,” in a way that he wasn’t before. Dance has become “a search for a simple way of being in the body.” Lisa Densel says. It’s “suddenly waking up to the present -- waking up to, oh, this is my hand.”
Today I’m sitting in on a rehearsal for Bill T. Jones’s Love Re-Defined. It’s five minutes till time and students run in circles, run in place, shake their muscles, lie on their backs and shake their legs. We’re in ADF’s new Broad Street Studios -- gorgeous light-filled rooms with a view of oaks, so distractingly green and lovely that it takes me a long time to figure out what this room is missing: a mirror. We’re in the land of modern dance here.

Leah Cox, education director for Jones’s company, leads the rehearsal. Still, sitting and looking at her notes, she looks small: a bag of bones in a crush of bright cloth, pale as paper, with a frizzy nimbus of peach fuzz for hair. When she gets up, though, she gets big: taller than any of the men, quick and loose-limbed, with a condor wingspan. And her energy’s big too -- more than ample to set this room buzzing. Throughout rehearsal, she uses her voice as almost a meditation aid, a metronome, sometimes talking constantly while the students move. You’ll hear a lot of her in this dispatch; you might try reading standing up, letting her words hypnotize you too.

“I know what you can do. I’m interested in you moving beyond that,” she says. “I want you to be able to access all of you that I see sitting inside you.” She asks the students for a walk-through, but not a mark (a low-energy version in which movement is merely indicated). For the lifts, she tells the students, “Don’t mark them, but just dance the thing as if that were the movement.” The same for absent people -- she wants the absence danced through. “Let’s reinvent.

A run-through begins. This dance is lovely, dreamy, and hard; it calls for balletic technique (feet matter) and a sense of swing. Everything suspends, nothing ends: one action overlays another, exit covered by entrance, downstage played off against upstage. This means the students have to take and yield the stage, with the yielding part of the dance as well (“no such thing as transitions,” Cox says), and they have to breathe in time, with awareness, to make that suspension real. “Keep dancing bigger than this room, bigger than this room,” Cox says.

The students don’t manage too well; they can do the steps, but I don’t get any emphasis from them. Only one dancer looks like he’s alive in the moment, awake and making decisions. The rest seem off-balance, which leads me to think that a balance problem is really a failure of motivation. It’s not that you fall: you fall out of the dance.

“Keep being powerful,” Cox intones to one dancer who’s holding the stage with his back to us. “Big power, big power, big power, you’re still alive, big power.” What could make you look at someone’s back? The scene’s winding down but he has to keep the audience with him, watching. His lungs fill. You try it: hold an auditorium’s attention in your shoulder blades. “Keep fighting death to the end,” Cox says. “Heartfelt, real, physical, physical. In your center, you’re still very much alive. We can feel it in your back space. You’re still speaking to us.” And now he is.

The run over, Cox has the students walk around the room. Little dances flare up and decay as she talks to them about aggression, space, cooperation, play. “How can I be in space with another body?” she asks. “How are we giving people space to dance?” She joins the students, ebbing and flowing with them. “I’m okay enough that I can allow you to enter my world and I can move with you.” She connects this responsiveness to politics, to the world. “What if we don’t have distinct bodies, but only relationships? What if the default is movement? What if I don’t have to stop and think? What if I can move and think? What if I can move and think?” She pushes at their range of response. “Nicely done, I can feel that,” she says. At other times frustration flares. It reminds me (and the students too, I suppose) of Cox’s dual role: she’s their teacher, but she also represents the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company.

Some students make knots; others circle around. One young man has very caring arms. Some have to look for entrances, and some are always on the inside. Some are waiting for this be over, and some are just fine, finding enough in it. At their best, the students are like a school of fish, flickering, shoaling. This is a four-hour rehearsal, and there’s about thirty minutes of this walk-dancing. No one could watch this for long, except that it’s fascinating -- one of those exercises that reveals what’s going on, where dance is happening and where it isn’t.

“How might you be resisting what I’m asking?” Cox says. That is the question of education, isn’t it? One guy always bears with him a little bubble of space -- personal space he won’t yield. Of course there could be plenty of good reasons to resist. I like how Cox lays bare the dilemma of learning, the leap involved; she makes me uncomfortable, or, to put it another way, she moves me. “Just let me guide you, but you have to let me. Just have the experience.”

She settles the students down, does a daddy-long-legs and folds up, gets small again. Now it’s their turn; they need to apply this. She calls for another run-through. “We are going to find ways to dance the entire dance,” she says. She cuts off a dancer offering an excuse, a reason something didn’t work. “Just try it.”

And they do: the dance becomes not arbitrary but mercurial, full of magic, desire, sudden and lovely whims, breathing stillness and propulsive dance. The students are paying attention now.
ADT 5: Learning From the Past: Duane Cyrus Rehearses Martha Graham

Lightsey Darst
 Posted: 07/26/2013 5:30 pm

Rehearsal for Martha Graham’s Helios, Durham School of the Arts. The usual dancer pile-up -- dancers stretching, listening to music on their headphones, even singing along. Dancers hanging over bolsters, their shoulder blades sliding apart under their skin. Dancers with taped toes flopped down in frog pose (knees splayed, pelvis to the floor). The young man in front of me is the quintessence of dance as he lounges and stretches and hums, his lanky mahogany limbs soaking up the limelight. You could draw him in two or three strokes of a fountain pen; he’s enviable at ease. Behind him another dancer does a flurry of crunches, and another cracks her extension past 180 degrees, foot in hand. I see ballet boys, girls in fashionable top-knots, and some unlikely candidates -- a diverse crew, but I get the sense they’ve grown together in the past weeks.

Duane Cyrus enters, a deceptively quiet presence; at a glance you might mistake him for an amateur. But by the way they circle around him and by their quiet attention, I can tell he’s won these students’ respect and admiration. Time’s tight, with only a week and a half to opening night, but Cyrus keeps his manner gentle and his voice soft. They’re fine on technique, he says. “You have those things. They’re coming.” Now they need to work on presence: “Graham or not, whatever it is, it’s dance and it’s performance.” His clear, calm voice holds them. He talks about breathing, dynamics (“How can you find more sharpness of attack?”), theatrical choices. He asks them to try a silent run through. The dancers jump up, a well-oiled corps; competitive spirit crackles, but it’s team spirit, them vs. whoever and whatever. They warm up.

What should I do? a young man asks Cyrus. “You should practice doing grand jetés,” Cyrus says. “You have to show the back leg. Practice turning the back leg into second, then observe what’s happening.” He marks the jump for the young man; his forward leg, as he extends it, is pristine, independent. I’ve come here wondering how Cyrus will invigorate Graham’s technique -- so far back in the history of modern dance by now that it almost looks like ballet -- for these young modern dancers, and this view of his own dancing is my first clue. Graham’s not cool these days, but Cyrus’s dancing is better than cool: it’s classic. I see his effect in the statuary poses the students strike. They look like they’re part of something important -- part of history.

Later, when I ask Cyrus what Graham can be for these dancers, this is what he emphasizes: dancers need to know their history. “In order to break a mold and be avant-garde or contemporary, you have to understand the forms that came before.” Contemporary dancers don’t emerge fully-formed, like Athena from the head of Zeus: “You have to study foundations.” He calls today’s lack of emphasis on founding modern “a mistake of the dance culture.” For Cyrus, “Modern dance informs how I am contemporary now.” To help the students see further into the dance, Cyrus gives them Graham’s context and inspirations, sharing articles, videos, other dances. He tells them that “they are researchers, and they will be performing their research.” Also, as a former Graham dancer (among other things), he believes in Graham’s work. “Graham technique is really simple in its form,” he says, “and it totally makes sense. The spiral is such a beautiful simple thing.”

The run-through begins. One dancer walks across stage. He looks terrified but his dancing does it -- I feel response in my nerves. Then all the dancers run out, with the tremendous, stirring sound of feet on a dance floor. As always, I’m fascinated watching them. My mind runs over with questions their dancing provokes.

Is there real lift in the torso -- breath and muscle? Can you make the dance more than pretty? Do you have to remember your foot or does it know what to do? Can you pick out what matters? I watch one dancer who knows that her elbow is the point of interest in one step. This clarity in her is intensely exciting, as if she’s found a new way to think. How much line can you get out of what you have? Line will never be entirely clean, because we’re human, so how do you make it look clean? Do you go on dancing in the background, in the margin? Do you go on when it’s hard? My gaze is held by one young man whose dedication insists that the step he’s doing -- an arduous swirling crouch -- is crucial to the future of the world. What do you have to draw on? Most of us haven’t done much by 22, haven’t made (or been aware of) big decisions. Maybe that’s why great dancers so often have vivid early lives -- or imaginations. Can you imagine a reason to do what you have to do? I see some students dancing in their heads and some beyond their bodies. Some dancers are good without being capable of unison; they’ll never be Graham dancers, obviously, but that doesn’t mean they won’t excel elsewhere in the dance world. Vigor and courage can overcome a lot -- but how much? How much can you learn? What’s promise? What’s necessary -- what can you not become a dancer without?

I ask Cyrus whether he can tell which students will be dancers. “No,” he says. Let me pause to emphasize this. Cyrus, a former Graham dancer, has come here to set Martha Graham on the students. If he had a narrow view of what makes a dancer, no one would be surprised. But instead, he says “Who’s to say? You never know.” He’s open to whatever they are, whatever they will be. Not only that: he doesn’t judge their learning by what they’re showing him. “How they dance is not fully an indication of how much they’ve learned. Maybe, in five years, something is going to click.”

For now, I see moments of beauty and strength in everyone, but mostly, I see the group. Every time Cyrus gives praise, every time he gives a correction and the dancer works on the step and fixes it, the rest of the group watches and applauds -- this dedicated corps working through the past toward the future.
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, “I it 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 bold 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, Jed McKeeble and Helen Simoneau) are creating

Above, Natalie Mackey and Barrington Hinds of the Stephen Petronio Company.
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. Nimmerichter "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. "Jodie is so much more attuned now with the younger generation, as it should be," Mr. Reinhart said.

But not everyone is convinced, following a modern dance tradition and not what I would refer to as contemporary dance and contemporary performance."

Ms. Nimmerichter 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. Nimmerichter, 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

SEE FRESH/PAGE A2
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 Web site at www.americanandancefestival.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 “Undertown” 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.
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.

“As 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 sidetick, Anna Bass, the two women, dressed in floor-length parkas, haul onstage a puppet-show curtain-and-frame set. To help, they enlist an audience volunteer, who takes little coaxing to shake his boot.

First seated and then standing in place, having removed their coats to reveal sequined dresses, 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 union 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 headdresses, cockatoos, 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
An intimate blend of art and dance:
Shen Wei adapts vast piece to N.C. museum galleries

Roy C. Dicks
July 15, 2012

Shen Wei Dance Arts’ “Undivided Divided,” co-sponsored by the American Dance Festival, will weave dozens of dancers among paintings and sculptures in the N.C. Museum of Art’s West Building. The piece debuted last fall in Manhattan’s Park Avenue Armory.

Theaters are for watching live performances, and art museums are for contemplating inanimate objects – except in Shen Wei’s world.

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.

DETAILS
What: “Undivided Divided,” performed by Shen Wei Dance Arts
Where: West Building, N.C. Museum of Art, 2110 Blue Ridge Road, Raleigh
When: 7 p.m. Tuesday (Museum of Art gala); 7 and 9 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday (ADF co-sponsored performances)
Tickets: $150 (museum gala); $60 (ADF co-sponsored performances)
Info: 919-715-5923; ncartmuseum.org or americandancefestival.org
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.”

“We can’t do the projections that we did at the armory, but that will encourage more focus on the dancers,” says Shen Wei, winner of a prestigious MacArthur “genius” grant.
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.
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
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.
The Paul Taylor Dance Company performs through Saturday at the American Dance Festival, Durham, N.C.; (919) 680-2787 or americandancefestival.org.
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 1988. Mr. Reinhart’s connection with the Taylor company also runs deep; he was its manager from 1963 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 de-synchronization 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 dissonance 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.
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 two-piece percussion band is hitting the beat, and more than 20 kids ages 5-7 are following the creative lead of former Pilobolus 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 six-week program highlights community-based projects, including workshops at El Centro Hispano, ADF's first partnership with the center.

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.

"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 experiences of being uprooted culturally have 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 business major'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 business man, 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.

"She was disappointed and said, 'What will I tell the family? And I said, 'Tell them I'm an artist.'"

Louis went on to work with Gus Giordano in Chicago, Nikolai's/Douglas Dance Lab in New York, Alfred Galman, Smith & Shapiro and Sara & Patrik, honing his creative movement skills.

had fulfilled my dream of touring with an international dance troupe and I thought it was time to satisfy my mother's dream and become a successful businessman," he said.

Louis spent two years as a Real Estate agent in Manhattan, a period he calls rough. Still conflicted, he became a personal banker

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With ADF receiving the funding to hire a full-time director, Louis was hired and moved with his wife and toddler 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 passes for the kids so that they can go with their families to live performances, which are an
Dizzying Combinations Mix It Up at Durham Festival

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 75th 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 strobe-light "Caught"; and a rare performance of Alvin Ailey's "Revelations" by the young Alley II company. This week stirs together classics by José Limón and Jiri Kylian, danced by the Limón troupe; and by Eleo Pomare, Talley 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 Hanya Holm's "Jooss," 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?"

The equivalent of a cafe for choreographers.
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 1950s, 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 premiers began in 1961 with "Insects and Heroes," followed by "Arsenale" in 1962. This summer, his company performs a new work, "Change," 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 of 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, Elise 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 Paye 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.D. 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 andBetty 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 rescripting 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, Pech 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 it’s 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 residencies 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 “inwards and sideways” in order to support modern dance.

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 21; americandancefestival.org or (919) 684-4444.

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

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

The soloists — Meghan Bruskewitz and Candace Thompson — serve as solitary embodiments of those emotions, with the effect of almost church-like 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-torsos, 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, so one of the great minimalist performers 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 done not only by the size of the 21-mobe cast but also by the number of its dancers 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 practically urgent now, can be taken up by the festival, which such a troupe in the 1970s. At the very least there should be a “File Forward” program every year.
The Slowness of Motion, and What It May Reveal

DURHAM, N.C., June 28 — Few things in the performing arts are more marvellously 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, Chariar 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-Chariar-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 Chariar and Peace do finally rise from their “death” and move into fabulous, one-legged, statuesque, balanced positions, and 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 than mourning over 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

Eiko and Koma
American Dance Festival

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

“Thank you for your patience,” I’ve overheard people of expression to them, “and for your patience, for your patience with us.” 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 Dutch 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: you give so much to see. They are masters of fragmentation, of poetic distortion, of making even the slowest movement become a psychodrama leading we know 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 Chariar and Peace (aside from the first scene, still amazingly performed by Eiko and Koma at their most enthralling).

The young performers give it a quality quite unlike that of their elders: tragic they-know-not-what-they-do innocence, whereas Eiko and Koma always seemed to have been weathered by time and feeling.

It works, beautifully. To watch Chariar arrive on Peace like a boulder of carrion while he lies like a baby asleep, to see him, in a later scene, sit coolly with an elbow resting on a sole of his amazingly upturned foo as if it were a ledge, to see them both lie on the floor, slowly hoist their prises up in the air like mohawks: these are just some of the startling thrills of the singular dramatic poetry of Eiko and Koma.
"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 McCoule's "Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder," which drew on black church practice and the experiences of prisoners on a Southern chain gang.

It could be argued, perhaps pointlessly, that no white choreographer could or would have created these dances, though there are a few historic exceptions. With Mr. Jones's "D-Man in the Waters" (1980), a response to the devastation of AIDS, modern dance has achieved the option of color-blindness.

The dancing is a good deal livelier than the narration by Taye Diggs. The most powerful performances come from G. D. Harris in "Ostrich" and Jerome Stigler in "Mourner's Bench"; both men are from Dayton Contemporary Dance Company. The importance of a strong, rooted torso is suggested, rising from and suc-
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.

cumbing 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 arrives 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 contemporary Chinese dance, through talks and performances in several cities. Ten donors have signed up to join Linda Shelton, the theater’s executive director, and Richard Ahlom, 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 we’ll 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 Chinese 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 surprises for her theater.

“There’s a little China boom going on,” said Ralph Samuelson, the director of the Asian Cultural Council in New York. “It’s somewhat reminiscent 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 directs the American Dance Festival in Durham, N.C., first led a delegation of choreographers to China in 1980. His voice still drops to an awestruck whisper when he describes how the director of the Guangdong Dance Academy, Yang Mei-qi, approached him in 1986 after watching a modern dance class at the festival, which she was attending as part of its International Choreographers Workshop.

“We do not speak a word of each other’s language,” he said recently from the festival’s Manhattan office. “But boy, did we connect.”

By now the story is dance lore: Ms. Yang
and Mr. Reinhart 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. Reinhart 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 exposure on 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 at middle positions have now moved up to higher positions, and they are much more open," Mr. Reinhart of the American Dance Festival said. "It was impossible to talk about doing an A.D.F. in 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. Too 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-Il," was given its premiere by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal 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 seems. "I could tell you stories," Mr. Reinhart said 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 legitimization 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-citizens 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 stereo 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, irascible 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 Merce Cunningham, Glen Tetley, Donald McKayle and others.

"The 1960’s were so incredibly important," Mr. Reinhart said. "And I just happened to be the right kind of person at the right time." He left Bennett’s office in 1971 to accept the position of dance director at City Center.

As Charles Reinhart marks 25 years at the American Dance Festival, his motto remains ‘Blow it up, but pay respects.’

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 done.

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 Company of American dance 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
Mr. Reinhart with a modern-dance class in Durham, N.C., earlier this month—“The 1960's were so incredibly important.”

1977, serves as co-director with her husband. The festival is now a mecca of modern dance. And the Reinheits 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.”