



Dance Expeditions
and
Creative Research

Wilderness Newsletter vol 4

What's new...

Giving

Once again we have been blessed by the generosity of our donors. We are on track this year to exceed our 2006 donations. If you are receiving this newsletter we owe this success to you and we appreciate that you recognize how vital dance and creativity are to our society.

Commission

One thing about donations in the arts is that they tend to multiply. It takes money to make money as they say. We have been commissioned to choreograph a duet to Ricky Ian Gordon's opera "Orpheus and Euridice". Work on this commission, sponsored by the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival (HPAF), began in December of 2006 and will culminate in our premiere at the festival in late July of this summer.

Just yesterday, we finished our first draft of the project and are very excited by its possibilities. There are certain challenges to this project that have forced us to create in new ways.

First, the commission was for a duet. This isn't a new direction for us but it is a direction that we haven't pursued recently. In order to create this project we have returned to our roots of duet work. Solos and duets have fewer bodies on stage to hold the attention of the audience and therefore provide certain choreographic challenges. To overcome this difficulty we are utilizing our partnering skills. It is amazing what can be accomplished with an understanding of gravity and momentum and often, a little courage.

Second, the work is an hour long. It will be our first work of this length. An hour-long work of choreography generally requires at least a year to complete and tens of thousands of dollars to produce. As we don't have these resources we are exploring simplicity. Sometimes it takes very little to create a powerful image or simple action that carries forward the story in a beautiful and efficient manner.

Since many of you may not be planning a trip to the big island of Hawaii, we want to give you the opportunity to see this exciting new work.

We will have an open rehearsal at Patrick's Cabaret in Minneapolis on Thursday July 5th at 6pm. This is a chance for our mainland supporters to get a look at the work and give us their thoughts.

Mark your calendar!

July 5th 6PM

Patrick's Cabaret

3010 Minnehaha Ave S

Minneapolis, MN 55406

We are currently working with HPAF to secure funding for a tour of this work to Minnesota and elsewhere. Wish us luck!

For more information about HPAF check out their webpage. www.hawaiiperformingartsfestival.org



Photo by V. Paul Virtucio

Video Projects

In March we had our first ever house concert and screened a collection of Amber's video work. In spite of the blisteringly cold weekend we had a great turnout and look forward to another house concert in 2008.

Amber's most recent documentary, Izu Becic: Carving a New Life is being screened through the month of June at the Pelican Rapids Public Library and Multicultural Learning Center and from November through December at the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center in Moorehead, MN.

Guest Writer

This newsletter we are trying something new. We realize that many of our supporters may have little context for our work as contemporary dancers. Joan Jarvis Ellison wrote the following article which is part one of a three part series on the history of dance. We welcome her to our newsletter.

Dancing on the Edge: **The Early Years**

Ever since prehistoric people first took each other's hands and began to move in a patterned, rhythmical sequence, there has been dance. And ever since that moment, some dancers have looked for the edge of what is considered "dance".

In 508 B.C. a competition began in Greece for dancers trained by a *choregus*, and performed to music in an open air theater, in front of an audience. This contest encouraged virtuosity. In the early 16th century, the nobility provided *balletti* or danced entertainments at their feasts. As guests at the feasts began to take part in the dances, they were trained in simple steps and patterns to be danced across the floor. When King Louis XIV of France, held *balletti* in the 1660's, he himself danced as the Sun King.

The dance masters of the Italian Renaissance were the first to break away from the idea of communal dances involving everyone, to dance as a performance to be watched. The tempo and rhythms of the music, size and weight of the costumes, decoration and shape of the stage and

lighting all determined what a choreographer could produce. They worked away at the edges of the social dance traditions, turned the feet outward, and added arm motions, creating the five fundamental positions of classical ballet.

Over the next several centuries, some choreographers worked at the edges of classical ballet. They added facial expressions and characterizations to enrich a dancer's performance, or worked with new, more contemporary themes. Classical ballet impresario Serge Diaghilev was one such innovator. "Surprise me!" he'd say to his dramatist, encapsulating the urge to seek the cutting edge of the dancing experience.

-Joan Jarvis Ellison

See our 2007 fall newsletter for the second installment of Dancing on the Edge, in which the ballerinas lose their shoes and modern dance is born.

*Where spirit
sets the soul to rise
the barrenness of winter skies
the vibrancy of summers—
there music lies, there music lies.
O sound unearthly,
Orpheus, as birthed thee.*

-Ricky Ian Gordon
from *Orpheus and Euridice*