Paul Taylor Summer Dance Intensive Comes to Ann Arbor

Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan have been added to the roster of Paul Taylor Dance Company Summer Intensives. The summer programs started in New York at the High School for the Performing Arts. The University of California at Davis made two when they began offering a west coast intensive. Now the School of Music, Theatre & Dance makes three. This summer, the first Midwest intensive will be held in Ann Arbor from June 16 to 28, 2008.

Taught by dancers from the Paul Taylor Company, current and former, these programs introduce students of dance to the Taylor style and repertoire. Mr. Taylor, who has been described as “the greatest choreographer in the world,” (Vanity Fair) recently completed his 127th work. At 77, he’s as prolific as ever. While openings in the Company come up infrequently, six of the current roster trained at Paul Taylor Summer Intensives. Taylor’s dances are now in the repertory of dozens of renowned ballet and modern companies.

All classes will take place at the Dance Building. Housing for out-of-town students is being arranged at Mary Markley Hall. Dance faculty member Christian Matjias will be the on-site director; Andy LeBeau, a Taylor alum, will be the Taylor director. Students may sign up for one, two, or three of the intensives, all scheduled in sequential order (Ann Arbor: June 16 to 28; New York: June 30 to July 25, Davis: August 4 to 15). There are discounts for enrolling in more than one intensive, as there are for registering early.

According to Fogel, the concert’s artistic director, “In 1989, the dance department presented a concert of dances inspired by Stravinsky, and it proved to be one of our most popular productions. Thus we decided to again pay homage to the composer in Stravinsky Revisited. The five choreographers on the program each took very different approaches. Three of us used original Stravinsky works while two used his music as part of a sound collage. The result was a truly diverse program of dances.”

No other composer has inspired as many choreographers and dancers as Stravinsky, with more than 1,200 dances having been created worldwide. Guest artist Rennie Harris created Heaven, a work that blends hip-hop with allegorical references to a Japanese folk tale. Gwirtzman (see profile, next page) set his dance, Villages, on ten freshmen to seven brief movements from Stravinsky compositions. Thatcher, a former member of the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, created Shadow Dances, a meditation on light and shadows set in a design referencing Matisse’s famous cut-outs. Fogel’s new work, In the House, set to a new score by Stephen Rush loosely based on the Stravinsky Pastorale, blended fragments from 18 of her earlier works in a surrealistic mosaic. Chavasse offered Swimming the English Channel, a depiction of historical events that coincided with the years in which Stravinsky was writing.

Dance Department Presents “Stravinsky Revisited”

The University Dance Company celebrated the music of composer Igor Stravinsky in Stravinsky Revisited at their annual winter Power Center dance concert. The program presented choreography by guest artists Rennie Harris, Daniel Gwirtzman, and Ginger Thatcher and by faculty members Amy Chavasse and Jessica Fogel.