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Dancin' to science

Ann Arbor Dance Works premieres new works June 8-9

May, 2013

By Jessica Fogel

Ann Arbor Dance Works, in collaboration with the University of Michigan Museum of Natural History, presents “WITHIN/BEYOND,” an evening of dances inspired by frontiers in scientific research.



Performances will be 8 p.m. Saturday June 8 and Sunday June 9 at the University of Michigan Museum of Natural History, 1109 Geddes Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48109. Featured in the performance will be premieres by NYC choreographer Edisa Weeks and resident choreographers Jessica Fogel, Peter Sparling and Robin Wilson.

From the furthest reaches of space to the inner workings of a single cell, four choreographers find inspiration in cutting edge scientific research taking place at the University of Michigan and beyond. The performances will take place in the U-M Museum of Natural History, a 1928 architectural gem designed by Albert Kahn.

Featured in the performance will be a new work by NYC dance artist Edisa Weeks, inspired by the spiraling structures of DNA. Weeks's choreography creates intimate environments that merge theater with dance, to deliriously explore our deepest desires, darkest fears and dearest dreams.

Described by the New York Times as having "a gift for simple but striking visual effects," Weeks has presented her choreography nationally and internationally in venues such as Works & Process at the Guggenheim Museum, Harlem Stage, The Kennedy Center, The Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts, The National Black Arts Festival, Summerstages Dance Festival, as well as in swimming pools, storefront windows, senior centers, sidewalks and living rooms. Edisa Weeks teaches technique, improvisation and choreography at Queens College, NY.

Choreographer and Artistic Director of Ann Arbor Dance Works Jessica Fogel premieres a dance inspired by the research of U-M Associate Professor of Astronomy Sally Oey, whose focus is the role of massive stars in the evolution of galaxies. Fogel also draws inspiration from Italo Calvino's elegant absurdist short stories, "Cosmicomics."

The dance will travel between the two-story lobby rotunda and the museum's intimate planetarium. A longtime U-M Professor of Dance and the recipient of numerous commissions and awards, Fogel has presented her choreography throughout the US and internationally since 1974. Her choreography has been inspired by wide ranging topics including visual art, literature, scientific research, and the natural

environment. A recent interest has been the creation of large-scale site-specific dances, the latest of which celebrated the layered histories of several locations in downtown Ann Arbor.

With “How Autophagy Works,” Thurnau Professor of Dance Peter Sparling offers a dancer’s guide to cell biology that is both spoof and serious interdisciplinary research. Assisted by Dr. Dan Klionsky, U-M Ruthven Professor of Life Sciences, medical illustrator Dave Woodsell and composer Wendy Lee, Sparling and dancers provide movement models or dioramas for the museum’s rotunda in the form of animated video projections, danced episodes and psychodramas freely interpreting the ongoing cellular process of autophagy, or “self-eating,” the body’s method of cleansing, recycling and defending against disease.

A graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy and Juilliard School, Sparling was a member of the JoséLimón Dance Company and principal dancer with Martha Graham Dance Company. Sparling has had extensive experience as artistic director, (Peter Sparling Dance Company), choreographer, performer, teacher lecturer, video artist, collaborator, administrator and dance/arts consultant. His dances for video have been selected for numerous international dance on camera festivals.

Choreographer Robin Wilson, Associate Professor of Dance at U-M will choreograph and perform a new solo inspired by Rebecca Skloot’s bestselling book, “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.” Lacks was “a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, in vitro fertilization, and more.

“The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew.”

Robin Wilson is best known as a founding member of the Urban Bush Women. She also performed in New York for over a decade with such choreographers as Dianne McIntyre, Kevin Wynn, and Dorothy Vislocky. Her choreography has been produced by the Washington University Dance Theater, Metro Theatre Company, Happendance Company, Kentucky Arts Council, Bluegrass Black Arts Consortium, Harlem Dance Foundation, and various Kentucky arts organizations. A frequent guest teacher, she has taught at numerous universities and institutions nationally and internationally. She is the recipient of the 2012-2013 Shirley Verrett award, and is the president of the Michigan Dance Council.

These performances have received generous support from the UM Gay Delanghe Endowment, the U-M Department of Dance, and the U-M Museum of Natural History.

ABOUT ANN ARBOR DANCE WORKS

Formed in 1985, Ann Arbor Dance Works is the resident professional dance company of the University of Michigan Department of Dance. Dedicated to the collaborative process, the company shares a wide-ranging repertory with audiences. In addition to producing works by resident UM Dance faculty choreographers, the company hosts guest choreographers from the US and abroad. Designers, poets, videographers, visual artists, scholars, and composers collaborate with company members, contributing to the creation of innovative and multi-layered works of resonance, depth, and beauty. Since its inception, Ann Arbor Dance Works has produced choreography to critical and popular acclaim in New York City, throughout the Midwest, and internationally. The company has also produced unique projects in the Ann Arbor community, including the creation of several large-scale site dances with a variety of community partners. Artistic Director for the company is Jessica Fogel.

TICKET INFORMATION

- Admission: \$10.

- Advance tickets can be purchased in person or charged by phone at the Michigan Union Ticket Office (MUTO), located on the ground floor of the Michigan Union, 530 S. State Street, Ann Arbor, [\(734\) 763-8587](tel:7347638587).
- Tickets can also be purchased online at www.mutotix.com.
- Tickets can be purchased at the door, but seating is limited and advance sales are encouraged.
- Directions to the museum and parking: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/ummnh/visiting/directionsparking>
- For further information, please visit the Ann Arbor Dance Works website: <http://www.annarbordanceworks.com>
- Follow us on Facebook and Twitter, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Ann-Arbor-Dance-Works/116357105065295> and @AADanceWorks.
- University of Michigan Dance Department Events Line: [\(734\) 763-5461](tel:7347635461).

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