

## ANN ARBOR DANCE WORKS CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

Thirty years ago, the Department of Dance received a dynamic surge of vitality and creativity when three new faculty members were recruited by Professor Gay Delanghe: Bill DeYoung, Jessica Fogel, and Peter Sparling.

All three artists had been enjoying successful careers in New York City, and were eager to join forces in their new academic setting to keep the creative momentum going. Their goal was to both expand their reach in the Midwest and bring their works back to NYC and other urban centers.

With Delanghe, the trio decided to form a company to present their works, which they would both perform and choreograph. The result was Ann Arbor Dance Works (AADW), U-M's resident professional dance company. Dedicated to the collaborative process and sharing a diverse repertory with audiences, the company's dancers include faculty members, alumni professionals, guest artists, and many top dancers in SMTD's Department of Dance.

In addition to producing works by resident choreographers, the company hosts guest choreographers from the

United States and abroad who conduct residencies, teaching and setting works on company members.

This year, AADW celebrates its 30th anniversary with a momentous event titled A Feast of Dances. Featuring works by dance faculty choreographers **Melissa Beck**, **Amy Chavasse**, **Bill DeYoung**, **Jessica Fogel**, **Peter Sparling**, **Sandra Torijano**, and **Robin Wilson**, with technical direction by Mary Cole, the celebratory free performances take place on June 18 and 19 at 7:30 PM at the University of Michigan Museum of Art.

The evening will begin with a series of dance "hors d'oeuvres," where audiences will travel through the museum spaces for "a tasting of a rich array of dance delicacies," followed by a few short dance works in the museum apse, constituting "the main course." The evening will conclude with a dessert reception (with real cake!)

PHOTO: ???

"We look forward to welcoming back old friends, introducing ourselves to new ones, and doing what we love to do: sharing resonant dance works," said Jessica Fogel, artistic director of AADW and the newly appointed chair of the Department of Dance.

## A CREATIVE JOURNEY

After the founding members of AADW formed the company in 1985, they were joined by Mary Cole—a lecturer of dance who had recently joined the U-M faculty—who took on the role of lighting designer and technical manager. Other early members of the company included former dance faculty members Marsha Pabalís and Linda Spriggs, and Professor Stephen Rush (performing arts technology), who served as music director and composed and performed many scores for the company.

Over the years, many more faculty members were drawn to the company, including Melissa Beck, Amy Chavasse, Sandra Torijano, Robin Wilson, and pianist/composer Christian Mecca Matijas.

"Every new dance we create is an eventful and gratifying creative journey," said Fogel. "I think my faculty colleagues would agree that we learn and grow a great deal with each dance we make. Many of our dances have grown out of fascinating interdisciplinary projects. We are generally creating the works during the months of May and June, free and clear of other teaching commitments, so there is a quick-paced creative momentum occurring in a condensed amount of time."

For SMTD dance students, the company provides opportunities to perform intimate works, often in unusual venues, with both resident faculty choreographers and internationally and nationally recognized guest artists.

"Students are able to network with our exciting alumni and guest artists who teach company classes, choreograph new works, and/or perform with the company," said Fogel. "And our faculty have the rich opportunity to create new work, which is at the heart of what we do here, and to share our dances with communities here and beyond."

Early on, the company set an ambitious pace for the creation of new works and touring. "We burned the midnight oil—rehearsing deep into the night after putting in a full day of teaching, and running out on the weekends to perform," said Fogel. "This was difficult to sustain while we were also rooting ourselves in our teaching here at U-M, and each of us was developing our own creative voice in distinct directions."

During this time, AADW toured Michigan and Ohio; performed several seasons in NYC and one season in Toronto; and performed an 11-city tour of Mexico.

In the 1990s, the company shifted gears, with most of the members coming together to present annual concerts in the spring and fall. They did less touring, and developed their own projects outside the auspices of the company.

In the new millennium, AADW has focused on engaging with different communities in Ann Arbor and beyond. Several years ago they instituted spring term courses that provided a more formal structure for rehearsals and classes.

Most recently, the company has focused on "site-specific performances" in which the venue is intrinsic to the work. Among the memorable sites are the Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum, where dance artists from global cultures were featured, including Heidi Durning (Japan), Biza Sompá (Congo), and Bipasha Guptaroy (India). Another highlight of this period was Robin Wilson's *Slave Moth* (2005), presented at Detroit's Charles H. Wright Museum of African-American History.

In 2012, the company joined forces with several community partners, including the Allen Creek Greenway Conservancy, WSG Gallery, Downtown Home and Garden, and Community High School, to produce a site-specific performance that was danced through the streets and buildings of downtown Ann Arbor. The choreographers included guest artists Monica Bill Barnes (NYC), Adesola Akinleye (UK and Ann Arbor), and Marly




ROBIN WILSON, BILL DEYOUNG, SANDRA TORLIANO, PETER SPARLING, JESSICA FOGEL, MELISSA BECK, AMY CHAVASSE

Speiser Schneider (Vermont), as well as professors Wilson and Fogel.

The following year, taking full advantage of the interdisciplinary opportunities at U-M, AADW presented dances inspired by scientific research, collaborating with prominent U-M researchers including Dan Klionsky (life sciences) and Sally Oey (astronomy). These concerts were performed in the beautiful rotunda of the U-M Museum of Natural History and featured works by Jessica Fogel, Peter Sparling, NYC guest artist Edisa Weeks, and Robin Wilson.

Last year, the summer concerts were presented under the auspices of Fogel's sabbatical project, *Into the Wind*. Inspired by the potential for harnessing offshore wind in the Great Lakes, the performances took place on the grounds of the Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy Center in Muskegon, a lakeside site and the location of a former prominent engine factory. The performances featured musicians, dancers, poets, designers, and artists from U-M and Grand Valley State University.

"A constant thread throughout the years has been our love of making dances, and our passion for sharing them with our audiences," said Fogel. "It's been an extraordinary three decades; we're excited to see what lies ahead." 

## Ann Arbor Dance Works 30th Anniversary Celebration "A Feast of Dances"

June 18 + 19 at 7:30 PM  
U-M Museum of Art  
525 S State Street, Ann Arbor, MI  
Free of charge; reservations required

**734.763.8587** or **mutotix.com**