

SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

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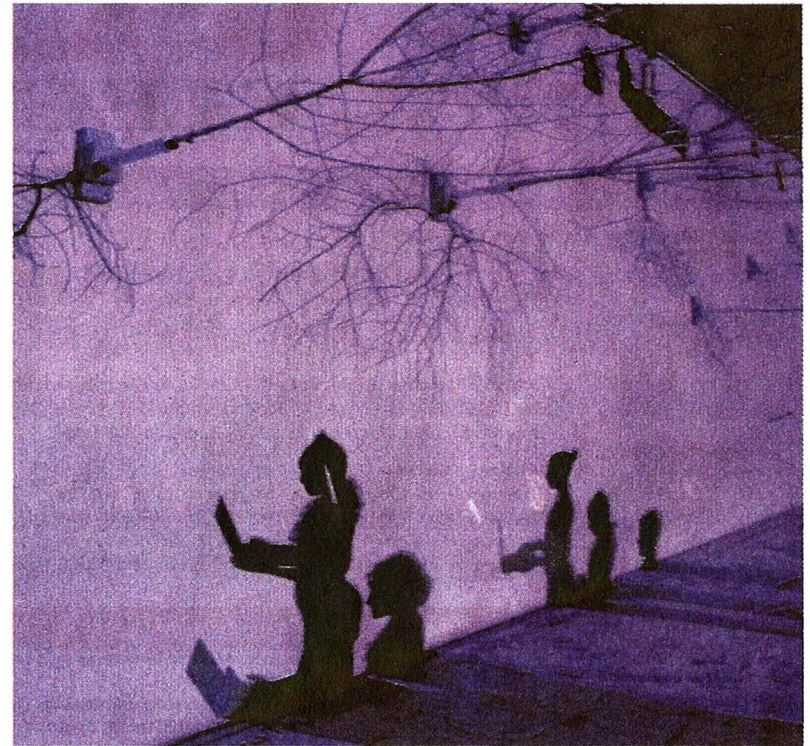
Dance company presents unique coming-of-age story *Local news, C-1*

Trip: Show starts as audience enters theater

ARCOS Dance presents a fast-paced, surrealistic coming-of-age story in **'500 Words or Less'**



Dancers rehearse scenes for *500 Words or Less* on Saturday at the ARCOS Performance Space. The multimedia production involves 19 dancers, four actors, videos, social media, photos and music to re-create the main character's wandering mental journey to analyze himself. JANE PHILLIPS/THE NEW MEXICAN



Curtis Uhlemann describes *500 Words or Less* as an abstraction of thought, and a young man reviewing his past, present and future possibilities. JANE PHILLIPS/THE NEW MEXICAN

Multimedia mind trip

IF YOU GO

What: *500 Words or Less*, multimedia performance by ARCOS Dance
When: 7:30 p.m. Feb. 3-4 and Feb. 10-11; 2 p.m. Feb. 5 and Feb. 12
Where: ARCOS Performance Space, 1583 Pacheco St.
Tickets: \$20. For reservations, email info@arcosdance.com, or call 505-473-7434

By Staci Matlock
The New Mexican

Tommy has just one page in which to describe who he is for a college essay. It's a frightening and frustrating prospect. ARCOS Dance will give audiences insight into Tommy's challenge in a fast-paced, multimedia ride into his mind that involves such varied things as colorful gypsies, his life as a movie trailer, dancers with laptops, a Skype argument and the bittersweet memory

of his childhood friend's secret. *500 Words or Less* involves 19 dancers, four actors, videos, social media, photos and music to re-create Tommy's wandering mental journey to analyze himself and his relationships. The 85-minute show combines and showcases the talents of three guiding lights: Artistic Director Curtis Uhlemann, Associate Artistic Director Erica Gionfriddo and multimedia specialist and Theater Director Eliot Fisher. ARCOS is working toward offering year-round performance

opportunities to young professionals. Uhlemann described *500 Words* as an abstraction of thought and feeling, a young man reviewing his past, present and future possibilities. The creators wanted to explore the influences of new technology and social media on issues close to young people. Along the way, it evolved into a coming-of-age story. The show is a result of a broad collaboration involving local high school

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videographers, artists and actors. Tommy Roman, a New Mexico School for the Arts sophomore who plays the lead, also plays something of himself, he said. Roman, fellow NMSA student Gabe Lenetsky and Fisher wrote the script. "They spent some nights just interviewing me for hours," Roman said, noting that his required focus on self-revelation made this show different from the many others he's been in. The trickiest part of the show was blending all the various art forms seamlessly. "We are stepping beyond our comfort zone," Uhlemann said. Fisher said he didn't have much experience with dance until recently. Working on *500 Words* helped him understand that dance, like music or theater, can be abstract or have meaning. "I was interested in how we could get all these forms to work together," he said. "But I want there to be a story."

Gionfriddo helped choreograph the eight original dance pieces in the show and also will dance. "It is tricky to do both the directing and performing," she said. Uhlemann said the production-direction trio started by thinking about the space, then converting a stage into the inside of a boy's head. The creators made use of walls, floor and a mezzanine. In effect, "We designed the show around the space," Uhlemann said. The show will start from the moment the audience enters the theater as they are funneled through three rooms — one exploring old technology, one with photos showing moments from the performance, and one with a large mural by Santa Fe Prep artist Lydia Abernathy. The rooms serve as a portal into Tommy's mind. The tarp on the stage floor is covered with writings by the dancers, who range in age from 13 to 27, expressing who they

are and what they believe. They are members of local Santa Fe dance companies, New Mexico School for the Arts and universities around the nation. Videographers and artists from local high schools helped create the multimedia show. And those familiar with the writing, acting and directing talents of Matt Sanford won't want to miss his cameo video performance in a bathtub. For anyone who's faced the prospect of describing themselves to strangers in a very limited amount of room, Tommy's struggle will be familiar. So will his coming to terms with some of the moments that have defined his young life. "I think there will be moments in the show that everyone can connect with," Uhlemann said.