

ARCOS Dance Concert

sense of
MOTION



ARCOS
company
dancers
will
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works

Erica Gionfriddo will perform in ARCOS Dance's Spring Repertory this weekend.

COURTESY OF ARCOS DANCE

BY KATHALEEN ROBERTS
Journal Staff Writer

ARCOS mixes the atonal jazz of Charles Mingus with John Adams' minimalist melodies in a visceral swirl for spring.

Santa Fe's newest dance company will premier two original works this weekend at the MPD Performance Space at 1583 Pacheco St.

The spring debut follows the fledgling company's multi-media production "500 Words or Less" in February.

Choreographers Curtis Uhlemann and Erica Gionfriddo launched the contemporary dance company last August. Its 10-25 members range from pre-professional students to professional dancers.

If you go

WHAT: ARCOS Dance Spring Repertory Concert

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. tonight, Saturday and April 13-14; 2 p.m. April 15.

WHERE: MPD Performance Space, 1583 Pacheco St., Suite A2

COST: \$20/adults; \$13/students

CONTACT: 505-473-7434 or info@arcosdance.com.

"The idea is to incorporate young artists from Santa Fe who are interested in performing and to give them some opportunities to dance," Uhlemann said. "We

wanted to use them as members of the group and incorporate them into the creative process. We wanted to start off as that bridge, that connection."

The dancers range in age from 14 to 27 and come from Columbia University, the University of California at Irvine, the University of New Mexico, the National Dance Institute of New Mexico and the New Mexico School for the Arts. The founders plan to expand into both a fall Southwestern tour and some European dates by the summer of 2013.

The Mingus piece has been percolating inside Uhlemann's head for some time. Never performed, "The Children's Hour of Dream" was discovered after the composer died.

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The dancers slide down, jump off and run up ramps set up on stage. "It's very raw," said Uhlemann, ARCOS's artistic director. "I really like the brass and the horns. It's very atonal and contrapuntal."

"I didn't have the right people to do it" until now, he continued. "It has this heavy, really abstract sort of community, like if there was a (group) of people who existed someplace else. I try visually to get around what I'm hearing. For me, the music always comes first."

Associate artistic director Gionfriddo, who also dances in the piece, said the movements reflected the style of the music without necessarily lining up with the meter.

"We just embodied the piece," she said. "I get a feeling or a sense of motion in my body. He'll say, 'I need you to come up with a phrase to this piece of the music.'"

The Pulitzer Prize-winning composer John Adams' "Soledades" explores gentler themes of solitude.

"The score is like the transcription of a storm that slowly builds in intensity, pours down for a few moments, and leaves everything calm but altered afterward," Uhlemann said.

The continually shifting meter offers multiple opportunities in a canvas that incorporates video projection.

"I wanted to give the audience a chance to really see the movement," Uhlemann said. The dancers "roll under the screen and projection makes it appear like they are dancing up the wall. There's this epic feel to the piece."

"To Have Everything" is an audience favorite dating to 2009 dedicated to Uhlemann's mother. Set on a white floor anchored by five dancers draped in a palette of whites, it features the music of Santa Fe composer Eliot Gray Fisher.

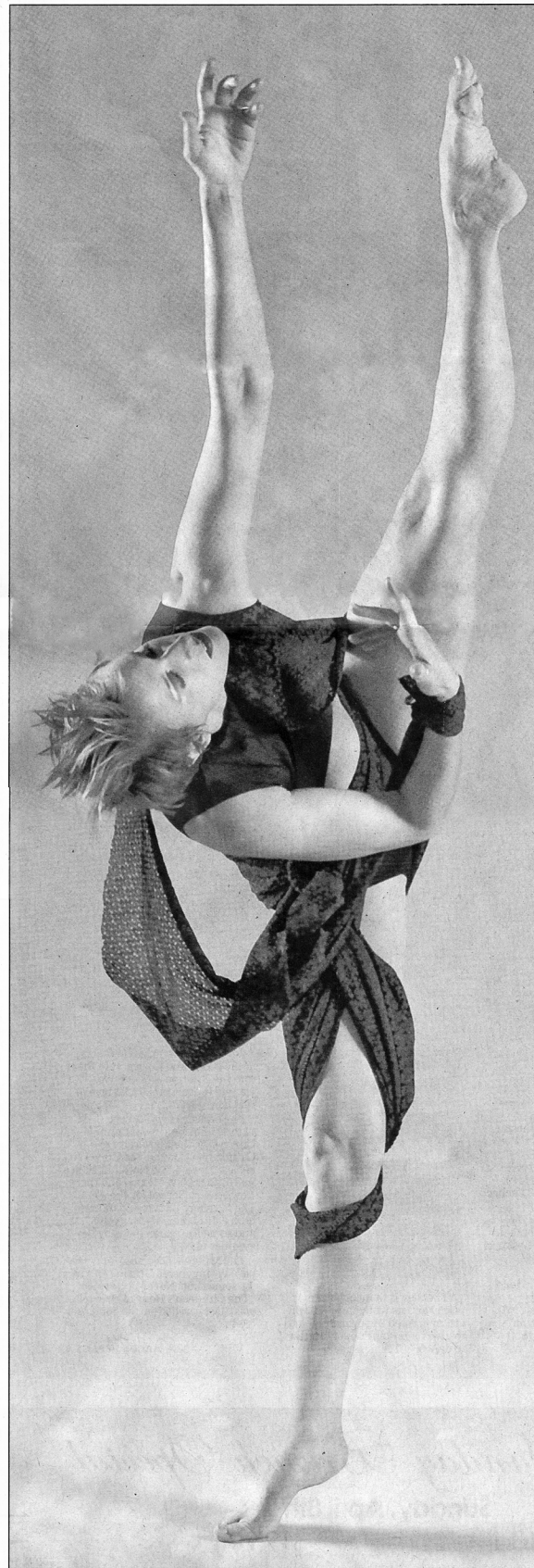
"I wanted to show this powerful side and strength in women," Uhlemann explained.

Uhlemann has always wanted to create; he stumbled into a college dance class because the teachers were — as always — desperate for men. He chose the name "ARCOS" as a derivative of his favorite word "Arcadia."

"I danced for a while, but I was always more interested in being behind the scenes," he said. "I've got pieces that are living in my head, and I just need to get them out. The goal with this is to create something that lasts."



Curtis Uhlemann is the artistic director of ARCOS Dance.



Erica Gionfriddo is the associate artistic director of ARCOS Dance.