

TOUR DANCE COMPANY & FACULTY INVITED TO INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL



Assistant Professor Chung-Fu Chang and five members of the Tour Dance Company he directs have been invited to showcase their performance and choreography at the International Festival of Contemporary Dance Avant Garde Mexico in Merida Yucatan, Mexico on May 24 and 25. The appearance will augment the dance program's international reputation and provide students with an incredible experience to further their careers in dance.

The Avant Garde Festival was created in 1999 to promote the dance movement of Mexico and its leading figures, to foster documentation and information about dance as a process of construction of repertoire, and to advance the free creation of new movement in stage presentation. This year's festival includes representatives from Sweden, Switzerland, Venezuela, Spain, Taiwan, Mexico, and the United States.

Chang was invited to perform at this month-long event in Mexico's second largest city by Cristobal Ocana Dorantes, the director of the Cultural Trust Threshold Contemporary Dance Company, after seeing Chang perform his dance entitled "Ash Wind" at the World Dance Forum in Buenos Aires, Argentina in October 2007. Upon invitation to participate in the festival, Chang offered to provide a showcase of his repertory work performed by him and Colorado State's Tour Dance Company.

The Tour Dance Company is a pre-professional dance company that presents the diversity of dance and promotes the expression of culture through dance. In the last five years, the Company has successfully taught, performed and brought the art of world dances to more than 50 schools and 10,000 people at educational institutions, festivals and community events throughout Colorado, California and Wyoming. Proceeds from their work support scholarship funds for dance students at Colorado State.

At the Avant Garde Festival, Chang and the Tour Dance Company will present more than one hour of a wide range of Chang's choreography, including the world premiere of "Pebbles from the Kaoping River" performed by Chang and Tour Dance Company members. With a combination of Taiwanese Aboriginal and Western scores, the piece is an exploration of humanity and oral traditions and how they connect with inanimate objects.

Chang will perform two of his solo choreographic works: "Thousand Threads," which draws inspiration from a Chinese classical lecture phrase, and "Golden Heat," which uses a Chinese iron fan as a prop and fuses Eastern and Western movement as a metaphor to portray the Greek mythological figure Icarus.

Company members Chantel Doyon, Rich Lugo, Ariane Pfneisl, Noelle Robinson, and Grady Soapes will perform "Segments," in their first presentation of the piece that was originally performed by the Kent State University Dance Division in December 2002; "Ash Wind," a piece that fuses a rich Chinese heritage and Western dance tradition to portray life as a grain of sand that disappears in the wind traceless; and "In/Out" that uses Chinese writing characters as metaphors for kinetic space that dancers and movements abstract from Chinese calligraphy and transform into an infinite universe.

With a strong focus on his own Chinese heritage in Taiwan, Chang's choreography is well-matched to an international audience. He says, "I am most excited for the opportunity to have people understand how my traditional Chinese culture influences my dance. At the same time, this is a unique chance to immerse myself in a country and culture I have not experienced."

The Avant Garde Festival is the Tour Dance Company's first international performance, and students welcome this opportunity to gain a new level of exposure that will significantly benefit them as they pursue careers in dance.

Company member Grady Soapes remembers his excitement and anticipation upon learning about the invitation to perform. "When Professor Chang first proposed the trip, there was no question in my mind that I wanted to go. I applied for my passport immediately. An opportunity like this is extremely rare and who knows if it will ever come along again. It is a huge honor!" he says.

Chang notes that it has taken years of preparation to give students the required skills, confidence and maturity to perform at the international level. He plans to continue building the national reputation of the Tour Dance Company and providing company members with the skills and experiences they need to successfully pursue a career in dance.

Company member Chantel Doyon echoes Soapes' excitement and recognizes how valuable Chang's work to promote the company has been for the students. Doyon says, "Being able to perform internationally is an unbelievable opportunity that will have an enormous impact on my career because it will be an amazing learning experience, giving me more training as a dancer in professional environment. This opportunity will open up the door to more in the future."

Chang has performed in Cyprus, Greece, Argentina, England and Taiwan, and is honored to be part of the Avant Garde Festival. He says, "I am pleased to be able to meet great people from around the world and honored to be invited and share the CSU Dance program with the world!"

Chang continues with his national and international work during 2008-09, including a performance of "Red Tides" for the Aspen Dance Connection, setting one of his pieces of choreography on the dance company of the Glenwood Springs Center for the Arts, choreographing a new piece for Mesa State College, setting his work In/Out on the National Tainan Chia-Chi Girls Senior High School Dance Division in Taiwan, and choreographing a new piece for Taiwan's Chung Hwa School of the Arts.

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