

Wolf adds a woman's view to Men In Dance

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- By: Rosemary Jones



Deborah Wolf's "Frattura" is one of the many pieces that she's created for Men In Dance.

Credits:

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Although the festival is called Men In Dance, women have played an important role since its early years. Choreographer Deborah Wolf, Professor of Dance at Seattle's Cornish College of the Arts, has created works for the festival since 1998. On the East Coast, she was Artistic Director, Resident Choreographer and dancer for Concert Dance Company of Boston.

Wolf's work can be seen this weekend as Men In Dance continues at the Broadway Performance Hall. Earlier, she answered the following questions about festival as well as the next generation of male dancers that she sees in her classroom.

What does a festival like Men In Dance allow you to do that you couldn't do elsewhere?

Many college programs, companies, and producing organizations that offer opportunities for choreographers and dancers are dominated by numbers of female dancers. The male population is generally much smaller (Cornish College has about 10 men to 60 women). Most of the commissioned works I've created are mostly with women or with one or two men. To create work for only men is usually not an option.

At the higher levels, dance in America largely has been dominated by male choreographers -- so it's interesting to see in a festival dedicated to "Men In Dance" with a strong tradition of women choreographers. How does having women choreograph pieces for men impact the festival -- and dance in general?

For the festival, having women choreograph widens the availability of more choreographers to choose from, broadens the possibility of different aesthetics, styles and points of view. In the dance field in general, there are a vast number of female choreographers. As you state, the fact that at higher

levels in dance in America , dance has been dominated by male choreographers is an interesting topic, one that I think is on the minds of many in the dance field. Interesting because the numbers of dancers in the field is still dominantly women.

At Cornish, what type of men are you seeing coming into the program there?

Male students are coming with histories of competition dance, musical theater, some traditional studio training (usually ballet and jazz), some street dance and public and private high school programs which often include some creative process work.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the young male dancers that you see these days? They are generally strong movers who attack movement and take risks, but are weaker in their technical training.

What do dance programs like Cornish need to do to make their men successful in pursuing a dance career after college?

At Cornish, some of our goals are to train them as thinking artists, as responsible and reliable professionals; developing a clean and efficient technical base with a mind towards performance versatility, and developing their creativity in all aspects of being in the world and managing their lives.