

Still Dancing

After All These Years

Art and Athleticism at 100

A June 10-14
Celebration Planned

BACK IN THE SUMMER OF 2005, dance faculty member Jessica Fogel was at the Bentley Historical Library, researching a lecture on the history of dance at Michigan.

Box after box of archival materials were brought up from storage, a seemingly untapped vein of resources: clippings from *The Michigan Daily*, souvenirs from impeccable and detailed scrapbooks kept by the Department of Women's Phys Ed, dance cards—and photos, lots and lots of photos.

"I began to see pictures of people frolicking on the lawn in Greek tunics, in the 1930s, the 1920s, even as early as 1910. Who were these women?" Fogel asked herself.

AS SHE SIFTED THROUGH THE fragile photographs and keepsakes of the past, hands sheathed in Bentley-issued white gloves, she happened upon something new. Even though the department hadn't officially been founded until 1974, Fogel saw that classes in dance had been on the books for years leading up to that milestone.

"I learned that dance had been officially in the curriculum at Michigan since



1909," Fogel says, "a fact unknown to me and to my colleagues." That first class was called "aesthetic dance" and was taught by Catherine Bigelow, faculty in women's phys ed and director of the Barbour Gymnasium for Women.

It was an era when the teaching of dance was first entering physical training curriculum in phys ed. "It was moving away from militaristic calisthenics and marching and drilling to a freer form of gymnastics."

Through necrology reports—death notices—Fogel was able to learn important details about Bigelow and other early faculty members. "Bigelow's class in aesthetic dancing was actually a

modified form of ballet she had studied with Melvin Ballou Gilbert at the Boston Normal School of Gymnastics, where she was a student in the 1890s."

A FEW YEARS LATER, when Fogel and her colleagues were planning for the 2009 annual Power Center performance, 'ping' went the light bulb over her head. The occasion for a centennial celebration at U-M was looming.

Thus was born *Dancing at 100: Celebrating a Century of Dance at the University of Michigan, 1909-2009*, scheduled for June 10-14 this summer in Ann Arbor. Alumni from near and far will return to their alma mater for four days of master classes, dance performances, and lecture



Students would often form a Block M after the annual J-Hop

presentations, all capped off with a site-specific dance that will trace—literally—the history of dance on campus.

Starting out at the site of the old Barbour Gym for Women, alumni and current dance majors will evoke scenes of U-M dance from the past. The performers will dance their way across North University and Washtenaw to the Dance Building, where more memory vignettes will be performed, then by bus to North Campus, which holds promise for a new dance facility in the future.

Four wayfaring musicians will shadow the dancing procession as it wends its way along the route. The group will pause at the summit of the hill just below Stockwell Hall, overlooking Palmer Field, where echoes of a time gone by will be recreated.

THAT LONG-AGO TRADITION was Lantern Night, started in 1910 as a rite of spring, where women in long white dresses and black caps and gowns would congregate on Palmer Field. There, in a solemn yet joyous ceremony, junior women presented flower-festooned hoops to sophomores and senior women passed lanterns to the juniors, ending in a dramatic diorama among flickering lights forming a block M.

Freshman pageants that included dance were a part of Lantern Night, and a rehearsal for such a pageant will be suggested in a brief display for the audience observing from the top of the hill. Once the entourage reaches

its final destination on North Campus, a 21st century version of Lantern Night will play out. There, among the trees, the revelers will recreate that ritual passing of the torch, this time linking the legacy of the past to a new future, lanterns held aloft in the gathering twilight.

That day will end at the Bentley Historical Library with a reception and a chance to view a special exhibit of dance photographs, articles, and videos, curated especially for the centennial.

A COMMEMORATIVE BOOK

compiled by Fogel, with contributing articles from all of the department chairs over the years, is in the works. From Liz Bergmann, first chair of dance, to the late Gay Delanghe—with Fogel filling in for her long-time friend—through Peter Sparling, Bill DeYoung, and up to and including current chair Angela Kane, each contributing memories of their respective eras, noting key events in the life of the department.



Liz Bergmann and Gay Delanghe

An account of the early history of dance at U-M, by Fogel, will accompany archival photos. Dance faculty member Christian Matjias, who has been researching the life and work of Jeanne Parsons Bostian, will contribute a section on this seminal U-M dance teacher and alumna.

PROMINENT ALUMNI FROM ALL YEARS

are returning to town, including that first chair, Liz Bergmann, now heading up dance at Harvard. Bergmann, who was hired by Betty Pease in 1960, was pivotal in pushing for the creation of a department in the early 1970s, taking it out from under phys ed and bringing it under the aegis of what is now the School of Music, Theatre & Dance. “Gay Delanghe and I built the department, together,” Bergmann says.

Bergmann will choreograph a new work for the occasion, as part of two days of short chamber works by current dance faculty and guest alumni artists.

Another honored guest will be Christine Dakin, a native of Ann Arbor and a U-M alumna known for her performance of Martha Graham’s roles in works like *Appalachian Spring* and *Clytemnestra*, and roles Graham created for her in *Rite of Spring* and *Phaedra’s Dream*, in which she was partnered by Rudolf Nureyev.

AMONG THE SCHEDULED PERFORMERS

is Dana Reitz (‘70), a choreographer, dancer, and visual artist who toured with Mikhail Baryshnikov in a program of solos. Expect to see another new work by alumna Leyya Tawil (‘97), inspired by characters from the commedia dell’arte, with emphasis on the play between the wistful Pedrolino and the trickster Arlecchino.

Many other surprises lie in store. For more information, please visit the *Dancing at 100* Web site: <http://site-maker.umich.edu/dancingat100> or contact Samantha Strayer, sstrayer@umich.edu (734) 763-5460. *De*