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**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA DANCE PROGRAM TO PRESENT
EXPLORATIONS: AN EXPERIMENTAL DANCE CONCERT**

October 16 at 8PM and October 17 at 2PM and 8PM at Culbreth Theatre

**Program Features Original Modern Dance Works
by Student and Faculty Choreographers**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – October 8, 2009 – The University of Virginia Dance Program and Department of Drama will present **Explorations: An Experimental Dance Concert** on Friday, October 16 at 8PM and Saturday, October 17 at 2PM and 8PM at Culbreth Theatre.

The program features original contemporary dance works by student and faculty choreographers and provides both with an opportunity to stretch their creative and literal muscles in new and exciting ways, according to U.Va. Dance Program Director Rose Pasquarello Beauchamp. “This show is really about encouraging our students to try something they haven’t tried before. In most cases, they have never choreographed to this level before, and it’s about creating a safe space to just go for it. And we find that a lot of times this freedom can result in some really fantastic pieces.”

One example of what students are doing with that safe space comes from fourth year English majors Rebecca Connors and Camille Beckman. “They have come up with a really interesting concept,” Beauchamp said. “Theirs is the only duet in the program, and they started by writing a poem and then switched and finished each other’s poems. Then they did the same with the movement. Finally, they integrated all of that into text and movement in a way that explores the idea of how we can integrate writing and dancing. This is a perfect example of what this concert is about in terms of trying new things.”

Also in the spirit of integrating art forms, Beauchamp herself is presenting a piece that marries the worlds of dance and theater. “My piece is actually something I have been working on for some time,” she said. “I was in residence at Jacob’s Pillow in the Berkshires and did a workshop with theater and dance people in which we were tasked with creating a piece together. We gave ourselves a structure and I created part of it and a Russian director created part of it.”

The piece, she said, looks at a variety of gender issues as well as different ways of incorporating props into the dance experience.

Another faculty choreographer, Susan Barnard, has created a piece that capitalizes on the way dance has hit the mainstream through television shows like “Dancing with the Stars.” She is

using the traditional couples dance “Paso Doble” as a creative launching pad for a piece that allows her six student dancers to explore, among other things, modern relationship issues.

Explorations: An Experimental Dance Concert will feature eight pieces in all, including three choreographed by faculty and five by students. But choreography is hardly the only student input. “A lot of our choreographers have never worked at this level, so that is very eye opening and kind of blows them out of the water. Then add the fact that you have the dance production classes designing and running the show and the choreographers are working with student lighting and costume designers...it is a true collaborative effort for everyone and everyone is forced to step up to a level they may not have stepped up to before.”

All these factors combine to create great anticipation and excitement for audiences, Beauchamp said. “Audiences always love the energy of this show because there are so many dancers and so much newness to it all.”

Joining Beauchamp and Barnard as faculty choreographers for the show is Autumn Proctor. Student choreographers, in addition to Connors and Beckman, include Anna Barneja, Daniel Overstreet, Rachel Swartz and Tessa Nunn.

Tickets for **Explorations: An Experimental Dance Concert** are \$10 for the general public and \$5 for students and U.Va. faculty and staff. Tickets can be purchased online at <http://www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu/>. Tickets are also available by phone at 434-924-3376 between noon and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and in person at the Arts Box Office, located in the lobby of the Culbreth Theatre also from noon to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. A \$3.50 processing fee applies to Internet, phone and mail orders.

This spring, the U.Va. Dance Program will host a week-long residency with AXIS Dance Company, a nationally-acclaimed troupe focused on creating and presenting contemporary dance by artists with disabilities. The residency will feature performances in addition to student and community outreach through workshops, master classes, lectures, demonstrations and live performance.

For more information on **Explorations: An Experimental Dance Concert**, the AXIS residency and more, visit <http://www.virginia.edu/drama/danceproductions.htm>.

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