



Hollins University, American Dance Festival Create “Community of Artists” With M.F.A. in Dance

The Program, Which Will Launch Next Year, Is The First Of Its Kind In The U.S.

Roanoke, Va. – Hollins University has formed an unprecedented partnership with the country’s pre-eminent center for modern dance to create a master’s-level degree program.

Beginning in the summer of 2005, Hollins and the American Dance Festival (ADF) will offer a master of fine arts (M.F.A.) program in dance. While the ADF has worked closely with such prestigious institutions as Bennington College, Mills College and Duke University over its 70-year history, the alliance with Hollins marks the first time a college or university will offer a degree in partnership with the organization.

According to Donna Faye Burchfield, associate professor of dance at Hollins and ADF dean, the program will blend the resources of both institutions.

“Students will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the ADF’s modern dance heritage, which brings together artists and ideas from around the globe,” said Burchfield. “At the same time, they’ll benefit from the intimate atmosphere of learning at Hollins. It’s a complementary partnership that draws from the strengths of both institutions.”

The M.F.A. program will offer two tracks of study. In the year residency track, eight students will first spend six weeks during the summer at the ADF, located on the campus of Duke University in Durham, N.C. Then, the students will enroll for both the fall and spring terms at Hollins. The residency concludes with a second summer six-week session at the ADF.

The second track, a low residency program, is designed for mid-career artists, teachers, and dance professionals who must study in a limited time frame that accommodates their employment/performance schedules. The six students in this track attend the ADF for six weeks during the summer, followed by 16 days at Hollins. During the fall and spring terms, they engage in independent study and fieldwork. A second

summer again consisting of six weeks at the ADF and 16 days at Hollins finishes this track.

Burchfield described both tracks as “rigorous yet flexible. The curriculum can absorb whatever artistic direction in which you want to go. You can evolve as an artist in this program and ground yourself in your own personal aesthetic. Above all, we want to establish a community of artists where the six ‘elders’ will mentor the younger eight students.”

The creation of the M.F.A. program comes as Hollins achieves as milestone: 2004 marks the 50th year that the institution has fostered a creative environment for modern dance.

“Modern dance’s evolution at Hollins is quite distinguished,” said Burchfield. “The most important figures in early modern dance helped set the tone here.”

The ADF’s history with modern dance parallels the growth of this art form. Founded in 1934 at Bennington College in Vermont, the organization over the years has attracted such internationally renowned teachers, performers and choreographers as Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Twyla Tharp, and Alvin Ailey. In 1987, ADF teachers began the first modern dance program in China; today, a total of 44 countries around the world are represented in the organization.

“The ADF is excited to work with Hollins University on this extraordinary partnership,” said ADF Director Charles Reinhart. “We all look forward to furthering the careers of dancers and choreographers.”

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