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SMC Dancers in Fragments

By Lou Fancher



Dancers rehearse Tali Stevens' All There is, is in Your Mind. Photo Francesca Crebassa
keep-a higher caliber of dancer to our program now."

Zhe Jerry Lin's A Time When the World was Silent promises a personal statement about human devaluation. Drawing from the Nanjing Massacre of 1937, a brutal conflict between the Japanese and Chinese people and a story Lin was told countless times by his parents and grandparents, Lin says the solo has allowed him to explore human values and emotions.

Hailey Yaffee, will dive into matters of faith with Pardon the Spiritual Minds, a group piece with original music by E.J. Youngblood. "We had many phone conversations to listen to the sections of music he created and from there we would figure out what worked and what didn't," Yaffee explains. "He also attended some of my dance rehearsals. In the end, I described the emotions I wanted my dancers to feel while dancing and he created a theme that fit that motif."

Lauren Rose O'Leary's green, blue, brown, hazel, is a dance focused on unleashing the deepest personal traits of each dancer.

Melissa Weik, a Communication major with a minor in dance, is combining the two disciplines in infectious ripple (are you Happy now?). Reflecting Weik's global outlook, four dancers, searching for bliss, find it through a fifth, central character.

Tali Stevens is a Lafayette native who studied at the California Academy of Performing Arts in Moraga. Stevens dares to address fear in All There is, is in Your Mind, allowing the emotion to fill the stage, before the dancer at the center of the storm breaks free and conquers the dark shadows.

Lin and Yaffee, who had the opportunity to speak about SMC's dance program, praise the department's intellectual training, as much as the physical rigor. Performing at the Kennedy center was a highlight for both dancers. "The Kennedy Center has such an incredible history of hosting talented performers and to be a part of that legacy was unreal. It will forever be one of my fondest memories," Yaffee says. Lin describes the opportunity as "breath-taking," and "a true honorary experience."

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Saint Mary's College Dance Company will present works of substance in Fragments, the annual fall concert running December 2nd though the 4th.

Traveling high on the prestige of last spring's performance as invited guests to the National College Dance Festival at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, five senior students will premiere new work.

Program Director Catherine Davalos came to the department 14 years ago. There was one dance major," she says, "now, there are 40 dancers in the company, and the number of classes has gone from 2 to 40. Our next challenge is how to house all this growth!"

Participation in local and national showcases has "raised the bar of the technique of the dancers," according to Davalos. "Last year, we won our conference title," she says, borrowing from sports lingo, "that's how you get to the Kennedy Center."

With plans to attend the 2011 conference and a number of gigs in the Bay Area, Davalos is committed to plugging her dancers into as many opportunities as possible. She is particularly proud of the work premiering at the LeFevre Theatre in December: "We attract-and