



Poised: ETSU dance classes step on stage with theatre

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By Sheila Gystad

Dance at ETSU took quite a turn in the 2007-2008 school year. As a new facet of the Theatre Division of the Communication Department, the instructors say they hope dance will become better recognized.

"The marriage of dance and theatre is that rare thing ... a perfect marriage," said Pat Cronin, head of the theatre division and longtime actor and director.

This change will give students the opportunity to take dance classes geared more toward choreography and theatre. Theatre graduates have told former professors that choreography has been their weakest area in auditions, Cronin said.

In addition to the changes that are anticipated, the dance instructors are also hoping for more visibility, now that it is no longer mixed in with physical education courses but instead, an active part of ETSU's theatrical endeavors. "I believe dance will grow and expand much better," said Judy Woodruff, longtime dance instructor at ETSU and professional dancer.

This partnership should open new doors, Woodruff said. "We hope to find a broader interest in students with dancing offered under Dance instead of PE," Woodruff said.

Although throughout the years dance and theatre have had somewhat of a connection, said Cara Harker, it is being put to the test at ETSU. "I think they complement each other naturally," said Harker, a new dance instructor at ETSU.

Harker has been dancing since she was 3 years old, while Woodruff has been at ETSU in the dance program since 1982. "Without the amazing leadership of Judy Woodruff, the flame of dance here would have died long ago," Cronin said.

With many new things happening in the dance program, it should become easier to find more dance classes in the ETSU catalog and schedule, Woodruff said. New courses are now offered under DANC instead of PEXS. "Check both," Woodruff said.

Because more classes being offered and finding them should be easier, Woodruff and Harker say they hope that more students will become interested in dance as an academic pursuit. "We feel students will be more interested and able to find the classes more suited for them under the new listing," Woodruff said.

This spring the ETSU dance division presented its first concert. Most students who were chosen in fall auditions were required to take a repertory dance class, taught by Woodruff and Harker. "I think the concert is a great way to give the dance program more exposure," Harker said.

A minor in dance is also being discussed, said Harker and Woodruff. This should take place in the next three years, followed shortly by a theatre major, Cronin said.

The ETSU Theatre Division welcomes the dance addition and collaboration is the outlook for the future, Cronin said. Dance was included in fall 2007's *Cherry Orchard* and integral to spring 2008's *Grease*. "We are already collaborating in our curricula and in our performance schedule," he said. "With a new dance program, in addition to dance concerts, you'll be seeing more dance-oriented musicals and operas."