

LEWIS CENTER FOR THE ARTS PRESENTS

# *40 Years of Dance at Princeton*



Photo by Jack Mitchell

## A TRIBUTE TO ZE'EVA COHEN

*Featuring Utah's Repertory Dance Theatre and alumni  
performing the choreography of Ze'eva Cohen*

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 2010 AT 6:00 PM

Berlind Theatre | McCarter Theatre Center | Princeton, NJ

LEWIS CENTER  
PRINCETON  
DANCE

arts

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## WELCOME FROM PAUL MULDOON

It's been a thrill to stand back and try to take in the extent of the groundwork Ze'eva Cohen has done over the past 40 years. Those 40 years have seen only a gradual, still sometimes grudging, acceptance of the role of the artist in the academy. Ze'eva's own persistence has, I'm certain, been a major component in such a philosophical and perceptual shift here at Princeton. From years of making do, of dancing on a wing and a prayer, we're now entering an era in which dance will flourish even more vibrantly in the ground Ze'eva has prepared, and with the full support of the University. We will always remember Ze'eva Cohen as an exemplar of that figure of the artist in the academy. I think of her as a beautiful tree, responsive and supple but with her feet planted resolutely, solidly, in the earth.

## A NOTE FROM MICHAEL CADDEN

Given all that's happened in the arts at Princeton recently, it's difficult to imagine what it must have been like for Ze'eva to build a dance program over the course of four decades. Being a pioneer isn't all that it's cracked up to be, and the environment in which Ze'eva initially found herself must have at times seemed hostile to all she held most dear. There was certainly no question at the beginning of her journey that one day she would be a tenured professor at the university. What did she care, she had a blossoming career to manage!

But course by course, memo by memo, Ze'eva worked to make it clear just why and how dance belonged in the curriculum. Our students now dance, choreograph, and study dance history in every dance class we offer - a tripartite educational template Ze'eva evolved to speak both to the beginners in "Dance for Klutzes" as well as to those who matriculated with years of technical training. She recruited faculty members committed to working with the bodies, minds, hearts, and souls of our endlessly inquisitive undergraduates.

For 15 years, I was privileged to share this enterprise with Ze'eva. She sometimes referred to me as her boss, and because I was the Director of the Program in Theater and Dance, she was technically correct. But Ze'eva was really my colleague and my co-conspirator, the thorn in my side and the jewel in my crown, my sister-in-arms and my friend. Our new Lewis Center for Arts is built on the foundation she helped to lay.

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## MY REFLECTIONS ON 40 YEARS OF DANCE AT PRINCETON

Dance officially came to Princeton in 1969, when the University opened its gates to undergraduate women. Dance was one of the “special needs” anticipated by the administration for the incoming women, along with shorter beds, kitchen facilities, and secure locks on dormitory doors.

What sort of dance? Princeton decided to take a comprehensive approach, introducing students to the creative and theoretical aspects of modern dance, as well as the physical and mental discipline of dance technique and performance. I was the first teacher, leading the dance program and its development for the next 40 years.

Student response was enthusiastic, and 50 of the 60 in my first class who enrolled were men. Clearly, both female and male students had a hunger for physical expression in an artistic context and a desire to develop self-awareness through movement. The first annual out-of-doors dance demonstration, “To Dance is to Live, #1,” took place on Poe Field one glorious Sunday in April, 1970. A group of long-haired, bare-chested, body-painted men and a few women performed to the accompaniment of conga drums and a rock ‘n roll band before a large crowd. They presented a twenty-minute assemblage of work prepared in class throughout the year—a bold, proud performance that gave expression to their youthful exuberance and their conflicts, particularly their feelings of anger and fear about the Vietnam War.

Since that modest beginning, dance at Princeton has flourished, with many milestones along the way. In 1975, dance became part of the academic Program in Theater and Dance. In 1985, the opening of Richardson Auditorium in a refurbished Alexander Hall gave us a venue where dance could begin to be presented in a manner approaching professional standards. In 1986, the creation of the Patricia and Ward Hagan ’48 Dance Studio at 185 Nassau Street provided a fully equipped dance studio, as well as a facility for informal showings by students, faculty and guest artists. In 2003, the opening of the Roger S. Berlind Theatre made it possible for student dancers to present collaborations, such as Prokofiev’s “Pas d’Acier” and Nijinsky’s “L’Après-midi d’un faune,” that have brought national attention to Princeton.

Most recently, President Shirley M. Tilghman has enlarged the University’s mission to include “Princeton in the Service of the Imagination,” a phrase coined by poet Paul Muldoon. She understands how the arts foster creative habits of thought appropriate to any field of study, and improve the quality of life for practitioners and viewers alike. The Lewis Center for the Arts, inaugurated in 2007 and now chaired by

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Muldoon, has emphatically affirmed the central role of the arts at Princeton.

Princeton's is one of very few university dance programs in which active professional artists offer a comprehensive approach to the art form — and not just to dance concentrators, but to all students. Program students, who include physicists, engineers, and social scientists as well as concentrators in the humanities, are encouraged to integrate their dance studies with their academic disciplines in rich and meaningful ways. Many have written junior papers and senior theses connecting their knowledge of dance to their major fields of study. By drawing on kinetic, spatial, visual, and musical intelligence as well as verbal and mathematical intelligence, students involved in dance can bring special insight to their subject matter. A psychology major, for instance, studied nonverbal communication and body language; an architecture major related the set designs of Isamu Noguchi to the concept of space in the choreography of Martha Graham.

Some enhance their written theses with dance presentations, often involving large casts of student dancers and collaborations with other students in music or visual arts. Choreographic theses have addressed topics as varied as the body and the machine, the involvement of turn-of-the-century working class women in prostitution, and concepts of the feminine in the work of philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. One student in Near Eastern studies translated a Persian story-poem and choreographed a long work inspired by this poem, performed with a décor of scrolls painted by a student in visual arts.

Princeton now offers a model for the integration of performing and creative arts with high-level academic studies. In a world that relies increasingly on simulated experience delivered via video screen, the tactile whole-body experience of dance and other arts is rare and valuable. Learning to shape the flow of stimuli and information traveling between mind and body into work whose meaning can be shared with others is a worthy goal of a liberal arts education.

I am, of course, proud that some Princeton graduates have become professional dancers, choreographers, directors, dance professors, and dance therapists. But I am no less gratified by what I hear from students who have become ministers, military officers, doctors, and scientists. It was good to hear from astrophysicist Ken Davis '87 how dance changed his life: "Thank you for showing me passion in my work. I judge career goals by how I enjoyed performing at Richardson. It's a tough standard, but I might as well shoot high."

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One of my favorite comments about our dance program came from Suzy Schweiters '93: "Dance is a window on the world. It bears insights into course work, personal relationships, and political and social issues. I cannot count the number of times I entered the studio tired and confused, only to leave with a clear mind, a new way of looking at a situation, and a burst of energy. But perhaps Ze'eva's most important contribution to Princeton is bringing the idea of dance to 'non-dancers.' As she states, 'All people can dance.' She stresses not just the movement but a whole way of sensing with the body and mind."

In fall 2009, after a long and creative partnership with theater, dance became an autonomous program, with its own voice and its own director. Courses now range from "Introduction to Movement and Dance" to "Contemporary" and "World" Dance, as well as "Dance History and Criticism". There are also upper-level classes in which students learn works by well-known choreographers such as Mark Morris and Twyla Tharp, courses in performance workshops, visits by guest choreographers, and a daily ballet class.

As I leave Princeton after 40 years, I am gratified to see dance thriving both in the curriculum and in the 16 different student dance companies that span a diverse cultural spectrum. I am profoundly grateful to President Tilghman, to Roger S. Berlind '52, and to Peter B. Lewis '55 for their steadfast and generous support.

I am thankful to Paul Muldoon for his committed and courageous leadership as the first chair of the Lewis Center for the Arts, and to my former colleague, Carol Rigolot, Executive Director of the Humanities Council, who was a close advisor for three decades, and to Michael Cadden, now Director of the Program in Theater but formerly the Director of the Program in Theater and Dance, with whom I worked very closely for 15 years. I am also deeply indebted to the talented and dedicated dance faculty who helped foster our dreams throughout the years. I wish Susan Marshall, our first Director of Dance, success and fulfillment as she continues to build the Program in Dance at Princeton.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to my students, from whom I have learned so much. It has been a joy to share passion and knowledge with you.

It has been an incredible journey.

*Ze'eva Cohen*

April 3, 2010

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# A TRIBUTE TO ZE' EVA COHEN

## RAINWOOD

Choreography: Ze'eva Cohen

Repertory Dance Theatre Dancers: Sarah Donohue, Rosy Goodman, M. Colleen Hoelscher, Chara Huckins, Toni Lugo, Christopher Peddecord, Aaron Wood

Music: Environmental sound [Dawn-Okifenokk Swamp]

Lighting Design: James Larsen

Costume and Projection Design: Avri Ohana

Rehearsal Assistant: Nicholas Cendese

*Premiere: 1977, University of California/Santa Cruz*

## WELCOME

Paul Muldoon, *Chair, Lewis Center for the Arts*

Susan Marshall, *Director, Program in Dance, Lewis Center for the Arts*

## MEMORIES OF ZE' EVA COHEN AS DANCER AND CHOREOGRAPHER

Deborah Jowitt, *Dance Critic and Historian*

## ARIADNE

Choreography: Ze'eva Cohen

Repertory Dance Theatre Dancer: Rosy Goodman

Music: P. Vangleis with Irene Papas, vocals

Lighting Design: James Larsen

Costume Design: A. Christina Giannini

*Premiere: 1985, Ze'eva Cohen and Dancers, New York City*

## FILM DOCUMENTARY - ZE' EVA COHEN: A LIFE IN DANCE

Editor/Producer: Sharon Kaufman

## NEGOTIATIONS WITH ZE' EVA

Michael Cadden, *Director, Program in Theater, Lewis Center for the Arts*

## REFLECTIONS FROM ALUMNI

Carter McAdams '73

Jill Sigman '89

Mariah Steele '06

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FILM DOCUMENTARY - PRINCETON DANCES: A PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMOIR, 1969-2009

Curator: Ze'eva Cohen

Editor: Evan Younger '08

WIG WISE [AN EXCERPT FROM CIRCLES II]

Choreography: Ze'eva Cohen

Princeton Alumni Dancers: Kristen Arnold '06, Christine Chen '97,

Hana Ginsburg '04, Julie Rubinger '09, Elizabeth Schwall '09, Jennie Scholick '09,

Indre Vengris '04

Music: Duke Ellington

Lighting Design: Aaron Copp

Costumer: Catherine Cann

*Premiere: 1992, Spectrum Dance Theater, Seattle, Washington*

REFLECTIONS FROM ALUMNUS

David Rousseve '81

CLOSING

Ze'eva Cohen



Ze'eva Cohen as Sarah from Margalit Oved's *Mother's of Israel*, photo by Lois Greenfield

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