

**By Bing Mark  
FOR THE INQUIRER**

It will be the biggest dance party ever held in Philadelphia. And the theme is the universal language of dance — especially how American modern dance is sprouted around the globe.

2000 Feet: A Celebration of World Dance, a combination festival and international conference, begins on Saturday. With about 25 international dance companies, ranging from Venezuela's Ballet Metropolitano de Caracas to Beijing's Chinese Folk Dance Troupe, 2000 Feet fits 25 performances — and dozens of other events — into a single week.

So if this is a party, who else is invited?

Besides the international companies, about 35 local groups and seven other U.S. troupes will be performing. Every program is a "mixed bill" — no single style predominates. In fact, each program, in theory, includes an international company, a local dance company, a modern or post-modern dance company, and a traditional, national/ethnic or "folk" dance company.

The festival starts with a gala at the Merriam on Saturday evening, continues with a big show at the Merriam every night through Thursday, and closes with a public dance party

in City Hall courtyard next Friday. There will be outdoor performances, lecture/demonstrations, twilight showcases and late-night gatherings. Many events are free.

The audience will be as diverse as the performers. The World Dance Alliance, the Dance Critics Association, the American Dance Therapy Association, and several other professional groups are holding their annual meetings in Philadelphia this week.

The international entourage, a hundred or so University of the Arts students, plus conference registrants together mean that more than 800 dance-hungry people will be jostling with Philadelphians for seats. The numbers also will mean lots of networking, cross-over exposure, and a chance for Philadelphia to shine.

"The goal of 2000 Feet is to give tremendous visibility to dance as an art form, and to Philadelphia as a hub of dance activity," says Pearl Schaefer, Philadelphia Dance Alliance executive director and festival cochair.

Other dance festivals, like the American Dance Festival in Durham, N.C., or Jacob's Pillow in western Massachusetts, focus primarily on modern dance or new work. 2000 Feet is all about juxtaposition: filmmaker Noche Flamenco, originally from Madrid and now based in New York, next to Isaburoh Hanayagi's

of layered conventions (the Spanish gypsies and Japanese peasants among us excepted) — yet Noche Flamenco's recognizable family dynamics and Hanayagi's short, joyful character studies, because they use music and gesture, require less translation than a Spanish or Japanese road sign.

Another trend in world dance is the tendency of postmodern choreographers to mix and match: "We see the future of dance," says festival co-chair Susan Glazer, director of the University of the Arts School of Dance, "as the breaking down of the stylistic and genre boundaries, and the mixing of different elements into every one of those forms."

Australia's Expressions and Wisconsin's Li Chiao-Ping Dance, for example, share a similar antic and risky sensibility. Dance Forum Taipei's pieces and a local reconstruction of Paul Taylor's *Espionnage* will manipulate the same reduced vocabulary of brisk walking and running.

Missing from 2000 Feet are the big national ballet and European modern dance companies with rosters of 40 to 100 dancers. The reason, of course, is money. The 16 companies from Asia had to find government or corporate sponsorship to travel here. 2000 Feet pays only a per-diem and lodging. Still, with the help of the World Dance Alliance, more than 200 compa-

nics applied to come to the festival. Many are coming to the United States for the first time.

Basing programming decisions mainly on videotapes is risky business: It's easy to see that the dancers are very well-trained, but harder to determine the impact of the choreography. (Neither Glazer nor Schaeffer has seen more than one or two of the international companies live.) The upside to all this uncertainty is the promise of discoveries. That's why this country's dance professionals are showing up — it's a chance to see beyond the usual "world dance" suspects.

Yes, this is a festival for the adventurous — but adventure in dance never has been, and perhaps never will be, so easy.

The Arts Bank, at Broad and South Streets, is host to three lecture/demonstrations (low-tech performances and discussions) over the course of each weekday, beginning at 10 a.m.

There will be outdoor performances in the City Hall courtyard at 12:30 p.m. each weekday. (No rain dates — if it rains, come back the next day to see another grouping.)

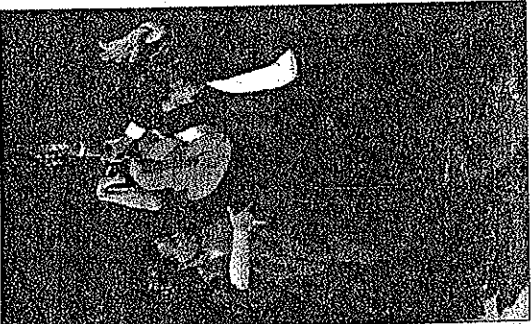
The University of the Arts' Drake Theater will host two performances on most days — at "Twilight" (5 p.m.) and "Late-Night" (10 p.m.). Tickets to these might be scarce since only a

small number of seats are being made available to the non-dancing public through UpStages Box Office; more may open up at the door.

Finally, 2000 Feet includes more than just performances. There are speakers, such as Adrienne Kaepler of the Smithsonian Institution, giving a keynote address on indigenous dance traditions, 11:30 a.m. Monday at the Arts Bank; scholar Martha Ullman West on writing about ballet in a cultural context, 11:30 a.m. Tuesday at the Arts Bank, and City Paper dance critic Jonathan David Jackson on black gay social dance, 3:30 p.m. Tuesday at CBS Auditorium in Hamilton Hall, 320 S. Broad St. And exhibits, a film, an afternoon of dance for children — and the big closing party next Friday in the City Hall courtyard, where the swing dancing begins at 7 p.m.

In a festival of 25 mixed bills and many unknowns, even a critic's recommendations should be taken with a grain of salt. My advice: Clear up a few days and take a chance — there's bound to be a prize on every program.

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Soledad Barrio and Jesus Torres of Noche Flamenco.

11-member Kabuki troupe. Flamenco's quiet, smoldering intensity juxtaposed with Kabuki's narrative mosaic of make-up, disguises, costumes and masks.

In both forms, we are outsiders looking in without knowing centuries