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January 9, 1995

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## Illinois Wesleyan to Stage Dance Concert in January

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Works by a legendary influence on modern dance and one of Chicago's hottest choreographers will highlight Illinois Wesleyan University's Faculty Choreographed Dance Concert this month.

"Water Study," a work by Doris Humphrey, a founder of American modern dance, will be performed to commemorate the centennial of the choreographer's birth.

"Trials" is a work by Chicago's Winifred Haun, who has been called "immensely talented," "a master of the finely drawn detail," and "very good at telling a story" in recent newspaper reviews. Haun was on campus last month to work with students performing the piece.

Dance Concert performances are scheduled for 8 p.m., Jan. 18, Jan. 19, Jan. 20, and Jan. 21 in IWU's McPherson Theater, 304 E. Graham, Bloomington. Ticket prices are \$5 general admission, \$4 senior citizens, and \$1 for students with any college identification. For more information about Dance Concert performances and tickets, call the McPherson Theater Box Office at 309/556-3232. The Box Office is open from 12:30-5 p.m., Monday, Wednesday-Friday and from 12:30-4 p.m. Tuesday.

"Winifred Haun was here Dec. 2 to teach a combined intermediate and advanced modern dance class," said Megan Smith, a junior majoring in music theater from Flushing, Mich. "We auditioned for her piece in the afternoon and after it was cast she taught the first rehearsal.

The piece, which has three dancers, deals with how one woman copes with various aspects of her personality. Smith was cast as the dancer representing the woman's sadness.

Over the Dec. 2 weekend, about 35 IWU students worked more than nine hours with Haun in various capacities.

Working with Haun, Smith said, "means that I got a great learning experience and that I danced with one more choreographer who knows my name and is hot in Chicago, the second largest place for dance in the country.

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## IWU Dance Concert/2

I acted like a sponge, absorbing what she could give me. It was wonderful."

Haun is planning to attend the Dance Concert to see the performance of her work.

Jean MacFarland Kerr, assistant professor of dance/theatre arts and a Dance Concert director, sees advantages to IWU students working with guest artists.

"A strength of Illinois Wesleyan," Kerr said, "is the very close student-teacher contact. However, we don't have many dance teachers on campus so without inviting guest artists to campus, students would receive a limited perspective.

"We want to promote the idea of versatility, adaptability, and flexibility as performers," Kerr added, "and with guest artists you audition and work in a new process. In effect, students receive field training on campus."

Commenting on Haun's work, Kerr said, "She is actively engaged in pursuing the idea of living movement--avante garde abstractions. She's interested in exploring how art can advance."

Thirty performances of Humphrey's work--including the IWU Dance Concert-- as well as eight conferences, exhibits, and workshops are scheduled for 1994-95 to mark the centennial of her birth. Events are slated for New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Dallas, Boston, Seattle, and elsewhere across the United States, as well as internationally in London, France, and Taiwan.

"Water Study," Smith explained, is a product of Humphrey's examination of the movement of water. It is performed without music, she added, so you can hear the dancers' steps and breathing when it is performed.

"Water Study" was part of Humphrey's New York debut in 1928, Kerr said.

Commenting on the work's performance without music, Kerr said:

"Humphrey was interested in the independent nature of dance--the fact that it didn't have to rely on the structure and texture of music and that dance could be performed in silence.

"Humphrey," Kerr added, "became America's foremost choreographer of modern dance."

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### IWU Dance Concert/3

Last year, Kerr said, several students urged us to take bigger risks--more visually apparent risks--with the Dance Concert.

"After I thought about it," Kerr explained, "I went to our lighting designer--Ken Johnson--and asked him to choreograph a dance. The cast for his work in the Dance Concert is light--there are no dancers on the stage."

About 15 IWU students will perform in the Dance Concert program, which includes:

- "Daydreams," choreographed by Kerr, features two dancers.
- Humphrey's "Water Study" has nine dancers.
- "Dizzy Lizzy," choreographed by Kerr, has four dancers.
- Haun's "Trials."
- "Layers," choreographed by Dance Concert Assistant Director and IWU Dance Instructor Sheri Ann Bates, seven dancers.
- "Like Rain on Skin," choreographed by Kerr, has eight dancers.

The program also includes the light piece by Kenneth Johnson, technical director of IWU's School of Theatre Arts. Johnson also is the Dance Concert's lighting designer.

Dance Concert costumes were designed by Laura Wetli, assistant professor of theatre; Curtis Trout, assistant professor of scenic design; and Lori Oldham, costume shop supervisor.

Haun, who began studying dance at age 10 in Chicago, earned a bachelor of arts degree in theatre/dance from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, in 1984. She joined the Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theatre in 1985, where she was a dancer, teacher, and scholarship coordinator. In 1991, she was nominated for a Ruth Page Award for Dancer of the Year.

Several Chicago and Midwest dance companies have commissioned Haun's choreography and dancing. She traveled to Peru as a guest soloist with the David Pusz Dance Company in 1987. Three years later, she performed with the Chicago Repertory Dance Ensemble in its "NewDances" Showcase. Her choreography commissions include: Patchwork Dance Company, Zephyr Dance Ensemble, Esande Dance Company, and Barrington Youth Dance Ensemble.

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## IWU Dance Concert/4

Haun has received several choreography grants from the city of Chicago and the Illinois Arts Council.

In June, 1992, Haun taught modern dance at the Beijing Dance Academy in the People's Republic of China.

She is a board member of the Chicago Dance Coalition and is a faculty member at the Chicago Academy for the Arts and the Dance Center of Columbia College.

Doris Humphrey (1895-1958) is recognized as one of the founders of American modern dance. Her contribution to modern dance technique focuses on her approach to movement, which stresses the fall from and recovery of balance.

Humphrey was trained in classical ballet, folk, and ballroom dancing. She was an established teacher by age 18. A few years later, when enrolled in a summer course, she was told by her teacher, Ruth St. Denis: "You shouldn't be teaching, you should be dancing."

Consequently, Humphrey became Denishawn's star performer and a noted teacher. However, she left Denishawn with her partner, Charles Weidman, and between 1928 and 1944 performed and choreographed for the Humphrey-Weidman Company. During this time, she created some of her most noted works, including: "Water Study," "The Shakers," "Air for the G String," "New Dance," "With My Red Fires," and "Passacaglia."

When an arthritic condition ended her career as a dancer, Humphrey turned entirely to composition, serving as choreographer and artistic director of the Jose Limon Company. Three key works from this period are "Ritmo Jondo," "Day on Earth," and "Night Spell."

Humphrey also is the author of "The Art of Making Dances," a widely used reference and choreography text.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,800 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. In recent years, the university's endowment has grown to more than \$92 million; a \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$24 million science building will open in 1995. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois

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## IWU Dance Concert/5

Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 164 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *U.S. News* ranks IWU the second most efficient national liberal arts college--a key gauge of the campus' quality academic program and relatively reasonable cost. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition. IWU's 1994 freshman class scored an average 27.9 on the ACT exam, compared to the national average of 20.7.