

Tuesday, April 21, 2015

OU Dancers Travel to Germany and Korea this Summer



The dance program at Oakland University is taking flight this summer. Students, alumni and faculty will be showcasing their passion and skills in Europe and Asia.

In May, Professor **Elizabeth Kattner** will accompany ten dance majors to Berlin, Germany, one of Europe's most lively artistic cities. They will study German Contemporary Dance by taking technique classes at the Tanzfabrik and learning choreography from German dance artists. **Andrea Cheshure** is one of the dance students traveling to Berlin. "I'm excited about studying with German dancers," she said, "I'm eager to learn about their culture knowing we're already connected through our passion for dance."

The OU dancers will end their stay in Berlin with a final performance at the Uferstudios for Contemporary Dance, which serves as a performance space for Berlin's rich culture of solo and group dance artists. They will perform their own works from Oakland Dance Theatre productions, as well as new works learned in Berlin. The trip is being funded in part by the Judd Family Endowment and the Maggie Allesee Summer Scholarships for Dance.

The study abroad program will also offer an academic component in the humanities, and Oakland students will work closely with students from Free University Berlin. They will examine dance and theatre in a broader context, allowing students to gain greater insights into the political, historical and social complexities of German culture. The students will attend arts performances such as the State Ballet, Berlin Philharmonic, and independent artists, and visit museums including Pergamon Museum, the New Museum and the Old National Gallery. Site visits to the Berlin Wall, the Holocaust Memorial and the Brandenburg Gate will also be part of the program. They may also enjoy day excursions to other German cities, including Dresden and Potsdam.

This is the first time this particular opportunity for international study has been offered to Oakland students, but Dr. Kattner is very familiar with the cultural scene in Berlin. She worked as a dance artist in the city for ten years and completed her Ph.D. in Theatre Studies at Free University. "Oakland students will have the chance to be immersed in one of Europe's artistic and cultural centers," Dr. Kattner said. "Germany is important to 20th century dance; it is the birthplace of modern dance and both theatre and dance dramaturgy. These genres are interwoven with the music, art, literature, architecture and history of the area."

Free University Berlin was founded in 1948 with American support. Its mission was academic freedom. Berlin's historic university was, at that time, located in the city's Soviet sector, and scholars were unable to study without political influence. And there is a Michigan connection. The main lecture building is called the Henry Ford Building because the Ford Foundation made a large donation to assist with its construction.

The OU students will stay in a youth hostel in the city center, which will also house other international students. This is a much

travelers of different backgrounds offers experiences that stay with many people for the rest of their lives.

Once they are home, the dancers will perform new choreography learned in Berlin at the OU dance program's annual fall concert. This year those recitals will be held between December 3 and December 5, 2015. Complete information will be available on the Oakland University web calendar and in the 2015-2016 season brochure beginning in August. You can sign up to receive the brochure or ask to be added to our email list on the [Music, Theatre and Dance homepage](#).

Dance professors **Ali Woerner** and **Thayer Jonutz** will join the group for the last week of the program to assist with rehearsals for the Oakland Dance Theatre's performance at the Uferstudios for Contemporary Dance. They will also perform in a full length duet concert with repertory from their professional company Take Root and teach a workshop based on Take Root's partnering methods which will be open to Free University students.



Take Root will travel to Korea in August. The company was invited to teach and perform at the Gwang Jin International Dance Festival in Seoul. They will debut "Ink," an original work based on a short story by OU faculty member and 2012 Kresge Artist Fellow **Kathleen Pfeiffer**. Professor Woerner said, "Along with original music by company composer **Jon Anderson**, Kathleen's voice reading the short story will be used within the score for the piece." Company members **Vivian Costello** (B.F.A. '12) and **Andrew Dettloff** (B.F.A. '13), who will travel to Korea to perform in "Ink," are OU dance alumni. Professors Jonutz and Woerner are both recipients of 2015 Fellowships from the University Research Committee.

You can read more about the Uferstudios for Contemporary Dance and see the schedule for the [Oakland Dance Theatre and Take Root performances here](#).

Photos:

Upper: Dr. Elizabeth Kattner and dance students during their preparations for their summer study abroad in Germany. Photo by Eric Reikowski

Lower: Dance professor Thayer Jonutz and Ali Woerner of Take Root Dance Company rehearse for their summer of international performances and teaching. Photo by Sam Paraventi