Family and Friends Concert

For Immediate Release
October 2003

Contact: Martha Scanlon
Residential Arts
413.545.2804
resarts@admin.umass.edu

Residential Arts, a program of the Fine Arts Center at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, will present the annual Family and Friends Concert at the Hampshire College Main Dance Studio on October 24 and 25 at 8pm. Featuring dance faculty from various colleges, this event unites performances that explore pop-culture, artistry, war, and everything in between.

Celebrated choreographer Billbob Brown is joined by Rebecca Nordstrom for two comical duets that will make “you laugh as much as you ooh and ahh.” (Phoenix Gazette) In Dance Review the pair give six tongue-in-cheek lessons on how to write a dance review. Posing as students, Nordstrom and Brown progress around a background of video-projected faces and words. Their second piece, Sweet Inspiration, mischievously surveys the relationship of the artist and the muse. Set to the music of Fritz Kreisler, it evokes the sounds of the 1920’s to span a wide dramatic range from passionate to playful. Originally created as a music/dance collaboration for a concert performed in London, this is the premiere of Sweet Inspiration in the area.

Currently an Associate Professor of Dance at UMass, Brown earned his BFA from Arizona State University and his MA in Dance History and Criticism from the University of New Mexico. In addition to choreographing and performing in works ranging from TV commercials for the Chicago Cubs to directing a mass for Pope John Paul II, Brown toured nationally with Bill Evans Dance Company and is the co-founder and artistic director of the 27-year-old Desert Dance Theater in Phoenix. His latest project, Chaos Dance Theory, is a science and video-based dance collective that he founded in 1999.

Nordstrom is a Hampshire College professor of Dance and Movement Studies who earned her BA in Arts with a concentration in Dance from Antioch College, and her MFA in Dance from Smith College. She has taught at Windham College in Putney, Vermont, and at the University of Delaware. A former member of Laura Dean Dancers, Nordstrom is a veteran of the Five College Dance Department performances and has toured in the U.S. and abroad. She has been creating duets with Brown since 1994 and is a member of Chaos Theory Dance.
Hampshire and Amherst College Visiting Artist Fritha Pengelly will show two new works with six Five College Alumni. Michelle Amrhein from Mount Holyoke, Cassie Ghiorse, Julia Skoot, and Sayaka Kaiwa from Hampshire, Molly Oullette from UMass, and second year Smith graduate student Jaqueline Kinsman will all join Pengelly to create a unique and pioneering performance.

Pengelly graduated Hampshire College in 1994, and has toured nationally and internationally as a member of Doug Elkins Dance Company for seven years. She has performed with David Neumann and Wire Monkey Dance, and her own works have been shown at Hampshire, Smith, Dixon Place, Gowanus Arts Exchange, and the Inside/Out Series at Jacob’s Pillow.

This year’s guest artist Jill Becker brings two intriguing pieces to the Family and Friends Concert. Storytelling, which uses fanciful language to invite the audience to create their own tale, illustrates plot with dance and gesture. In the more somber Indictment, Becker creates a lamenting response to the first Gulf War. Set to the Tibetan music of Alain Presencer, this piece is a dirge for all the victims of war and the subsequent embargos.

Becker, an Associate Professor of Dance at Antioch College, is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Choreographer’s Fellowship. She has taught at Middlebury College, New York University, Connecticut College and directed Jill Becker and Dancers in New York City for six years. Performing in Portraits of Women, a danced series of portraits of historical and contemporary female figures, Becker toured in Holland, Germany, and throughout the U.S.

Tickets for this event are $5 (students) and $12 (general). To order tickets, please call the Fine Arts Center Box Office at 800.999.UMAS, or visit www.resarts.com.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND PRINT-QUALITY IMAGES, PLEASE VISIT WWW.RESARTS.COM

RESIDENTIAL ARTS, A PROGRAM OF THE FINE ARTS CENTER, IS SUPPORTED IN PART BY GRANTS FROM THE STUDENT AFFAIRS CULTURAL ENRICHMENT FUND.

- end -