

TSODA meets professionals

Missouri Contemporary Ballet visits Truman, teaches dancers for recital

BY JESSICA RAPP AND MICHELLE MARTIN
Index Staff

For the next several weeks, the members of The Society Of Dance Arts will point their toes and take a few pointers from the Missouri Contemporary Ballet, the professional dance troupe that performed "Rock" last weekend for the Lyceum event.

The group is a non-profit company based in the Missouri Theatre, a historic theater in downtown Columbia, Mo. The six professional dancers perform shows by request at popular venues in Missouri, including the Blue Note in Columbia.

"The residency program is TSODA's initiative to have them come on campus three weekends in a row," said Candy Young, secretary for MCB and professor of political science. "They're going to offer master programs for anyone who wants to come, but they're also going to have auditions for people who want to perform in a piece with the company. And these will be jointly performed during TSODA's spring program."

Young said that for "Rock," the segments included both en pointe dance, the classic form of ballet in which the dancers

are on their toes, and non-pointe. MCP will teach both forms to members of TSODA.

"There's a lot of non-pointe work [in "Rock"]," she said. "It has a higher theatrical value, again, more of the entertainment punch, as opposed to some serious, artistic dance."

Young approached junior Michelle Gaasch, president of TSODA, at the beginning of last semester about bringing in MCB for workshops.

"We've never brought in an outside dance group, especially not a professional company at that," Gaasch said. "Most people are pretty excited about it. People who aren't dancers may not know how great of an opportunity it is."

MCB came last weekend to host workshops for beginning, intermediate and advanced levels of ballet and contemporary jazz. The workshops were free and open to all Truman students. She said an average of 12 students came to each of the workshops and that she encourages more to come this weekend.

"I went to a ballet workshop," Gaasch said. "It was really helpful, and I learned a lot, but it also was really fun because ... it wasn't intimidating."

MCB member Zach Young said he

is helping to teach some of these workshops. He said he encourages all Truman students to come out this weekend.

"People are taking the class because it's fun," he said. "There's no stress. Don't feel like there's pressure because we're professionals. Do it for you and because you love to dance."

Young said he was pleasantly surprised at the high skill level of dancers at Truman.

"There are quite a few really good dancers," he said. "I was pretty surprised because Truman doesn't have a dance degree."

In addition to the workshops, 11 Truman dancers have rehearsed with MCB so they can perform in their upcoming show, "Don't Stop the Music."

Karen Grundy, the director of MCB, said Truman students are learning a long dance piece from the company's repertoire.

She said MCB created the piece to be performed with its six members, so it had to adapt it so that additional dancers could be part of the performance.

"So far they've been working hard, making sure they give us what we need to make the piece work," she said. "It's really been a great experience."

"Don't Stop the Music" will take place at 7 p.m. April 18 and 19 in Baldwin Auditorium.



Krista Goodman/Index Junior Laura Park (front) and freshman Tricia Hurt (back) rehearse with 11 other Truman dancers and the Missouri Contemporary Ballet on Tuesday.



Krista Goodman/Index Senior Jenny Crouch and sophomore Ryan Niehaus rake leaves for a local resident.

EVENT | Big Event leaves Kirksville clean, students satisfied

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a sizeable squad of volunteers raking leaves and planting grass. Many APO members were assigned to clean up a hill that had long been a local eyesore. They raked and bagged leaves and planted grass seeds to sprout in the spring.

Junior Trieu Vo, the Big Event project leader of APO, said the fraternity encourages people to participate in the event every year, and it annually attracts a large number of members. Vo said about 80 APO members attended the event.

"I think it's a good thing because it's like everybody getting together and helping Kirksville," Vo said.

Despite appealing mostly to Truman students, non-campus organizations also participate. A.T. Still University's Thompson Campus C, a club within the institution that promotes its holistic approach outside of the curriculum, attended the event.

Senior Jake Uhlenhake attended the activities as an A.T. Still employee. Uhlenhake said a group from A.T. Still normally attends the event. He said his group picked up trash along the roadside and cleared hazardous refuse.

"The campus needs to improve its image with Kirksville, and this definitely helps a lot," Uhlenhake said.

Hoffman said the Serve Center plans to host the Big Event again next year.

IRAN | Kirksville resident publishes book about fleeing with family from Iran after suffering years of war, bedlam

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mom and my dad and slapped them around."

Hezbollah took his father into interrogation and gave him an ultimatum, Radmanesh said. He said Hezbollah told his father that he had two choices: either "train the Iranian engineers to run these establishments or basically we're going to put you and your family up against the wall and gun you down."

"So my dad said OK," Radmanesh said. "So we stayed there under constant observation by the Iranian government for about nine years."

Radmanesh said his father eventually was able to make arrangements to get his mother and sister out of Iran. He obtained forged documents that allowed them to be sent to Switzerland and from there back to the United States. He said he and his father were not able to escape because no males from the age of 14 and up were allowed to leave the country because their job was to fight in the Iran-Iraq War.

"They don't care if you're ill, they don't care if you're old, they don't care if you got one limp leg - you went to the war," Radmanesh said. "When I was at the war I saw 9-year-old boys, 8-year-old boys that were given AK-47 machine guns."

He said most of the boys did not have any prior training and that once he even saw a little boy carrying a gun that was pointing toward his own face. Some of them often asked Radmanesh if he could show them how to use their guns.

"They didn't know what the hell they were doing," he said.

When Radmanesh was only 16 years old, he was yanked off the street while playing soccer by Hezbollah members and forced to fight on the front line of the war for three months.

"I hated it," Radmanesh said. "I'm American." He said he faced a lot of ridicule while he was in the war because he was American and a Christian. He was called an "American pig," beaten, kicked in the knees and shins, urinated on and had a gun held to his head.

Fortunately, an Iranian major granted him a two-week leave, but Radmanesh never reported back. Instead, his father put him into hiding in the mountains with a nomadic tribe while he figured out a way for his son to escape. When he did not return to his base, Hezbollah called him a "deserter"

and an "American spy" and were ordered to kill him upon finding him.

"So I had Hezbollah and several members of the Taliban scouring the country, all over Iran, looking for me," he said. "But here I am."

After a year of hiding in the mountains, Radmanesh's father finally figured out a way for him to escape, and he was put on a boat with five to 10 other people across the Persian Gulf to Dubai. After going through the outskirts of a hurricane, Radmanesh said he had mixed emotions while on the boat.

"Was I terrified?" he asked. "After you go through something like that and you know this is your final chapter in that country, and you're about to get out, yeah, it was horrible. ... Scared the hell out of me. But at the same you're excited - you're happy."

From Dubai, Radmanesh flew to London, from London to New York and finally to St. Louis where his mother, sister and American grandfather awaited him.

"It was pretty intense," Radmanesh said. "My mom's crying, screaming, and I was like, 'Cool.' You can imagine what I did when I got home."

Upon his return to the United States after nine years of living in Iran, Radmanesh had various jobs in Kirksville, including some at pizza places and the cafeterias at Truman. He had the chance to attend Truman like his father but never followed through with it and instead ending up opening his own restaurant called Shirazy's Pizzeria in 1997.

Since then, he has spent some time in Washington and lived in England for four years. Radmanesh and his wife returned to Kirksville about two months ago to stay with his mother, who is ill. He also wanted to promote his book.

Radmanesh said he started writing the book when he was 18 years old because he wanted America to know what was going on in Iran. He said he eventually abandoned it, but the events of Sept. 11 prompted him to take it up again. After the Sept. 11 attack, he went to see a counselor who told him he should put his feelings down on paper, which he agreed would be a good idea. He said that when he started writing the book again it brought up a lot of suppressed memories.

"If I [could] go back and reconsider it, I probably wouldn't do it again," Radmanesh said. "I



Mayank Dhungana/Index Darius Radmanesh, the author of Escape from Iran, sells his book at the University bookstore. Radmanesh was forced to fight for Iran at the age 14.

mean I love what I did because I wanted to get a message out to the American people, but at the same time it's taken such a toll emotionally."

He said he has not moved past his experiences and that he has to deal with his past 24/7 because of everything that is going on in the world now. Radmanesh said he jumps at loud bangs and is afraid of thunderstorms because they remind him of bombs.

"I don't know if they call it shell shock, post-traumatic stress disorder or just screwed up in the head," Radmanesh said. "You never get over that. It tattooed me."

GLOW | Truman student organizes run-walk event to raise money for cancer research, incorporates glowsticks

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not know anyone who has not been personally affected by cancer. She said she walks this year with family members in mind.

"Every single one of my grandparents died of cancer, so more than likely it is probably something that I will be dealing with in my lifetime," Hurst said. "I think it's something that is very relevant

for me. ... Cancer is definitely something I would like to support in terms of finding causes and possibly ways of dealing with it."

Hurst said she is happy to see that someone is able to stand up for such an important cause and make a small difference.

"Here's an example of one person who said, 'Hey, you know what, it may

not be big, but I'm going to try it out,' and [Dutrow] wrangled me in, and then it draws other people in, and before you know it, sometimes it adds up," Hurst said. "So, no, she's not raising millions of dollars or anything like that, but she's doing her small part."

Hurst said the walk at night creates a unique effect.

"The place is in total darkness, and

then all of a sudden you just see all of these lights walking around the track," Hurst said. "And somehow, it just made more of an impact about just how many people were making a difference at that point. Because sometimes during the day, everybody gets jumbled together, but during the night you saw each and everybody's individual light, and that was really kind of cool."

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