

# New Dance Company Prepares Performers for Professional Careers

ARCOS Dance is a new contemporary dance company in Santa Fe offering world-class choreography and performance opportunities to both amateur and professional performers. Created specifically for dancers in their teens and early twenties, performers continue training at their respective schools and join ARCOS to supplement their training. The company's year-round home season includes five productions, each featuring a different repertoire.

"In Arcos, the line between student and professional is blurred. Our dance company is a mix of teens with advanced training and young professional dancers who work together in rehearsals and performances," said artistic director Curtis Uhlemann.

Providing a much-needed bridge for young artists between scholastic training and professional careers, ARCOS creates a context in which dancers can advance and prepare for the demands of professional auditions, rehearsals, touring, and performance schedules. The company aids teens with their auditions for college, as well as those in their early twenties who have already earned their college degree and want to participate in contemporary dance performance in Santa Fe.

"Most pre-professional dancers are not performing outside of school recitals, and most are not dancing professionally right away after college, either. We want to give them that chance here in Santa Fe," said associate artistic director Erica Gionfriddo.

The inaugural company of six dancers returned in August from its first annual international tour, sponsored by Interdansa. It was entirely subsidized by the Catalonian government in Spain. Traveling with Gionfriddo, dancers gave a month of daily outdoor performances free to the public in Spanish villages throughout the month of July. The 2012 tour will return to Spain, and will also add France and Germany to the docket. Working with teachers and performers from around the world gives ARCOS students invaluable experience as an international group, and allows for their artistic growth through the combined rigors of travel, classes, and daily public performance.

Uhlemann and Gionfriddo, each with extensive artistic direction and choreographic experience, also teach dance in a variety of studios throughout Santa Fe, Los Alamos, and the northern New Mexico area. Both hold BFAs in choreography. Uhlemann studied at Brockport College, and Gionfriddo at Shenandoah Conservatory. Having studied the techniques of Paul Taylor and Jose Limon in college, Uhlemann builds his choreography from large movements that sweep across the floor. "I'm inspired by the fast athleticism of Limon and Parsons, and the innate desire for bodies to always move faster and faster through space," said Uhlemann.

"We focus on an equal balance of performance, staging, and vocabulary to produce high-quality results," said Uhlemann. "We create patterns that really envelop the whole space of the stage and maximize the talents of each dancer. Choreographing is by far my favorite thing to do—and when it starts to take on life through the individual dancers, that's what makes it brilliant."

Gionfriddo is influenced by the emotional expressiveness and depth of Asian-Modern and Release styles. Gionfriddo commented, "Choreography is a craft that we've spent many years cultivating professionally to develop our own vocabulary and style. One of our biggest goals is to create unique choreography that highlights each individual dancer's strengths."

The inaugural performances of ARCOS Dance premiere repertoire concert will be held at Moving People Dance Performance Space, 1583 Pacheco Street, Suite A2 on October 14, 15, 20 and 21. All performances will begin at 7:30 p.m. Ticket information is available on [www.arcosdance.com](http://www.arcosdance.com) or call 473-7434 for reservations. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for students. The concert will include existing company repertoire as well as world premiere works created specifically for the new ARCOS dancers.

