

ARTS

‘Momentum’ dance performance to showcase student work

Guest artists lead some rehearsals

By Nicole Gregory,
contributing writer

“Momentum,” featuring eight dance pieces by students, faculty, and guest artist Yoshito Sakuraba of the New York contemporary dance company Abarukas, will be performed Dec. 1-10 at the Little Theatre in the Claves Performing Arts Center.

“Dance is full of momentum. It works on many levels — it’s physical, it’s cultural, it’s communal,” said Lisa D. Long, choreographer, dancer, and modern dance instructor in the Cal State Fullerton Department of Theatre and Dance, who coordinated this performance. “Our concert is a way of engaging with our community with forward-looking vision.”

“Momentum” comprises an eclectic mix of work by faculty and students. “The students have worked very hard and their pieces are elevated,” Long said. One is a combined vision of two seniors that explores the concept of “simple machines affected by the force of momentum, velocity and mass, accumulating to form a complex, fully functioning machine,” according to the creators.

Another student was inspired by the surrealist movement to create a piece that explores the unconventional and the unexpected by posing the questions: What is consciousness? What is reality?

And a third student-choreographed piece was created as a dance just for dance’s sake, exploring the limits of movement.

The dance by guest artist Sakuraba is called “Umbra (the darkest part of a shadow).” It was inspired by the poem “Echo” by Christina Rossetti, which begins “Come to me in the silence of the night; Come in the speaking silence of a dream; Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright as sunlight on a stream . . .”

Sakuraba is an award-winning choreographer who started his career in New York City and has presented his work in venues across the U.S. and in countries all over the world. He came to Cal State Fullerton the first week of school to introduce his piece to Long’s dance students, and they’ve worked on it ever since.

The opportunity to work with guest artists — dancers and choreographers from companies such as the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, Martha Graham Company, the American Ballet Theatre and many others — is a key part of the dance

program. “Typically, a guest artist will work intensely with students for a week in a dance company-style schedule of rehearsal,” Long said.

Cal State Fullerton’s Department of Theatre and Dance offers a Bachelor of Arts in Dance degree through small classes in intensive ballet, contemporary dance and composition. The dance study curriculum includes history of dance, improvisation, hip-hop styles, African American concert as well as kinesiology and yoga. The department is chaired by Jamie Tucker, and Alvin Rangel-Alvarado is the vice chair and dance program coordinator.

“We are a holistic program based in mindful practices, and we address each student as a whole individual,” Long said. “Because we are a smaller program, we are able to engage individually with our students and look at their diverse interests and paths. Some will go on to dance professionally, or own their own studios, or run dance programs in universities. Many of our students go into physical therapy, which utilizes the physical body knowledge they gain here.”

Long has been at Cal State Fullerton for eight years and has coordinated the concerts since 2019 — which were performed even through the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing creative solutions to the challenges of health restrictions.

“We livestreamed them, we performed fully masked, and now we’re almost back to normal,” Long said. “Students got performing experience and rehearsal experience and got the community exposure, even though it was via Zoom,” she said. “Literally, the show must go on!”

Dance students learn how to collaborate with designers, and theater students design their costumes and the lighting for the performances. “We guide them in best practices for communication and fostering good collaboration,” Long said. Choreographers choose the music for their pieces and are taught how to secure the rights to use the music.

Learning dance and choreography as creative disciplines can be transformational, Long said. “We help students find their personal choreography voice,” she said. “We work through the lens of advocacy and cultural competence — giving all our students from all different backgrounds a way to voice what matters to them.”

Long herself is a choreographer, dancer and massage therapist. She danced with the Dallas Black Dance Theatre and was a principal dancer with Indianapolis-based Dance Kaleidoscope. Her choreography has been produced at the Segerstrom Center, DUMBO Dance Festival and Solo-Duo Festivals in New York City, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and many other venues.

If you go

“Momentum” shows at 8 p.m. Dec. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 and 2 p.m. Dec. 3 & 10

Running time: 1 hour and 45 minutes

Venue: Little Theatre, Claves Performing Arts Center, 800 N. State College Blvd., Fullerton

Tickets: artstickets.fullerton.edu/TheatreManager/1/tmEvent/tmEvent1476.html



PHOTO COURTESY OF SKYE SCHMIDT

Bianca Wajack performs in the Spring Dance Theatre 2022, choreographed by Angelica Burgos.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SKYE SCHMIDT

Spring Dance Theatre 2022 performance at Cal State Fullerton



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICK VILLAREAL

Karen Ray Nelson and Trinity Ruelas perform in “Mourner’s Bench” by Talley Beatty.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICK VILLAREAL

Fall Dance Theatre 2021 performance

‘FISCAL STATE’

University faces challenges, but financial picture is sound

CSUF News Media Services

First, the good news: While there are certainly challenges, the university’s overall financial position is sound.

But while the amounts are not insubstantial (\$44.5 million in new baseline allocations and \$161.2 million in new one-time allocations), virtually all of those new dollars must be allocated to cover mandatory costs. In fact, 93% of the new funding is already designated for costs directly associated with enrollment, compensation and mandatory costs, and 34% of that “new” funding is CSUF’s money that was held back by the Chancellor’s Office last year for compensation increases and the university’s own tuition revenue. Graduation Initiative 2025 represents another 7%, which must be used for designated purposes. So...there is not much left after accounting for all the mandatory expenses.

“We’ve had to tighten our belts several notches and make sure we were living within our means, all the while focusing on decreasing equity gaps, providing the services and educational opportunities our students need, and continue working through the pandemic,” said Virjee. “Despite these challenges of the last few years, we have continued to work hard to assure financial solvency. We cut our budgets, exhausted our reserves and used one-time Higher Education Emergency Relief funds to help us through while still graduating one of the largest classes in the university’s history. We’ve

remained focused on closing equity gaps, hired 30 new tenure-track faculty, opened more than 150 additional course sections, hired 21 counselors, expanded funding for faculty research and much more.

“We are strong academically and we still managed to balance our budget and have not gone into the red. With HEER funds, we were able to restore our reserve. This is especially important as we move into the headwinds we are expecting.”

“We are also looking at how we’re doing compared to other campuses within the CSU system,” said Virjee. “We continue to press the Chancellor’s Office on the fact that we’re one of the lowest-funded CSU campuses (per full-time student equivalent). However, we have made some progress. For the first time in decades, we are now 22 out of 23 campuses. We were able to convince the CO in the creation of an equalization formula comparing campuses that are similar in size, demographics and geography. This includes Northridge and Long Beach, both of whom receive more funding than CSUF.”

“The campus will continue to move and push for appropriate funding levels. We are facing an enrollment challenge (the CSU system is down 7%) and we have to prepare as a system and campus on how we will meet enrollment targets.

“Yet, despite these challenges, the university finished the year without a deficit based on the work of the divisions to track and manage their budgets.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

President Fram Virjee continues to lobby the CSU Chancellor’s Office for equitable support for Cal State Fullerton.