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AMERICAN CHOREOGRAPHER WILLIAM FORSYTHE TO RECEIVE WEXNER PRIZE IN NOVEMBER

REVOLUTIONARY FORCE IN DANCE VISITS CENTER TO ACCEPT \$50,000 AWARD AND PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC PROGRAMS

“Mr. Forsythe is unquestionably the most important choreographer of our time, who has had not only a profound influence on the field of dance, but also on the wider cultural domain worldwide.”—Roslyn Sulcas, dance critic and author

“There is nobody to compare to Forsythe. He will be remembered as ballet’s Mozart.”—*Dance Europe*

Columbus (OH)—American-born choreographer **William Forsythe**, director of the highly regarded Frankfurt Ballet, will receive the 10th **Wexner Prize** November 26, 2002, at the Wexner Center in Columbus. The \$50,000 Prize is awarded annually to a contemporary artist who has been consistently original, influential, and challenging to convention. This year’s Prize events include discussions led by Forsythe, a film screening, and a symposium featuring leading artists and critics.

Forsythe is widely considered one of the most important dance artists of our time. A revolutionary thinker and artistic provocateur, Forsythe has set new standards internationally for ballet and modern dance companies alike. His Frankfurt Ballet (known as Ballett Frankfurt abroad) has attracted the top dancers in the world, and the company’s rare performances in the U.S. have been occasions for pilgrimages by a faithful following.

“Forsythe is a towering figure in his field, equally acclaimed for his daring and his virtuosity,” says Sherri Geldin, Wexner Center director. “He is an undisputed revolutionary who has altered the formal and conceptual terrain of dance, yet he has never lost touch with the pure physical joy of dancing.” Leslie Wexner, chair of the Wexner Center Foundation Board of Trustees and founder of Limited Brands, comments, “We are pleased to award the 10th Wexner Prize to groundbreaking choreographer William Forsythe. A vanguard artist with roots in classical technique, Forsythe joins past Wexner Prize winners in leaving a vital cultural legacy in his wake.” See the attached document for more information on the Wexner Prize.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

The following public events will be held in conjunction with the Wexner Prize:

- **Wexner Prize Symposium**
Sunday, November 24 / 2 pm
Wexner Center Film/Video Theater
Free admission

This symposium on Forsythe's work begins with a screening of the film *Just Dancing Around*, an intimate film portrait of Forsythe by Mike Figgis, followed by a discussion featuring a panel of well-known authorities about Forsythe and the global influence of his work across a variety of disciplines. The moderator of the panel discussion is **Senta Driver**, pioneering vanguard choreographer and Ohio State alumna, and editor of an issue of the international journal *Choreography and Dance* that was devoted entirely to Forsythe. Panel members are Oscar-nominated director **Mike Figgis** (*Leaving Las Vegas*), who worked "behind the scenes" with Forsythe and the Frankfurt Ballet to produce *Just Dancing Around*; leading avant-garde choreographer **John Jasperse**, artistic director of John Jasperse Company; critic and curator **Louise Neri**, former editor for *Parkett* and part of the curatorial team for the 2001 São Paulo Bienal; and dance critic **Roslyn Sulcas**, who has written for the *New York Times*, *Dance Magazine*, and *Village Voice*. Neri and Sulcas are both writing books about Forsythe.

- **Presentation by William Forsythe: *Dance and Digital Media***
Monday, November 25 / 1:30 pm
Wexner Center Film/Video Theater
Free admission

Forsythe will discuss the application of digital media in the arts, and the development of his CD-ROM *Improvisation Techniques: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*, a pioneering tool originally created for teaching his unique dance vocabulary to the dancers of the Frankfurt Ballet.

- **Discussion with Forsythe: *Collaboration across the Disciplines***
Monday, November 25 / 2:30 pm
Wexner Center Film/Video Theater
Followed by public reception the Café with Forsythe
Free admission

Forsythe will talk about artistic collaboration and how he combines philosophy and art, movement and language, dance and technology.

A multimedia display featuring Forsythe's work will be on view during building hours, mid-November through mid-December, in the lower lobby of the Wexner Center. While in town, Forsythe will also conduct a **private master class for students in Ohio State's Department of Dance**.

The Wexner Prize presentation takes place November 26 in private award ceremonies at the Wexner Center.

ABOUT WILLIAM FORSYTHE

Born in New York City in 1949, William Forsythe captured the attention of the dance world as a company member with the Joffrey Ballet. In 1973, he relocated to Germany to dance with the Stuttgart Ballet. He became resident choreographer, and commissions quickly followed from many noted European companies, including Paris Opera Ballet, the Basel Ballett, Deutsche Oper Ballet in Berlin, and Nederlands Dans Theater.

Upon taking the helm of the Frankfurt Ballet in 1984, Forsythe guided the company in a new direction, phasing out works from the classical repertoire and creating large-scale theatrical dance works. He more fully developed his radical signature style—one that expands upon traditional ballet vocabulary to explore the limits of the body. Brashly stylish and physically demanding, Forsythe's work features urgent, hyper-extended dance phrasing. His productions often convey images of conflict, violent beauty, and stark contrast, but he is also noted for poetic insight into human relations, with sweeping passages of tenderness to balance the hard edges. In December 2001, *The New York Times* called his choreography "tough, elegant, incisive, and usually rooted in ballet virtuosity, demanding highly trained classical dancers....There is no mistaking the contemporary energy that anyone from Mick Jagger to current rappers would recognize. At his best Mr. Forsythe fuses this energy and the dancers' physical attack with a strong structural concept."

Forsythe has encouraged members of the Frankfurt Ballet to collaborate with him on choreography, in the process developing a new methodology for improvisation. His knowledge of philosophy, mathematics, visual arts, and theater has informed this process. Considered a pioneer in his application of new digital media for dance instruction, Forsythe created an innovative CD-ROM program to familiarize dancers with his dance vocabulary and radical technique. Also intrinsic to his interdisciplinary approach to choreography is his close involvement with the development of text, lighting design, set design, and costumes.

Forsythe has created several art installations and site-specific artworks, including *Tight Roaring Circle* (1997), an installation that he developed with Frankfurt Ballet dancer and author Dana Caspersen and musical instrument designer Joel Ryan. Other longtime collaborators include composer Thom Willems, architect Daniel Libeskind, fashion designer Issey Miyake, and poet and classicist Anne Carson. In 1999, Forsythe became the director of TAT (Theater am Turm), a performance space in a converted tramway depot in Frankfurt, where he commissions new work and presents international artists.

In addition to his work in Frankfurt, Forsythe has created new work for the New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, The Royal Ballet Covent Garden, and the Paris Opera Ballet, among many others. Among his awards and honors are a Bessie Award

for choreography in 1988, several Laurence Olivier Awards, the Commandeur des Arts and Lettres in France, and many other international prizes.

In light of a recent fiscal crisis in Frankfurt's city budget and the forecast of crippling budget cuts at Frankfurt Ballet, Forsythe recently announced that he is leaving the company at the conclusion of the 2003–04 season. He thanked the city for its “unwavering and generous support” and expressed his desire to “pursue a more independent organizational path” that will ensure his artistic freedom in the future.

WEB SITES

For more information on Forsythe and the Frankfurt Ballet, visit www.frankfurt-ballett.de. For more on the Wexner Prize, visit www.wexarts.org/ctr and click on “Wexner Prize.”

WEXNER CENTER

The Wexner Center for the Arts is The Ohio State University's multidisciplinary, international laboratory for the exploration and advancement of contemporary art. Through exhibitions, screenings, performances, artist residencies, and educational programs, the Wexner Center acts as a forum where established and emerging artists can test ideas and where diverse audiences can participate in cultural experiences that enhance understanding of the art of our time. In its programs, the Wexner Center balances a commitment to experimentation with a commitment to traditions of innovation and affirms the university's mission of education, research, and community service.

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