

# Strength and power

## Eisenhower Dance Ensemble opens season with dramatic *Trilogy*

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
STAFF WRITER

Laurie Eisenhower leads the leaping dancers across the floor in Varner Hall at Oakland University in Rochester. The athleticism of her choreography keeps the Eisenhower Dance Ensemble in shape — that and classes in technique, modern and ballet, several times a week. The seven-member troupe works nearly six hours a day, Monday through Friday, to remain one of Michigan's premier contemporary dance companies. Eisenhower knows what it takes to remain in the top ranks of professional dance. She performed with Pilobolus Dance Theatre and David Parsons in New York City before earning a master of fine arts degree from Arizona State University and landing a position in 1986 as a dance professor at Oakland University.

After a brief break, Eisenhower assumes her role as artistic director of the ensemble, taking a seat along the back of the mirrored space. She watches quietly, not interrupting dancers as they run through her dramatic *Trilogy*, one of the pieces in the opening concert of Eisenhower Dance Ensemble's 12th season Saturday, Nov. 2, in Varner Recital Hall. The program features the revival of two popular works by Eisenhower — the powerful *Trilogy*, featuring guest artist Gregory Patterson, and the comedic *Not Even a Postcard*, a collaboration with Oakland University theater professor Karen Sheridan. Eisenhower also choreographed *Etchings*, a trio set to the contemporary music of Billie Holiday, and *Blues*, performed by the Center Dance Ensemble, a contemporary dance company based at the EDE Center for Dance and directed by former Eisenhower Dance Ensemble member Anne Bak Marine. Eisenhower Dance Ensemble is a repertory company that performs works by a variety of choreographers. Other selections include Erica Wilson-Perkins' *Fight Water*, an intense, driven work with images of martial arts and meditation. The company's assistant director, Stephanie Pizzo, adds a jazzy flair with her *Down With It*.

They won't have time to rehearse all the works today though. In a few hours, the company leaves for performances sponsored by the Thunder Bay Arts Council in



Christina Tasco demonstrates why she refers to *Trilogy* as a dance of strength and power.

Alpena. They've already danced in Chicago and Arizona earlier this year.

### DANCE VARIETY

"It's everything from drama to pure dance to comedy. I try to program a variety so it's fun and exciting," said Eisenhower who founded EDE after the Oakland University troupe she directed, Harbinger Dance Company, folded. "I'm interested in presenting dance as an art form. I love choreography, working with dancers — the process and creativity."

*Trilogy* premiered last year at the Macomb Center (for the Performing Arts). It's a dramatic work, my most religious imagery. It takes images like the walk to the crucifixion, Jesus before he knew he was going to be crucified. The deep burghundy of Leslie Littell's costumes set the tone for the moving piece danced to Carl Orff's *Musica Poetica* and Das Schwerk. Performing physically challenging dances like *Trilogy* is one of the reasons Michael Woodberry-Means is excited about joining EDE. This is his first season with the company after receiving a master of fine arts degree from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Woodberry-Means formerly danced with Peter Sparling.

### EISENHOWER DANCE ENSEMBLE

What: The professional dance company opens its 12th season with *On the Move*

When: 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 2

Where: Varner Recital Hall on the campus of Oakland University, Rochester

Tickets: \$12, \$10 seniors, \$6 students. Call (248) 370-3013

pany since the beginning and enjoys introducing children to dance at motion/lecture demonstrations company members give throughout the state. The Rochester Hills resident started dancing at age 4 and by 12 joined the Michigan Ballet Theatre. She earned a bachelor of fine arts degree in dance from Oakland University and is now EDE's assistant director.

"Down with It was originally choreographed for kids," Pizzo said. "During our demonstrations we talk about dance, how dance can help them to learn. We demonstrate the different styles of dance, what it is to be a professional dancer."

"Down with It is set to music by John Hanks, Mix #2. It's supposed to be fun and for them to enjoy. Kids like to see what you can do and all types of dance. It has a jazz feel, kind of MTV. There's lots of movement. Dancers wear a baseball cap. They turn it around and suddenly they're funky street, hip hop. I heard the music and tried to make it as fun for me as a dancer to do as possible and for the kids."

The second concert of the season, Saturday, Nov. 23, at the Seigman Family Performing Arts Center in Beverly Hills, should delight children as well. *The Land of Nod* and other dances is billed as a "fun and surreal journey into fantasy" that's based on children's tales.

NewDANCEfest follows Friday, Feb. 7, at Troy High School. Steven Lannone's *Bolero*, to Maurice Ravel's score, premieres Friday, April 11, at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts on a program

### LONG-TIME MEMBER

Pizzo has been with the com-

itled *Myth and Magic*. For the grand finale of the season, EDE joins forces with Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings and the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival to present Igor

Stravinsky's classic *L'Histoire du Soldat* (*The Soldier's Tale*) with choreography by Bill DeYoung of Ann Arbor.

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