

Doug Varone and Dancers back to teach students from colleges nationwide at UA

Professional company plans to hold 8 events in evening for public as well as kicking off the Heinz Poll festival

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Published on Sunday, Jun 06, 2010

Doug Varone and Dancers had such a first-rate experience teaching and performing at the University of Akron nearly two years ago, they're coming back for more.

The University of Akron dance program at Guzzetta Hall will host the company's summer workshop, where about 60 college dancers from across the country will converge on UA for nearly three weeks of immersion in dance, 12 hours a day.

"They're going 12 hours a day every day, and the company is really involved with these students," said Neil Sapienza, director of UA's School of Dance, Theatre and Arts Administration.

The students' hard work will begin Monday and continue through June 25 at UA. A host of classes for workshop dancers will be complemented by eight free evening events that will be open to the public, most in the Albrecht Studio at Guzzetta Hall. (See accompanying schedule.)

The summer intensive will culminate with free public performances by Doug Varone and Dancers that will kick off the Heinz Poll Summer Dance Festival June 25-26 at Firestone Park. (See festival schedule in accompanying box.)

Doug Varone and Dancers normally does its summer intensives at a New York state college, but it faced the prospect of dramatically reduced state funding this year, Sapienza said.

New York's loss will be Akron's gain: "Just to have the University of Akron name prominently on the marketing materials and on the Doug Varone Web site, people are saying, 'What's going on with dance in Akron?'" Sapienza said.

The professional company also appreciated 24-hour-a-day access to Guzzetta Hall's new seven-studio, state-of-the-art dance studios, an unheard-of luxury in New York, Sapienza said.

UA dance majors Erin Buck, Samantha Fox and Ellyn Sjoquist will serve as interns for the summer intensive and attend classes for free. Eleven daily classes will include everything from Pilates and ballet to choreography training, taught by Varone. In dance film class, students will view and create their own dance films.

Doug Varone and Dancers, which Varone founded in 1986, is the resident company at the 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Center in New York. Varone has choreographed for dance, Broadway, opera, film, TV and for the fashion runway.

His 2008 *Alchemy* premiered at Akron's E.J. Thomas Hall, set to Steve Reich's *Daniel Variations*. The score juxtaposes text from the Bible's book of Daniel with the words of slain journalist Daniel Pearl.

This time in Akron, one of Varone's public events promises to be highly site-specific: On June 17 at the Akron Art Museum, Varone will illustrate the process of creating movement based on imagery, creating dance responses to artwork from the museum's collection. The program, held in the museum lobby, also will examine the photographic inspirations for his 2006 work *Boats Leaving*. A question-and-answer session will follow.

It also should be exciting for the public to get a sneak peak at Varone's work in progress, *Chapters From Broken Novels*, in an open rehearsal at 7:30 p.m. June 23 at Guzzetta.

Those who can't attend the public events in the evening at Guzzetta Hall can check them out via live video stream at <http://www.douglvaroneanddancers.org> and <http://www.uakron.edu/dtaa>.

The company will perform *Chapters* as well as *Lux* and *Castles* at its Firestone Park performances. Varone says his *Chapters From Broken Novels* stems from literature that has resonated with him over many years: "My home library is filled with what I sadly refer to as broken novels — books whose sentences I've passionately underlined and scratched through beyond recognition. . . . I began collecting and organizing the most haunting of these into a notebook about 10 years ago and have been adding to it daily."

The end result will be a dance with a film-like quality, Varone said, composed of 34 short clips, or chapters, linked together to pose questions about the complexity of the human experience.

For more information on any of the Varone-related events, call 330-972-5196. For more information on the Heinz Poll Summer Dance Festival, sponsored by the city of Akron, see <http://akrondancefestival.org/> or call 330-990-5263.

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