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The African American Dance Ensemble performs during a dress rehearsal Wednesday evening at Reynolds Industries Theater. The ensemble opened the American Dance Festival with performances this past weekend.

Excitement in The Ark

Dancing students arrive on campus for a new season of the ADF

By James Slade

Monday, June 14, 2010

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DURHAM, NC -- This past Thursday, the porch and steps of the The Ark on East Campus were filled with lively students chatting it up as they arrived to register for the [American Dance Festival](#) (ADF).

One of the excited dancers was Kiani Del Valle, a student from Puerto Rico who trains in Montreal. Del Valle said she hadn't heard about ADF until she went to a two-week ADF winter workshop in New York City.

"They had auditions for the summer scholarships, I auditioned and I got it," said Del Valle. "I'm super excited, and I can't wait to start."

Jason Fowler, modern dance major at Texas Christian University, is an eager ADF first timer. "I wanted to get credit for school," he said. "I heard so many good things and how awesome it is."

Nearly 400 students from 38 states and 27 countries made their way last week to begin six weeks of intensive dance training at ADF on the Duke campus

Employees Save on ADF Tickets

Duke faculty and staff can buy tickets to any ADF performance at a **20 percent discount**. Performances will be held on Duke's campus and at Durham's year-old Durham Performing Arts Center.

For more about the discount, [click here](#). For a schedule of performances, [click here](#).

David Byrd, ADF director of marketing and communications, said ADF officials were pleased with the turnout. "It's remarkable and a broad reach for sure," he said.

ADF is a modern dance program with 80 percent of the dance taught being contemporary, but some other dance options are ballet, hip hop, and West African.

The ADF program is open to dancers age 16 and older. Nicolle Wasserman, director of school administration and student affairs said ADF is an opportunity for students to get away from their schools and get a breath of the dance world.

[American Dance Festival](#)

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"It's not a program for beginners," Wasserman said. "A lot of the students are getting undergrads in dance."

Most students pay tuition, but part of the ADF's mission is to expand opportunities for young dancers. Some students audition and receive full and partial scholarships.

One student who won a scholarship, Neka Kelly is a graduate of Spellman University, in Georgia, who is attending ADF for her first time.

"At ADF you can build connections and grow as a dancer," Kelly said. She added she hoped to use the connections and experience gained from ADF to become a professional performer and eventually a dance instructor at a college.

Students weren't the only dancers returning to Duke last week. Some 50 dance instructors are teaching at ADF this year. "Faculty come year after year," Byrd said. "At least five have been doing this for at least 25 years."

"Many [faculty] have been in professional companies and have performing backgrounds," Wasserman said.

Students spent the past weekend previewing classes and trying different styles of dance. They'll choose three to focus on during their classes..

Beginning this week, the students will attend three two-hour classes per day. "There are 40 classes a day held on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday," Wasserman said. She said this gets them ready to be professional dancers.

For Kat Folckomer, going to ADF is mandatory to receive a degree in dance at Hollins University in Virginia. Although her requirement is to only come for two semesters, she came back for a third time this summer.

"I've come three times because I love it so much," she said. "It's a great chance to grow and learn who you are as an artist in the dance world."

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