

# The Daily Tar Heel

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## Dance festival breaks out

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Staff Writer

In an afternoon of flexibility, agility and a few anxious jitters, students in the American Dance Festival School auditioned Saturday for the festival's "Past/Forward" program.

And it was only their second day at the school.

The weekend marked the first few days of the six-week intensive program during which students previewed classes and auditioned for performances.

"You jump from teacher to teacher, which is an really overwhelming experience because you are constantly having to switch gears and switch focus," said Mallory Markham, an American Dance Festival student from Jackson, Miss.

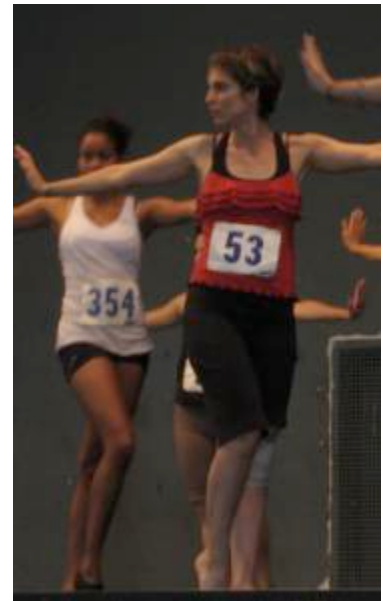
"Then at the end of the day, you have to go audition."

Markham is participating in the American Dance Festival to prepare for her professional career, which begins in the fall at Columbus Dance Theatre, a contemporary ballet company in Ohio.

Donna Faye Burchfield, dean of the school, spoke to the students prior to their auditions, encouraging them to try everything the school offers, from the preview classes to each audition.

"It's kind of like a relationship. It has to start to see how it will work out," Burchfield said.

The "Past/Forward" program will premiere toward the end of the season, July 19 through July 21.



Students dancers audition for the American Dance Festival's "Past/Forward" performance. DTH/Ali Rockett

<sup>[3]</sup>

Under Ryan Ghysels' direction, students will perform a reconstruction of "West Side Story Suite," based on the original choreography of Jerome Robbins.

Jean Freebury, of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, will reconstruct Cunningham's original work, "Inlets 2."

The final piece will be a world premiere choreographed by Tatiana Baganova of Russia.

"You get to decide which piece you would like to be in if you are chosen by more than one choreographer," Burchfield told students.

Markham, like many students, auditioned for all three ensembles in the "Past/Forward" lineup.

Callbacks were Sunday afternoon, when the field of hopeful hundreds was narrowed to several dozen.

Markham received callbacks for two performances. While eventually cut from the "West Side Story Suite," she was offered a role in "Inlets 2."

"I felt like my ballet background and my new sense of awareness in modern dance really helped me do well in that particular style," Markham said of the Freebury reconstruction.

Offering a wide range of styles and approaches, the school attracts students from all backgrounds.

"It's like a little cultural melting pot for dance," said Markham.

But not all the learning goes on in the classroom. Markham and a friend offered ballet lessons in return for help with their hip-hop dancing.

"I've always been a classical ballet dancer, and coming here, you are given so many avenues of dance and so many different ways of moving," she said.

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