



Centerwork: European Exposure

By Victoria Looseleaf

Imagine doing fouettés in Tuscany, making modern dances in Paris, or sipping tea in London while soaking up various dance cultures. These are but a few of the options available to college students choosing to study dance abroad, whether for a summer session or semester. And while the global dance scene has become more accessible, thanks to networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, there's no virtual replacement for the transformative experience of living and dancing in a foreign country. *Dance Magazine* looked into three colleges offering such programs.

Artists of the World

Karen Dearborn is director of dance at **Muhlenberg College**, a small liberal arts institution in Pennsylvania. Five years ago she founded the dance study-abroad program affiliated with Accademia dell'Arte in Arezzo, Italy. She says response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive. "One thing students gain is a new sense of artistry and what it means to be in the moment. Since it is an intense program of working with artists, a transformation takes place for those who want to open themselves up. It's away from the hurry-up of America, and they learn what it means to be an artist of the world." [...]

Crossing Boundaries Across the Pond: MADE in France

An equally picturesque place for study is France. Liz Claire is the founder and director of the French-based MADE (Movement Arts & Design in Europe), a program begun in 2008 and based at **Washington University in St. Louis'** performing arts department. The month-long summer abroad program, which is also open to students from other universities, offers a survey of European art, dance, and costume design.

By spending time in Paris as well as in France's Burgundy region, students have opportunities to engage in dialogue with French artists, which, Claire says, proves to be a rich cultural exchange.

"We begin with a course in Paris on dramaturgical research for the movement arts and combine it with costume design. And since our students work directly with European artists, it's also eye-opening, as European artists have different skills, techniques, and approaches to the creative process. But the main benefit to studying your art and/or craft in France," adds Claire, echoing Karen Dearborn of Muhlenberg, "is that you gain a deeper access to your artistic self."

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Claire points out that studying abroad is, by definition, rigorous. “Classes are extremely challenging and students are encouraged to think and act outside the box. Many professors tell me their students have grown after attending our program, that their work matures after the experience in France.”

One such course, says Claire, resulted in a site-specific sound-dance in the entrance to a wine cellar in Burgundy. “A sound installation was built with strings, metal coils, and electric triggers for pre-recorded sounds that responded to the movements of one student’s dancing body.”

Maya Orchin graduated from George Mason University last year after participating in MADE in 2009. She said being in France inspired her to move to Europe to dance. “MADE helped me decide what type of dance career I wanted, which was contemporary, and exposed me to the European style of dance. What was cool was that it wasn’t so competitive or focused on technique, but that it was more about dance as an art form. We also learned how to make costumes, which helped us create movement.”

Cosmopolitan Scholars

While both Muhlenberg and Washington University’s study abroad programs are optional, in 2006 Baltimore’s **Goucher College** made an abroad experience mandatory, with three-week, full-semester, and academic year programs available. Dance students’ options include London’s Middlesex University, the Accademia dell’Arte in Arezzo, and the University of Ghana in Accra. Elizabeth Ahearn, chair of Goucher’s dance department, says that by gaining an international experience in a country other than their own, students benefit from a more cosmopolitan perspective. [...]

In other words, have passport, will dance.

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