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**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA DANCE PROGRAM TO WELCOME
WORLD-RENOWNED AXIS DANCE COMPANY FOR FIVE-DAY
GUEST ARTIST RESIDENCY AND PUBLIC PERFORMANCE**

March 22-26, 2010

**Company Known For Creating and Presenting Contemporary Dance
By Artists With and Without Disabilities To Present Master Classes for U.Va. Students
and Public; Lecture/Demonstration for Middle and High School Students
And Public Performance At Paramount Theater**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – February 19, 2010 – The University of Virginia Dance Program and Department of Drama will present one of the most boundary breaking arts organizations in America this spring when it welcomes AXIS Dance Company from March 22-26 for a series of master classes, student demonstrations and a public performance at the Paramount Theater.

The San Francisco-based AXIS Dance Company is focused on creating and presenting contemporary dance by artists with and without disabilities. AXIS acts as a bridge between contemporary dance and physically integrated dance, providing audiences a chance to expand the very definition of what the art form is and can be.

The visit will be highlighted by a public performance at the Paramount on Friday, March 26th at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students, children and U.Va. faculty and staff. Tickets can be purchased online at www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu/. Tickets are also available by phone at 434-924-3376 and in person at the Arts Box Office, located in the lobby of the Culbreth Theatre from noon to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

On Monday, March 22nd, AXIS will give community members a chance to be a part of the performance as they host open auditions for those with and without disabilities to perform in choreographer David Dorfman's "Light Shelter" at The Paramount. For more information and to sign up for an audition slot, visit www.virginia.edu/drama/axisdance/.

The company will present a Master Class for U.Va. students on Tuesday, March, 23 at 11 a.m. at the U.Va. Aquatic and Fitness Center. Admission is free. Later that afternoon, at 5 p.m., they will hold a Master Class for Community Members at the U.Va. North Grounds Recreation Center. Admission for this Master Class is \$7.00. Space is limited in each class, and RSVPs are required by email to ras3tj@virginia.edu.

Since its founding in 1987, AXIS has reached beyond the boundaries of its art form and the perceived boundaries of its dancers to redefine not only how people see dance, but how they see

themselves and each other. The company has paved the way for a powerful contemporary dance form – physically integrated dance – and has performed in sixty cities nationwide and in Europe. The New York Times recently wrote that an AXIS performance “will change the way you feel about dance and the potential of the human body forever.”

According to its artistic director Judith Smith, physically challenged performers are just one part of the AXIS equation. “We are as much about non-disability as we are about disability. It is not just about the disabled dancers, it is about the fact that we can do what we do because both components are represented.”

For U.Va. Dance Program head and faculty member Rose Pasquarello Beauchamp, AXIS represents an opportunity to challenge students and audiences to think about dance in different ways. “One of my challenges is to break my students out of the bubble by asking them the question ‘What is dance?’ So having these young people interact with people of differing abilities is huge, just as it is huge for the audience. People are more used to more classical dance forms. So just having people that have limitations on stage is a huge deal, and I feel like it might even open up people’s minds to say ‘If they can do it, maybe I can too.’”

Bringing the company also has a personal connection for Beauchamp. Her former student Ashley Sisti studied dance for three years at U.Va. In the spring of 2007, she was thrown off a horse and suffered a traumatic spinal cord injury, losing her ability to walk. “Having someone I was dancing with one week and the next she could not walk was a huge thing for me. So to have this opportunity to present this company and engage in this dialog around accessibility has been amazing.”

This dialog has been engaged in not only by dance students and audiences through AXIS, but also by some of the world’s leading choreographers. The list of AXIS collaborators reads like a Who’s Who of contemporary dance, ranging from Bill T. Jones to Victoria Marks, Ann Carlson, Meredith Monk and David Dorfman, whose piece it will be performing at The Paramount.

Since its inception, AXIS has made education and outreach a key component of its offerings. “We spend about 50% of our time doing artistic work and 50% doing educational work,” Smith said, “and the two are inextricably linked. We have an opportunity to reach so many people who might not be reached through traditional contemporary dance and it’s a great platform for teaching about dance, disability and collaboration, about difference and about inclusion. We absolutely love to go out and meet and get involved with the communities in which we perform.”

As part of this effort, on Friday, March 26, AXIS will host a demonstration and lecture for local middle and high school students and educators. This youth performance will provide the audience with the exciting experience of participating as an audience member of a live AXIS performance in a theater setting. AXIS dancers will showcase artistic repertory, provide educational information on disability, personal dance history and include the audience in a physically integrated dance experience. Admission is free and open to local students and educators. RSVPs are required; visit www.virginia.edu/drama/axisdance/ to reserve a spot.

The AXIS Dance company residency at U.Va. is generously supported by U.Va. Arts Enhancement Fund , Arts Connect, New England Foundation of the Arts, VSA Arts and The Hook. The MetLife Foundation is the National Tour Sponsor of AXIS Dance Company

For more information on the AXIS Dance Company Guest Artist Residency and Performance, visit www.virginia.edu/drama/axisdance/.