

A&M dance company looking for talented Aggies

By CATHERINE CAMPBELL
Reporter

Ignoring their groans, Dance Company choreographer Lynn Berry scrutinizes 24 rotund-clad bodies stretching their muscles during a vigorous warm-up before Wednesday night's two-hour dance practice.

"Hey, do you know Hitler?" a weary voice gasps at Berry, as arched bodies quiver, shoulders hug the floor, pelvises thrust up and hands clasp ankles in the torturous "fanny tucks" held for a 10-second count.

"Do you want to be dancers?" Berry asks calmly, "or do you want to be fat and sloppy?" "Fat and sloppy!" the voice shouts back. Everyone giggles, including Berry.

The Texas A&M Dance Company is as professional a dance troupe as a troupe of unpaid dancers can be, Berry said. The campus-based company is a modern and jazz dance troupe but unlike its competitor, the Dance Arts Society, it's not a club.

The company holds auditions to find Aggies with superior dancing ability. The company is designed for those dancers who want to work hard and perform for exhibitions, Berry said.

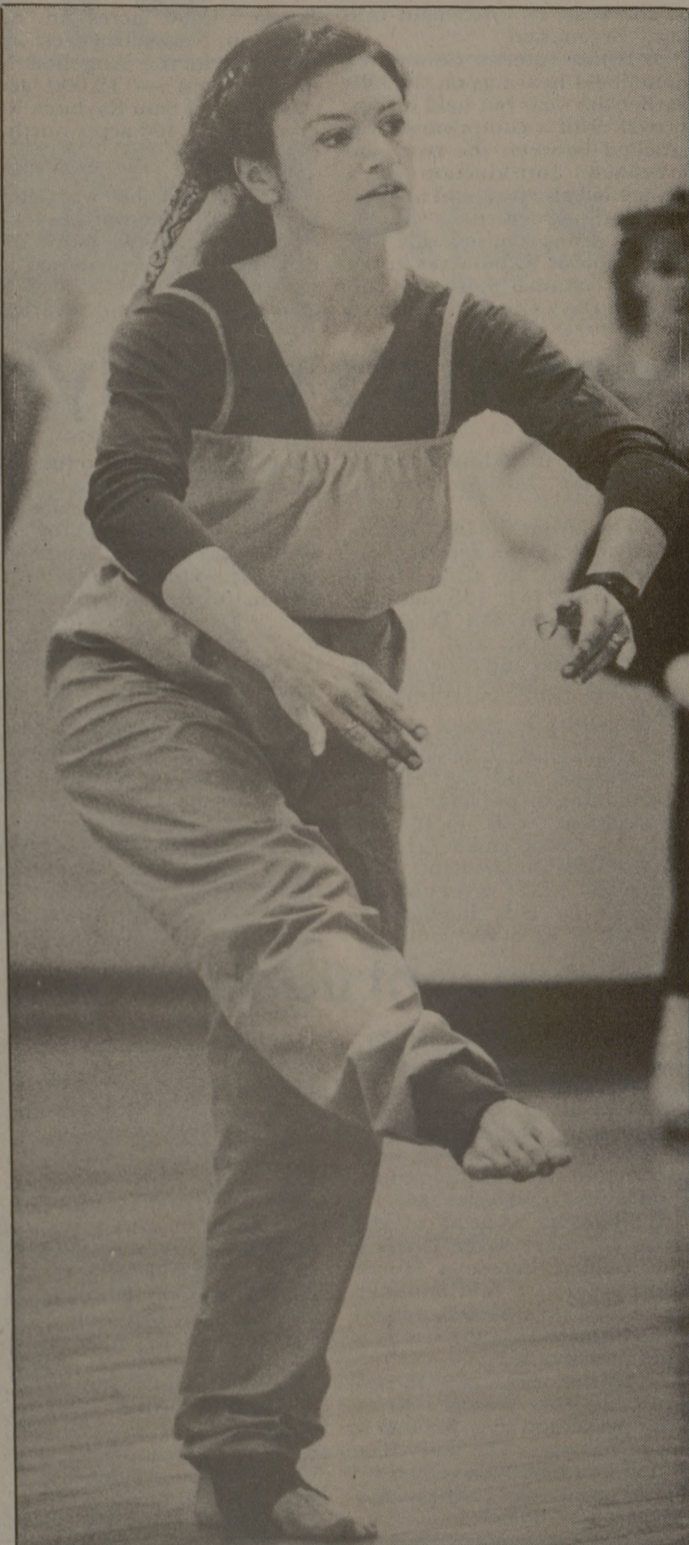
The studio appears to be infinitely filled with dancers as reflections bounce off two opposing mirrored walls. The room seems littered with human abstract art—contorted bodies resembling Andy Warhol-styled patio furniture.

Berry, 30, works her dancers hard to build up a repertoire of modern and jazz dances that she and some of the company members have choreographed. Berry said she wants the company to be ready for short-notice performances.

Berry said she hopes the two-semester-old company will one day serve as a catalyst for developing a new physical education degree with an emphasis on dance.

When Berry assembled the company last April, it was a 17-member all-woman dance troupe. But the September auditions brought in 76 to try for seven positions, expanding the company to 20 women and four men.

With practice nearly over, Berry breaks away early to an-



Lynn Berry, choreographer for the A&M Dance Company practices Wednesday.

Photo by MIKE DAVIS

swer questions. The petite, freckle-faced woman asks one of her more advanced dancers to lead the others through the rest of the dance routine.

Berry heads toward the back of the studio and flops onto a metal chair. She begins tucking stray strands of red hair back up into the loose bun at the nape of her neck. Her glowing angular face lacks any trace of make-up.

"Modern dance is something you can pick up," Berry says. "You can do well in modern dance if you're willing to put time into it."

"You've got to have the time to put into dance practice, which means you've got to be doing well in school. You've got to be dedicated and willing to cut out something in your life if you want to dance, even if it's your social life."

"I don't want it to be your school work because that's what you're here for. It's a matter of getting organized—you may even have to start studying on the weekends."

Most of Berry's dancers have between six and 18 years of experience in ballet, jazz or modern dance. A few have only had drill team experience, a thought that makes Berry shudder.

Being captain of a drill team is not an asset, Berry says. "Some have never had strong technical dance training and drill-team makes them think they can really dance," she says. "It becomes obvious that they haven't had the training when they try modern dance."

"It's not that there's anything really wrong with drill-team, it's just not real creative."

One of the company's leading dancers, Carrie McElroy, says she doesn't mind Berry's teasing her about being Miss Drill-Team Texas of 1980.

McElroy, a former instructor and now vice president of the Dance Arts Society, says the company gives her a chance to perform in what she believes is a professional sense.

"I don't feel like I'm a student pretending to be a dancer," McElroy says. "When you walk into the dance room and you start dancing, you don't think about school; you're in another world."

"Dance is a form of exercise as well as an art. It's a form

of mental therapy because it takes your mind off of school."

The company plans to put on a spring show but has postponed the performance indefinitely until it has funds to rent Rudder Theater for the performance. Berry says she's optimistic the show will draw a large crowd because of "the growing interest in dance at Texas A&M."

The company's first show was held in the Memorial Student Center lounge during Casino Night '83, an activity sponsored each spring by the Residence Hall Association. Berry says that after the first dance number, seating was virtually impossible to find.

Berry says she plans for the company to tour the College Station junior high and high schools to introduce modern dance to younger audiences.

When it seemed the company was destined to be all female, Berry says she panicked. Male dancers are necessary, she says, if the company tours the school district.

"Modern dance is such a strong dance form," Berry says. "You do push-ups and sit-ups,

that with guys in it—if they do real strong dancing—the kids won't think dancing is sissy."

Berry says she likes experimenting with new concepts in dance. She has been known to spend days of practice just teaching her dancers to personify objects such as "rolling around like a grain of sand on the ocean's floor." This, she says, shows the dancers various ways

to move and develop new steps for their own choreography.

Choreographing a dance is not as easy as it looks, Berry says.

"It's the most disciplined thing in the world to have to sit down with a piece of music and decide what idea you want to get across to an audience," Berry says.

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Democrat Jack Ogg is key target in antitrust trial against his company

United Press International

HOUSTON — Sen. Jack D-Houston, was a key target Wednesday in trial of a \$106 million federal antitrust suit against Jack Ogg, Browning-Ferris Industries of Houston and a state health official.

Houston-based Conservation Management Inc. charges BFI, Ogg, Jack Carmichael of the Texas Department of Health solid waste division and BFI Vice President Norman Meyers conspired to block CMI plans for a Katy waste dump.

Since BFI and CMI are competitors in the waste disposal business, CMI charges BFI, Ogg, Carmichael and Meyers conspired to limit competition in violation of federal antitrust law.

A federal grand jury reportedly is looking into the allegations, but CMI's civil suit went to trial in federal court Tuesday.

BFI, Ogg, Carmichael and Meyers deny wrongdoing. Lawyers for CMI charge BFI paid Ogg, a Houston Democrat, \$25,000 for help and

suggesting the money paid Ogg was a payoff for influence-peddling.

In opening arguments Tuesday, CMI lawyer Joe Jamail of Houston said a 13-day hearing on the ill-fated CMI landfill proposal in August 1979 was "corrupted by means of bribery, gifts, influence and

false representations."

Jamail charged BFI violated antitrust laws "in an attempt to monopolize the garbage business in Harris County."

In July 1978, Jamail charged in his argument to the jury that Ogg and three other men won a state permit to oper-

ate the Whispering Pines landfill at Little York Road and Mesa Drive in northwest Houston.

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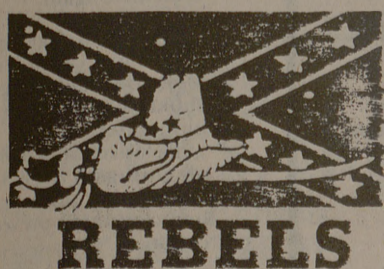


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