University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE

DANCES FROM A TRIBAL LIFE

Sunday, October 14, 2007, 2 p.m.

HANAY GEIOGAMAH
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

BUDDY WILSON
PRODUCER

MICHELLE WARNER
LIGHTING DESIGNER

OBADIAH HARVEY
LIGHTING DIRECTOR

BARBARA SCHWEI
PRODUCER EMERITUS

THE COMPANY
Jocy Bird
Isaiah Bob
Adrian Cross
Tawny Hale
Kevin Haywahe
Nate Littlechild
Marla Mahkimetas
Randy Paskemin
Marty Pinnecoose
Doug Scholfield
Andy Vasquez
Jason Whitehouse
Josette Wahwasuck
PROGRAM

American Indian dances and music are passed from generation to generation, to keep the traditions strong as they are constantly enriched by new voices. The program features dances that have been performed for hundreds of years as well as dances of today. The music combines traditional songs with works by modern American Indian composers.

ACT I

CEREMONIES

THE BLESSING

Shaman Marty Pinnecoose
Flute Andy Vasquez
Eagle Dancers Marla Mahkimetas, Doug Scholfield

TRADITIONAL GRASS DANCES

The young men clear the tall grass to form the dance circle.

Dancers Isaiah Bob, Randy Paskemin, Marty Pinnecoose
Singers Adrian Cross, Nate Littlechild

The Shaman calls upon the animal spirits.

THE GATHERING

In the ceremonial circle, the dancers honor the ancestors.

Memory Dance Marty Pinnecoose, Doug Scholfield
Buffalo Dance Isaiah Bob, Kevin Haywahe, Doug Scholfield, Randy Paskemin
Old Style War Dance Doug Scholfield, Jason Whitehouse
Women’s Traditional Dance Jocy Bird, Tawny Hale, Marla Mahkimetas, Josette Wahwasuck
Singers Adrian Cross, Nate Littlechild

THE MEN PREPARE FOR BATTLE

Men’s Traditional Dance

Dancers Kevin Haywahe, Andy Vasquez

DRUM CALL

Drummers Isaiah Bob, Adrian Cross, Kevin Haywahe, Nate Littlechild, Randy Paskemin, Jason Whitehouse

EAGLE DANCE

Dancers Tawny Hale, Marla Mahkimetas, Isaiah Bob, Jocy Bird, Doug Scholfield, Josette Wahwasuck, Jason Whitehouse

Music by Robbie Robertson
TRADITIONAL HOOP DANCE

Soloist

FINALE

The Company

Intermission

ACT II

CELEBRATIONS

COYOTE DANCE

The Company

The people prepare for a contemporary powwow. Dancers and singers gather to compete and express themselves with new steps and new songs.

Music by Robbie Robertson.

THE POWWOW COMPETITION

Smoke Dance

Tawny Hale, Marla Mahkimetas, Isaiah Bob, Doug Scholfield, Josette Wahwasuck, Jason Whitehouse

Traditional Dance

Soloists

(In Order of Appearance)

Andy Vasquez, Kevin Haywahe

Jocy Bird, Tawny Hale, Marla Mahkimetas, Josette Wahwasuck

Randy Paskemin, Marty Pinnecoose, Doug Scholfield

Men’s Fancy Dance

Isaiah Bob, Doug Scholfield, Jason Whitehouse

Modern Hoop Dance

Soloist

Jocy Bird, Tawny Hale, Marla Mahkimetas, Isaiah Bob, Doug Scholfield, Jason Whitehouse, Josette Wahwasuck

Singers

Adrian Cross, Randy Paskemin, Nate Littlechild

THE DANCE CIRCLE CONTINUES

New expressions in dance and music

Modern Fancy Dance

Dancers

Jocy Bird, Tawny Hale, Marla Mahkimetas, Isaiah Bob, Doug Scholfield, Jason Whitehouse, Josette Wahwasuck

Singers

Adrian Cross, Randy Paskemin, Nate Littlechild

NEW DANCE

The Company
The acclaimed AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE (AIDT) will look to the future while celebrating an ancient tradition during its 2007-08 season, which begins in October with a tour of its new production, entitled *Dances From a Tribal Life*.

Members of the 2007-08 American Indian Dance Theatre company include Jocy Bird, Isaiah Bob, Adrian Cross, Tawny Hale, Kevin Haywahe, Nate Littlechild, Marla Mahkime-tas, Randy Paskemin, Marty Pinnecoose, Doug Scholfield, Andy Vasquez, Jason Whitehouse and Josette Wahwasuck.

The 2007-08 program celebrates the ancient and the modern by presenting dances performed for hundreds of years, some with original choreography reflecting the present. The music combines traditional American Indian songs, performed with drums, rattles and bells, with contemporary music.

The program features a newly staged Honoring Ceremony, in which the company pays tribute to the elders who have passed on the traditional dances to the younger generations; an Eastern Woodlands Suite of social dances common to many tribes on the east coast of North America; an Eagle Dance suite from the Hopi and Zuni pueblos; as well as dances paying tribute to some of the animals and birds revered by many tribes, including the deer and the buffalo.

Principal dancers of the company will perform solo renditions of Grass Dances, Men's and Women's Traditional Dances, Men's Fancy Dances, Women's Fancy Shawl Dance and the Hoop Dance.

Grass Dances evolved in the northern plains where young men prepared the ceremonial dance circle by stomping down on the long grass. Grass Dance outfits feature long fringe to simulate rippling grass on the wind-blown plains.

Traditional Dances performed by the men in the northern and southern plains interpret their experiences in everyday life, including the ancient myths passed down from one generation to the next, stories of the hunt and man’s relationship with all living things. Male traditional dancers design their outfits to simulate birds or animals.

In the modern Fancy Shawl Dance, the young women display great dexterity and intricate footwork, while whirling their shawls in graceful sweeps of their arms. A popular competitive piece at contemporary powwows, the Fancy Shawl Dance may have originated as a Butterfly Dance. According to this popular interpretation, the female butterfly mourned the loss of her mate by going into her cocoon, represented by the fancy shawl. Her emergence celebrated her freedom and the start of a new life.

The Men’s Fancy Dances have evolved from the older traditional and warrior society dances. Over the past 50 years, male Fancy Dancers have started wearing highly colorful outfits and feather bustles, and have developed more intricate footwork and body movements. Today’s modern warrior-dancer has greater freedom of expression in displaying his fancy footwork, spinning moves, agility, stamina and all-around artistry.
The Hoop Dance is a fast-moving, non-stop dance during which the dancer manipulates as many as 30 hoop reeds at a time to form the shapes of flowers, eagles, turtles, butterflies and other living things. The dance, created to teach and convey stories, illustrates how all natural things are connected, even as they grow and change.

The Eastern Woodlands Suite is a series of social dances usually performed in the Long Houses of tribes mostly from the Iroquois Confederation in New York State and Canada. Included are the Stomp Dance, Raccoon Dance, Iroquois Women’s Dance, Old Style War Dance, Smoke Dance and Stick Dance. The Eastern Woodlands dancers wear traditional outfits made of cloth — calico for the women — reflecting earlier contacts with the European settlers. The unique percussion sound of the music is created by small water drums — clay pots filled with water and covered with stretched deer hide.

Since its creation in May 1987, the AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE has succeeded in introducing Native American traditional dance and music to a wide range of audiences all over the North American continent, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, reflecting the vibrancy and excitement of an ancient culture that continues to thrive and flourish in the new millennium.

“The 2007-08 season celebrates the past and looks toward to the future as the company continues to expand and evolve,” said AIDT Co-Producer/Director Hanay Geiogamah, a member of the Kiowa and Delaware Tribes of Oklahoma. “American Indian dance has traditionally been passed from generation to generation, constantly being enriched by new voices and interpretations.”

Reflecting on the company’s history, Geiogamah said, “When we began in 1987, it was our intent to build a professional all-Native American troupe of dancers and musicians that would perform traditional American Indian dances in a theatrical setting without sacrificing the spirit of the dance. American Indian culture is constantly changing as new and exciting voices emerge with each new generation and we are committed to showcasing these important new talents.”

The AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE succeeded in becoming the first professional company of American Indian dancers representing a variety of North American tribes. Previously, most American Indian dance troupes were composed of members of a single tribe, and many were family groups. In forming the AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE, Geiogamah and his co-founding producer Barbara Schwei, who passed away in 2004, set out to assemble a professional company comprising the best available dancers and musicians in the Native American world. They eventually enlisted an integrated company of dancers, singers and musicians crossing tribal lines.

Unlike many other countries, before 1987 the United States did not have a national dance company representing the diverse segments of American culture. Many dance critics agree that the AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE has filled that void, allowing Native Americans to share their heritage and culture with the American public and the rest of the world.

The company has also received strong support from the American Indian community, which has applauded AIDT’s efforts toward preserving and enhancing an important part of the culture and traditions of Native American people. Before incorporating new traditional tribal dances into its productions, the company will first get permission from tribal leaders, and often will have tribal elders and/or cultural leaders teach the intricacies of their dances to AIDT company members, thus, preserving the authenticity of the dances.
The AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE traditionally adds new pieces to its repertoire. In recent years, eastern woodlands dance suites from the Iroquois Confederation and dances from the Hopi and Zuni pueblos in the southwest have been incorporated into the company's program. In each case, the new dances were added with the approval of tribal leaders.

“Whenever we add a new tribal piece, we first make sure that there are no religious restrictions to performing that dance in public,” Geiogamah, an adjunct professor in the American Indian Studies Department at UCLA, explained. “We subsequently invite members of the tribe to advise us on regalia and music. In some cases, a tribal leader or elder will teach the dance to our cast.”

Over the years, the company has included dancers and musicians from many tribes across the United States and Canada, including Assiniboine, Choctaw, Comanche, Cree, Creek, Delaware, Jicarilla Apache, Kiowa, Menominee, Navajo, Northern Arapaho, Oneida, Seneca, Southern Ute, and Sioux. Company members are chosen from the most prestigious Native American festivals and dance competitions held in North America.

The AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE is co-produced by Hanay Geiogamah and Buddy Wilson, and directed by Geiogamah. The lighting by Michelle Warner is based on a design by Alan Adelman. Les Schecter is Consulting Producer.

THE DANCES

Grass Dance

This ancient dance is the basis of many men's dances. In the northern plains, the elders would ask the younger men to prepare the ceremonial clearing by stomping down the tall grass. The dancers' movements and their outfits simulate the grass rippling in the wind. Today, this is also a popular competition at powwows.

Animal Dances

All tribes celebrate and honor animals through dance. The dancers pay tribute to the buffalo, which have made the ultimate sacrifice to provide man with food, shelter and clothing.

Eagle Dance

The eagle — a symbol of wisdom, strength and power — is sacred to all tribes. It is believed that eagles are messengers between Man and the Creator.

Traditional Dances

Most dances are considered traditional dances, but in recent years this is a name given to certain types of older dances and regalia. The women in buckskin reflect the earliest participation by women in the dance circle. The men's dances recreate the old myths, tell stories of the hunt and battles and often incorporate animal movements.

Old Style War Dance and Fancy Dance

The steps of the modern Fancy Dance are based on the older Warrior Society dances. Modern warriors challenge each other using their most intricate footwork, spins, leaps and brilliant plumage.
Traditional and Modern Hoop Dances

Using many reed hoops to create a variety of shapes, the dancer tells stories about nature. The hoops become animals, insects and flowers, showing how all living things in the circle connect, yet continue to change and grow.

Smoke Dance

Throughout the eastern woodlands, socials are held in the Long Houses. The Smoke Dance helps fan the smoke from the center fire out through the roof smoke hole. Recently, this dance has been added to powwows as a competitive piece.

Fancy Shawl Dance

Women rarely entered the dance circle as soloists until recently. The Fancy Shawl dance is very popular today at powwow competitions. The dance traces its beginnings to the Butterfly Dance. After her mate is killed, the female butterfly mourns her loss by retreating into her cocoon, represented by the shawl. Her emergence celebrates freedom and her new life.

BIOGRAPHIES

HANAY GEIOGAMAH, Artistic Director

A member of the Kiowa/Delaware Tribes from Oklahoma, Hanay Geiogamah has an extensive background in the theatre as a director, playwright and producer. Actively involved in American Indian studies and research, he is the Artistic Director of the Native American Theater Ensemble and is a professor in the School of Film, Theater and Television and the American Indian Studies Program at UCLA in Los Angeles. A collection of his plays, entitled New Native American Drama, is published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Geiogamah is a producer for the Turner Network Television (TNT) Native American Project’s feature films: The Broken Chain, Geronimo, Lakota Woman, Tecumseh and Crazy Horse, and was the principal writer for the documentary series, The Native Americans, for Turner Broadcasting in 1994. Geiogamah wrote, co-produced and co-directed the American Indian Dance Theatre’s second GREAT PERFORMANCES DANCE IN AMERICA television special, Dances For The New Generations, which was nominated for a 1993 Primetime Emmy® Award.

BUDDY WILSON, Producer

Cary (Buddy) Wilson has been affiliated with the American Indian Dance Theatre since 1989, joining the company as technical and design director. Wilson was production coordinator for American Indian Dance Theatre’s second GREAT PERFORMANCES’ DANCE IN AMERICA television special, Dances For The New Generations, which was nominated for a 1993 Primetime Emmy® Award. He assisted Barbara Schwei as production coordinator for International Music Stars national tours. He has worked with both the American Indian Theatre Company of Oklahoma and the Tulsa Indian Actors Workshop, the latter as managing producer. He was production stage manager for Black Elk Speaks featuring Will Sampson, David Carradine and Wes Studi. A member of the Pawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, he has participated in tribal ceremonies and cultural activities since early childhood. Wilson is a member of the Project HOOP national artists’ advisory council.

BARBARA SCHWEI, Producer Emeritus/Company Founder
Barbara Schwei, who died in September 2004, was involved in producing theatre and concerts for many years. Her first production on Broadway was the musical *Nash at Nine*, written by Ogden Nash. The production, staged by Martin Charnin, starred E.G. Marshall. She subsequently presented many international concert artists in the United States and Canada, including the Broadway series, *International Music Stars*, and tours by French artists Gilbert Becaud, Enrico Macias and Charles Trenet.

Schwei founded the American Indian Dance Theatre with Hanay Geiogamah in 1987 and was its producer until her passing. In 1990, she received a Grammy® Award nomination in the “Best Traditional Folk Recording” category as producer of the American Indian Dance Theatre’s original cast album. In 1993, she garnered a primetime Emmy® Award nomination as co-producer of the GREAT PERFORMANCES’ television special, *American Indian Dance Theatre: Dances For the New Generations*.

**AMERICAN INDIAN DANCE THEATRE**

The American Indian Dance Theatre has been entertaining audiences all over the world since May 1987, when a group of Native American dancers, singers and drummers, representing various North American tribes, first gathered in Colorado Springs to begin rehearsals with a revolutionary new theatrical dance company. Brought together by the late Barbara Schwei, a New York concert and theatrical producer, and Hanay Geiogamah, a renowned Native American playwright/director and a member of the Kiowa and Delaware Tribes of Oklahoma, they would form the nucleus of the American Indian Dance Theatre.

No one could have predicted the rapid success this new company would attain in a relatively short period of time. Today, the American Indian Dance Theatre has achieved worldwide recognition and acclaim, and occupies a unique position within the international dance world as well as in the American Indian world.

When the company founders began searching for qualified candidates for their new company, they realized they were entering uncharted waters. “Until then, no one had successfully assembled the kind of Native American Dance Company we envisioned,” Geiogamah recalls. “We were committed to forming a professional company, featuring the best dancers and musicians from the Native American world, which would perform in first-class dance venues. We also wanted to cross tribal lines and create an integrated company of dancers, singers and musicians from a variety of tribes and tribal cultures.”

Geiogamah, who has served as Artistic Director of the company since it was formed, adds: “Audiences experience many styles of American Indian dancing at our performances. All our dances are traditional and authentic, but have been staged as theatrical pieces. In making this transition, we are careful not to alter the basic structure of any of the dances.”

The American Indian Dance Theatre tours extensively throughout the United States from the major eastern cities of Boston, Philadelphia and New York City, to Minneapolis, Cleveland, Madison and St. Louis in the heartland of America, to Tampa/St. Petersburg and Sarasota in Florida, and to Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Alaska and Hawaii in the far west. Standing-room-only audiences have enthusiastically greeted the company in Paris and the French provinces, Austria, Greece, Holland, Switzerland, at dance festivals in Italy, Ramallah, and Bethlehem, the Edinburgh International Festival, Yemen, Bahrain and Qatar on the Persian Gulf, Morocco and Algeria in North Africa, and across Australia.
The American Indian Dance Theatre has accumulated a number of remarkable achievements in its relatively brief existence. It was the first Native American dance troupe to have its own primetime national television performance special when it was featured on PBS’ GREAT PERFORMANCES in February, 1990, as the focus of a one-hour program, *Finding the Circle*. A second hour-long special, entitled *Dances for the New Generations* premiered on GREAT PERFORMANCES in May 1993, and received a Primetime Emmy® Award nomination. The company was also featured on Turner Network Television’s acclaimed multi-part 1995 documentary series, *The Native Americans*.

Since its inception, the American Indian Dance Theatre has attracted the attention of a number of rock musicians and artists who have incorporated Native American beats and sounds into their own music. The company has performed at various benefit rock concerts and other consciousness-raising public events, including the 1991 Gathering of the Tribes spectaculars in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and the Ban The Dam Jam at the Beacon Theater in New York City in October 1991, where they shared the stage with Jackson Browne and Bruce Cockburn.

Ian Astbury, lead singer of the popular rock band The Cult, included some of the company’s traditional Native American music on a recent release, *Wild Hearted Son*. The company often performs concept concerts with rocker Robbie Robertson, one of which was taped in Italy in early 1995 for international television broadcast by Italian television, RAI.

The company’s original cast album was also nominated for a prestigious Grammy® Award, the first time ever that a Native American recording had ever been so honored. The American Indian Dance Theatre has even had an impact on Hollywood. *The Doctor*, a 1991 feature film starring William Hurt, used the American Indian Dance Theatre as a major plot element.

The company includes dancers and musicians from tribes across the United States and Canada. Among them are: Apache, Assiniboine, Chickasha, Choctaw, Comanche, Cree, Menominee, Navajo, Northern Arapaho, Oneida, Seminole, Seneca, Sioux and Southern Ute.

Since the passing of Barbara Schwei in September 2004, the American Indian Dance Theatre has been operated by co-producers Hanay Geiogamah and Buddy Wilson, and coordinating producer Les Schecter.

**COMPANY CREDITS**

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