

JUNIOR COMMITTEE

[Apply](#) [JComm Blog](#) [Member Bios](#) [About](#)

Monday, March 29, 2010

[JOURNAL] Ana Marie Forsythe, Co-Director of the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. Program

By gaddtastic

► [Share](#) | [Print](#) | [Download](#)

Submitted by Justina Gaddy

Ana Marie Forsythe has been on faculty at The Ailey School since 1972 where she is currently the chairperson of the Horton Department and Co-Director of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in dance. She's danced with the Garden State Ballet Company, Joyce Trisler Danz and the Sophie Maslow Company. Forsythe is also the co-author of a book, The Dance Technique of Lester Horton, the only written guide to the technique. She has produced 5 instructional DVD's on the Horton Technique.

JG: How did you come to dance?

AMF: I had an older sister who danced. She started taking ballet classes at the Garden State Ballet school, so I did as well. At the age of 12, I joined the company.

JG: Why did you stick with it?

AMF: My mother died when I was 10 years old and dance was really what kept me going. I loved to dance. It was something I had a talent and a passion for. It was also something that gave me focus and purpose in life. There was a felling of celebration for me as well.

JG: What is unique about dance in New York City?

AMF: While I've danced here all of my life, I've found that dance in the city is unique in that there is an openness, people are willing to try new things. There is more room for experimentation. In one of my classes abroad I was setting a work on a student whom I kept encouraging to "project" and "show some emotion" to which the student replied "I do show emotion, but it's in here" (pointing to his chest). NYC is also the dance capital of the world and allows dancers the opportunity to see and experience every kind of dance.

JG: Who were some of your greatest influences? In dance/ not in dance

AMF: Fred and Evelyn Danieli who directed the Garden State Ballet in my early years they taught a sort of professionalism and quality that was an asset to me later on. They also brought Joyce Trisler who was a student at the Julliard School at the time and a member of the Lester Horton Company. Joyce was of course a huge influence to me as a dancer and as a woman. I would later join her company Joyce Trisler Danscompany. Not only was she fabulous dancer but she also got married and had a child while dancing which was unheard of at the time. I got married at 18 and have been married to my husband Dall Forsythe for 47 years in December. Outside of dance he has been the one of the most influential people in my life. My 3 daughters continue to inspire me and to be a source of enormous comfort.

JG: What do you feel are some of the biggest changes in the field from the time you were entering the field to now?

AMF: There is a lot more competition and it is far more technically demanding. I remember seeing this beautiful ballerina, Maria Tallchief, as a child and being wowed and impressed by her skill. I recently saw an old tape of her and thought, wow that is nothing like what I remember. The facility and training of dancers now is superior. We know so much more. I also think dancers have different expectations entering the field now. They expect company contracts, health care and benefits and many other things that were not necessarily available to us when I was dancing. Dancers did performances because they wanted to work with a particular choreographer, not because they would get paid.

JG: Describe how dance is fulfilling to you now as an administrator as opposed to when you were a dancer.

AMF: The administrator part of my life is much like the teaching part of my life. I enjoy passing on what I've learned to the next generation. It's satisfying and exciting when they succeed and get the job. There came a point when I was finally asked to perform "Journey", a work by Joyce Trisler. It was a work, I had seen Joyce dance many times and I had always wanted to dance it. Joyce asked me to perform it with her company after I had retired. I got back to class and rehearsed it with her. During one of the last performances, I had a moment when I was on stage and thought "what am I doing out here?" At that point I knew I was ready to transition into the next phase in my career. ..

JG: What advice do you have for dancers entering the field now?

AMF: Prepare yourself for the specific type of dance that you are interested in pursuing, pursue it and pursue it doggedly. Prepare for what you want to succeed at, do research, take workshops or classes that will help you reach your goal. Dream your dream, but do the work that will help you achieve it.

[< back](#)

[previous listing](#) • [next listing](#)