

## Review: Performance showcases Garth Fagan's range

By Anna Reguera  
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*Photo by Yi-Chun Wu*

Garth Fagan's signature styles were displayed on Nazareth College Arts Center's stage Friday night, the kickoff concert of Nazareth's second annual Dance Festival. The program featured works that span over 30 years of Fagan's choreography, including a preview of his work-in-progress *Madiba*.

Though modulations in Fagan's work over time could be easily seen in such a wide-ranging program, it was the unchangeable aspects of his style that stood out most. It's the longtime significance of Fagan's choreography that earned him the college's first Joe Baranowski Award, presented at the start of the night. The award will be presented annually to individuals who have contributed to Rochester's dance landscape.

One of the most notable aspects of Fagan's work over the years is his unique sense of musicality. His movement doesn't reveal the music's most obvious qualities, such as tempo, lyricism or style

— slowly moving music is coupled with frantic movement, or vice versa, as in excerpts from his 1990 work *Until, By & If*. Other times, as in Fagan's 1988 *Landscape for 10*, angled movement accompanies flowing, classical music. Music also doesn't serve as a starting or end point to his choreography; transitions unfold slowly, and sometimes cut off jaggedly while the dancers keep going as if time were suspended, such as in the opening solo of *Thanks Forty*, last season's piece danced expertly by Nicolette Depass.

But inner details emerge, in accents that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. It's movement that reveals expression through the music's undercurrent, an abstract representation of sound.

The program also was a reminder of Fagan's earlier days experimenting with deep political and cultural statements expressed through movement. In '80s-style street clothes, *Until, By & If* seems to express a culture of separation yet togetherness, and in the second excerpt, couples express love through conflict and embraces.

*Landscape for 10* resonates today as a timely work, where Fagan couples same-sex dance partners together, though gender is masked through unisex unitards. It was an early statement for the acceptance of gay relationships that seems to have foreshadowed New York state's recent decision to legalize gay marriage.

Fagan's work-in-progress *Madiba*, based on anti-apartheid activist and former South African president Nelson Mandela, incorporates Fagan's penchant for groove. Its duet, danced by Vitolio Jeune and apprentice Tere Lyn Jones, is surprisingly more mainstream than much of his older works, clearly representing a jaunting, playful couple.

Jeune, a rising star recently featured in *Dance Magazine*, also was featured in the "Talking Drums" solo from *Senku*. He jumps as if gravity doesn't exist; pushing to the sky without limits, and exhibited controlled flexibility in full splits that slide across the floor, though he's still mastering Fagan's gravity-defying balance poses.

Fagan gets a lot of concert mileage out of some of his older works, but his programs are always a reminder of his wide-ranging contributions to dance over the years, an appropriate way to begin this year's dance fest.