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## Program director: Dance department adding faculty, improving curriculum

By Gretchen Boehr Senior Reporter

The dance department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has progressed dramatically within the last five years, said Laura Milan, assistant dance professor and temporary pro-

gram director. By adding three more faculty members within the next two years, the program and its curriculum will continue to progress, Milan said.

Like many colleges across the United States, the UNL dance program started in the physical education department, she said.

tant professor of dance, the dance program began in 1968 as part of the women's physical education department in the Teachers College.

Eventually Dudley Ashton, the chair of the women's physical education department, combined the men's and women's dance programs and moved them to the department of arts and sciences, she said.

Milan said about four years ago he dance program joined with the theater department and became known as the Theatre Arts and Dance Department.

'In the early'history of the university, dance was part of the physical

According to Dee Hughes, assis-education department because it had the facilities the dancers needed,"

Milan said. "The focus was on dance as an activity," Milan said.

The focus now is on dance as an art form, she said, and this is why the

program was moved. The university realized dance belonged with theater and music,'

At some universities dance has its own department separate from music and theater, but the combined theater

arts department at UNL has its advan-tages, Milan said.

"We're lucky because we can draw on experts of the faculty in all performance areas," she said.

Professors knowledgeable in cos-

tuming, lighting, choreography and stage design together in one department help each other, she said.

"If the dance department were by itself it would have to find additional faculty to help with these elements of production," Milan said.

The other departments can draw on our expertise, too.'

If the theater department is putting on a historical play, they can ask the dance faculty whether certain dance movements are correct, Milan said.

This makes all the performing arts stronger.

Though the dance department is small, it's very active, Milan said.

The dance department puts on two dance performances a year and a number of outside projects with the community, Milan said

The Prairie Winds Quintet in the spring plus the Lincoln Contemporary Dance Theatre are examples of additional dance opportunities open

The LCDT is a repertory touring company that gives performances throughout the year in the Lincoln area. The company is composed of university dancers and the choreogra-

See PROGRAM on 11

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Both dancers said they received excellent instruction at UNL's theatre arts and dance department, although the dance department in particular is understaffed.

Mapes-Raasch said her dance experience at UNL has trained her

well for professional dancing.

"Laura Milan is incredible,"
she said, "but the dance program is very understaffed and it makes it difficult to be a dancer."

As a result of being under-staffed, she said, some classes are offered only every two years, which makes it difficult to gradu-

But, she said, UNL has helped her become a more than competent

"I was invited to perform in New York this summer," she said. "And I thought the other dancers would blow me away.

But instead, she said, she found she could hold her own and was trained just as well, if not better, in technique and classroom etiquette.

Mapes-Raasch and Ellingson said less competition exists between dancers in the Midwest compared to dancers in New York.

'I think there might be a better environment for learning dance here," Ellingson said.

Mapes-Raasch said her New York experience taught her to budget her money and survive in a big city.
"Another thing I learned was

that people need to have an attitude to live in New York," she said. "I learned to be gutsy.

She said she also learned what dedication to dance was all about.

A dancer in the company Mapes-Raasch danced with had a terrible back condition, she said, resulting in a visit to the chiropractor after each performance and extreme pain, yet she danced any-

way.
"This made me realize how much people will do for their art," she said.