

Group draws on Japanimation

BY BRET SCHULTE
Senior Reporter

In a postwar apocalypse, two children struggle to find love and shelter in a devastated world. It's as close to Disney as Japan has to offer.

Friday, the campus organization Global Friends of Japan is offering a free evening of Japanimation — the deeply detailed and typically dark animation of Japan's burgeoning video cartoon subculture — to students interested in the country's world-renowned animated films.

The evening will feature the Japanese blockbuster "Hotaru No Haka," by graphic artist Hayao Miyazaki. Translating to "Grave of the Fireflies," it is a deeply somber tale of a young brother and sister lost in post-World War II Japan, trying to survive in the war-torn nation.

"I don't want Americans to take this film the wrong way," said Kari Yanai, vice president of Global Friends of Japan, "but we need to know the facts. It happened. The point to this (film) is it could happen anywhere in the world."

Although Japanimation is notorious for its graphic violence, sexual content and disturbing images of destructive youth subcultures, "Hotaru No Haka," is "kind of like Disney," Yanai said.

Chosen because of its wide appeal, the film can be viewed by people of all ages while also offering a window to Japan's turbulent and painful past. But, Yanai said, people can get whatever they want from the film.

"You can learn anything," she said. "You can learn how people used to live in the '40s in Japan, or you can learn about the animation."

Although the film carries strong political overtones, Yanai says the group's intention simply is to provide an evening open to everyone interested in learning more about Japan, and, in this case, its extremely popular animated films.

"I hear about a lot of Americans who are interested in Japanese animation," Yanai said. "We thought maybe this way we can attract some Americans. There is no point in having this organization with just Japanese people."

Global Friends of Japan is an official organization of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and currently boasts between 40 and 50 members, but, Yanai said, many are not UNL students, and most aren't Japanese. Members include faculty, businessmen, musicians and even people so removed from campus life that they live in New York.

"It's kind of surprising that a lot of Americans want to learn about Japan," she said. "Americans know details (about Japan) that I don't even know. The interesting thing about Americans is that they focus on something I wouldn't — like animation."

Yanai said the reason the club decided on animation was because of American's interest in the art form, but she hopes that people also will discover that many myths still persist about Japanese culture.

"Americans can learn a lot about Japan just by coming to the show and meeting people," she said. "It's not true that we eat sushi every day, and we don't all know karate. It's not silly, it's understandable."

If the program is successful, the group

hopes to make the Japanese films a regular event.

"We want to put out a variety of films, not only animation," Yanai said. "This is Japanese animation night, but we're going to do Japanese movie night with old films and contemporary films."

Friday's show begins at 6:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Union, the specific room being posted that day. Also, free soda will be available. Call (402) 436-8898 for more information.

MATT HANEY/DN



Choreographers jump at 'Last Chance'

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior Reporter

Dance

As the semester drives to a conclusion, the UNL dancers want to offer the community one last chance to see their work.

Today, the dancers will present "Last Chance to Dance," a concert featuring nine pieces from Composition I students, two pieces by graduating University of Nebraska-Lincoln seniors, a work in progress by dance program director Charlotte Adams and a demonstration by modern and improvisation dance classes.

This year's concert is the third "Last Chance to Dance" since last fall. Adams instituted the series to encourage students to bring their choreographic work to a culmination.

Rena Armendariz, a junior dance major and a Composition I student, agreed that the concert served as a catalyst during the choreographic process.

"I think the importance of the concert is that it pushes us to work harder on the pieces because we know we're going to have to perform them," Armendariz said.

Amy Ballou, another junior dance major, said that while the concert pushed the dancers, stress

was minimized by its informal style.

"The audience is not going to be real critical," Ballou said. "A number of dance majors will be attending so this is an audience we can trust and can get input from."

Adams remarked on the variety of choreography featured in this semester's concert.

"(The students) are choreographing mainly in a modern style, but they each have their own individual voice," she said. "I've seen a lot of growth and experience. They're really grasping how you choreograph, that there is intent behind the movement."

A creative process

Armendariz agreed that she had learned how to "stay true to the intent" while choreographing her piece, "In Beauty I Walk." Armendariz set the piece to music from Peter Gabriel's "Passion" album.

The piece originated from a study Armendariz composed on preferred movement and body-part accentuation. She said it focused on the contracting and releasing movements of modern dance.

Sophomore dance major Kellie Werner said in

addition to intent, she learned how to personalize movement.

"(Composition I) taught me how to take a basic step or basic turn and stylize it and make it into my own movement," Werner said.

Werner will perform her piece, "Homecoming," for the concert. The work originated in a time study where Werner worked on tempo change. The theme of the piece is longing for a loved one, and Werner described it as balletic and modern.

Ballou will perform "Time Out," a piece she choreographed to the song "Who Do You Think You Are?," played by the Turtle Island Quartet. The piece originated in a study of time and qualitative movement.

"The piece is about manipulating time and time as a kind of driving force," Ballou said.

While choreographing this piece, Ballou said, she learned to be more spontaneous.

"You can't be extremely analytical. Choreographing is truly a creative process," Ballou said. "A piece needs time to evolve."

Capers in choreography

The other Composition I students presenting pieces are seniors Carrie Orsi and Kevin Gibbs, juniors Mark Yambor and Jennifer Grundman, and

freshman Nicole Haynes.

Becky Drum and Heather Schwenzer are the two graduating senior dance majors presenting pieces for the concert. They first choreographed their pieces for their senior projects last semester.

Drum said the chance to continue working on her piece, "In Love and War," allowed her to solidify the work.

"I knew what I was aiming for this time," Drum said. "It was easier to get the movement out and on to the dancers."

Drum based her piece on a poem she wrote by the same name. Six dancers perform the piece, which Drum described as abstract modern movement.

The piece Adams will present is actually a work in progress she based on stories the UNL dancers told her about growing up.

"I based it on things that (the dancers') parents would tell them," Adams said. "Like, 'Don't leave the lights on!' and 'Don't leave the refrigerator door open!'"

Adams titled the piece "Lockjaw" and set it to harpsichord music by Scarlatti and Couperin.

"Last Chance to Dance" will run at 2:30 and 8 p.m. today in Mable Lee Hall 304. Admission is \$3.