

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: A WACKY PRESS NOTICE***  
***August 1, 2006***

***Gilgamesh***

A Dance Drama

Contact: Ann Dunn (828) 258-1028 [ann.dunn@mindspring.com](mailto:ann.dunn@mindspring.com)

The Asheville Ballet opens its 2006-07 Season with a world premiere of ***Gilgamesh*** at Diana Wortham Theatre, Friday and Saturday September 29-30 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25- 45, \$15 for children and students. For reservations, call the box office at 257-4530.

*Gilgamesh* is a full-length, interdisciplinary theatrical event based on civilization's oldest surviving epic poem, the ancient Sumerian tale of a demi-god hero-king who lived @2,700BCE in what is now Iraq. The sometimes funny, sometimes tragic saga rages across the Middle East, including a scene where the hero and his pal destroy the forests of Lebanon.

The performance features original text by award-winning poet and playwright David Brendan Hopes, original choreography by Ann Dunn, and original music composed and directed by Matthew Richmond and performed by the Untold Ensemble with members of many local choirs, including Cantaria. Stage direction is by Michael MacCauley, and the all-important lighting by Ardean Landhuis. Performers include professional actors, dancers, instrumental musicians and a choir.

***Gilgamesh*** is a collaboration between The Asheville Ballet and Black Swan Theater Company, intended to create a gripping work of interdisciplinary art that explores the universal, heroic human journey. Besides making a whoppingly fun piece of entertainment, the developers of the project are interested in the ways art forms interact with, and affect, each other to form a powerful experience bigger than the sum of its parts.

On the human level, no-one of any age will want to miss this glorious tale of a hero's loves, losses, search for immortality, adventures, and big discovery. Audience members will recognize the hero in themselves as we pull out all the stops and hold the mirror up to humanity.

Hopes' play preserves the archaic splendor of the original, but is contemporary, fast-moving, and sometimes funny. He reminds us, "We think that the ancient classics were often funny, though we sometimes miss the joke."

Richmond has created a brilliant, richly layered original score. The music, while remaining thoroughly contemporary, seeks to invoke the flavor of that ancient time.

The choreography is a physical exploration of the relationship of the one to the many, the temporal to the eternal, the human to Gods and Nature. Dunn has tried to access a new vocabulary for the old themes of love, fear, hope, mortality and meaning. To this end she investigated art forms from the region and made movement imagery that is refined, honed,

focused and spare – except when it is explosive and raw. The fight scene between the terrible Bull of Heaven and the hero is a killer.

Matthew Richmond, composer, says of the work, “Gilgamesh is a meditation on dichotomies - self and other, love and death, innocence and guile, god and human. It also, in any production, must be about the ancient and the modern. The music aims to span these contradictions without attempting to reconcile them. Drums meet voices, complexity meets transparency, and intense energy meets thunderous silence. Many creative inspirations for my interpretation of Gilgamesh came from Sumerian mythology, particularly the pervasive water imagery. I hope the music portrays the power of the gods, the impermanence of love, and the beautiful futility of protecting what we cherish. The musical vocabulary is modern, but the journey is eternal.”

So! Come hear instrumental and vocal music in constant interaction with an ever-shifting stage space in which dance, sound and text entwine, inseparably, to unfold a story. Significance and emotional content arrive through a synthesis of sense and senses: language, body, drums, choir, light, fabric: an ascetic abundance, a frugal fullness.

Gilgamesh has been selected for presentation at UNCA for Chancellor Anne Ponder’s installation festivities.

***Gilgamesh*** is also designed to introduce Middle and High School age people to their cultural heritage, involve them in an artistic experience, and get them to the theater. School shows are planned for the week of performance. A study guide has been prepared and an art show of student illustrations is in the works. For more information on the school shows please call Ann Dunn at (828) 258-1028.