

# The Integrated Choreographer

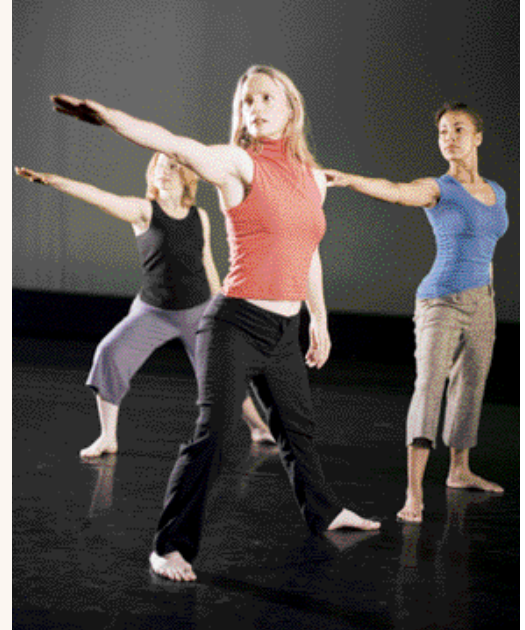
MARY FITZGERALD PREPARES DANCERS FOR A RANGE OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES.

**T**o her classes in contemporary dance technique, improvisation and choreography, Assistant Professor Mary Fitzgerald brings much experience. After completing a bachelor's degree in dance, nutrition and zoology, Fitzgerald spent 11 years working with minimalist choreographer Kei Takei's company, Moving Earth, performing and teaching master classes throughout the world. Having enjoyed a rich performing career, she decided to pursue a graduate degree in order to develop independently as a choreographer. Fitzgerald received her MFA at Arizona State University, then accepted a teaching position there. For the past eight years, she has nurtured the university's future performers.

Whether she's working in the classroom or in the outer reaches of the Phoenix area, Fitzgerald's goal is to create community. In the studio, she serves as a facilitator so that students can explore collaboration. "The biggest thing I try to teach [students] is to have an inquisitive and open mind and to be thoughtful about what they're doing, how they're interacting with people and interpreting the material," she says. In addition, she is determined to stay abreast of trends in the field. "The university tends to lag behind the professional world by a few years," she notes. "My job is to stay aware of what's going on so that I can prepare [students] for that world."

Fitzgerald reaches the community outside the university through her work with Dance Arizona Repertory Theatre, of which

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she is the co-artistic director. Established in 1984, DART is an ASU outreach project that provides dance instruction, performance opportunities and mentoring to disadvantaged youth in the Phoenix area. Along with Co-Artistic Director Jennifer Tsukayama, Fitzgerald works with the Thomas J. Pappis School for Homeless and Migrant Youth, The Boys and Girls Club and other institutions to develop long-term partnerships.

In addition to her work at ASU, Fitzgerald presents choreography through her dance troupe, Mary Fitzgerald Dance. "I'm interested in pushing movement invention and finding ways to integrate different artforms with dance so that it becomes a new aesthetic," she says. "I'm very interested in technology and interactive works." In her recent project, *Atmospheres*, she created sensory environments onstage by collaborating with a video artist and a composer.

Fitzgerald's work as a choreographer goes hand in hand with her technique instruction: "My approach to technique is a very choreographic one—exploring movement invention while teaching skills." In this way, she is helping ASU dancers develop the skills that will help them succeed after graduation.

—Katia Bachko