

Body art: choreographer Carolyn Dorfman tattoos her dancers without using ink



By: **Robert Johnson/The Star Ledger**
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To commemorate her company's 30th anniversary, choreographer **Carolyn Dorfman** decided to have her dancers tattooed.

Some of them, she notes, had tattoos already. Speaking of the personal artwork that Dorfman has noticed on people all around her lately—including her daughter's wrist and shoulder—the choreographer says, "It's very powerful, people's need to express themselves that way." As a form of self-expression, tattoos reveal something intimate about the wearer. "People wear their internal worlds on their bodies through tattooing," Dorfman says.

In her premiere, "Interior Designs," however, which the Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company presents this weekend at Kean University in Union, the dancers' tattoos shrink to near invisibility, lost within effusive patterns covering their entire bodies. The new tattoos, fortunately, are not inscribed permanently with an electric needle. Instead, they are projections that Dorfman created with video artists Kate Freer and David Tennent. The videographers employ an advanced, X-Box technology called video mapping, which allows them to project patterns on an individual dancer's body without having the image plaster the whole stage. They can even follow the dancer as he or she moves—and the procedure is bloodless.

Dorfman says she still aims to get beneath her dancers' skin and inside their minds. One section of "Interior Designs" analyzes the last four minutes before the curtain rises, as dancers steel their nerves and build energy for the performance. Another section describes the sounds they hear while they're on stage—rustlings and stray coughs that can prove unsettling. The new work's commissioned score by Svjetlana Bukvich incorporates all manner of noises, plus songs performed live by a pair of vocalists.

"Interior Designs" concludes with a series of intimate solos, honoring the dancers' individuality, in contrast with an earlier ensemble in which the performers are just "cogs in a wheel," Dorfman says.

Because the choreographer wants the audience to feel involved, she says the performance will not be confined to the stage.



The Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company rehearses "Interior Designs"

"The entire theater is the stage," Dorfman says. "People say, 'Sit back and relax.' And I go, 'No, no, no! Sit forward and be present.' Because when you do, you actually create the art with me."

In addition to the premiere, Saturday's gala event will feature guest artist Wendee Rogerson performing the "father's" solo from Dorfman's "Mayne Mentschen," a tribute to the choreographer's family and to all Holocaust survivors. That evening also includes a star turn by dance comedienne Claire Porter in her rib-tickling solo

"Happenstance" and a performance of Dorfman's "Portrait," which the choreographer describes as "a portrait of one woman danced by five."

On Sunday, the lineup includes the duet "Keystone," an intense depiction of a relationship that endures despite the inevitable wear-and-tear, plus the premiere of "Maria Marie," by company member Mica Bernas, whose dance portrays sisterhood and loss.

For Dorfman, however, the focus of this anniversary year has been the stimulating give-and-take with her collaborators on "Interior Designs."

"We have all changed each other," she says. "After 30 years, I'm not looking to do the same thing all the time. If I'm not growing and evolving, it's not interesting for me."

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Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company

Where: Wilkins Theater, Kean University, 1000 Morris Ave., Union

When: Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 4 p.m.

How much: \$25 to \$30 (\$15 for seniors, \$10 for students); visit cdcc-celebrate30.eventbrite.com.