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ARCOS DANCE Company World Premier: A Concert Review

"I think that Santa Fe needs to turn out for every performance by ARCOS DANCE, and cheer, applaud, enjoy, and encourage this kind of youthful artistry in our community..."



BY [Liz Simon](#) Trips & Quips

Liz Simon is photographer, writer and cyclist who likes to combine the three in her quest to discover the nooks and crannies of New Mexico. Sometimes, means of transportation other than bicycle are employed--- including the Rail Runner and motorcycle.



On Oct. 23, I spent the evening with Edgar Allen Poe, Philip Glass, The Mamas and The Papas, and, best of all, with a new dance company here in Santa Fe called ARCOS DANCE.

I wish they had put an exclamation point after the name "ARCOS," because the energy and enthusiasm generated by this group of young and talented dancers deserve a couple hundred such marks.

ARCOS was created specifically for young dancers who are either professional or still students. ARCOS provides them with the venue and the guidance by which they can develop into polished professionals. By the looks of last night's performance, it seemed to me as though the pros already made up most of the company.

The first piece, called The Raven, by Edgar Allen Poe (for those of us

who may have forgotten) was beautifully choreographed by Artistic Director Curtis Uhlemann and Associate Artistic Director Erica Gionfriddo. We are presented with a stark and austere stage: only one large Victorian-era chair upholstered with a medieval-style tapestry depicting unicorns. This was an appropriate symbol given that unicorns are often associated with the power to heal the sick.

Poe's character is certainly in a dark place, trapped by his own compulsive and destructive thoughts, punctuated relentlessly by the raven's refrain of "Nevermore." The dancers portray this mental downward spiral—which most of us have experienced at sometime or other—by sliding, writhing and bounding across the floor, both in time and mood, with a narration of the poem.

Their athletic movements around the chair give compelling visual form to the self-destructive whirlpool thinking of Poe's tormented speaker. Painted on the floor is an impressionistic image of a raven with outstretched wings as seen from above, or was it from below? The combination of the set in its austere yet forceful simplicity, the evocative and beautiful lines of the dancers, the lighting and the narration created a work of living art right there before your eyes. Phew, these guys are good!

I also liked the piece entitled "Glass Walls," with music by Philip Glass; and no, the pun was not lost on me. Again, we are presented with a minimalist stage—four large wrought iron chairs evocative of distorted, almost nonfunctional thrones—and certainly not very comfortable for sitting. Each of the four "thrones"—set inside the four corners of a large square motif on the floor—were different and were "inhabited" by one dancer each. No matter how much the four dancers moved away from their throne, merging and interacting together for brief moments on stage, they always returned to their respective thrones as though attached by rubber bands. I thought it was perfect.

And that perfection is the result of a lot of hard work, to which some of these photos will attest. In addition to the clearly talented and dedicated dancers, there is the artistic direction of Curtis Uhlemann and Erica Gionfriddo, both of whom I had the distinct pleasure of meeting and chatting with. They exude enthusiasm and joy and this spills over into each piece and to all of the dancers. It's no mystery. As Erica has said, "One of our biggest goals is to create choreography that highlights each individual dancer's strengths."

It's exciting to think what future performances will be like. ARCOS is all about collaboration with other artistic disciplines including music, video, and set design—be they professional or pre-professional. ARCOS is also determined to share its vision of dance with the world, having recently returned from a tour in Spain. This was sponsored by [Interdansa](#) and by the Catalanian government. ARCOS is literally on the move.

Here's what I think should happen next. I think that Santa Fe needs to turn out for every performance by ARCOS DANCE, and cheer, applaud, enjoy, and encourage this kind of youthful artistry in our community. Bravo to ARCOS!

For more photos, kindly drop in at [Trips and Quips/Arcos Dance Review](#).

2011 - 2012 Performance Calendar

All performances take place at Moving People Dance Performance Space, unless otherwise noted.

2357 Fox Rd, Suite 300

Tel: 505-473-7434

Web: arcosdance.com

1/20/12—1/22/12

ARCOS Dance Multi-Media Project

3/16/12—3/17/12

ARCOS Dance Repertoire Concert

3/23/12—3/24/12

Second Weekend of Repertoire Concert

6/8/12—6/10/12

ARCOS Dance Live Musician Collaboration

Summer 2012

International Tour, Dates TBA

Dancers participating in three or more ARCOS productions are eligible to audition for The International Tour.