

GoTriad:

Dancer brings her talent back to the Triad



Helen Simoneau

Credit: Contact us for information/News & Record

Want to go?

What: The North Carolina Dance Festival featuring two evenings of works by dancers and companies from the Triad and beyond.

When: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday ; Friday concert features Eleanor Smith (Raleigh), Cyrus Art Production (Greensboro), Even Exchange Dance Theater (Raleigh), Kinetic Works Dance (Charlotte), Helen Simoneau (Winston-Salem); Saturday concert features Kim Jones (Charlotte), Natalie Marrone (Raleigh), Joan Nicholas-Walker and Courtney Greer (Raleigh) and Cindy Mancini (Rocky Mount), Van Dyke Dance Group (Greensboro)

Where: Aycock Auditorium, UNCG, Greensboro

Tickets: \$15 adults, \$12 for students and seniors, \$9 for UNCG students. A special rate of \$6 per person for groups of 10 or more.

Information: 334-4849 or www.ncdancefestival.org

Thursday, November 5 (updated 3:00 am)

By **STEPHANIE BURT**

For Winston-Salem resident Helen Simoneau, creativity always starts with movement. She closes herself in an empty studio and just starts moving, exploring emotion and perhaps the idea of a story through the kinetic. Although she has been a dancer for most of her life, she still finds surprises in dance and her movement within it.

On Friday, as part of the 19th annual N.C. Dance Festival, Simoneau will perform a self-written solo at Aycock Auditorium on the campus of UNCG, the first time she will perform this award-winning solo in the region.

The festival is an annual showcase of N.C. dance artists that travels to five cities: Boone, Greensboro, Raleigh, Wilmington and Charlotte.

Although Simoneau won first place for choreography and third place for performance at the 13th Internationales Solo-Tanz-Theatre Festival in Stuttgart, Germany, in March, this upcoming performance is special because she has many ties to the region, including her tenure at UNC School of the Arts and her husband, a Winston-Salem native.

The solo, called "the gentleness was in her hands," weaves an automated and sometimes eerie doll-like quality with exquisitely intimate moments. Like surrendering to a memory, the performer allows glimpses of vulnerability to be exposed before reverting to numbness. The piece has an open-ended meaning for the audience and the performer, but folding and twisting trickle out of the dancer and create a sense of ritual and inevitability within the journey. "Although I've performed it a lot this year, it gets a little clearer each time I perform it," Simoneau says. "I never get bored with it and feel completely invested in the moment. I want the audience to find something in this performance that keeps them curious and maybe find something they can relate to."

A native of Québec, Canada, Simoneau graduated from the School of the Arts with a bachelor of fine arts degree in contemporary dance and served as adjunct faculty at the arts school from 2004 to 2008. She just finished her master of fine arts degree in dance at Hollins University/American Dance Festival. Although her work takes her around the world, her focus is currently on the Triad.

"(School of the Art's) technical training with the focus on modern technique and ballet technique, along with the daily rigorous training, really built me as a dancer from scratch," she says. "In my past, I performed in New York and internationally, but now I want to share my work with my own community. I want to share more of my presence locally and really want to be rooted here."

Simoneau was recently given a Regional Artist Project Grant by The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, which will help fund the creation of a new work to be performed in Winston-Salem. Although Simoneau teaches and performs, "Performance is more sharing than teaching, sharing my experience, sharing myself," she says. "The audience's presence is part of the performance, and they know a lot and that knowledge becomes part of the performance."

Contact Stephanie Burt at charlotteghost@gmail.com