

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DNA Gets Its Groove On

Genetic Scientists and Liz Lerman Dance Exchange Collaborate on
Ferocious Beauty: Genome.

Washington Performing Arts Society to Host Four-Night Run at the Atlas Center
for Performing Arts.

National Human Genome Research Institute Partners
Scientists Join the Dance

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange investigates the startling realities of how knowledge of the genome will change the way we think about aging, perfection, ancestry, and evolution in its new work, *Ferocious Beauty: Genome*. The company developed the piece through collaborations with thirty-four genetic scientists and researchers from leading universities and government agencies across the country. The resulting work offers an insightful perspective on a complex and controversial subject. On **Thursday, April 26** through **Sunday, April 29** Washington Performing Arts Society (WPAS) presents the Washington D.C. area debut of the piece at the Atlas Performing Arts Center.

On Saturday, April 28, the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) and Liz Lerman Dance Exchange will invite 60 science educators and their students to attend the performance of *Ferocious Beauty: Genome*. Francis S. Collins, M.D., PhD, director of the Human Genome project, will lead a post-performance discussion with audience members. The evening is part of a larger collaboration between the NHGRI and Dance Exchange that celebrates National DNA Day (April 25), an annual education outreach effort organized by the NHGRI. Events for participating students and teachers include a series of daylong workshops led by Dance Exchange members and participating scientists.

“The NHGRI is extremely excited to be working with the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange for this year’s National DNA Day,” states Vence Bonham, Chief, Education and Community Involvement Branch, NHGRI. “We hope this will be an opportunity for D.C. area teachers and students to learn about cutting edge topics in genetics through creative and innovative ways.”

Ferocious Beauty: Genome premiered at Wesleyan University in Connecticut in February, 2005, after four years in development. Liz Lerman, the founding artistic director of Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, explains, “Initially, I began the project because I wanted to know more about how discoveries in genetic research might impact our lives - and when I want to learn about a subject, the best way to do it is to build a dance. I also knew that presenting the subject through art would provide a new lens through which others could view these issues and think more deeply about controversies raised by the potential of genetic research. And, as we collaborated with scientists it became clear that biology and dance share a common theme in movement itself– which made using choreography even more compelling.”

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WPAS director of programming Travis Bowerman states, “WPAS is excited to debut *Ferocious Beauty: Genome* in D.C. this coming April. We have a long and rewarding artistic relationship with Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, dating back to our 1977-1978 season. Today, the Dance Exchange’s work continues to be thought provoking and innovative and we are happy to be the presenting organization that provides local audiences an opportunity to see this performance.”

Dancers in *Ferocious Beauty: Genome* perform in a multi-media landscape created by videos, projections, and stage-to-ceiling screens that help illustrate the range of questions raised by genetic research. Rather than seeking answers, *Ferocious Beauty: Genome* operates in a spirit of inquiry and gathers multiple voices in a dialogue with history and possibility. Act one begins with a series of vignettes from history and folklore to depict the visionary spirit at the heart of scientific inquiry as well as contemporary, concrete scientific content. Act two focuses on the complicated questions surrounding aging, perfection, and evolution, weaving the various threads of the evening together in what some might call a “spiritual” look at evolution and belonging.

The development of *Ferocious Beauty: Genome* initiated an unprecedented collaboration between dance and science, as the Dance Exchange partnered with a group of scientist and humanities scholars from institutions such as the University of Chicago, University of Illinois and Princeton and Stanford universities, as well as Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the National Institutes of Health and the Genetics and Public Policy Center. Many of these advisors appear in the performance in videotaped interviews, representing viewpoints on the uses of genetic research that range from curing disease to maintaining biodiversity to fighting terrorism.

Dance Exchange members and scientists learned from each other as the work evolved. Scientific collaborators provided accurate and objective information and the Dance Exchange filtered the information through their methodology for making dances, a process in which the company members engage as full collaborators.

Who: **Liz Lerman Dance Exchange**
Program: ***Ferocious Beauty: Genome***
When: Thursday, April 26 at 7pm
Friday, April 27 at 8pm
Saturday, April 28 at 8pm
Sunday, April 29 at 4pm
Where: Atlas Performing Arts Center
1333 H St. NE, Washington, DC

Tickets for WPAS’ presentation of Liz Lerman Dance Exchange’s performance of *Ferocious Beauty: Genome* are \$37.

To purchase tickets call WPAS Ticket Services Office at (202) 785-WPAS (9727) or purchase online at www.wpas.org

WPAS is committed to making every event accessible for persons with disabilities. Please call the WPAS Ticket Services Office for more information on accessibility to the various theaters in which our performances are held. Services offered vary from venue to venue and may require advance notice.

Washington Performing Arts Society has created profound opportunities for connecting the community to artists, in both education and performance. Through live events in venues that criss-cross the landscape of the D.C. metropolitan area, the careers of emerging artists are guided, and established artists who have bonded with the local audience are invited to return. In this way, the space between artists and audiences is eliminated, so that all may share life-long opportunities to deepen their cultural knowledge, enrich their lives, and expand their understanding and compassion of the world through the universal language of the arts.

American Airlines® is the official airline of Washington Performing Arts Society’s 2006/2007 Season.

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Funding & Development Support

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange has received leadership support for *Ferocious Beauty: Genome* from the Nathan L. Cummings Foundation, the Dallas Morse Coors Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art. Additional funding has come from the Doris Duke Fund for Dance of the National Dance Project, a program administered by the New England Foundation for the arts with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. Additional developmental partners are the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, Krannert Performing Arts Center at the University of Illinois, Workspace for Choreographers, Maryland Institute College of Art and the Applewood Estate of the Ruth Mott Foundation. The Genetics and Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins University provided essential support and guidance.

Lead Commissioning Partners

Center for the Arts, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut
Flint Cultural Center. Flint, Michigan

Partial List of Participating Scientists and Humanities Scholars

Bonnie Bassler, Princeton University
Georgia Dunston, Howard University
Irene Eckstrand, National Institutes of Health
Claire Fraser, The Institute for Genomic Research
Laura Grabel, Wesleyan University
Kathy Hudson, Genetics and Public Policy Center
Harris Lewin, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Chip Lovett, Williams College
Jane Mainenschein, Arizona State University
Steve Palumbi, Hopkins Marine Station, Stanford University
Charles Sing, Univ. of Michigan
Nancy Wexler, Columbia University

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About Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

Liz Lerman founded Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in 1976. Its unique brand of dance/theatre breaks boundaries between stage and audience, theater and community, movement and language, tradition and the unexplored. Through explosive dancing, personal stories, humor, and a company of performers whose ages span six decades, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange stretches the expressive range of contemporary dance. Its work consists of formal concerts, interactive performances, specialized community residencies, and professional training in the art of community-based dance. An artist-driven organization, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange employs a collaborative approach to dancemaking, administration, and implementation. Representing the multiple artistic voices of Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, current choreographic projects include explorations of coal mining, genetic research, radical prayer and intergenerational LGBT communities. More information is available at www.danceexchange.org.