

Everybody Dance

Not everyone on the *PASTForward* stage will be world-famous, or a dance innovator — or even a professional dancer. The White Oak Dance Project troupe of seven (including Baryshnikov) will be joined by 16 students from the University of the Arts (one of the local co-presenters), as well as 36 “community” participants, persons selected through Dance Affiliates (another of the local co-presenters) to represent a Philly cross-section.

The UArts students submitted essays in order to be considered for selection, writing on the subject of why they wanted to be included in the process, and what they would bring to it (a very satisfyingly Judson way to find 16 students in the 240-member student body where everyone, says Dance Program Director Susan Glazer, is “physically gifted.”) The students perform *Huddle*, a 1961 dance construction by Simone Forti in the lobby of the Merriam, the first thing the audience will see upon entering. A human sculpture piece, the dancers drape, tumble and pile on each other in a mound that shifts and reshapes. The audience is meant to walk around it — it’s a happening.

The community participants in Forti’s *Scramble* are a different story. They were chosen mostly for being game, and being able to give over a week to rehearsal. The 36 volunteer-selectees are heavy on people with arts interests but include two police

officers (one male, one female), a belly dancer and a psychiatric nurse. University of Pennsylvania junior Ellen Yang from Taiwan wanted to do this because she’s “totally into dance, and especially because of Baryshnikov”; she doesn’t know anything about the post-moderns (good way to learn). The community participants will be asked to do ordinary movements, like walking, that won’t require any special dance training. James Dunn and his wife Kate Cassidy both serve



GET TOGETHER: A moment from a previous White Oak staging of Simone Forti’s *Scramble*.

as opera supers so they know something about filling out a stage. Dunn says they did this because they’re both “always up for adventure” and because his wife is, yes, crazy about — Baryshnikov. Dunn’s not sure whether the post-modern stuff is really his “cup of tea,” but he likes walking and is a “very good sitter.”

—J.A.