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Linking to Dance's Future in a 21st-Century Workshop

By JENNIFER DUNNING

WITH the formal opening on Oct. 2 of the new Dance Theater Workshop in Chelsea, New York dance officially enters the cyber universe. The new D.T.W. is the most technologically sophisticated dance theater space in the nation and perhaps the world, judging by anecdotal evidence from touring dance companies.

D.T.W. is certainly not the first organization to recognize the close relationship between dance and video or film as visually oriented art forms rooted in movement and metaphor. That honor belongs to the Kitchen Center for Video, Music and Dance three blocks west, whose video archives are legendary. But the new D.T.W., rebuilt on its previous site on West 19th Street, will enable artists to work with video and dance in new and expanded ways.

"We're building a building for tomorrow," David R. White, the executive director of D.T.W., said.

Every room in the complex is wired for video and computers. Even more impressive is the in-house Artist Resource and Media Laboratory, which will provide arts technicians and dance artists with extensive access to video-editing, digital video creation, graphics layout and digital performance playback. Underwritten chiefly by the City of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation, the laboratory will enable performances to be viewed across the globe, allowing co-producers on different



Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

Dance Theater Workshop's high-tech new building in Chelsea is scheduled to officially open next month.

A new complex brings together dance, video and the Web, allowing creators to work together across time and space.

continents to review artists' work simultaneously. The lab is also expected eventually to provide access to a virtual theater in which viewers can "attend" D.T.W. performances on the Internet.

The lab includes six Macintosh systems, each with a selection of video-editing software for both inexperienced and sophisticated users, from I-Movie to Final Cut Pro and other advanced software. Each workstation has access to video tape decks for adding digital images and texts. One plan is for the studios and theater to be used as video-conferencing stations for everything from community events to international collaborations.

What does this mean in practical terms? About 30 percent of today's choreographers and dancers own digital cameras. It is not unusual for them to tour with laptops. Mr. White recalled a Chinese choreographer and her filmmaker-husband who traveled through China recently with two digital cameras and recorded pockets of indigenous dance in mountain villages.

"The other side of an idea of globalization," Mr.

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