Company’s show looks at many dance aspects

By Matthew Gamber, S.J.

A Company of Dancers, the major performing work of Creighton’s dance department, opens its 1985 fall run tonight at the Performing Arts Center. The 90-minute program consists of four distinct works representing various aspects of the world of dance.

Company of Dancers was established in the late 1970s to provide dance students the opportunity to work with artists from outside the school and to perform for live audiences.

According to Valerie Roche, head of the dance department and director of Company of Dancers, the experience of putting on a full dance production broadens the students’ view of the dance world and enhances their training beyond the rigors of daily practice.

Fusion of art

The 1985 company includes dance majors, non-major dance students, a former dance major now in Creighton’s Law School, faculty from the dance department, outstanding Omaha-area high school dancers and children from the Omaha Academy of Ballet. It numbers around 20 dancers supported by a crew of stage, lighting and costume technicians.

"Situations: A Fantasia" fuses painting, music and dance into one modern dance piece.

Jill Lile, the choreographer, worked with painter Vicky Loechuk and musical composer Dewey Hooven in a collaborative effort designed to express within a single dance each artist’s unique perspective.

The artists do not attempt to make a concrete statement in the work, but rather symbols and suggest in such a way that the audience will discover its own meaning.

Guest artist

The four principal dancers in “Situations: A Fantasia” are Linda Wieczorek, Julie Gilligan, Marilyn Larsen and Melodie Gust.

“Bach, Skip and Hop” is the title of the dance choreographed by this year’s guest artist, Bonnie Merrill of Portland State University.

The piece will be performed in honor of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Johann Sebastian Bach, the classical musical composer. The dance was described as a “light-hearted romp” by Roche.

It combines specific dance steps with gestures from daily life, accompanied by a fast-paced jazz score designed to captivate the audience.

“Hansel and Gretel,” choreographed by Kenneth Hughes, last year’s guest artist, is the classical ballet component of the program. The ballet will be performed in full costume to the music of Tchaikovsky.

Modern ballet

Tom McCleary and Gust will dance the lead roles of Hansel and Gretel. The gingerbread cookie figures will be played by children from the Omaha Academy of Ballet.

“Guitar Pieces,” a new modern ballet by Roche, was inspired by the classical guitar music of Andres Segovia and John Williams. Two compositions by each guitarist will provide background music for five dancers dressed in vibrant red gowns.

The five dancers who will interpret the mystery and romance evoked by the Hispanic sound are Mary Beth Quinn, Marcy Ziaka, Connie Lorenzo, Wieczorek and Gilligan.

Company of Dancers performances begin this evening at 8 and continue Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3:30 p.m. The program will be held again next weekend, Nov. 8 and 9 at 8 p.m. and on Nov. 10 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets for Creighton students with I.D. are $5 and $5 for the general public. Tickets may be obtained by calling the Performing Arts Center Box Office.