Wakefield’s love of dance began during childhood

By Andrew Arganbright

At age 7, Julian Wakefield begged her parents to let her attend dance lessons with her older sisters. Her sisters later stopped dance lessons, but Julian kept pursuing what she liked best — dance.

Tonight at 8, Wakefield will present her Bachelor of Fine Arts Thesis dance concert in the Interim Performing Arts Center.

Last month, the Nebraska Arts Council designated Wakefield as an official artist of Nebraska.

"This position will allow me to work with children and adults by teaching, performing and creating dance in communities," she said. "And I'll be getting paid for it."

Her work will be funded by the arts council.

Wakefield said a lot of preparation has gone into her performance.

"I have been working on my thesis concert since November," she said. "My presentation will involve 18 members."

All three pieces were created by Wakefield.

Her first piece, "Godlesses" is a Greek ballet based on the myth, Triad of the Moon. The three sections of classical dance set moods to classical music by Bach, Brahms and DeBussy.

The second piece involves live music to create a dream-like atmosphere called "Reverie."

"This piece is an expression of myself. It relates the struggles a dancer faces in competition and personal life," she said.

Wakefield's final piece, "Novae," is a modern dance work that involves nine dancers.

"Like a nova, the movement starts slowly but grows, peaks and then resolves again," she said. "In choreography, everything has to fit together — the style, theme, music and movement."

Wakefield said she usually finds the music and listens to it many times to get the feel of it. She then jots down different dance movements.

"When I have organized my notes, I teach the dance to others and arrange and rearrange the movement," she said. "I let it sit for awhile and go back and rearrange my notes again until I'm satisfied with the dance."

Julian Wakefield is her professional name. Her real name is Julie Gilligan, she said.

"Wakefield is my grandparents' performing name," she said. Wakefield said she wanted to keep it alive by using it herself.

Wakefield, who came to Creighton as a pre-med student, said she became involved in the Company of Dancers and decided to pursue dance as her major.

"My first big break came in 1983 when I was allowed to choreograph 'Pippin' for the Center Stage Theatre in Omaha," she said. "That was my first professional job."

The native of Omaha said she has done shows for West Side High School and teaches a small group of students privately.

"Graduate school is definitely in the future, but I first want to use my performing years," she said.

Wakefield said she has auditioned for jobs in San Francisco, Kansas City, Chicago and St. Louis. She would like to move to Chicago and perform in jazz dances.

Wakefield's thesis presentation coincides with the department of fine and performing arts' Spring Dance Concert.

The admission is free.

For more information, contact the department at 280-2569.

Julian Wakefield practices a dance routine.