

## Distinguished teacher Vera Blaine

# Extending the potential of each individual

By Diana Kohlrieser

To Vera Blaine, professor of dance and recipient of a 1976-77 Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching, the most important elements in teaching dance are recognizing each individual's potential and extending that potential.

Some students may not be as open or ready to accept new information as others, Blaine said.

"Often in a mind-body operation such as dance, students should receive new physical and intellectual knowledge with a free attitude, so they can experience the knowledge and then evaluate it," she added.

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## A tradition of honoring distinguished teaching

The University's Distinguished Teaching Awards reached the age of majority this week with the announcement of the eight winners for the 1976-77 academic year.

The awards, sponsored for the 18th consecutive year by the Alumni Association and the Development Fund, carry with them cash prizes of \$1,000.

Nominations are solicited from alumni, faculty and students alike. All faculty members engaged in teaching and on full-time appointment with the rank of instructor through full professor are eligible. Final determinations are made by a select committee of faculty, students and

An Ohio State faculty member since 1962, Blaine teaches dance composition and choreography to upper-level undergraduate and graduate students.

She describes her teaching style as informal but says her grading standards are high and clear-cut.

"Students know what I expect them to accomplish from the beginning of each term. Thus they become more self-critical of their own work," Blaine said.

In the classroom Blaine encourages interaction between students and herself.

"Peer group analysis is valuable to students. They learn not only the craft of choreography but they also learn to develop 'visual literacy' — the ability to see the structure and style of the dance and the concerns of the choreographer. Sometimes students see things I don't," Blaine admits.

In addition to interacting with others, students need to develop self-discipline in order to become good dancers, Blaine said.

"Students must know how to plan the next step in their development. They leave the department with tremendous experience in the field, which includes courses in composition, notation, dance history and dance production. Students can see where their talents lie and what areas they want to learn more about," she said.

In addition to teaching, Blaine directs the Ohio State University Dance Company, which meets daily and has performed about 30 times this year.

While students in the 1970s are still as interested in dance as those in the 1960s, they seem to be more sophisticated today, Blaine said.



**VERA BLAINE**, distinguished teacher of dance, directs a rehearsal of the OSU Dance Company. (Photo by Vincent Leo)

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But apart from the few procedural changes that might normally be expected to occur during maturation, the awards retain today their original purpose . . . "to recognize and give evidence of the importance placed on superior teaching in the University and to provide encouragement and incentive for teaching achievement."

This year's honorees bring to 106 the number of University faculty designated as distinguished teachers since the first awards were made in 1959.

The Distinguished Teachers for 1977 are: William Berry, management science; Vera Blaine, dance; Helen Gritzmacher, home economics; Thomas Hayes, anatomy; George Kalbouss, Slavic languages and literatures; Donald Sanders, education and human resources; Helen Swank, voice; and Carole Widick, education special services.

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"They're ready to move more quickly. I can cover more material in the same amount of time," she said.

An Ohio State graduate with both bachelor's and master's degrees in dance, Blaine believes receiving the



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distinguished teaching award honors the other members of the dance department as much as it honors her.

"Everybody in the department depends on everybody else," she said.

As an undergraduate at Ohio State, Blaine took a class which was taught by Helen Alkire, who is now chairperson of the dance department.

"She opened the whole world of dance to me," Blaine said.

Blaine, who has had a long-time interest in choreography, studied with Louis Horst, a well-known teacher of dance composition during his time.

She has studied at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance and at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio.

# Imparting the desire to know more