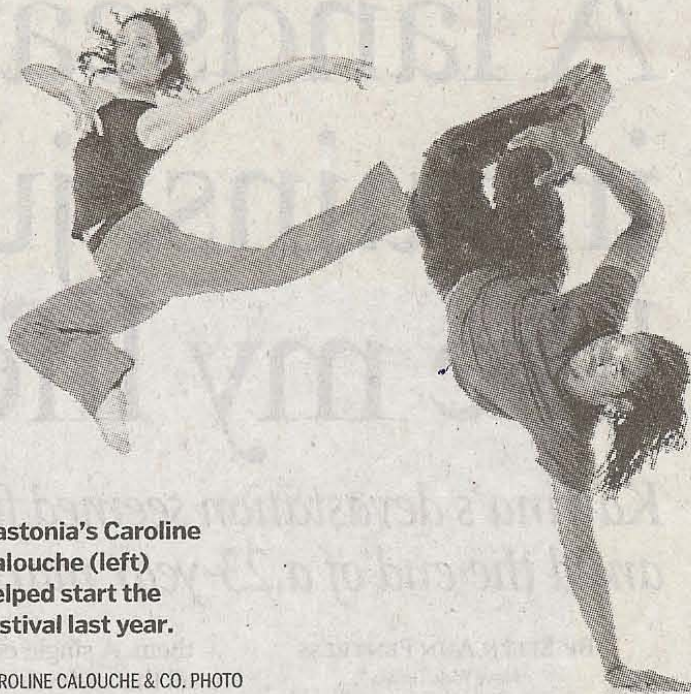


STARTS THURSDAY

Charlotte Dance Festival



Gastonia's Caroline Calouche (left) helped start the festival last year.

CAROLINE CALOUCHE & CO. PHOTO

Troupes will come from across the Carolinas and as far away as New York for the Charlotte Dance Festival, which was launched last year to help dance groups get a helping of Charlotte Shout! exposure. Spearheaded by Gastonia dancer/choreographer Caroline Calouche, the festival puts the spotlight on blends of modern dance and other styles.

Taking to the street

The festival opens Thursday at noon, when dancers give free performances at outdoor sites along Tryon Street: first Spirit Square; then Polk Park at Trade and Tryon Streets; and finally Wachovia Plaza. Different dancers perform at the same parks at noon Friday. Next Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., young dancers from the Carolinas and

Georgia will make a splash in a daylong showcase on the lawn at Ray's Splash Planet, Fifth and Sycamore streets, also free.

On the stage and in the air

Nine troupes from the Carolinas, Georgia, Virginia and New York will share the bill Thursday night. Alpha Omega Dance, a New York troupe that embraces a variety of cultural and ethnic influences, performs Friday and Saturday. Raleigh's Chuck Davis African American Dance Ensemble will join in for the Saturday performance. Things should really take flight Sept. 14-15, when the festival ends with a program of aerial dance. All the preceding performances are at 8 p.m. in the Booth Playhouse, Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, 130 N. Tryon St. — STEVEN BROWN

MORE INFORMATION

- **TICKETS:** This Thursday and Friday nights, \$10-\$20; Saturday night and Sept. 14-15, \$10-\$25.
- **DETAILS:** 704-804-2731; www.charlottedancefestival.org.