



# Center Stage

Newsletter of the UW Department of Theatre & Dance

Winter 2007

## Something Old, Something New

**H**appy New Year to you and yours from all of us here at the University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance! Now that the fall semester has drawn to a close, we are looking forward to a bright new year ahead!

Our 2007-2008 production season opened in October with **UNCLE VANYA**, Anton Chekov's timeless and painfully funny tale about love, loss, and desire in pre-revolution Russia. Directed by **William Missouri Downs**, the production was lively, engaging, and very funny — no small feat when producing a Chekov piece! The play was beautifully rendered by design faculty **Lee Hodgson** (costume design), **Casey Kearns** (scene design), and **Larry Hazlett** (lighting and sound design).

A concert of original dance works followed in early November, featuring the world premiere of **Jennifer Deckert's** contemporary ballet **FIRE & ICE**, which was inspired by the music, landscape, and culture of Iceland, and the Wyoming premiere of visiting dance faculty **Jacob Mora's** **THE PINK BLUE**, an inventive piece incorporating jazz, hip hop, ethnic, and urban forms in a complex exploration of relationships, self-definition, and how individuals contend with their environment.

We closed out the fall season with the world premiere of **William Missouri Downs' new play** about post-Matthew Shepard Laramie, **THE "M" WORD**. Ably directed by **Lee Hodgson**, this dark comedy took a serious look at issues of tolerance, diversity, and freedom of expression, while poking fun at campus politics.

The production, which has been invited to compete at the Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival

The lovely Yelena (Katrina Despain, L) ignores a flirtatious Vanya (Ken Stellingwerf, R) in Chekhov's classic tale, **UNCLE VANYA**. (Photo by Bill Downs.)



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(KCACTF) in February (see **M WORD Selected for Region VII KCACTF**, p. 2), stirred up considerable dialogue among campus groups, and met with good reviews and audience response.

The spring semester is right around the corner, and we are already gearing up to host Region VII KCACTF for the first time since 1996, thanks in large part to the construction of the Laramie Hilton Garden Inn & University of Wyoming Conference Center — Region VII KCACTF will be the inaugural event for the new complex (see **UW Hosts Region VII KCACTF**, p. 3)!

We look forward to keeping you up-to-date on our activities as we continue to make UW one of the best undergraduate theatre and dance programs in the country! Please continue to share your news with us as well. All the best and feel free to stop by to visit anytime.

## THE "M" WORD Selected as KCACTF Regional Finalist

The University of Wyoming's original production of THE "M" WORD has been selected as one of five Region VII finalists for the 2008 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF).

**An encore performance of THE "M" WORD** will be shown on February 17, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. on the Fine Arts Main Stage. Call 766-6666 or go online at [www.uwyo.edu/finearts](http://www.uwyo.edu/finearts) for tickets.

Written by professor and playwright-in-residence **William Missouri Downs** and directed by professor **Lee Hodgson**, THE "M" WORD is a darkly comic look at UW 10 years after Matthew Shepard's murder. The play examines the collision between perception and reality while also poking fun at campus politics.

THE "M" WORD was chosen as a Region VII finalist from a pool of more than 30 productions.



Harlan Post and Kayla O'Keefe in a scene from UW's world premiere production of THE "M" WORD.

The regional event, which is part of the Kennedy Center's annual competition for student actors, directors, and playwrights representing colleges and universities nationwide, will be held February 18-22 at UW.

"Our selection for Region VII KCACTF is a nice recognition from our peers and colleagues," said director Hodgson.

"It's an honor to represent the University of Wyoming at the regional

festival, especially since we will be hosting it. It will be wonderful to mount our production at home in such a supportive environment."

The other KCACTF Region VII finalists are THE NIGHT THOREAU SPENT IN JAIL, Colorado State University; NOH TELLING, Central Washington University; CONVENTION, Western Washington University; and THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, University of Northern Colorado.

UW's production of FUR, directed by senior Anna Brownsted, was also under consideration to be a regional finalist.

The winner of the Region VII competition has the potential to be produced at the National Festival in April at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Four productions nationwide are selected from the eight KCACTF regions.

## Student Playwrights, Actors Move on to Regional Competition

Four UW student playwrights have been selected as finalists for the 2008 Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival and will compete for a bid to the national festival.

Finalists in the one-act play division include UW's **Leann Torske Stellingwerf**, THE PROBLEM WITH APPLES, **Anna Austin Brownsted**, NIAGARA FELL, and **Amy Hollon**, BACKYARD GENE POOL. **Nicholas Gene Terpstra-Schwab** is a finalist in the 10-minute play division with SHARING THIS ROOM WITH YOU.

Also, 14 UW student actors — the most in school history — have



Leann Torske Stellingwerf as Frida Kahlo in 2007's THE BODY THROUGH WHICH THE DREAM FLOWS....

been chosen to participate in the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competition at the regional festival. They are: **Caleb Clark, Katrina DeSpain, Chris Egging, Kira Galindo, Katie Herbert, John Byron Hill, JP Jaramillo, Nick Linn, Claudine Mboligikpelani Nako, Harlan Post, Rachel Rosenfeld, Jake Staley, Ken Stellingwerf, and Dominic Syracuse**. UW student actors have won the regional competition an unprecedented 11 times since 1990.

Region VII of the KCACTF comprises participating colleges and universities in Wyoming, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Washington.

## Brownsted Chosen to Speak at Honors Convocation

**Anna Austin Brownsted**, senior in directing and playwriting with UW Theatre and Dance, was one of two students selected to speak at the 2007 Keith and Thyra Thomson Honors Convocation this October. Anna was nominated by **Dr. Rebecca Hilliker**.

Anna presented her research (funded by an College of A&S Summer Independent Study Award), which centers on defining a method of contemporary theatre making. Based on production vs. critical theory, Anna's work argues that "imaginative" theatre places great importance on the visceral here and now, while stressing the unique art form of live production and its relationship to the audience.

"I believe this imaginative theatre has an integral place in today's world," Anna said, "because it focuses on a



Rebecca Hilliker (L) and Anna Brownsted (R).

shared moment in time and emphasizes sensory experience while providing an opportunity for catharsis."

These ideas have come together out of Anna's passionate belief that legitimate theatre is necessary in an increasingly technologically advanced society.

A regular performer in UW Theatre & Dance plays, Anna had roles last summer in Neil Simon's *THE LAST OF THE RED HOT LOVERS* and **William Missouri Downs'** *KOSHER LUTHERANS*. Her most recent project has been to direct *FUR*, Migdalia Cruz's challenging retelling of *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*.

## Fine Arts Main Stage Gets a New Sound System

In 1972-73, when the Fine Arts Main Stage Theatre was completed, the 8-track cassette was the vogue for entertainment playback. Almost all theatrical sound was designed using multiple reel-to-reel tape decks and tapes. Hours of re-recording and splicing the 'show' tapes using magnetic splices were the norm. Occasionally, phonograph records were played directly into stage and house speakers. Sometimes the results were quite good for the day, but usually the sound was fraught with snaps, crackles, and pops along with the music, and frequently the sound didn't enhance the production at all!

Until this past summer, the speakers, amplifiers, and cables from 1973 were still in use on our stage. Yes, we had updated a few playback components, as well as a few speakers since then, but essentially the old infrastructure remained intact.

Thanks to a fabulous, major gift from the **Jack and Victoria H. Oakie Foundation**, along with special gifts from many of our donors, support from UW Physical Plant through the Major Maintenance Budget, and a grant from the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund, UW Theatre & Dance has finally stepped into the 21st century and the digital age with both feet!

We have new speakers (19 of them), a new digital control console, and a new computerized sound cue playback system! We will be continuing our sound renovation for the Main Stage and will also be upgrading components in the Studio Theatre over the next few months.

Not all productions provide the best medium for showcasing a new state-of-the-art sound system – for many, there are no helicopters or jets flying overhead or volcanoes erupting or atomic bombs exploding. Hopefully, throughout this production season and the coming ones, you will notice a new clarity and wrap-around sound quality that has never been present before.

We are thrilled with our new sound capabilities and the enhancements they will make to our productions in audio quality and audience enjoyment, but, more importantly, we are thrilled and grateful for what these advances represent in training and teaching opportunities for our students! The fabulous gifts from the Oakie Foundation and the following donors have made all of this possible. Thank you!

Larry W. Hazlett

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# Alumni News Update

**Cheyenne Christian, BFA, 2007**, is an acting apprentice with the Actor's Theatre of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky. The Actors Theatre of Louisville, founded in 1964, is one of America's most consistently innovative professional theatre companies. The Acting Apprentice Company provides members with the invaluable opportunity to develop their craft as actors, their skills as collaborators, and their knowledge as theatre professionals. Apprentices participate in master classes with distinguished artists and administrators, including agents, casting directors, guest directors and actors. They observe rehearsals and are given professional audition opportunities. They perform in projects throughout the season and work closely with technical and stage management staff as crew support on mainstage productions. The season concludes with a showcase for industry professionals in New York City.

**Paulie Jenkins, BA, '76**, has just published a novel, *Following the Eagle*, with Book Surge Publishing. *Following the Eagle* is available at [www.Book-Surge.com](http://www.Book-Surge.com), [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com), [www.Abebooks.com](http://www.Abebooks.com) and [www.Alibris.com](http://www.Alibris.com).



**Thomas Martin, BFA, 2006**, has recently returned from a year abroad at the London Academy of Music and

Dramatic Art (LAMDA). Thomas sat in on several acting classes, served as assistant director on five shows, including *ALL MY SONS* by and *A CHERRY ORCHARD* by Anton Chekhov. Thomas also directed *THIS IS HOW IT GOES*, by Neil LaBute, and *BOBBY GOULD IN HELL*, by David Mamet in LAMDA's Limbury Studio theatre. Thomas is now back in Boston working as an assistant at one of the larger Equity companies there, New Rep, and has plans to get married this summer to Kortney Adams, a Boston-based stage, film, and television actress.

**Garrett Neergaard, BFA, 2002**, spent November in New Haven, CT, doing a show called *TROUBLE IN MIND* at Yale Rep, directed by Irene Lewis. Garrett was in the show at Baltimore Centerstage last January and was pleased to reprise the role of Eddie Fenton, an ambitious stage-manager caught in the crossfire between a tyrannical director and a leading actress who finds herself unwilling to continue playing into negative stereotypes about African-Americans.

**Kyle (Watts) Pitts, BFA 2001**, is living and working in Lakewood, CO, and recently celebrated her second wedding anniversary. Kyle is looking into getting her teaching license so that she can start teaching high school drama. You can reach Kyle at [kylehillary@gmail.com](mailto:kylehillary@gmail.com).

**Kellie Rae Rockey** had a paper selected for *History Trails: An Undergraduate Journal of History from the University of Wyoming* entitled "Primo Levi and Paul Steinberg's Auschwitz Memoirs."

**Brian Slaten, BFA, 2002**, has been in three episodes of *THE GUIDING LIGHT* this past year, and an episode of *LAW & ORDER: CRIMINAL INTENT*. This coming spring, a new film — currently entitled *THE TOURIST* — in which Brian has a role is scheduled to be released internationally. Directed by Marcel Legeneger, the film stars Ewan McGregor, Hugh Jackman, and Michelle Williams. Brian also has a starring role in the independent film *POSE DOWN*, which is in the Fliff film festival.



Makela Spielman and Brian Slaten in *AFTERMATH* by Theresa Rebeck. The show was part of *COUCHWORKS* for the Slant Theatre Project.

Brian also acted in *HAYFEVER* by Noel Coward last summer at the Old Globe, directed by Robert Longbottom. With the Slant

Theater Project Brian has performed at the Tank Theater in new works by Theresa Rebeck, Michelle Lowe, and Mat Smart.

**Thomas Stoppel, BFA, 2006**, is in his second year with the University of Washington Professional Actor Training Program (PATP), a nationally recognized three-year conservatory training program leading the MFA degree. Thomas just finished acting in a production of *OUR LADY OF THE 121ST STREET*, by Stephen Adly Guirgis, set in gritty New York. He is currently working on *THE THREE SISTERS*, by Anton Chekhov, with Mark Jenkins, head of the acting program and a UW alumnus. Thomas writes that "The program is everything I wanted. The work that we do is breathtaking, and honest."

## Vertical Dance Continues to Grow

**Margaret Wilson** and **Neil Humphrey** produced a vertical dance at Vedauwoo concert, *DANCING BETWEEN EARTH AND SKY: VERTICAL DANCE AT VEDAUWOO*, during the last weekend in August. This year's performance focused on insect life.

Working with students in the department who have taken the Vertical Dance classes, and accompanied by Peter Queal, Bill Plummer, Steve Barnhart and Paul Taylor, this "almost annual"

performance is a very popular event in the summer. Check out the website for new photos and video.

The Vertical Dance II class will also present a workshop performance of their class projects at KCACTF in February 2008. In addition, Margaret and Neil are arranging for a vertical dance performance in Nuuk, Greenland, and have hopes to continue this program with students in the summer of 2009.



Neil Humphrey (L) and Margaret Wilson (R) in the grasshopper pas de chat at Vedauwoo.



Dancers form a dragonfly at Vedauwoo.

## Faculty Spotlight

**William Missouri Downs** received a Meritorious Achievement Award from the American College Theatre Festival for directing Chekhov's *UNCLE VANYA*. Also, in February actors from the Guthrie Theater will stage his play *SEAGULLS IN A CHERRY TREE* as part of the Twin Cities Chekhov Festival.

**Margaret Wilson** attended the 17th annual International Association for Dance Medicine and Science in Canberra, Australia in October. She learned how to look left for oncoming traffic when crossing the street and saw lots of Kangaroos (\*and presented a paper and poster). Margaret and Jennifer Deckert (new dance faculty) are also developing a wellness screening for dancers, and Jennifer will present on this topic at the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) in June.

**Lou Anne Wright**, who was recently promoted to Full Professor, has had a busy 2007. In the spring, Lou Anne was recruited to create and teach an Advanced Voice class for the University of Colorado at Boulder. She was subsequently hired to voice, speech and dialect coach all five shows for the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, where she was delighted to work with such luminaries as Scott Schwartz (*BAT BOY, THE MUSICAL*) and John Plumpis (*LION KING*). In the Fall, she won excellent reviews for playing Amanda Wingfield in *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* at the Dairy Arts Center in Boulder, Colorado. The second edition of Lou Anne's Introduction to Theatre text (*THE ART OF THEATRE*) is due to be published next year.

# What Does It Take to Bring Professional Theatre to UW Each Summer? YOU!!

We'd like to thank all of our patrons for their tremendous support of the 2007 Snowy Range Summer Theatre & Dance Festival. You make our festival a success!

Running the festival each summer is a big job and we'd love for you to be part of the goings on this coming season!

**HOW YOU CAN HELP:** We're looking for housing for our guest artists (performers and designers) for the 2008 summer season (2-week stay per artist

per show). Dates we need housing for the 2008 summer season are:

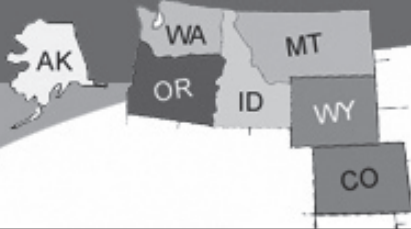
- ❖ June 1 - June 15;
- ❖ June 15 - June 29; and
- ❖ June 29 - July 6.

Do you have a guest room and would like to host a visiting artist? Or a small apartment you'd be willing to donate or lease at a reduced rate? Or do you have the need for housesitting next summer? Donations of housing will enable us to bring in seasoned theatre professionals and are tax deductible.

Interested? For details, please contact Kathy Kirkaldie at [kirisk@uwyo.edu](mailto:kirisk@uwyo.edu) or Leigh Selting at [selting@uwyo.edu](mailto:selting@uwyo.edu). THANKS!



Guest actors Mindi Logan and David Borrer in the 2007 UW Summer Theatre production of MAN IN THE FLYING LAWN CHAIR.



## UW Hosts KCACTF Region VII Festival

UW Theatre & Dance is pleased to host the Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) for the first time since 1996. The festival runs February 18 - 22, 2008, and will include participants from schools in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado.

Begun in 1969 by Roger L. Stevens, the Kennedy Center's founding chairman, KCACTF encourages, recognizes and celebrates the finest and most diverse work produced in university and college theater programs; provides opportunities for participants to develop their theater skills and insight; improves the qual-

ity of college and university theater in the U.S.; and encourages colleges and universities to give distinguished productions of new plays, the classics, and experimental works.



Through state, regional, and national festivals, KCACTF participants celebrate the creative process, see one another's work, and share experiences and insights within the community of theater artists. The KCACTF honors excellence of overall production and

offers student artists individual recognition through awards and scholarships in playwriting, acting, criticism, directing, and design.

Each January and February, regional festivals showcase the finest of each region's entered productions and offer a variety of activities, including workshops, symposia, and regional-level award programs. Each April, the national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center and showcases invited works from the regional festivals.

For more information on the 2008 Region VII KCACTF, please go online to <http://www.kcactf.org/7/festival/2008index.htm>.

# Thank You to our 2007-2008 Friends of Theatre & Dance!

We'd like to say a sincere "Thank you!" to all our faithful supporters in the 2007-2008 *Friends of Theatre & Dance*. *Your gifts have been instrumental in supporting and growing our award-winning programs!* (We apologize for any errors.)

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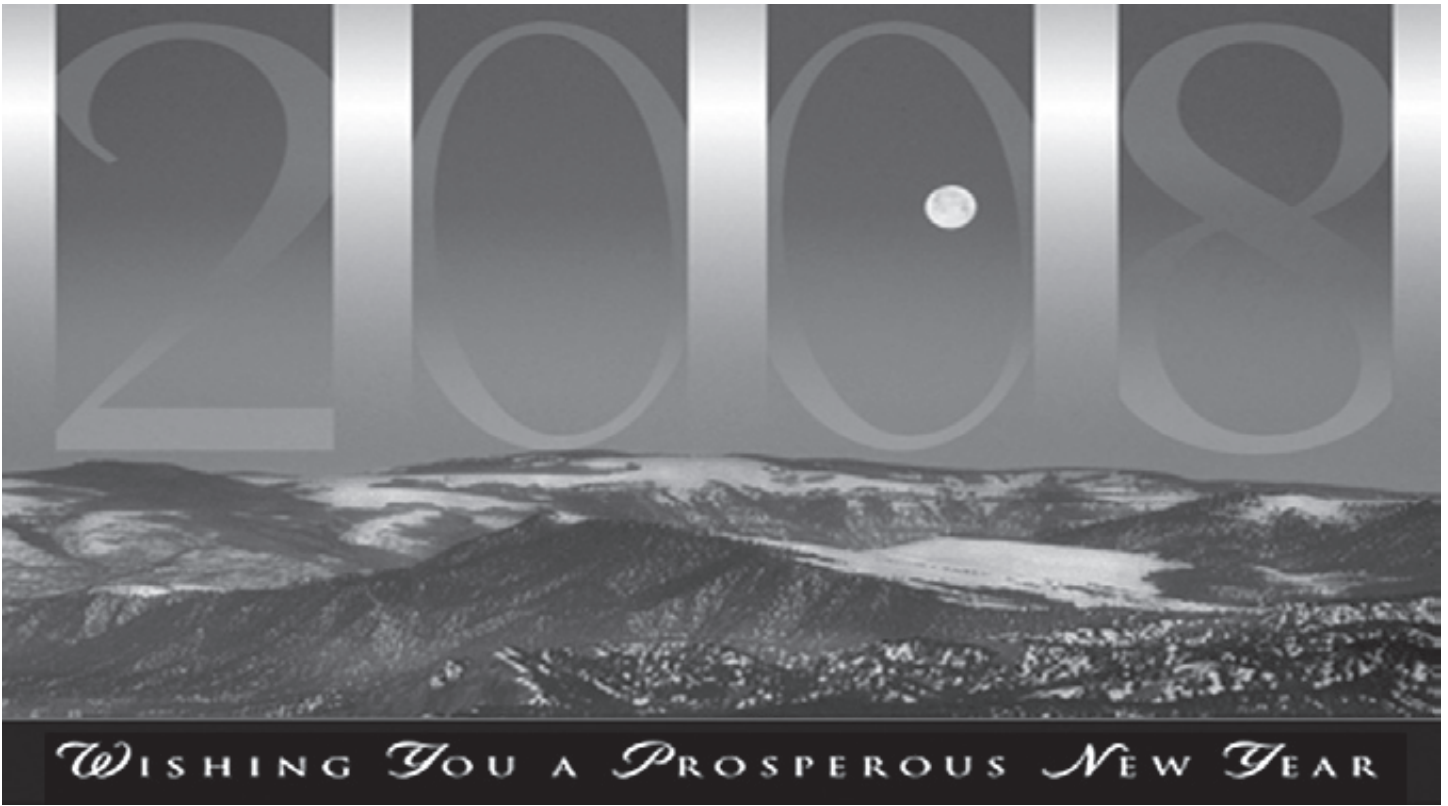
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