



# Center Stage

Newsletter of the UW Department of Theatre & Dance Spring 2006

## 2006 off to a great start!

Summer is bursting out all over here in Laramie, thanks to welcome wet snows and spring and summer rains! We at the University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance hope this issue of Center Stage finds you well and enjoying these warmer days while gearing up for fall.

This spring has been one of the busiest in recent memory. The semester kicked off in January with a staged reading and world premiere of **Un-American Activities**, written by Keith

Hull, former English department head, and directed by **William Missouri Downs** and **Lou Anne Wright**. Based on original tran-

scripts from the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the play intertwined real testimonies of celebrities with the fictional story of Hollywood starlet who is preparing to testify. The production featured freshman and sophomore performers and also served as a benefit for UW Playwrights.

John Gay's landmark ballad opera, *The Beggar's Opera*, followed in February. Directed by music faculty **Dr. Larry Hensel**, this ground-breaking political and social satire set in the seedy London underworld of 1720 played to full houses.

Right after the opera's closing, the department scrambled to take **Frequency 98.6**, student **Dana Formby's** original Vietnam-era, coming-of-age play to the regional Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival in Pasco, Wa. While the production did not go on to the national KC/ACTF in April, the

Marley looks on as the living go about their business in *A Christmas Carol*.

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play was a Finalist for the prestigious David Mark Cohen National Playwriting Award.

Once again, our acting, directing, playwriting, and design students took top honors at the Region VII KC/ACTF, with several going on to national competition (see **UW Theatre Students Claim Top Honors At 2006 Regional Festival**, p. 4).

We had barely unpacked the truck from KC/ACTF when it was time to tech the well-received *Collected Dances, II*, which opened in early March. The concert featured works by UW dance faculty **Mel Claridge**, **Margaret Wilson**, **Marsha Knight**, and **Vincent Brosseau**, with highly inventive ballet, modern, jazz, swing, and vertical dance pieces.

Less than a week later, UW Theatre & Dance students, faculty, and staff

were busy hosting the 2006 Northwest Conference of the American College Dance Festival (ACDFA), under the able direction of **Marsha Knight**. The festival, which had more than 425 participants, included four days of exciting events, with the welcoming performance by **Alvin Ailey II**, four sessions of master classes each day, Adjudication Concerts, an Informal concert, panel discussions, and the final Gala Concert. **Marsha Knight's** original ballet, *Of A Mind*, which was presented at the Northwest ACDFA, was selected for performance at the Gala Concert and also for performance at the national festival at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in May (see article below).

Our spring season ended in late April with a new play by Deborah

Brevvort, *The Women of Lockerbie*. Directed by **Rebecca Hilliker**, this lyrical drama charted the journey of an inconsolable couple looking for closure and their dead son's remains in Lockerbie on the seventh anniversary of the crash. The play was written and staged



in the form of a Greek tragedy, providing a great opportunity to work in that style for our acting students.

Summer theatre is in full swing (see **Snowy Range Summer Theatre & Dance Festival Continues to Grow**, p. 3) and the 2006-2007 academic performance season is almost upon us. We look forward to keeping you up-to-date on activities as we continue to make UW one of the best undergraduate theatre and dance programs in the country!

Please continue to tell us about your whereabouts and goings on as well — we are in the process of updating the online Alumni News section of the UW Theatre and Dance website that was launched last fall, and will have current news up soon. All the best and feel free to stop by anytime to visit.

## Contemporary Ballet Selected for Performance at the Kennedy Center

*Of a Mind*, an original contemporary ballet featuring University of Wyoming dancers **Anna Keller** (senior, Missoula, Mont.), **Nikki Canete** (freshman, Rapid City, S.D.), **Stephanie Thomas** (freshman, Gillette, Wyo.), **Bridget Bose** (junior, Denver, Colo.), and **Eileen Skidmore** (sophomore, Laramie, Wyo.), was selected for performance at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as part of the 2006 National Conference of the American College Dance Festival Association (ACDFA).

Choreographed by Theatre and Dance faculty **Marsha Knight** to Fritz Kreisler's *Praeludium and Allegro*, *Of A Mind* was selected by adjudication from 37 works presented at the Northwest Conference of the ACDFA.

Adjudicators Bill Evans, Claire Porter, and Elizabeth Zimmer recommended 11 of these works for performance at the NW Conference's Gala Concert. Three of these were then



Anna Keller rehearses *Of A Mind*.

selected for performance at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., on May 16-18, 2006. The other invited works from the NW Conference are Brigham Young University's *Deux Chaises* and Western Oregon University's *The Lisa Variations*.

The honor of selection to the ACDFA National Festival is a first for the UW Department of Theatre and Dance, and is especially meaningful, as the department hosted the NW Conference of the ACDFA from March 8-11, 2006. Other pieces presented by UW at the NW Conference included UW's student submission, *Instability*, choreographed by dance major Krystal Stovall (senior, Gillette, Wyo.) and featuring dancers Teresa Thompson, Dani Deaver, and Marlo Tanner. Jennifer Yarber (senior, Cheyenne, Wyo.) also choreographed *Torn*, which featured dancers Kristin Kissell, Eileen Skidmore, Broc Timmerman, and herself, for the Informal Concert.

## Former Professor Dr. Patricia Tate Passes Away in Florida

UW Theatre & Dance is sad to report the passing of Dr. Patricia Sue Tate on May 11, 2006, at the HospiceCare of Southeast Florida in Ft. Lauderdale.



From 1981 until her retirement in 2003, Pat was a professor in the

department, where she had a longstanding record of excellence in research and creative endeavors. Tate choreographed several original ballets, including productions of *Cattle Kate*, *Winter Moons* and *The Secret Garden*; departmental productions, including *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Carmina Burana*, *Brigadoon* and *Cabaret*; and many works for area community colleges and companies.

Tate also founded the Snowy Range Dance Festival in 1995 to provide the

highest level of professional training for young dancers in Wyoming and surrounding states. In 1999, Tate received the Wyoming Governor's Arts Award.

The Patricia Tate Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established to honor Pat's memory and provide assistance to students attending the Snowy Range Dance Festival. If you would like to support this fund, please send donations to the UW Foundation using the return slip in this newsletter.

## Snowy Range Summer Theatre & Dance Festival Continues to Grow

The 2006 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival, an outgrowth of UW's longstanding summer theatre program and annual dance festival, is just drawing to a close and has included an exciting and diverse performance season with many guest artists.

Serving as artistic director for the theatre portion of the festival was **Leigh Selting**, while **Margaret Wilson** and **Vincent Brosseau** led the dance portion.

"Moving to a festival format last summer was a really positive step for us," said department head and professor, **Rebecca Hilliker**. "It allowed us not only to provide a whole season's worth of cultural offerings, but also to attract more professional performers and designers, which has been a great experience for our students," she said.

The season opened with *Headset: A View from the Light Booth*, **William Missouri Downs'** charming backstage comedy, directed by **Leigh Selting**. This clever farce featured **John Mayer**, who was so outstanding in last year's production of *Art*, UW alum **James Weber**, and **Fred Willecke** and ran June 13-17.

Next came *Proof*, David Auburn's Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning drama about genius and madness. Directed by **Wolf J. Sherrill** and featuring stage and screen actor **James Harper**

and UW alums **Martha Slater** and **Rian Jarell**, *Proof* ran June 27-July 1.

Closing the theatre season was *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, by Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Winfield, which crammed Shakespeare's considerable oeuvre into 90-odd minutes and played to sold-out houses. Directed by **Leigh**



Garrett Neergaard (l), Jimmie Galaites, and John Mayer (back) hamming it up in *Shakespeare (Abridged)*.

**Selting**, this hilarious parody ran July 11-15 and featured **John Mayer** and UW alums **Jimmie Galaites** and **Garrett Neergaard**.

*Vertical Dance, Children's Theatre, and Music at Vedauwo* ran July 14-16, during *Shakespeare (Abridged)* and provided a segue into the dance festival and dance concert series. The event featured vertical dance in the natural rock formations at Vedauwo, choreographed by Margaret Wilson and Neil

Humphrey; the children's show *Alicia in Wonder Tierra*, an adventure fantasy directed by **Cecilia Aragon**; and live music by **Thomas Pfothner**, **Rod Garnett**, and **Kevin Hart**.

From July 19-29, the dance festival and concert series brought dozens of students to campus for 11 days of immersion in dance and studies with professional faculty and performers.

The free Student Showcase Concert on July 27 featured festival participants, while the festival resident company **Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago** gave a solo concert on July 28. The Dance Festival Gala Concert on July 29 features guest artists from **Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago** and participants performing repertory works by faculty Peter Pucci, Yoav Kaddar, Gail Benedict, Keith Saunders, Susan Israel Massey, and Lawrence Jackson.

"It's exciting to see how our summer program is growing and expanding" noted Hilliker. "We had a great run last year and were thrilled with the performers and designers who took part in this year's productions. It was a terrific season and we hope audiences really enjoyed it!" she added.

UW Theatre & Dance would like to thank everyone who has given to our summer programs and helped them to grow. *We appreciate your support!*

## UW Students Claim Top Honors at Regional Festival

University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance faculty and students received top honors at the Region VII Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) and Northwest Drama Conference (NWDC) held in Pasco, Washington this past spring.

UW actors swept the KCACTF Region VII Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competition, picking up their ninth regional win. Senior **Stephanie Lovell**, Enfield, CT, is one of two Region VII Irene Ryan winners who will go on to compete at the national festival in April at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

Other Irene Ryan awards went to sophomore **Andrew Franks-Ongoy**, Helena, MT, who was selected as second alternate and won the Mark Twain Comedy Award; junior **Claudine Mboligkpelani Nako**, Laramie, WY, who won the Musical Theatre Award;

and junior **Katie Herbert**, Granby, CO, who won the Best Partner award.

**Claudine Mboligkpelani Nako** also won a full-tuition scholarship to attend the 2006 TVI Summer Professional Acting Program in London, New York, or Los Angeles. Nako will train at the TVI Actors Studio with industry



Stephanie Lovell in *Frequency 98.6*.

professionals including producers, directors, talent agents, casting directors, and faculty members from prominent theatre schools across the country.

The production of *Frequency 98.6*—a new play by senior **Dana Formby**, Cheyenne, WY, with original staging by **Leigh Selting**—was placed on the "short list" to be invited to the national festival at the Kennedy Center.

Senior **Jesse Sundell**, Casper, WY, was runner-up for the Region VII 10-Minute Play Competition, second bachelor's candidate **Leann Torske**, Casper, WY, won Third Place in the KCACTF Critic's Forum, while junior **Russell Gilbert**, Roscoe, IL, picked up a Meritorious Achievement in Lighting Design award from the KCACTF.

Finally, UW Theatre and Dance department head **Dr. Rebecca Hilliker** was awarded the prestigious Kennedy Center Gold Medallion for her years of service and leadership to Region VII.

## Alumni Focus: James Weber, BT'D, '93

We caught up with alumnus **James (Jim) Weber** during the summer season while he was performing in our first summer show, *William Missouri Downs' Headset: A View from the Light Booth*.

**Jim** has been in New York for the last nine years and has been seen on *Saturday Night Live*, *Comedy Central*, and *Law & Order: SVU*, and most recently as George Washington in a film series playing at the Mount Vernon museum.

Jim is an associate member of Transport Group, a New York theater company founded by fellow University of Virginia graduate students. Since Transport Group's inception, it has received five Drama Desk Award Nominations for its productions. The most recent is *The Audience*, a new



Jim Weber as George Washington in a film series for the Mount Vernon museum.

musical that used the talents of over 30 New York playwrights, composers and lyricists and 46 actors to create the journey of one vibrant group of theatergoers who venture to a Broadway theatre one rainy Saturday night to see a new contemporary American musical.

Jim also works full time with Loosely Translated Productions, his film and video production company that has produced content for AOL, Sports Illustrated, Entertainment Weekly, American Express, Teen People, Time Magazine, Loews Theaters, Travel & Leisure Magazine, and an original award-winning documentary (*Farang Ba*) for the Trio Network.

Loosely Translated Productions is currently working on "Temps," a half-hour comedy pilot about the travails of two temp workers in New York City, starring Devin Sanchez (BFA '04). Jim serves as one of the Executive Producers and will also be the Director of Photography on the project.

If you're planning a trip to the Big Apple, Jim invites you to contact him at: james@looselytranslated.com.

## Gone, But Not Forgotten

Join UW Theatre & Dance in congratulating **Billie K. Gross**, who is retiring after more than 15 years sewing and working in the Costume Shop, serving as shop forewoman, and occasionally designing for shows.



Billie K. Gross hard at work in the Costume Shop. Photo by Donald P. Turner.

Although she's already at work up in Skagway, AK, where she goes for her annual summer trek, Billie Kay will be back in Laramie in the fall and plans to continue doing some freelance costuming work. Thanks for all your hard work in our department, Billie K., and we hope your retirement is fantastic!

Also leaving us this spring is **General Macarthur Hambrick**, who has served with the Snowy Range Dance Festival, taught dance classes in our program, occasionally performed, and, for the last several years, taken over leadership of Centennial Singers. General leaves us to pursue his own professional performance opportunities. We wish him the best and hope to see him back at UW before too much time passes!



General performs in *Les Sylphides* during the 2005 Spring Dance Show.

## Faculty Spotlight

**Vincent Brosseau**, our newest addition to the dance faculty, has elected to take a position as Director of Dance with the Savannah School of Arts and Design. This is a great opportunity for Vincent, but we are very sad to see him go—he has been a great asset to our department this past year. Good luck to you, Vincent!

**Billie K. Gross** retired from the department at the end of the spring semester and made her annual trek to Skagway, Alaska this summer to do some work and catch up with her old friends up North. Congratulations Billie K., and don't keep yourself too busy now that you're "retired."

**General Macarthur Hambrick** has moved on from his stint as director of Centennial Singers this spring in order to pursue more professional performance opportunities. We wish him well and hope to see him back at UW some time in the future!

**Larry Hazlett** set lights for his lighting design to **Marsha Knight's** *Of A Mind*, which was performed at the national ACDF festival at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. on May 18, 2006. This was Larry's second lighting design to be seen at the Kennedy Center. Larry recently presented a lecture entitled "Lighting: The Invisible Theatre Art" to the Laramie Lyceum. Also, **Russell Gilbert**, Larry's student, was given an 'Honorable Mention' award for his lighting design presentation for *Frequency 98.6* at the NW KCACTF festival in Pasco, WA.

**Rebecca Hilliker** received her second Kennedy Center Gold Medallion in as many years for her outstanding leadership in KC/ACTF Region VII.

(Continued on p. 6)

## Faculty Spotlight (Cont.)

**Marsha Knight** directed the 2006 Northwest Region American College Dance Festival in March, which was a major undertaking. Her original ballet, *Of A Mind*, was presented at the festival and was selected not only for performance at the Gala Concert, but also for performance at the national festival at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. in May.

**Leigh Selting** directed *Frequency 98.6*, an original student-written full length play that was chosen to be produced at the Region VII KCACTF Festival in Pasco, WA in February. The production was named to the short-list for selection to go on to the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. This spring, Leigh also spent two months acting in an Equity production of *The Heiress* in Denver, CO, and this summer he will return to the New Harmony Project in Indiana, where he will once again work with the company to develop new plays and screenplays, including a new piece by Jim Leonard, Jr. (*The Diviners*). Leigh was awarded the John P. Ellbogen teaching award from the university this year, and is the University of Wyoming's sole nominee for the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) national teaching award.

**Wolf J. Sherrill** directed *Proof* for the 2006 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and will also be attending an actor combatant workshop in Las Vegas later this summer.

**Margaret Wilson** has been busy directing the Snowy Range Summer Dance Festival with **Vincent Brosseau** this summer. Margaret, along with Neil Humphrey, also choreographed and put together the *Vertical Dance, Children's Theatre, and Music at Vedauwoo* performances that were held in mid-July.

## Class of 2006

Commencement has come and gone, taking a fantastic group of UW Theatre and Dance graduates with it! Though we'll be sad to lose so many talented students, we wish them the best of luck in their endeavors!

- Dana Formby
- Anna Keller
- Stephanie Lovell
- Norman Mabbit
- Heather Malek
- Sarah Oman
- Stephanie Schingle
- Ellen Soderberg
- Krystall Stovall
- Thomas Stroppel
- Jesse Sundell
- Jennifer Yarber



## Congratulations to...

**Lisa Betz**, BTD, '93, who has just been nominated for a Wilde Award by the GBLT Weekly Newspaper (Detroit) and who last summer received the Critic's Choice for Best Leading Actress in a Comedy (Olivia in *Twelfth Night*) at the Michigan Shakespeare Festival.

**Jimmie Galaites**, BFA '99, and wife **Lisa (Howe)**, who are expecting their first child this fall.

**Chris Will**, BFA, '05, and wife Beth, who are thrilled to announce the birth of their little girl. Caitlin Will was born July 9, 2006, and was 7lbs 7oz and 18 1/2 inches long. Chris and Beth are currently living in Scotland, where Chris is studying with the Royal Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow.



## ALUMNI NEWS UPDATE

The updated UW Theatre & Dance website launched last fall and has several features for alumni.

Two editions of *Center Stage*, the departmental newsletter, are online, with others to soon follow. We also have an online *Alumni News* section at [www.uwyo.edu/th&d/alumni](http://www.uwyo.edu/th&d/alumni), which we are about to update once again. We are working with UW Visual Communications to automate submission of online notes and

changes in contact information, so watch for changes to this in the near future.

As always, we would love to hear from you. Send a note to [kirisk@uwyo.edu](mailto:kirisk@uwyo.edu) with "Alumni News" in the subject line or to:

Alumni News  
University of Wyoming  
Dept. of Theatre & Dance  
Dept. 3951, 1000 E. University Ave.  
Laramie, WY 82071

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We'd like to say a sincere "Thank you!" to all our faithful supporters in the 2004-2005 *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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## 2006-2007 UW Theatre & Dance Season

### Dead Man Walking\*

*By Tim Robbins*  
Directed by Rebecca Hilliker  
OCTOBER 3 - 8  
Fine Arts Main Stage

### Sexual Perversity in Chicago\*\*

*By David Mamet*  
Directed by Leigh Selting  
OCTOBER 31 - NOVEMBER 5  
Fine Arts Studio Theatre

### The Nutcracker\*

*Adapted from Dickens' Holiday Classic*  
Choreographed by Marsha Knight  
NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 3  
A&S Auditorium

### Spinning Into Butter\*\*

*By Rebecca Gilman*  
Directed by William Missouri Downs  
FEBRUARY 6 - 11  
Fine Arts Studio Theatre

### ...the body through which the dream flows\*

*Choreographed by Margaret Wilson*  
MARCH 2 - 4  
A&S Auditorium

### Picasso at the Lapin Agile\*

*by Steve Martin*  
Directed by Leigh Selting  
APRIL 17 - 22  
Fine Arts Main Stage

\*A&S Auditorium and Main Stage curtain times are 7:30 p.m. with 2:00 p.m. Sunday matinees

\*\*Studio Theatre curtain times are 7:30 p.m. & 10:30 p.m. (Fri.-Sat. only) with 2:00 p.m. Sunday matinees

Curtain times for Second Season Events are TBA.

### Second Season Events

**The Exonerated**  
OCTOBER 9  
Fine Arts Main Stage

**N\*W\*C\*—The Race Play**  
OCTOBER 20  
Fine Arts Main Stage

**Student-Written One Acts**  
DECEMBER 6 -9  
Fine Arts Studio Theatre

**The Reindeer Monologues**  
FEBRUARY 14-16  
Fine Arts Studio Theatre

**Shorts By Skirts**  
MARCH 7 – 8  
Fine Arts Studio Theatre

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