



Center Stage

Newsletter of the UW Department of Theatre & Dance

Summer 2009

Embracing Innovation

Summer is in full swing in Laramie and we are in the thick of the summer festival season. All of us at the University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance hope this issue of Center Stage finds you hale and happy and enjoying these beautiful warm days.

The spring season opened with HEY*O*KAH / HOK*A*HEY, the world premiere of Eminent-Artist-in-Residence **Bill Bowers'** original new physical theatre piece. Drawing inspiration from the "contraire" trickster—the Heyokah—and from a Lakota battle cry—Hokahey—HEY*O*KAH / HOK*A*HEY celebrated the power of difference to reflect, critique, and transform culture. This exciting new piece was set on 16 of our students and featured **John O'Hagan** in the role of the Heyokah.

Immediately after the show closed, our students were off to the Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, where our playwriting, acting, directing, and design students took top honors, with some going on to national competition (see UW Theatre Students Claim Top Honors, p. 4).

The spring season continued in early April with an innovative dance and jazz concert, AWAKEN / SHIFT. This fusion of music and movement featured original

works by **Marsha Knight, Margaret Wilson, Lawrence Jackson**, and former faculty member **Vincent Brosseau**, as well as the musical stylings of the **Wyoming Jazz Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble II**, and pianists **Rubia Santos** and **Theresa Bogard**, and attracted large audiences of dance and jazz lovers alike!

The spring season ended in late April with a double bill of short operas directed by Vocal Arts Professor and UW Opera Theatre Head **Dr. Larry L. Hensel**. THE MEDIUM, by Gian Carlo Menotti, told the harrowing tale of a fake clairvoyant in decline, while GIANNI SCHICCHI, by Giacomo Puccini, GIANNI SCHICCHI was a delightful satire on the "deadly sin" of greed inspired by a line in Dante's "The Divine Comedy." The operas were beautifully lit by **Adam Mendelson** and costumed by **Lee Hodgson**, and featured a reversible set by **Casey Kearns** inspired by New York City's Little Italy that merged the two works and their play worlds seamlessly.



A scene from RIPPLING SOULS, Vincent Brosseau's dynamic modern dance piece in AWAKEN/SHIFT.

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cluding innovative dance/theatre troupe **Jo Strømgren Kompani**, who presented a special free performance of "POLAROID (WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON AROUND THE NORTH POLE)," a collaborative dance /theatre work that gives voice to an indigenous perspective on Greenlandic culture and its art. We are already laying the groundwork for several more artists to join us during the next academic year.

As our summer season draws to a close (see Summer Festival Tackles New Fare, p. 3) and an exciting new season of work fast approaches, we look forward to keeping you up-to-date on our activities. Your support has helped us to become 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. Our online *Alumni News* is currently up-and-running—you can submit an update at <http://www.uwyo.edu/th%26d/submit-news.asp>. All the best and feel free to stop by anytime to visit.

UW Theatre & Dance Receives \$100,000 Endowment for Playwriting

UW Theatre and Dance has a lot to celebrate after receiving a \$100,000 endowment for playwriting.

Playwrights are often taught that if they have too many coincidences in their stories it makes their plots less believable. Yet there is the old proverb “the truth is stranger than fiction.”

This story begins when playwright-in-residence and professor **William Missouri Downs** had a chance meeting with Brooks Reeve at a department store in Cheyenne. Turned out that Brooks was an East Coast playwright and they had a lot to talk about. A few months later, by chance, Brooks was cast as the lead role in one of Bill’s comedies at the Cheyenne Little Theatre.

That would have been the end of the story, but as it turned out Brooks’ father was **Dr. Douglas Reeves**, the chairman and founder for the Center for Performance

Assessment, an international organization dedicated to improving student achievement and educational equity. And it just so happened that Dr. Reeves, from his Boston office, was looking to make a unique donation to his alma mater. With the help of **Dale Walker** in

Legislature) to create the Douglas B. Reeves Endowment for Playwriting.

Dr. Douglas Reeves has authored more than twenty books and many articles on leadership and organizational effectiveness. He has twice been named to the Harvard University Distinguished Authors Series. Dr. Reeves was named the Brock International Laureate for his contributions to education and received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Parents Choice Award.

The new endowment is designed to encourage and support the writing and performance of original dramatic works at the University of Wyoming and to bring guest playwrights to campus.

UW Theatre and Dance is thrilled with the new endowment and looks forward to staging the Douglas B. Reeves New Play Festival in 2010!



Douglas Reeves’s \$50,000 donation to UW will be matched by the Wyoming State Legislature, resulting in a \$100,000 endowment for the UW Department of Theatre and Dance.

the UW Dean’s office, the dots were connected and the result was a \$50,000 gift (which will be matched by the Wyoming

UW Theatre & Dance Students Featured in Award-Winning Film

A dramatic short film produced by and starring UW Theatre and Dance students was awarded both the Judge’s Choice as well as the People’s Choice awards in the 2009 Wyoming Short Film Contest sponsored by the Wyoming Film Office.

THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE was written and directed by Wyoming native **Dillon Petrillo** and produced by UW Theatre and Dance student **Ian Rowe**. The film also stars UW actors **Ian Rowe** and **Mark Meiden**. The short was filmed on location in Laramie and surrounding areas.

The Judge’s Choice award carries



Mark Meiden and Ian Rowe in a still from THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE.

with it a \$25,000 grant to support future work, and the film will be featured in the Saratoga Film Festival in August.

The Wyoming Short Film Contest began in 2008 as a celebration of the state—its people and its history, its landscape and its culture. The contest is designed to foster film production in the state, giving filmmakers an opportunity and an incentive to shoot Wyoming.

Other top films in this year’s contest included Honorable Mentions to Trey Chace’s WYO PULP and David J Swift’s KILLPECKER: ORIGINS, as well as second and third place from the People’s Choice awards, Marni (see Students Featured in Film, p. 3).

Students Featured in Film (cont.)

Walsh's WYOMING YODELER and Nathan Robertson's BEYOND THE LEGEND, respectively.

Dillon Petrillo is a Wyoming native currently living in Fort Collins, CO. He attended college at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, CA and is finishing his film degree through the college online.

Mark Daniel Mieden is a Colorado native currently living in Laramie, WY. He attends the University of Wyoming and is a senior



Dillon Petrillo, writer and director of THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE.

Theatre and Dance major.

Ian Rowe is a Wyoming native currently living in Laramie, WY. He attends the University of WY and is a sophomore Theatre and Dance major.

THE DEER & THE ANTELOPE can be viewed at www.youtube.com/rottenorchard.

Special thanks to UW students and faculty **Jaime Cruz, Kelleen Shadow, Sarah Varca, Melissa Zieres, William Missouri Downs, & Lou Anne Wright.**

Summer Festival Tackles New Fare

The 2009 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival is currently in full swing, with the theatre performances just finishing up and the dance festival about to begin.

Leigh Selting has served as artistic director for the UW Summer Theatre portion of the festival, while **Marsha Knight** is heading up the dance portion.

The summer theatre season featured a more diverse array of works than in recent years. The season opened with the Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, I AM MY OWN WIFE, a vivid portrait of the cunning and controversial Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, an openly gay German transvestite and collector of culture who survived and flourished within the harrowing eras of Hitler's Gestapo and East Germany's Stasi. Written by Doug Wright and directed by **Dr. Rebecca Hilliker**, this one-man play featured new performance faculty member **John O'Hagan** tackling 36 different roles and ran June 9 - 13.

Next came THE UNDERPANTS, Steve Martin's hilarious adaptation of Carl Sternheim's turn-of-the-century farce DIE HOSE, about a German bureaucrat's wife who becomes an instant celebrity after accidentally dropping her bloomers to her ankles at a parade for the king. Directed by **John O'Hagan**, the sold-out show ran June 23-27.

Closing out the regular summer theatre season was THE LAST FIVE

YEARS, a contemporary musical about an ambitious young writer, Jamie, and his wife Cathy, an aspiring actress, as they fall in love, get married, and drift apart over the course of five years. Directed by **Leigh Selting**, this sold-out production featured recent UW Alumni **Chris Will** and **Claudine Mboligikpelani Nako** and ran July 7 - 11.

The summer theatre season is closing out this week with a special event, Bill Corbett and Kira Obolensky's hilarious

epistolary play, HATE MAIL. This Gen X antidote to LOVE LETTERS tells the story of Preston, a spoiled rich kid, who meets his match in Dahlia, an angst-filled artist. Their worlds collide when Preston sends a complaint letter that gets Dahlia fired from her job, and then there's no turning back. Featuring Leigh Selting and guest actor Jennifer Mendenhall, HATE MAIL runs exclusively at Hart's Alley in Laramie July 16 - 18.

The 2009 festival closes with the Dance Concert Series. The free STUDENT SHOWCASE CONCERT on July 23 features festival participants, while the DANCE FESTIVAL GALA CONCERT on July 25 features festival resident dancers from the Cleo Parker Robinson Ensemble and the American Ballet Repertory Dance, as well as festival participants performing repertory works by festival faculty Bat Abbit, Peggy Petteway Mahoney, Kevin Byrne, Gail Benedict, Susan Israel Massey, Brent Schneider, and Darryl Thomas.

The ever-popular VERTICAL DANCE AT VEDAUWOO concert will be held in the spectacular Vedauwoo Recreation Area August 22 at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. and August 23 at 2:00 p.m.

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



Rachel Rosenfeld (foreground) and Nick Linn (background) in THE UNDERPANTS.

UW Students Claim Top Honors at Region VII KCACTF

University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance faculty and students received top honors at last week's Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) and Northwest Drama Conference (NWDC), which was held this year at the University of Idaho in Moscow, ID.

In the KCACTF Region VII Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competition, sophomore **Katie Stearns** was selected as first alternate and also picked up the Region VII KCACTF Mark Twain Comedy Acting Award. Senior **Lindsay Neinast** was awarded the NAPAT Regional Classical Acting Award. UW actors have won the regional Irene Ryan competition 12 times since 1990, which is a national record.

Senior **Jaime Cruz** was the Region VII One-Act Play winner for his piece

DEAD IN THE KITCHEN. **Randi Million** was the Region VII National Playwriting Program (NPP) Ten-Minute Play Competition Winner for **IDIOT'S GUIDE**. UW playwrights have won the regional one-act playwriting competition six times and the ten-minute playwriting competition four times since 2000.



Graduating senior Jaime Cruz, Region VII One-Act Play winner.

Of the eight KCACTF regions nationwide, four regional one-act play winners and four 10-minute play winners were selected to compete at the national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

American Studies graduate student **Drew Lyness** was the One-Act Play runner-up with **BODY OF AN AMERICAN**. The play also won the NWDC NW Playwrights Alliance Award.

Junior **Steven Rotramel** was the Region VII KCACTF Costume Design Award winner for his work on **RABBIT HOLE** and went on to compete at the national festival in April.

Finally, assistant professor **Dr. Cecelia Aragon** received a Region VII Faculty Excellence Recognition as a University Scholar.

Department Sponsors Dance Residencies

With funding from the Wyoming Arts Council and the Emerging Artist Series (funded by the Wyoming Legislature), the Department sponsored five dance residencies during this academic year.

Lorry May: Anna Sokolow Foundation. With funding from the Wyoming Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, under the American Masterpieces program, Lorry May, Artistic director for the Anna Sokolow Foundation was in residency at the University of Wyoming in September re-staging *Ride the Culture Loop*, originally choreographed by Anna Sokolow in 1971. This piece was performed in November along with *A Midsummer's Night Dream*.

Cleo Parker Robinson: Founder, choreographer and director of the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, from Denver, CO, Robinson was in residence for two days in October. She was the

first dance artist as a part of the Emerging Artist Series.

Ellie Sciarra: Tap dancer Ellie Sciarra was in residence in January, teaching classes and setting a repertory piece for students. Ellie was a part of the Snowy Range Summer Dance Festival in 2008 and we were delighted to have the opportunity to bring her back to work with more of the dance students at UW



A scene from *POLAROID*, which was in residency in March.

POLAROID: WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING AT THE NORTH POLE, a touring production from Norway and Greenland, was in residence in early April. The performers presented a workshop in Greenlandic Mask Dance and gave a lecture on the Jo Stromgren Kompani, <http://www.jskompani.no/> as well as presented a free performance of the *POLAROID* production. This residency was sponsored by the Emerging Artists Fund, the Wyoming Arts Council, Associated Students of the University of Wyoming and the Ruckelshaus Institute for Environment and Natural Resources.

Hannah Kahn: Independent choreographer Hannah Kahn, from Denver, CO was in residency during April teaching classes and setting excerpts from her repertory on the dancers. Her work *ON THE BANKS AND AROUND THE FIRE* was performed at the end of the residency and during finals week.

Alumni News

Bridget Bose, BFA, '07, moved to NYC in April to pursue dance. She is dancing with a small contemporary company, Eyes of a Blue Dog and had a gig in June at the Beacon Theatre that might tour to a few cities on the East Coast. Bridget also has a work study job at Broadway Dance Center so she can take classes. She is loving the city & all the amazing opportunities for artists!

Dana Formby, BFA, '06, is currently in her third year working towards an MFA in playwriting at Ohio University. She was awarded three of the most prestigious national honors a graduate playwright can earn. A third-year MFA, she was named the National 10-Minute Play Winner by KCACTF a Finalist in the Kendeda Graduate Playwriting Competition hosted by the Alliance Theater in Atlanta, GA; and was invited to participate in the 2009 WordBRIDGE Play Labs at Clemson University, SC.

Mike "Mykel" Hill, BTD, '90, just finished a run of the musical Ragtime (in the role of Coalhouse Walker Jr.) at Centerstage Theater in Overland Park, Kansas. Next month, I'll begin rehearsals to play Jim in Big River at Musical Theater Heritage in Kansas City, MO.

Paulie Jenkins, BA, '76, served as Lighting Designer for the Magical Starlight Electrical Parade which opened March 6, 2009, at Universal Studios, Osaka, Japan. Paulie is currently in Wyoming doing research for the sequel to her novel "Following the Eagle."

Catherine (DiBella) Lindsey, BTD, '91, has spent the last four years working as production manager for an award-winning documentary film company in Denver; the company folded the same week they got short-listed for an Oscar. She is now employed as the Administrative Coordinator at the Mizel Arts and Culture Center, and is still doing a couple Equity contracts a year and raising son Jack with her husband David.

Gavin Mayer, BA, '96, recently resigned his position teaching theatre at Pomona High School in Arvada, CO, to pursue an MFA in Directing at Florida State University in Tallahassee, FL.

Tiffany McCann, BFA, '05, is currently living in Gillette, WY. This past spring she was given the opportunity to teach dance at several schools in Campbell County and Weston County for the Choose Dance program. She

has also been working at Rozet Elementary as a Title 1 Teacher Assistant. Tiffany is expecting her first child in October 2009.

Mike Morelli, BS, '89, is working at Michigan Technological University as the Director of the Rozsa Center for the Performing Arts. The Center is building an Art gallery this summer to go along with our 5 series and 4 resident companies which contribute over 100 performances a year to the community.

Garrett Neergaard, BFA, '01, last summer filmed a short scene in his girlfriend's first full-length feature film, SAD SACK SALLY. He spent the fall in Baltimore, MD, at Baltimore Centerstage playing Barnaby in Thornton Wilder's THE MATCHMAKER. In winter, he went to Rochester, NY, to do a new play by Dan O'Brien called THE HOUSE IN HYDESVILLE.

Steve Peterson, played John of Gaunt in "Richard II" for the UpRising Theatre Co. in North Hollywood in January. I am completing the school year teaching Shakespeare and appearing in In-School Programs in and around

Los Angeles for the Theatricum Botanicum in Topanga, CA and Shakespeare at Play in Burbank, CA and haven't the foggiest idea of what I'm doing the rest of this summer.

After pushing for a new theatre facility for nearly two decades at the University of Wisconsin-Marathon County, **Sarah Rudolph, BA, '82**, delights in watching as work begins on preparing the site for a new building to house a new theatre. She even accepted the irony involved when one of the bulldozers demolishing the old properties on the site hit her new auto.

Heather and Jonny Schroeder, were married in Colorado in January. Both have been working in Denver's theater scene; Heather just closed a production of MOVE OVER MRS. MARKHAM at Miner's Alley Playhouse, and Jonny has just finished with (another!) children's show at Littleton Town Hall Arts Center. Last year, Heather signed on to Maximum Talent Agency. Jonny also works as a bartender and Heather cuts hair. They plan to move to NYC in January to try for the big time; wish them luck!

Leean Kim (Torske) Stellingwerf, BFA, '08, has been accepted into Ohio University's MFA Playwriting Program beginning Fall 2009.

Elaine Walrath, BFA, '03, lives in Santa Monica, CA, and works as an assistant editor on LEVERAGE starring Timothy Hutton on TNT. She recently joined IATSE Local 700 Editor's Guild.

Faculty Spotlight

William Missouri Downs' comedy COCKEYED received excellent reviews at the HotCity Theatre in St. Louis and his play BOOKS ON TAPE toured England with the Northwest Playwrights Alliance. Also, his plays COCKEYED and KOSHER LUTHERANS have been published by Samuel French.

The 2nd edition of Lou Anne Wright and William Missouri Downs's textbook *The Art of Theatre* was published by Wadsworth. Nearly 10,000 students nationwide now use the first edition.

Lawrence Jackson recently gave two presentations at the International Blacks in Dance Conference. The panels were entitled, "To Degree or Disagree," (this panel discussed the benefits and disadvantages of dancers attending an institution of higher education after high school in contrast to pursuing a career in the art of dance) and "Transitions for Dancers: Life after the Stage." In addition to leading these panel discussions, he taught a master jazz class and team taught a master modern class alongside Cleo Parker Robinson. He also taught a master jazz class at the American College Dance Festival in Orem, Utah.

Jackson choreographed two works for the spring dance concert, AWAKEN/SHIFT, as well as "Monica's Waltz" for the UW production of THE MEDIUM. He performed the role of Oberon in Ballet Society of Colorado Springs' version of A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM and also judged the International Baccalaureate (IB) Dance final at Douglas County High School in Castle Rock, CO, the International Student Association's Talent Show, and UW's Best Dance Crew.

Marsha Knight has been co-directing the 2008 Snowy Summer Dance Festival with Jennifer Deckert this July.

John O'Hagan performed in I AM MY OWN WIFE and directed THE UNDERPANTS for the 2009 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival. He is spending three weeks of July at North Carolina School of the Arts participating in the Society of American Fight Director's (SAFD) Actor Combatant Workshop and taking the Skills Proficiency test to become an SAFD recognized Actor/Combatant.

(Continued on p. 6)

UW Theatre & Dance Presents First-Ever Actor Showcase in NYC

Ten recent alumni and graduating seniors participated in UW's first acting showcase at the Sage Theatre in NYC on May 4th.

Partnering with the University of Georgia's MFA acting program, and the University of North Carolina-Greensboro's BFA/MFA acting programs, UW Theatre and Dance rented the Sage Theatre in Times Square, for two performances in front of industry professionals.

In total, over 27 casting directors and agents attended the event, which is primarily intended to jumpstart the professional careers of UW actors as they enter the workforce.

The showcase, "Two Chairs and a Table: A Showcase of Scenes," was directed by Leigh Selting, Professor and Chair of the Theatre

and Dance Department at UW, and assisted by first year acting faculty John O'Hagan. After the showcase, several UW actors were contacted by major agencies and casting directors for potential signings and future projects, ranging from voiceover animation projects for Disney

Theatricals to commercials, to legitimate theatre representation.

Hoping to make this an annual event, UW joins a small number of undergraduate programs offering this exciting opportunity to its students. On Sunday, May 3rd, a special invited dress rehearsal for UW alumni was held at the Sage for all NYC area alumni to preview the showcase.

There was a tremendous turnout, followed by a lively Alumni Reception at the Irish Rogue Bar on 49th and 9th Avenue in NYC. This too, is hoping to turn into an annual event, and provide an additional source of alumni networking for those choosing to relocate to New York City after completing their degrees.



UW actors presenting in NYC included: (back, L-R) Jimmie Galaites, Stephanie Lovell, Jake Staley, Lindsay Cozzens; (front, L-R) Devon Sanchez, Brianne Mai, Rachel Rosenfeld, Kelleen Shadow, and Emily Valley.

Faculty Spotlight (Cont.)

Leigh Selting served as artistic director for the theatre portion of the 2009 Snowy Range Summer Theatre & Dance Festival, for which he also directed THE LAST FIVE YEARS.

Centennial Singers played Leigh's old high school in Elgin, NE, on May 18, 2009 (Pope John XXIII Central Catholic High School). Cast members took the opportunity for this "late night photo op." to photograph one of the major props from the show "Milky White Cow" in front of the city sign....



Lou Anne Wright played the role of Mrs. Bennett in PRIDE AND PREJUDICE at the Openstage Theatre in Fort. Collins. She also dialect coached I AM MY OWN WIFE for UW's summer theatre.

Class of 2009

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!

- Carling Barker, BFA
- Chelsey Byrd, BA
- Jesse Cohen, BA
- Jaime Cruz, BFA
- Kimmie Gamble, BFA
- Lindsey Hall, BFA
- John Byron Hill, BFA
- Rachel Knutson (Minor)
- Sarah Moore, BA
- Callan Riedel BFA
- Rachel Rosenfeld, BFA
- Kelleen Shadow, BFA
- Laura Shockley BFA
- Jake Staley, BFA
- Emily (Watson) Valley, BFA
- Nick Valley, BFA
- Nicole Watts BFA
- Joelle Weber, BA



Thank You to our 2008-2009 Friends of Theatre and Dance!

We'd like to say a sincere "Thank you!" to all our faithful supporters in the 2008-2009 *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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2009-2010 UW Theatre & Dance Season

THE CRUCIBLE

By Kevin Kling, based on the children's book by Kevin Henkes

Directed by John O'Hagan

SEPTEMBER 29 - October 4

Fine Arts Main Stage

SEAGULLS IN A CHERRY TREE

By William Missouri Downs

Directed by William Missouri Downs

OCTOBER 20 - 25

Fine Arts Studio Theatre

SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS

Conceived & Choreographed by Marsha Knight

Co-directed by John O'Hagan & Marsha Knight

NOVEMBER 17 - 21

Fine Arts Main Stage

CRIMES OF THE HEART

by Beth Henley

Directed by Lee Hodgson

FEBRUARY 8 - 12

PERPETUAL MOTION

Spring Dance Concert

Choreographed by Lawrence Jackson, Jennifer Deckert, and Margaret Wilson

MARCH 4 -6

Fine Arts Main Stage

HAMLET

by William Shakespeare

Featuring Pete Simpson, Jr.

Directed by Leigh Selting

APRIL 20-25

Fine Arts Main Stage

Curtain times are **7:30 p.m.** with **2:00 p.m.** Sunday matinees (when scheduled).

Tickets on sale soon at (307) 766-6666 or online at <http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/FINEARTS/>

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