



Center Stage

Newsletter of the UW Department of Theatre & Dance

Fall 2004

2004 a Banner Year for UW Theatre & Dance

Welcome to *Center Stage*, the newsletter of the University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance! We're excited to share with you the latest news about our award-winning programs.

Great things have been happening in the department since spring 2002, our last newsletter installment, and while we can't catch you up on everything that's been going on, we'll do our best to bring you up to speed.

As those of you who participated already know, UW Summer Theatre commemorated its 50th anniversary

over the Fourth of July weekend in 2003 with an all-class reunion and a special production of A.R. Gurney's clever comedy *The Dining Room*. **Leigh Selting** took on the enormous task of contacting alumni and casting and directing the production, while more than 70 alumni, faculty, staff, and current students acted, designed, crewed, and assisted in the production. The department hosted several get-togethers for alumni during the run, which culminated in a special recognition ceremony for distinguished alumni and friends.

The 2003-2004 performance season was one of contrasts, and included both well-established plays and new works by UW and visiting playwrights. The season opened with the beloved Broadway musical *Gypsies and Dolls*, directed by **Leigh Selting**, which was as much fun to watch as it was to hear. The next offering, *Good Morning Athens: A Rock Musical*,

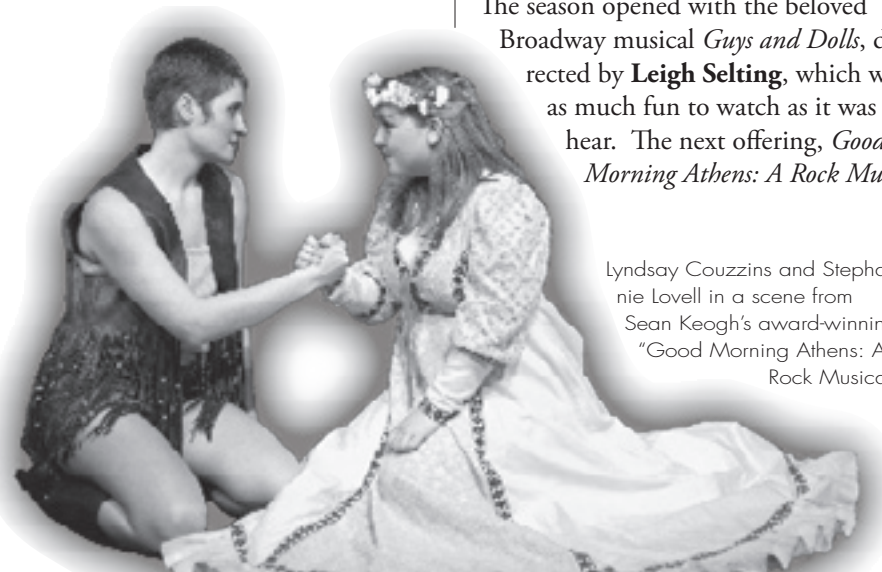
Inside This Issue

New Faculty Member!.....	3
Save Summer Theatre Campaign...	3
Student Play Nominated	4
A&S BOV Challenge	4
2005 Summer Festival.....	5
Faculty Spotlight	5
Baby Makes Three.....	5
ASOPA Update	6
AlumNews: Where'd Everbody Go?..	6
Thanks!.....	7

cal, an original work by senior **Sean Keogh** directed by **Bill Downs**, marked the first time that a UW student's work was produced on the Fine Arts Main Stage. Keogh's smart and relevant reinvention of the pointed Greek comedy *Lysistrata* continued to showcase the many actors in the department who also have a great set of pipes.

The 2004 spring semester kicked off with Craig Lucas' dark and quirky comedy *Reckless*, directed by new faculty member **Wolf J. Sherrill**. The spring dance concert, *It's Time for Us All to Dance Again*, choreographed by **Mel Claridge**, included a variety of dance pieces ranging from a very powerful, driving jazz piece to "Back in the Good Old Days," a silly but fun musical number. Student-directed one acts soon followed, and the season closed with visiting playwright **Aoise Stratford's** *Henry's Wives*, an imaginative rendering

Lyndsay Couzzins and Stephanie Lovell in a scene from Sean Keogh's award-winning "Good Morning Athens: A Rock Musical."



of the six wives of Henry VIII and their various perceptions of him and the world, as directed by **Rebecca Hilliker**.

In the meantime, UW Theatre and Dance students picked up numerous awards at the 2004 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF), both at the regional and national levels. Senior **Sean Keogh's** play, renamed *Good Morning Athens: A Rock Musical*, was selected as the KCACTF Region VII and national production winner. Sean also received the prestigious KCACTF National Student Playwriting Award, Mark Twain Prize for Comic Playwriting, David Mark Cohen Playwriting Award (tie for 2nd), and KCACTF Musical Theatre Award for book, lyrics, and music. Our other 2004 Region VII KCACTF playwriting awards included **Erin Butler's** Best Short Play winner, *Missionary Position*, and **Mariah Everyman's** 1st Runner Up Ten-Minute Play winner, *Pigs, Shoes, and Other Forms of Relaxation*.

UW Theatre and Dance students swept the 2004 Region VII Irene Ryan acting competition, with **Brandon Taylor** finishing as one of two regional winners and **Chris Will** and **Hanna Kellerby** coming in as the first and second alternates, respectively. As Region VII winner, Brandon competed at the national KCACTF festival in Washington, D.C. against the other top 15 acting students in the nation. During the past four years, UW Theatre and Dance students have won regional Irene Ryan awards seven times — a national record!

Also at the KCACTF 2004 Region VII festival, **Devin Shallow** won the Best Student Director Award, **Duana Hutchinson** won a Meritorious Award for Costuming, and **Erin Butler** was one of two national finalists for outstanding stage manager. Also in Spring 2004, *CULTURAMA*, a Jamaican dance group from Edna Manley College spent a week with us leading campus workshops and performing for community groups and elementary and high school students.

Summer 2004 brought the *10th Annual Snowy Range Summer Dance Festival*. This fantastic event included excellent faculty, exciting guest performances, and numerous opportunities for students to interact with teachers and performers. The festival opened with a vertical dance performance amid the rocks at Vedauwoo with UW dancers and guest artists from the alban elved dance company. The Final Concert, a highlight of the festival, featured students performing works by Peter Pucci, Yoav Kaddar, Keith Saunders, Susan Israel Massey, **General McArthur Hambrick**, and Gail Benedict, and also performances by principal dancers Kelye Saunders and Donald Williams from Dance Theatre of Harlem, alban elved, and The Jump Rhythm Jazz Project.

The 2004-2005 performance season is already in full swing, with three shows already under our belts. The season opened with the second directorial undertaking for **Wolf J. Sherrill**, the well-received *All My Sons*, Arthur Miller's classic but timely tale of wartime

profiteering and the American Dream gone nightmarishly awry. Following was a dark and wickedly funny new one-act comedy by **Bill Downs**, *The Little Train That Could (But Chose Not To)*, an exploration of the teacher-student relationship, how to gain ownership of one's thoughts and values, and what happens when the free exchange of ideas devolves into reiteration of one's existing beliefs. Student-Written One Acts in November resulted in several KCACTF playwriting and acting nominations (see ASOPA Update). Rounding out the fall semester was a jewel of the classical ballet repertoire, the comic ballet *Cap-pélia*, choreographed by **Marsha Knight** and beautifully rendered by designers **Lee Hodgson**, **Karl Brake**, and **Larry Hazlett**.

As 2004 draws to a close, we are grateful to have been chosen for an ECTL Assessment Assistance Grant, which will help us to bring in adjudicators for upcoming dance shows and from high-caliber programs outside our region. We look ahead to a vibrant spring semester with *Book of Days*, *The Spring Dance Concert*, and *Love's Labour's Lost*, and we again have several original plays going to KCACTF, as well as several Irene Ryan candidates.

This is an exciting time for the department as we continue to grow both in numbers and in quality. We invite you to stop by and just visit or take in a show if you have the chance — we are always happy to see you!



50 YEARS OF SUMMER THEATRE – Over 70 alumni, faculty, staff, and students participated in the production of "The Dining Room."

Department Welcomes New Faculty Member

The Department of Theatre and Dance is pleased to welcome new faculty member **Cecilia Josephine Aragón**, who will be dividing her time between Theatre and Dance and Chicano Studies. Cici hails most recently from the Department of Theatre Arts at California State University, San Bernardino, where she taught theatre pedagogy, focusing on creative drama and reader's theatre for children, and world drama.



Cici is a specialist in Theatre for Young Audiences, Theatre Education, Multicultural Theatre, Chicana/o Studies, and Border Theory and Psycho/Social Theory, and a generalist in Theatre History, Directing, and U.S. Latina/o and Chicana/o Theatre. Cici has taught at both the secondary and university levels and has an extensive background in both Chicano studies and theatre and dance, including significant experience as an actor and director.

technicians. After making as many cuts as we could, we have been forced over the last several years to cut our production budget in half by first reducing the summer performance season to three shows and then to two. This has allowed us to reinstate decent wages for company members, but at the cost of losing half a season's work.

Obviously, our current summer stock cannot compete with programs that offer a full season's work and full-time pay. We cannot expect to retain our best students for summer theatre any longer unless we can reinvigorate our program. We want to offer students a challenging and meaningful summer stock experience that hones their skills and honors their contributions through appropriate compensation.

We're working hard to do just that. We've recently instituted a summer theatre advocacy board to help establish needs, set long-term goals, and create a plan for shoring up the summer theatre program. We're working to procure additional funding for the program through outside grants

Help Save UW Summer Theatre!

With the UW Summer Theatre 50th Anniversary celebration come and gone, the department has had to take a hard look at what form this summer stock program — the second oldest west of the Mississippi! — will take in the future. The UW Department of Theatre and Dance has undergone many changes since that first summer season of five productions in 1954. Our program has grown to over 100 majors and a dozen minors; we've added several faculty in all areas of the theatre and dance arts, and we've expanded our degree offerings to include a variety of BA and BFA options, some of which include teacher certification. We've added on a state-of-the-art dance studio and most recently a fully equipped acting-for-the-camera studio to the Fine Arts Center, which is alive with more activity than ever and is literally bursting at the seams.

But as our program has grown and become nationally recognized for excellence, our funding resources have not kept pace. Due to ever-rising costs and a budget that has not changed in



Actors in a summer 2003 production of the popular children's fable "Androcles and the Lion."

over 15 years, the summer theatre program has struggled of late to maintain a full season and to attract actors and

and potential partnerships with public and private entities alike. We're making connections to bring in guest artists to perform and lead workshops in order to increase our visibility in the community at large. And we're working to combine UW Summer Theatre with the Snowy Range Dance Festival beginning in summer 2005 as means of increasing audience draw to both events (see 2005 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival Features "Art"). We hope that through these measures,

we will be able to expand the summer theatre season to include at least three

See Summer Theatre Campaign, page 4

UW Student's Play Nominated for David Mark Cohen Award

UW playwriting student **Dana Formby's** play *Monday After Work* has been nominated for the prestigious David Mark Cohen National Playwriting Award. Dana's one-act comedy about used car salesman and the women they try to dupe will be presented during the one-act marathon at Region VII KCACTF in February.

The David Mark Cohen National Playwriting Award is presented in an effort to promote the writing and



Dana Formby, right, and Hannah Kellerby rehearsing for the Fall 2004 production of "All My Sons."

production of new plays while honoring and perpetuating the memory of David Mark Cohen, Professor of Playwriting, the University of Texas-Austin. Developed by the Playwriting Program of ATHE and the Playwriting Awards Committee of KCACTF, the award is intended to provide incentive to college and university theatre production departments to foster the growth and development of playwrights through the public presentations of unpublished full-length or collection of shorter works for the stage that have not received a professional production. This award may be presented to any working playwright whose play is produced by a college or university theatre program and entered as an Associate or Participating entry within the KCACTF. All rules regulating entries into KCACTF are applicable to this award

except those related to the definition of student playwrights.

The winning playwright will receive a cash award of \$1000.00, an offer of publication by Dramatic Publishing Company, and up to \$500.00 to defer travel and expenses to attend a script-in-hand reading at the annual August meeting of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.

Recent UW winners of the award include **Sean Keogh** for *Good Morning Athens*, 2nd place 2004, and **Todd McCullough** for *Rainy Day People*, 3rd place 2002.

Other UW playwriting students' plays have been selected for production at the 2005 Region VII Festival, including *The Parable of the Housewife and Snake Salesman* by **Emily Jorrey** and *Finding Nero* (alternate) by **Mariah Everman** for the One-Act Marathon, and *Lady Lazarus* and *Digger* by **Jessi Sundell** and *Beating Around the Bush* by **Dana Formby** for the 10-Minute Play competition.

Summer Theatre Campaign (cont.)

and perhaps four productions in addition to the Dance Festival.

But we can't accomplish this important work without the help of our alumni and friends. If the summer theatre program is to survive long-term and grow into the full and rich offering it once was and still can be, we will need your support! Please consider making a gift to help maintain the legacy of outstanding summer theatre at the University of Wyoming — doing so now may double your gift to Theatre & Dance (see A&S Board of Visitors Challenge, right)! You may designate gifts for either Summer Theatre or the Dance Festival or for both on the gift card on page 7. However you choose to give, we greatly appreciate your support!

A&S Board of Visitors Match First-time Donor Gifts

As part of the final phase of UW's "DISTINCTION" Campaign, the Board of Visitors for the College of Arts & Sciences has issued a challenge to any of the College's alumni or friends who have not yet given a gift to the College or one of its departments. The Board of Visitors will match dollar for dollar any first-time gift of at least \$50; the match will extend up to a maximum of \$1,000 per gift. This opportunity is available now until June 30, 2005.

The chair of the A&S Board of Visitors, Greg Dyekman, explained the motive for the match, saying, "The campaign is a turning point in the history of the University, and we want as many people as possible to be a part of it. We hope that making the match available will make people aware of the opportunity they have to be part of the University's expanding distinction."

If you've not previously given a gift to the College, please consider becoming a *Friend of Theatre and Dance* at any patron level and *double the impact of your gift!* You may designate your gift either for our Summer Theatre campaign or for our Excellence Fund, which helps to bring in guest artists and send our students to festivals and competitions. Thank you for your support!



2005 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival to Feature "Art"

Summer 2005 will mark the inception of our combined *Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival*. The season will open with a children's show, followed by the innovative comedy, *Art*, in early July.

For *Art*, we are bringing in two guest artists, **Michael Boatman** of *Spin City* fame, and actor/director/educator **John Mayer**. Michael Boatman is a versatile supporting and occasional leading actor who has worked steadily on stage, screen, and television since making his feature film debut playing Motown in *Hamburger Hill* (1987). John Mayer is Associate Professor at California State University - Stanislaus. The production will also feature UW Theatre and Dance faculty member and Equity actor **Wolf J. Sherrill**.

Art promises to be a fantastic offering — don't miss it! Another theatre production will follow *Art*, and the season will be rounded out in late July by the Snowy Range Dance Festival, now in its 11th year.

Faculty Spotlight

Professor **William Missouri Downs** play *Headset; A View From The Light Booth*, a comedy about technical theatre, was published by Brooklyn Publishers. Last year, Bill directed the rock musical *Good Morning Athens*, which was produced at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts during the National ACTF Festival. He was also a member of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts Playwrights Unit, where he finished his new play *Seagulls In A Cherry Tree*, which was a finalist in the Orlando Shakespeare Festival PlayFest 2005 and one of seven finalists chosen out of 400 scripts in the Columbus State University International Playwriting Competition. This year, Bill's plays have been produced at the Stella Adler Theatre in Hollywood, the Theatre Co-operative in Boston, and at the Miners Alley Playhouse in Golden. This coming spring, Bill will be a play judge for the O'Neill Playwright's Conference.

Larry Hazlett was awarded an Innovative Summer Course grant, which made it possible to take three UW Theatre and Dance students to Russia during summer 2004, including Erin Butler, Dana Formby, and Jessi Sundell. Larry and the students were based in Saratov, Russia, but also spent time in Moscow,

Baby Makes Three

Wolf and Alexi Sherrill welcomed their new son, Keegan, into the world a bit early but with no less enthusiasm. Notes the loquacious Wolf — "He is cute."



Keegan Sherrill at 20 hours old

and attended numerous productions and visited many museums. They studied the stage designs of the Russian Avant-Garde era at Saratov State University. Highlights of the trip were the overnight train rides through the Russian countryside, boat rides on the Volga and a sunny picnic on an island in the river with our dear friend Dmitry Krylov (lighting designer for the Academic Theatre for Drama in Saratov), visiting Nick and Irena Holdsworth's dacha in Saratov and attending the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow.

Faculty Spotlight (Cont.)

Rebecca Hilliker received the Kennedy Center Medallion from the Kennedy Center for contributions as chair of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Region VII and for her work as chair of chairs on the national executive board. She was also chosen by the KCACTF national executive board to be on this year's National Selection Team, which will determine the four college and university productions to be performed at the Kennedy Center in April 2005. The national team is made up of the artistic director from the Kennedy Center, Gregg Henry, an outside professional, and two academics. As a member of the national team, Rebecca will attend all eight regional festivals and watch between 50-70 productions.

Penny Hutchinson is choreographing a dance for six members of the UW Dance Department in collaboration with composer Fei Wu, for the UW Chandra Wyoga Gamelan, directed by I Made Lasmawan and coordinated by UW music faculty Rod Garnett. The dance will be included in the spring dance concert, March 3-5.

The performance will include Fei Wu on Chinese gu zhang, Rod Garnett on flute, voice, gong, and the gamelan. This is the second collaboration between Fei Wu and Penny, the first being a dance performed at Mills College in both the music and dance concerts, which included a Hindustani singer, Harshada Jawale, Fei Wu on gu zhang and also singing Chinese Opera excerpts, percussion and shakuhachi flute, and five dancers. The dance will be included in the department's dance tour April 10-17.

Professor **Bill Downs'** third book, *Naked Playwriting: The Art, the Craft and the Life Laid Bare*, has been published to excellent reviews and is now available at Barnes & Noble nationwide!

Faculty Spotlight (Cont.)

Marsha Knight choreographed the fall dance show, *Coppélia*, which brought in guest artist Ramon Thielen, a principal dancer with the Dance Theatre of Harlem, for the role of Franz. Also this fall, Marsha was awarded a Performing Artist Fellowship from the Wyoming Arts Council for choreography (works submitted included “Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth,” “Nutmacker/Waltz of the Flowers,” and “Six Songs Without Words”).

Leigh Selting spent the summer with the Nebraska Repertory theatre in Lincoln and Omaha, NE. Working on new scripts with playwrights from Chicago, New York, and Arkansas, Leigh performed in two premier productions in Lincoln and a world premier of *Ink and Elkskin*, a new play about the first tribal council meeting with Native Americans conducted by Lewis and Clark. *Ink and Elkskin* featured original music by Phillip Glass and a cast of Sioux, Lakota, Ojibwa, Missouri, and Omaha actors.

Wolf J. Sherrill received a certificate of merit in directing from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for *All My Sons*.

Associate Professor **Lou Anne Wright** spent the last two summers in NYC completing her Fitzmaurice Voicework certification with internationally known program developer and master teacher Catherine Fitzmaurice. Lou Anne is one of only 65 certified Fitzmaurice voice teachers in the country. Lou Anne recently received outstanding reviews from Rocky Mountain News and Denver Post critics for her performances in *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* and *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove*. She also portrayed Judy Shepard in the HBO production of *The Laramie Project*. Lou Anne has also been awarded a London Semester Professorship and will be living in Chelsea and teaching in London. Next year, Lou Anne’s new book *Setting The Stage* will be published by Wadsworth.

ASOPA Update

The Associated Students of the Performing Arts (ASOPA) have been working hard this semester to raise our visibility as well as to provide fundraising opportunities to help our peers attend festivals, professional conferences, and graduate school auditions. This semester has been very successful for ASOPA membership and our numbers are at an all-time high.

ASOPA have recently been awarded \$9000 worth of video cameras, digital cameras, and laptop computers through a grant from LEARN, a campus organization. This equipment is available for free check out to any ASOPA member in good standing.

ASOPA continues to provide manpower support to college functions such as Discovery Days, annual departmental events such as the Gladys Crane Mountain Plains Film Festival, and various University recruitment activities. ASOPA works hard all year long fundraising; we sell concessions at each Main Stage show and provide departmental T-shirts.

Perhaps the most important aspect of ASOPA is the funding we raise for students to travel to festivals and conferences. This year, six dancers are going to the American College Dance Festival (ACDF) to perform in three pieces — one student choreographed — held in Bellingham, WA. Sixteen Irene Ryan nominees and their scene partners, as well as four UW student playwrights, have been chosen to go to Region VII KCACTF in Ashland, OR.



ALUMNI NEWS: Where'd Everybody Go?

You may have noticed that our newsletter has a new name and look, and that our format has changed a bit — most noticeably, the *Alumni News* section is MISSING! So many of you write in regularly to tell us of your latest exploits and successes, that we’ll be publishing a separate newsletter online to better keep abreast of current information.

Look for the new online version of the *Alumni News* by Spring 2005 on the UW Theatre and Dance website, www.uwyo.edu.

www.uwyo.edu/th&d/. We’ll make sure to have a link from the homepage to help you navigate more easily.

As always, we would love to hear where you are and what you’re doing. Send a short note to kirisk@uwyo.edu with “Alumni News” in the subject line or to

Alumni News
c/of Dept. of Theatre & Dance
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Watch for online submission in the coming months!

Thank You to 2004-2005 Friends of Theatre and Dance

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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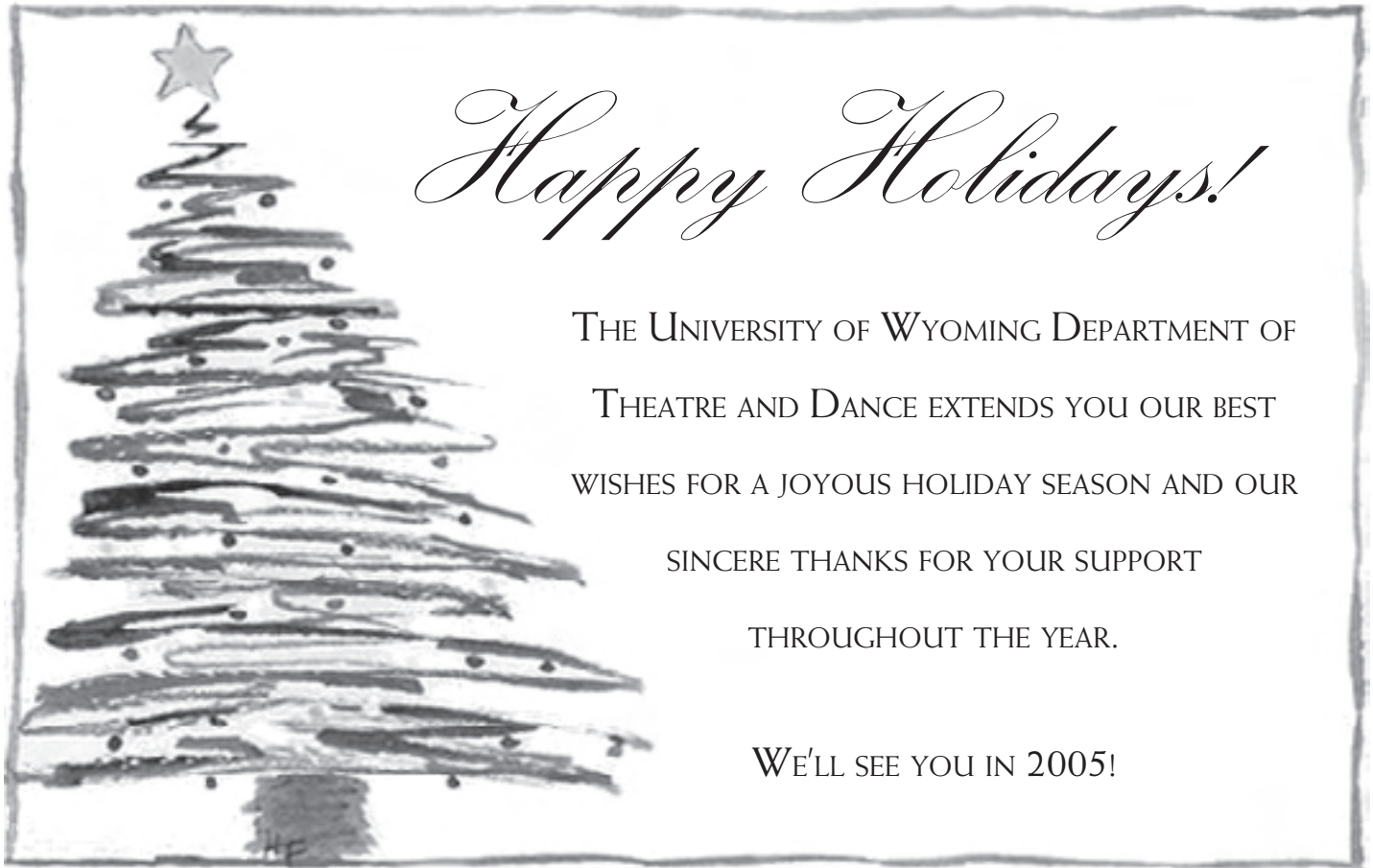
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