



Center Stage

Newsletter of the UW Department of Theatre & Dance

Spring 2005

2005 off to a great start!

Greetings from the University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance! We hope this issue of *Center Stage* finds you healthy and happy and enjoying the beautiful summer season.

A lot has been happening in 2005 thus far and we're excited to catch you up on goings on in the department and on the UW scene. On the back cover of this issue is also a sneak peek at our upcoming 2005-2006 production season, which promises to be challenging and exciting!

The spring season has already come and gone and the 2005 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival dance season is in full swing.

Our spring semester kicked off in February with Pulitzer Prize-winning

playwright Lanford Wilson's *Book of Days*, directed by Lee Hodgson. Set in America's heartland in a sleepy industrial town, *Book of Days* is a surprisingly funny depiction of contemporary small-town life and the fragile social fabric that knits a community together.

The well-received *2005 Spring Dance Show* followed hard upon in early March. The show opened with Mikhail Fokine's 1909 landmark ballet *Les Sylphides*, beautifully staged by special guest Eve Lawson of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, with Marsha Knight serving as Dance Mistress.

The concert moved into less traditional territory with original jazz, modern, and innovative dance compositions from Mel Claridge, Ana Paula Höfling, and Penny Hutchinson. The

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show also featured music composed and performed by local artists, including Annie Guzzo, Fei Wu, the Chandra Wyoga Gamelan, Juca Du Kassay, and Gayane Grigoryan.

Thanks to support from the UW Office of Cultural Outreach, the *2005 Spring Dance Concert* was downsized a bit and the company hit the road for a week in mid-April, touring throughout the state.

Our spring season ended in April with Shakespeare's "forgotten" comedy, *Love's Labour's Lost*, directed by Leigh Selting. One of Shakespeare's earliest and funniest plays, *Love's Labour's Lost* pokes fun at stodgy intellectuals and zealous romantics alike, recording the thrill of love's pursuit and the resulting antics in uncompromising detail.

We would be remiss to mention here that, once again, our acting, directing,



A. Ryan Jones, Heather Kaloust, Ellen Soderberg, and Stephanie Lovell in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

playwriting, and design students took top honors at the Region VII American College Theatre Festival in Ashland, Oregon this past February, with several going on to national competition (see **UW Theatre Students Claim Top Honors At 2005 Regional Festival**).

The 2005-2006 academic performance season is almost upon us and we

look forward to keeping you up-to-date on our comings and goings as we continue to make UW one of the best undergraduate theatre and dance programs in the country! Please continue to keep us up-to-date on your whereabouts and goings on as well — the new UW Theatre and Dance website has an August launch date (finally!)

for those of you who have been waiting to peruse the new online Alumni News section. Next spring, we'll also be hosting the Northwest Region of the American College Dance Festival, so it's going to be a full year. We hope the rest of your summer is great and we look forward to hearing from you!



Callie Stutheit and Tiffany McCann rehearse Mel Claridge's "Toward the Within" for the 2005 Spring Dance Show.

New Coco Kleppinger Scholarship for Theatre Students

Long time UW Theatre and Dance and Snowy Range Dance Festival supporters Dr. Kent Kleppinger, of Laramie Pediatrics, PC, and his wife Nicko, have set up a new \$1000 scholarship for theatre students. The Coco Kleppinger Scholarship is named for daughter Coco, who attended UW as a theatre major for two years before she moved on to UCLA.

"UW Theatre and Dance opened so many doors for Coco," said Kleppinger. "She learned more in two years here than I think she did in four at UCLA. In fact, when Coco transferred to UCLA,

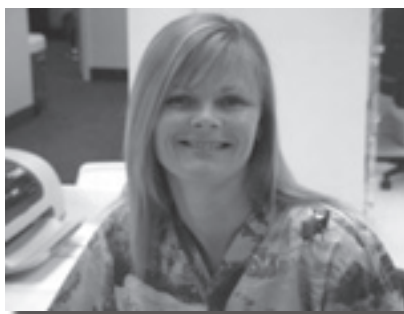


Dr. Kent "Klep" Kleppinger

she was about a year ahead of the other kids. She won the Natalie Wood senior award in part because of the training she received here."

"I have four daughters — all of

them fine arts kids," he continued. "The oldest one was a dancer with Marsha Knight. Since Coco had been at UW and gotten so much out of it, I thought we should pay some of that back."



Nicko Kleppinger, RN

The Coco Kleppinger Scholarship will be awarded annually, based on both merit and need-based criteria, to a deserving student of theatre. This year's recipient of the award is

senior Thomas Stroppel, who is working towards a BFA in both performance and technical theatre.

"It's amazing what you guys do over in that building — I don't know if people know what all you do," added Kleppinger. "If there's a way kids can benefit from this scholarship and can get through school, God bless them. It's our small way of saying thanks."

Snowy Range Summer Theatre & Dance Festival Hits the Mark

To continue to uphold the mission of our summer programs and to serve the Laramie and broader State community, our department has combined two traditional summer offerings, UW Summer Theatre and the Snowy Range Dance Festival, into one package this summer — the *2005 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival*.

We're proud of the long history and success of UW Summer Theatre, which at 52 years old is the second oldest program west of the Mississippi. And over its 11-year tenure, our Dance Festival has built a solid reputation of providing audiences and participants with wonderful exposure to professional-level dance. Changing to a festival format will ensure these programs remain strong and will help them to grow.

The newly christened summer season opened in June with Neil Simon's beloved comedy *Barefoot in the Park*, directed by faculty member **Wolf J. Sherrill**, which played to rave reviews and sold-out houses.



Students perform a Peter Pucci piece in the 2004 dance festival.

Leigh Selting, also artistic director for the summer season, directed the next offering, Anne Nelson's bittersweet 9/11 retrospective *The Guys*. This intimate duologue about a New York fire captain and writer who connect in the aftermath of 9/11 featured UW alum **Martha Slater** and **Wolf J. Sherrill**.

Laramie Fire Department personnel graciously gave Leigh, Martha, and Wolf the inside scoop on fire department life and the rare chance to try on real gear and sit behind the wheel of the fire engine and truck. Opening night was a benefit performance to honor our local Fire Department and to support its Burn Out and Community Service funds.



Wolf J. Sherrill and guest artists Michael Boatman and John Mayer in this summer's hilarious production of *Art*.

The theatre component of our summer festival is drawing to a close with Yasmina Reza's hilarious comedy *'Art'* starring television and film star **Michael Boatman** ("Carter" from Spin City), actor/director/educator **John Mayer**, and, as if his summer were not full enough, **Wolf J. Sherrill**. The ensemble cast is fabulous and ably directed by guest **Andy Segal**. At this writing, Michael's been called away to do some filming during the opening night of the show, which will give UW Theatre & Dance graduating senior **Brandon D. Taylor** the opportunity to cast off his under-study togs for the real thing.

It won't be long until our department is overrun with more than 80 students during the July 20-31 dance festival and concert series. Created in 1995, the dance festival provides training, educational support, and professional development for Wyoming and regional dance students, teachers, composers, accompanists, and choreographers, involving 11 days of immersion in dance

and studies with professional faculty and performers.

A free **Student Showcase** dance concert will be given Wednesday, July 27. The **Final Festival Concert** will be Saturday, July 30, and will feature **Dance Theatre of Harlem**, **Jump Rhythm Jazz Project**, and **Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble**, as well as student repertory pieces choreographed by guest faculty members.

Already, the festival format has increased audience draw to our summer programs. It has also opened doors to attract and hire outside professionals, who work with our apprentice and semi-professional actors, designers, and technicians. Our students can only benefit from that kind of interaction.

We've moved forward this year with a new approach—a healthy mix of student and professional work and a variety of shows, from very family-oriented pieces to more challenging work. We're looking forward to the new and exciting projects that the festival format will allow us to do in the future.

But with our budgets locked in at 1989 levels, we will need your help if our summer programs are to continue to remain viable and to grow. Please consider making a gift to help maintain the legacy of outstanding summer

theatre and dance at the University of Wyoming. *We appreciate your support!*



Brandon D. Taylor and Ellen Soderberg laugh it up in *Barefoot in the Park*.

UW Students Claim Top Honors at Regional Festival

UW Theatre and Dance students received top honors at the Region VII Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival (KC/ACTF) and Northwest Drama Conference (NWDC) in Ashland, Oregon this past spring.

Senior **Lindsay Cozzens**, Laramie, was selected Region VII Winner of the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competition, while her scene partner, junior **Thomas Stroppel**, Wright, was chosen as Best Partner. Both Lindsay and Thomas competed at the National Festival at the Kennedy Center in April.

Other UW Irene Ryan Finalists were senior **Brandon D. Taylor**, Rawlins, who won the 2004 Region VII Irene Ryan Scholarship; sophomore **Katie Herbert**, Granby, CO; senior **Ellen Soderberg**, Helena, MT; and senior **Heather Kaloust**, Arvada, CO.

Brandon D. Taylor also won a full-tuition scholarship to attend the 2005 TVI Summer Professional Acting Program in Los Angeles. Brandon has the opportunity to train at TVI Actors Studio with industry professionals including producers, directors, talent agents, casting direc-

tors and faculty members from prominent theatre schools across the country.

Junior **Dana Formby**, Cheyenne, WY, received special recognition for her one-act play *Monday After Work*. Dana was ineligible to enter the show in the national competition because **Rebecca Hilliker** was serving on the National Selection Committee, but she was



Irene Ryan winner Lindsey Cozzens and partner Thomas Stroppel in rehearsal.

awarded a scholarship to attend a 2-week playwriting intensive in the summer.

Senior **Jesse Sundell**, Casper, WY, won the Region VII 10-Minute Play Competition and had her play performed at the National Festival. Jesse also won Second Place in the KCACTF Critic's Forum.

Senior **Rocky Hopson**, Cheyenne, WY, won the 2005 Region VII Director Award from the Society for Stage Directors and Choreographers and also attended the National Festival.

Senior **Senda Dimock-Perry**, Laramie, WY, won the 2005 KCACTF Region VII Barbizon Meritorious Achievement in Costume Design and also the Costume Design award in the 2005 Design Storm, while senior **Paul Ankenman** picked up the Student Director Award for the 2005 Design Storm.

UW Theatre and Dance professor **Leigh Selting** was awarded the prestigious Kennedy Center Medallion for all of his years of mentoring student actors and his recognition as one of the top acting coaches in the nation.

UW Theatre Alums Take the Big Apple by Storm!

Brian Slaten, BFA 2002, who relocated to NYC after earning his MFA from the University of California-San Diego (UCSD) in May, landed a starring role opposite Tony and Emmy winner Bebe Neuwirth and film and stage actor Matthew Modine in the July 11th premiere reading of Charles Evered's full-length play *Adopt A Sailor*. The play dramatizes the cultural schism between armed forces personnel and the citizens they vow to protect. Among the diverse capacity crowd were actors, producers, publishers, agents, students, professors, and representatives from the U.S. Navy.

Take a gander at alum **Jed Schultz**, BFA '02, whom, after receiving an MFA from the Yale School of Drama

this spring, and in between auditions and callbacks, made time to win the Bastille Day and Liberty Festival waiters' race Thursday, July 14, 2005,



in New York. Jed (right), a waiter at Les Halles in lower Manhattan, and Michael Higbee, a waiter at the midtown Manhattan restaurant Oceana, race down the streets carrying bottles

of spring water and cups of water. Jed successfully carried his tray for two blocks without tipping over either the water or the cup to win the race. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

Garrett Neergaard, BFA '01, moved to the Big Apple in fall 2004 after earning his MFA from UCSD earlier that spring and taking part in the 2000 MFA Actors Showcase. After just five days in the city, he had four auditions, two callbacks, and landed a plum job — an episode of *LAW AND ORDER*. According to Leigh Selting, Garrett is "more than a day player. He has a nice role as a boyfriend living on a house boat that cops come to question." The episode aired last October.

Department Welcomes New Faculty Members

After two exhaustive position searches, the UW Theatre and Dance is thrilled to welcome new faculty members **Vincent Brosseau** and **Casey Kearns**, who will come on board in Fall 2005.

Vincent joins the faculty as the new Associate Professor of Dance and will teach Ballet Technique, Modern Technique, Dance Composition, Dance History, Men's Technique, and Pas de Deux. Vincent is a French national and graduate of the Juilliard School (BFA) and Ohio State University (MFA, Choreography), where he was a University Fellow. Vincent has performed with various professional companies in the U.S., South America, and in his native France, directed the modern dance company, Brosseau Danceworks, based in Charlotte, NC, worked as a choreographer (receiving a Choreographer Fellowship from the North Carolina State Arts Council), and offered master classes and workshops to many universities and regional and national organizations in the South and East Coast. Prior to coming to UW, Vincent held faculty positions at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Kent State University, the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, DeSales University, and the University of Nevada-Reno.



New Associate Professor of Dance
Vincent Brosseau



New Assistant Professor of Theatre
in Scenic Design Casey Kearns

Casey comes on board with us as our new Assistant Professor of Theatre in Scenic Design. A native of Chadron, NE, Casey holds a double BA in Theatre and Speech Communications from Chadron State College and received his MFA in Scenography from the University of Kansas. Prior to joining UW, Casey served as a Scenographer at the University of Northern Colorado and the Technical Director and Lighting and Scenic Designer at the Ohio State University – Lima. Selected credits include *The Secret Garden*, *Into the Woods*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Two by Two*, *Godspell*, *Look Homeward Angel* (technical direction); *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Cabaret*, *Proof*, *Street Scene*; *An American Opera*, *Oliver*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Steel Magnolias*, *The Gingerbread Lady*, and *Tartuffe* (scenic design); *Angels in American Part One*; *The Millennium Approaches*, *The Laramie Project*, *Grand Hotel*, *A Grand Night for Singing* (costume design); *Picasso at the Lapine Agile*, *1959 Pink Thunderbird*, *Measure for Measure*, *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* (lighting design); and *The Waltz Project* (lighting and scenic design).

Faculty Spotlight

Billie K. Gross is spending the summer in Skagway, AK, where she worked last summer for two production companies on 1898 Klondike Gold Rush costumes. Billie K. loves to see all her old friends who come back to Skagway each year. Last fall, Billie K. welcomed new granddaughter, Ireland Renee. Billie K. designed costumes for **Lee Hodgson's** production of *Book of Days* in February.

Rebecca Hilliker served on the National Selection Team for the Kennedy Center, viewing over 62 shows and then selecting the four that were performed in Washington, D.C. in April. Rebecca also received the Kennedy Center Medallion for her six years of service as chair and vice chair of KCACTF Region VII and work as Chair of Chairs for the National Executive Board.

Marsha Knight has been very busy this spring and summer with *Les Sylphides* and the tour of the *2005 Spring Dance Show* and the upcoming *Snowy Range Dance Festival*. Marsha is also currently at work on the 2006 Northwest Region American College Dance Festival, which UW Theatre and Dance will host this coming February.

Leigh Selting participated as one of 18 Equity Actors in the New Harmony Project (NHP) playwriting development conference this past May and June. In addition to numerous one-night readings, his primary casting was as the real-life Father Dan Berrigan (opposite Michael Gross of "Family Ties") in the new play *Little Heart*.

The New Harmony Project was established "to serve writers and scripts that celebrate the human spirit." The 16-day-long writers' retreat was revived for its 19th season in New Harmony, IN, in southwestern Indiana. The NHP conference's administration, helmed by project director Joel Grynheim, is based in Indianapolis. The 2005 scripts in full development by NHP are Suzanne Bradbeer's *The Roof*; Russell Davis'

(Continued on p. 6)

Faculty Spotlight (Cont.)

Mahida's Extra Key to Heaven; Irene O'Garden's *Little Heart*; and Susan Batten's screenplay "*Whynot.*" Directors are Eric Nightengale (*Little Heart*), Risa Brainin (*The Roof*) and Daniel Jenkins (*Mahida's Extra Key to Heaven*). Angelo Pizzo is story editor for the screenplay. The scripts in full development get a director, dramaturg, and actors who are both Equity and student performers, from the nearby University of Evansville. "There are 12 days of rehearsal and it's not staged - it's music stands, presentational style," Grynheim said of the readings. The final readings were June 3-4 and were open and free to the general public.

New Harmony Project invites additional writers to come work on new pieces and to present whatever they wish. Writers in residence in 2005 were Ludmilla Bollow, Vincent Delaney, Laura Harrington, Arlene Hutton, Jim Leonard, Anne Nelson, and Theresa Rebeck.

Over 130 scripts have been developed at NHP, and many have gone on to productions Off-Broadway and in regional theatres nationwide. Selected national productions include Heather McDonald's *An Almost Holy Picture* (Roundabout Theatre Co.), Jenny Laird's *Sky Girls* (South Coast Repertory Theatre, San Diego) and Warren Leight's *Glimmer*, *Glimmer and Shine* (Mark Taper Forum). Among the many past writers attending the NHP are Tony Award-winner Warren Leight, Pulitzer Prize-winner Robert Schenkkan, Academy Award-nominee Robert Anderson, and Indiana native Angelo Pizzo.

Don Turner will be on sabbatical in London this fall working as a photographer and spending time with family.

Lou Anne Wright just returned from London, where she taught acting at The University of London. Lou Anne also dialect coached a well-reviewed production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* for the Crescent Theatre in Birmingham, England.

Class of 2005

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!

- **Paul Ankenman** is moving to CA to try and get into a directing program.
- **Jason Boat** is heading to Penn State to pursue an MFA in acting.
- **Melanie Bunkowske** is getting married this summer and is finishing her Pilates certification and moving to Minneapolis.
- **Lindsay Cozzens**, who won Irene Ryan regionals this year, is performing at Busch Gardens and is on her way to NYC to try and work professionally.
- **Natalie Dollison** is working in community theatre in Centennial, WY.
- **Mariah Everman** will pursue an MFA at Cal Arts in properties design.
- **Katrina Fisher** is starting grad school this fall at UW in speech pathology.
- **Rocky Hopson** completed his BFA in Performance/Directing.
- **Chris Lang** is the first student from our department to be accepted into a graduate program dedicated to Voice, Speech and Dialect training and coaching, and this at Harvard!
- **Tiffany McCann** is an intern for the Snowy Range Dance Festival this summer.
- **Stacey Palmer** finished her BFA in Theatre (all concentration areas).
- **Senda Dimock-Perry** and **Devin Shallow** will marry in August in Laramie.
- **Brandon Taylor** starred in this summer's *Barefoot in the Park* and was understudy and performer in *Art*. In August, Brandon and fellow graduate **Callie Stutheit** plan to marry and move to San Diego where Brandon will join the prestigious MFA acting program at UCSD and Callie will try to secure a position with a small dance company.
- **Chris Will** is directing *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* this summer at the Wyoming Territorial Park Horse Barn Dinner Theatre. In the fall, Chris will attend the Royal Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow, Scotland.



ALUMNI NEWS UPDATE

The updated UW Theatre and Dance website will launch soon (finally!) and will contain a separate section dedicated to only alumni news.

After the initial catch-up phase (we have updates from some of you from over two years!), we'll be updating this section regularly to keep abreast of current information. We'll have a link from the homepage to help you navigate to this section 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
P.O. Box 3951
Laramie, WY 82072-3951

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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2005-2006 UW Theatre & Dance Season

Collected Dances, Part 1

Choreographed by Dance Faculty

OCTOBER 12-16 Main Stage

Frequency 98.6

A New Play by Dana Formby

Directed by Leigh Selting

NOVEMBER 8-13 Studio Theatre

A Christmas Carol

Adapted from Dickens' Holiday Classic

Directed by Wolf J. Sherrill

Featuring Pete Simpson as "Scrooge"

DECEMBER 6-11 Main Stage

The Beggar's Opera

By John Gay

directed by Larry L. Hensel

FEBRUARY 14-18 Main Stage

Collected Dances, Part 2

Choreographed by Dance Faculty

MARCH 2-4 A&S Auditorium

The Women of Lockerbie

by Deborah Brevoort

Directed by Rebecca Hilliker

APRIL 21-25, 2006 Main Stage

Second Season Events

Un-American Activities

By Keith Hull

Directed by Lou Anne Wright and William Missouri Downs

JANUARY 27-28

Education Auditorium

American College Dance Festival Gala Concert

MARCH 11, 2006

A&S Auditorium

Student-Directed One Acts

APRIL 3-5, 2006

Studio Theatre

Curtain times are **7:30 p.m.** for all days except Sundays.

Matinees on Sunday are at **2:00 p.m.**

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