



Center Stage

Newsletter of the UW Department of Theatre & Dance

Summer 2007

2007 a time of change

We had a scorcher of a summer in Laramie this year, but considering that it usually snows in June, we took the heat! All of us at the University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance hope this issue of Center Stage finds you happy and healthy and enjoying the waning summer days while you can.

After all the craziness of **THE NUTCRACKER** and other productions in the fall, the spring semester seemed positively restful by comparison! The semester began with **SPINNING INTO BUTTER**, Rebecca Gilman's darkly comic exposé of hidden racism and political correctness on American college campuses. Energetically directed by **William Missouri Downs** and well-

received by sold-out houses, Gilman's play tackled issues of tolerance and prejudice with knowing humor, clever dialogue, and unexpected benevolence.

The Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival followed immediately, where our acting, directing, and playwriting students took top honors, with several going on to national competition. For the first time, the Region VII Irene Ryan Acting competition was won by two students from the same school, which just happened to be UW (see UW Theatre Students Claim Top Honors At Region VII KCACTF, p. 4).

Margaret Wilson's original, evening-length dance concert **...THE BODY THROUGH WHICH THE DREAM FLOWS...** followed in early March. This conceptual piece explored the creative process as illustrated by women throughout time by presenting sketches of prominent women who changed the world through their work.

Our spring season ended in late April with Steve Martin's wacky comedy, **PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE**. Directed

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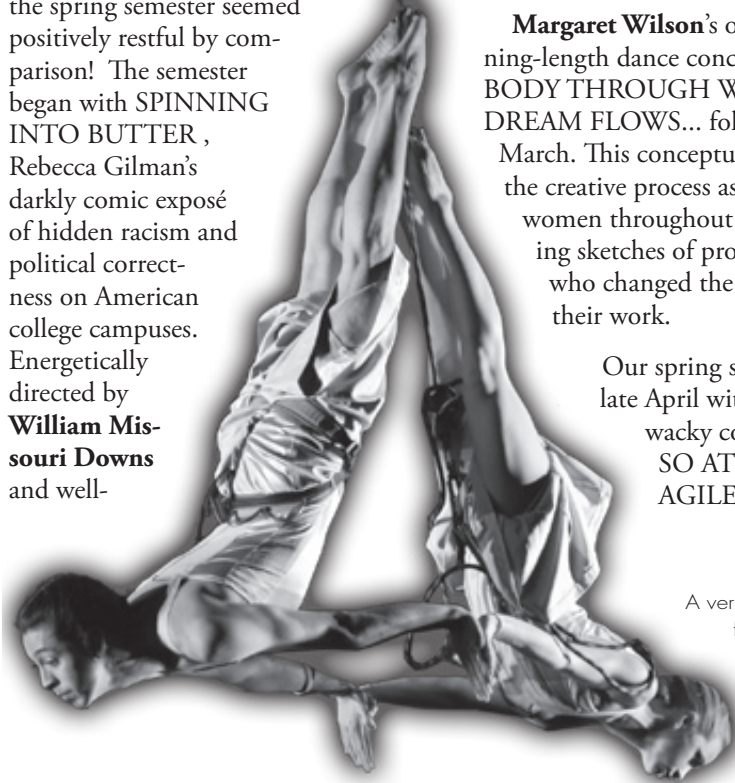
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by **Leigh Selting**, the play depicted a fictitious 1904 meeting between Pablo Picasso and Albert Einstein in the legendary Paris bistro, Lapin Agile, as both are perched on the edge of greatness.

At the end of the spring semester, professor and long-time department head **Rebecca Hilliker** stepped down from her administrative role for a well-deserved rest. (see Hilliker Steps Down, p. 3).

Professor **Leigh Selting** was appointed to be the new department head effective June 2007. We look forward to continued growth in the department under Leigh's able leadership!

Wolf J. Sherrill, Assistant Professor of Acting, and **Robert Michael Earl**, Associate Professor of Design and Technical Director, also stepped down after spring semester to pursue other opportunities. We wish them the best of luck!



A vertical dance piece from *...the body through which the dream flows...*

Finally, **Jennifer Deckert**, who served as an instructor of dance last year, joins the dance faculty formally this fall, while **Dr. Patrick Newell** takes over as Director of Centennial Singers.

The summer season has drawn to a close (see Summer Festival Most Successful Yet, p. 3) and the 2007-2008 academic performance season is already 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. All the best and feel free to stop by anytime to visit.

Ken Stellingwerf chats up Kelleen Shadow in *PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE*.



UW Student Wins Fellowship To William Inge Festival

A new, joint fellowship program instituted by the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) and the William Inge Center for the Arts was recently awarded to University of Wyoming theatre student, Anna Brownsted of Dallas, Texas.

The prestigious Inge Festival Scholarship Scene Audition fellowship recognizes the most outstanding student-directed and student-acted scenes written either by famed American playwright William Inge, author of *COME BACK LITTLE SHEBA*, *PICNIC*, *BUS STOP*, *THE DARK AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS*, and *SPLENDOR IN THE GRASS*, or by one the past winners of the William Inge Festival Award, including such American greats as Edward Albee, Neil Simon, Stephen Sondheim, Arthur Miller, and Lanford Wilson.

The fellowship allows winners to attend the annual William Inge Festival held in Independence, Kansas, Inge's childhood home, as invited guests and to perform their scene. The festival celebrates Inge's legacy with a four-day intensive series of performances, readings, workshops, panel discussions, and retrospectives.

Brownsted and her cast, including Megan Antles, Claudine Mbologikpelani Nako, Steve Rotramel, Cheyenne Christian, and Jake Staley performed one of only three student-directed scenes selected to participate at the

festival, a 10-minute cutting from A.R. Gurney's *A CHEEVER EVENING*. The UW scene was presented seven times to a standing-room only crowd of festival participants and theatre, television, and film professionals, including well-known playwrights and 2007 festival honorees Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick (*FIDDLER ON THE ROOF*, *THE ROTHSCHILDS*, *SHE LOVES ME*).



Anna Brownsted (far right) and her cast (from left) Megan Antles, Claudine Nako, Steve Rotramel, Cheyenne Christian, and Jake Staley.

"It was an honor to have our work seen by professional luminaries," said Brownsted. "We received compliments all the way around, but the highlight was the moment when Sheldon 'Call me Shelly' Harnick took my hand, looked me directly in the eye, leaned in, and said with complete sincerity that it was an honor for him to see our work."

As invited guests of the festival, the UW students were also able to participate in master classes with theatre legends such as Tony-award winning actors Elizabeth Wilson and Michele Pawk, and Pulitzer Prize-nominated playwright Theresa Rebeck.

"The Inge Festival was far more exciting and amazing than we expected—it's a real gem for the theatre industry," said Brownsted. "Many talented working professionals gather in little bitty Independence, Kansas to honor the generative artists of the theatre world—the playwrights. It was wonderful to have an opportunity to make connections—the theatre world is a lot smaller than most people would expect," she added.

Brownsted also said that the many industry professionals at the festival were very supportive and eager to help new artists to develop professionally.

"In a conversation with J.T. Rogers [winner of the Otis Guernsey New Voices Playwriting Award for this year's festival] I mentioned how impressive it was that everyone was being so generous and was actively interested in the UW students," said Brownsted.

"His reply says it all: 'When one finally gets a few rungs up the career ladder one should help those coming up behind you. Lord knows I've had a lot of help a long the way.'"

Hilliker Steps Down As Chair

Many theatre patrons and current and former students know **Dr. Rebecca Hilliker** as a professor, director, scholar and friend. Some of you may even know of her accomplishments as Chair and Vice Chair for the Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival; as Chair of Chairs for the



National festival and member of the National Selection Team; and as president of the Northwest Drama Conference.

But likely many of you are not aware of Rebecca's most influential role on behalf of the Department and its faculty, staff, students, and patrons — her tireless and exemplary service as department chair. Rebecca has led the department since 1991, advocating on its behalf, and has stepped down this summer to take a well-deserved rest.

"Rebecca Hilliker had an astoundingly positive impact on the department

of Theatre and Dance," noted College of A&S Dean Oliver Walter.

"During her tenure, the department's students time and again gained regional and national recognition, as did the faculty. And equally important was the ever enthusiastic manner in which Rebecca spread the word about departmental achievements," he added.

"When it comes to finding an example of a department head who moved their department forward, no better example can be found than Rebecca Hilliker," said Dean Walter.

Summer Festival Most Successful Yet

The 2007 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival has come to a close and has been our most successful season yet.

The combined summer and theatre and dance festival, now in its third installment, included a diverse performance season with many guest artists.

Leigh Selting once again served as artistic director for the UW Summer Theatre portion of the festival, while **Margaret Wilson** and **Jennifer Deckert** led the dance portion.

"The summer festival format has enabled us to shore up our summer programs and provide a full season of cultural offerings to the community," said former department head **Rebecca Hilliker**.

"Our students continue to benefit from the expanded program and from interactions with professional performers and designers, who now make up about half of our company," she added.

"We've also been able to welcome back several alumni who are now working professionally as performers and designers, which has been a real privilege," added Hilliker.

The summer theatre season featured three comedies that were a hit with audiences. The season opened with **THE LAST OF THE RED HOT LOVERS**, written by Neil Simon and directed by

special guest **Jay Edelnant**. Simon's endearing comedy about a middle-aged businessman who yearns to spice up his predictable life ran June 12-16 and featured UW alum **Devin Sanchez**.

Next came the high-altitude comedy of errors, **MAN IN THE FLYING LAWN CHAIR**, which was based on the story of Larry Walters, who in 1982 became a cult hero when he launched himself 16,000 ft into the air in an aluminum lawn chair. Directed by **Leigh Selting**, the play featured UW alumni **Kimmy Gamble** and **Dodie Montgomery** and special guests **Mindi Logan** and **David Borrer** and ran June 26-30.



David Borrer Takes off in **MAN IN THE FLYING LAWN CHAIR**.

KOSHER LUTHERANS, a new comedy written and directed by UW professor **William Missouri Downs**, closed the summer theatre season. This premiere production featured UW alumna **Dodie Montgomery**, as well as film and stage actor **Michael James Smith**, with a special guest appearance by assistant professor **Wolf J. Sherrill**.

The 2007 festival closed with the Dance Concert Series. The free Student Showcase Concert on July 26 featured festival participants, while the festival resident company **Alonzo King's LINES Ballet** gave a solo concert on July 27. The Dance Festival Gala Concert on July 28 featured guest artists from **Alonzo King's LINES Ballet**, as well as festival participants performing repertory works by festival faculty **Peter Pucci**, **Yoav Kaddar**, **Gail Benedict**, **Keith Saunders**, **Susan Israel Massey**, and **Lawrence Jackson**.

"Our summer program continues to expand and produce professional-quality work," said Hilliker. "The last two years have been an exciting time of growth and we have been very pleased with the mix of professional and student performers and designers who produced this year's season."

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 Claims Top Honors at Region VII KCACTF

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

UW actors swept the KCACTF Region VII Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competition again this year, picking up UW's 10th and 11th regional wins. Six of the 16 finalists were from UW, as were both Region VII Irene Ryan winners, seniors **Claudine Mboligikpelani Nako** and **Cheyenne Christian**, who went on to compete at the national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center in April. This is the first time that both Region VII winners have come from the same university. Nako also won the Region VII Musical Theatre Award for the second year in a row.

Junior **Anna Brownsted**, Dallas, TX, won the prestigious William Inge Festival Student Directing Award. Her directing scene, which featured several UW student performers, was an invited production at the William Inge home in Independence, KS.

Anna was also one of six students chosen to direct for 10-Minute Play competition at the regional festival and also the first alternate to direct one of



Cheyenne Christian, one of two Irene Ryan Region VII winners

the winning 10-Minute Plays at the national festival.

Second bachelor's candidate **Leean Torske**, Casper, WY, was the Region VII One-Act Play winner for **THREE-LEGGED DOG**. The play was a finalist for the John H. Cauble Short Play Award, which recognizes the best student-written short plays produced by colleges and universities nationwide.

Brownsted's one-act play **THE RUMBLE STRIP** took second place runner-up for the regional short play award, while **KOSHER ROMANCE GESTAPO**, by junior Amy Hollon, Los Angeles, CA, took third

Finally, Professor **Leigh Selting** won the Faculty Directing Fellowship to go to the national festival at the Kennedy Center, where he mentored the student directors for the original One-Act and 10-Minute plays being produced there.

Alumni News Update

Jason Diaz, BFA, '03, received his Master's degree in May 2007, and will join Robert Singer Associates in Aspen, CO in August as an architectural lighting designer.

After a stint as Senior Designer with the Ward Design Group in Seattle, WA, **Jason Grandpre**, '93, moved back to LA in April to work for Entertainment Lighting Services (ELS) as a Project Designer & Manager. Jason also designs lighting systems for installed projects.

Angel (Helm) Capone, BA, '95, is Assistant Director of Painted Past Productions in Casper, WY, a non-profit organization that provides historical tours of downtown Casper and presents historical characters in the school district. Last fall, PPP performed a children's musical for the families of the troops stationed in Germany, and plans to go again this fall.

William "Mykel" Hill, BTM, '90,



Unicorn Theatre's production of **CROWNS**.

appeared in **CROWNS** at the Unicorn Theatre and Gem Theater this spring and in **INTIMATE APPAREL** at the Unicorn Theatre in June. He also can be seen in the independent film **SUSPENSION** (for details, go online to www.suspension-movie.com) and in an ad on the Sprint website at <http://pictures.sprintpcs.com/publiclogin.do>

Scott Tedmon-Jones, BFA, '01 has been accepted to Carnegie Mellon's Design program and will begin studies there in fall 2007. You can reach

Scott at stedmonjones@verizon.net and **Ty Tedmon-Jones**, BFA, '02, at ttedmonj@verizon.net

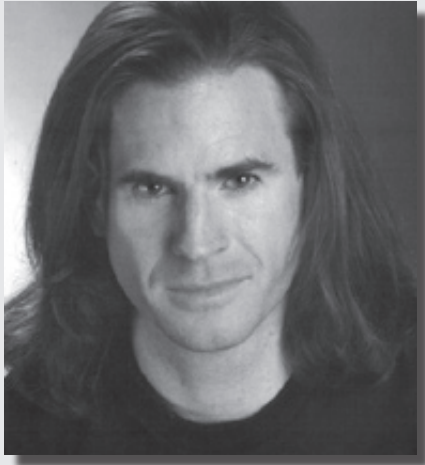
Scott Pardue, BTM, '94, received his MFA from the University of Iowa in Directing in May 2007. Last spring, Scott directed his own play **THE AMERICAN BLACK BOX**, for which he won the 2007 IRAM for Best Director from the Iowa Playwrights Workshop. Scott is now heading back to NC with his wife and little boy.

Kristi (Milner) Quinn, BFA, '95, works at Bodycenter Studios and has a new baby girl born February 15, 2007, named Claire.

Sal Sabella, BFA, '98, is still with **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**, and is likely to stay until the end of the year. Sal moved into the swing position in the spring and covers 10 ensemble tracks and three leads (Phantom, Pi-angi, and Andre).

Best of Luck!

Leaving the UW Department of Theatre and Dance this summer is **Wolf J. Sherrill**, who has served as assistant professor of acting since 2003.



Wolf J. Sherrill.

Also a freelance director and Equity actor, Wolf acted in UW's production of *KOSHER LUTHERANS* this summer, directed *DEARLY DEPARTED* for Theatre West in Scottsbluff, NE, and is now in the process of moving his family to Harrisonburg, Virginia, where he has accepted a faculty posi-

tion with James Madison University. We will miss you, Wolf!

Also leaving us this summer is our incredibly hardworking assistant professor and technical director **R. Michael "Mike" Earl**, who joined the department in 2001. After spending a sabbatical working in Egypt during the last academic year, Mike has decided to take a position with Universal Studios. We wish Mike all the best in his new endeavor!



Robert Michael Earl

Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Cecilia Aragon recently participated in the American Theatre for Higher Education Conference (ATHE), the Women and Theatre Program Conference (WTP), the American Alliance for Theatre and Education—Sea to Sky: Swimming Upstream Spawning New Horizons, and the 365 National Festival at The New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA). She was an invited Director for *EL SILENCIO GRANDE AND SUGAR* (for Nina Simone and Celia Cruz), served as respondent for *CONFESSIONS OF A RELUCTANT CAREGIVER* by Merri Biechler, Winner of the 2007 Jane Chambers Student Playwriting Competition for the Association for Theatre in Higher Education\Women and Theatre Program, and was an invited panelist for *Mare Incognita: Navigating Through the Complexities of Teacher Education and the Preparation of Teaching Artists and Why Bother? A look at Using Original and Primary Sources in Theatre* (UW Art Museum). CiCi also acted in *AJAX BIG AJAX LITTLE*, directed by Milton Lazoya. Finally, Cici served as a juror for the Distinguished Thesis and Dissertation Award.

William Missouri Downs' book *SCREENPLAY: WRITING THE PICTURE* (co-written by Hollywood screenwriter Robin Russin) is now one of the best selling screenwriting books in Poland. Bill's book has received outstanding reviews from top polish screenwriters and directors. The Oscar-winning polish director Andrzej Wajda wrote that, "SCREENPLAY: WRITING THE PICTURE conveys - with American pragmatism - many practical experiences while avoiding what is obvious, and what to many European screenwriters is unclear..."

Bill's new introduction to theatre textbook *THE ART OF THEATRE* (co-written with UW professor Lou Anne Wright and published by Wadsworth) is selling well in the States with nearly 100 universities adopting the book just one year after its publication.

Bill was recently invited to be part of the Last Frontier Theatre Conference in Valdez, Alaska, where his new comedy *COCKEYED* was read. He was also invited to be part of the Playwrights Showcase of the Western Region where his new play *The "M" WORD* was read.

This year, Bill also fulfilled a lifelong dream when he traveled to Egypt and stood in the remains of a lecture hall from the ancient Library of Alexandria.

Dr. Rebecca Hilliker recently stepped down as department chair after 15 years of exemplary service. She will resume professor duties this fall after recuperating from knee surgery. Thank you for all of your hard work

(Continued on p. 6)

UW Theatre & Dance Baby Boom?

There must be something in the water these days at UW Theatre & Dance, as the department welcomed four new little ones this past year, as well as several alumni babies.

Ellen May Bredehoft, Costume Shop Manager, and husband Geir Jaegerson welcomed daughter Hilda Elisabeth Ellen Jaegerson on September 13, 2006.

Cecilia Aragon, Assistant Professor, and husband Jed Cabrera had a daughter, Skye Soleil Canyon Cabrera on May 17, 2007.

Emmett Buhmann, BFA, 2003, and **Heather Welch, BFA, 2006** had a daughter, Hannah Marie Buhmann, on May 17, 2007. Emmett and Heather reside in CA.

Kathy Kirkaldie, Fine Arts Coordinator, BFA, 2000, and husband Shawn Bunning had a daughter, Claire Elizabeth Bunning, on April 14, 2007.

Emily (Watson) Valley and **Nick Valley**, both current UW students, welcomed daughter Olivia Eunice Valley on July 17, 2007.

Roger Winn and wife Christie welcomed a new little girl, Paige Novella Grace Winn, on May 23, 2007.



Introducing Hannah Buhmann!

Faculty Spotlight (Cont.)

on behalf of the department, Rebecca!

Marsha Knight received a 2007 John P. Ellbogen Meritorious Award for Teaching and was UW's nominee for the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) national teaching award this year. Marsha also took a trip to NYC to begin research on *SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS ISLAND*, an original ballet that will incorporate audio recordings of Ellis Island immigrants, transcriptions of interviews read by actors, and film of several who passed through Ellis Island as children during the peak years of immigration. These stories will be enhanced by contemporary dance based on recurring themes in the immigration experience.

After a stint teaching in London and Italy during the pre-session, **Leigh Selting** served as artistic director for the summer theatre component of the 2007 Snowy Range Summer Theatre and Dance Festival. This fall, Leigh will take on a new challenge and step into the role of department chair.

Wolf J. Sherrill acted in the world premiere of William Missouri Downs' *KOSHER LUTHERANS* and also directed *DEARLY DEPARTED* for Theatre West in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, this summer. Wolf, Lexi, and son Keegan are moving to Harrisonburg, VA, this fall, where Wolf has accepted a position with James Madison University. We wish them all the best!

Margaret Wilson received her Ph.D. from Texas Woman's University in May. This July, she directed the Snowy Range Summer Dance Festival with new dance faculty member **Jennifer Deckert** and the vertical dance performance at Vedauwoo with Neil Humphrey. In October, Margaret will travel to Australia to present at the International Association for Dance Medicine and Science Annual meeting.

Lou Anne Wright was the voice/speech/text/dialects coach for the 50th Season (2007) of the Colorado Shakespeare Festival in Boulder. She coached all five shows, including *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS*, *THE SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS*, *ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL* and *JULIUS CAESAR*. Lou Anne was thrilled to work with so many wonderful actors, directors, and designers, including Broadway director Scott Schwartz (*BAT BOY*, *THE MUSICAL*), actors John Plumpis (*THE LION KING*) and Julia Motyka (*Eve Ensler's WE GOT ISSUES*), as well as internationally known director/activist Cynthia Croot (*Theatres Against War*).

This September, Lou Anne will perform the role of Amanda Wingfield in the Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company's production of *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*.

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

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

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

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

are: June 1 - June 15; June 15 - June 29; and June 29 - July 6.

Do you have a guest room and would like to host a visiting artist? Or a small apartment you'd be willing to donate or lease at a reduced rate? Or do you have the need for housesitting next summer?

Donations of housing will enable us to bring in seasoned theatre professionals and are tax deductible.

Interested? For details, please contact Kathy at kirisk@uwyo.edu or Leigh at selting@uwyo.edu. THANKS!

Class of 2007

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!

- Bridget Bose
- Paige Bowman
- Cheyenne Christian
- Lance Martin
- Teresa Thompson
- Elise Verley



Thank You to our 2006-2007 Friends of Theatre and Dance!

We'd like to say a sincere "Thank you!" to all our faithful supporters in the 2006-2007 *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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2007-2008 UW Theatre & Dance Season

Uncle Vanya

By Anton Chekhov

Directed by William Missouri Downs

OCTOBER 2 - 7

Fine Arts Main Stage

Fire & Ice /The Pink Blue

*Choreographed by Jennifer Deckert
and Jacob Mora*

OCTOBER 31 - NOVEMBER 4

Fine Arts Main Stage

The "M" Word

By William Missouri Downs

Directed by Lee Hodgson

DECEMBER 4 - 8

Fine Arts Main Stage

Almost, Maine*

By John Cariani

Directed by Leigh Selting

FEBRUARY 8 - 14

Fine Arts Studio Theatre

A Chorus Line

Directed by James B. Nicola

APRIL 24 - 30

Fine Arts Main Stage

*ALMOST MAINE will have a 2:00 p.m. matinee as well as a 7:30 p.m. evening performance on Sunday, February 10.

Second Season Events

The Relay Plays

SEPTEMBER 1

Fine Arts Main Stage

FUR

OCTOBER 16 - 20

Fine Arts Studio Theatre

Irene Ryan Showcase

FEBRUARY 17

Fine Arts Studio Theatre

Shorts By Skirts

MARCH 6 - 7

Fine Arts Studio Theatre

Student-Directed One Acts

MARCH 31 - APRIL 3

Fine Arts Studio Theatre

Curtain times are **7:30 p.m.** with **2:00 p.m.** Sunday matinees (when scheduled).
Curtain times for **Second Season Events** are TBA.

To get tickets, call (307) 766-6666 or go online at
<http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/FINEARTS/>

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