



Center Stage

Newsletter of the UW Department of Theatre & Dance

Winter 2009

Onward, Forward...

Happy Holidays to your and yours from the University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance! We hope this issue of Center Stage finds you well and warm and enjoying the holiday season!

Our fall production season was an ambitious one. We opened with *THE CRUCIBLE*, Arthur Miller's searing portrait of the mass hysteria that led to the tragic witch-hunts and trials in 17th century Salem, Massachusetts. Directed by **John O'Hagan**, the production demonstrated that Miller's allegory of political and religious intolerance still resonates with audiences today.

The production featured stark lighting by **Adam Mendelson**, a beautifully spare, otherworldly set by **Casey Kearns**, and the austere costumes by **Lee Hodgson**.

Next in the fall lineup was playwright-in-residence **William Missouri Downs'** hilarious tribute to all things Chekhov, *SEAGULLS IN A CHERRY TREE*, which follows two Hollywood screenwriters as they try to adapt Anton Chekhov's classic play *THE CHERRY ORCHARD* into a new movie for Mel Gibson. Also directed by Downs, the show played to sold-out audiences and featured **Lou Anne Wright** as

Madame Natasha and **Lee Hodgson** as Boris.

Closing out the fall season was *SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS*, a new dance/theatre work conceived

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and choreographed by **Marsha Knight** and co-directed by Knight and **John O'Hagan**. Thanks to support from UW Cultural Programs and the Wyoming Arts Council, the piece went on tour to Casper, Gillette, and Cody. We have just learned that *SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS* has been selected for performance at the Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival to be held at the University of Nevada-Reno from February 15 - 19, 2010.

As we head into the new year, we look forward to remounting *SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS* for a special performance in late January. The spring production season promises to be exciting and eclectic: we open with the Pulitzer Prize-winning, dark Southern comedy, *CRIMES OF THE HEART*, followed by the spring dance concert, *PERPETUAL MOTION*, which will feature both contemporary and classical ballet as well as modern dance, and we

A scene from our fall production of Arthur Miller's classic drama, *THE CRUCIBLE*.



Onward, Forward...Cont.

end the season with Shakespeare's masterpiece, *HAMLET*, which will feature UW alumnus and long-time member of Blue Man Group, Pete Simpson, Jr. Add to that Region VII

KCACTE, USITT, and the Student-Directed One-Act Play Festival, and we have a full plate this coming year!

We look forward to keeping you up-to-date on our activities and encourage

you to share your news with us as well. We wish you the best and can't thank you enough for your support of our programs! Drop us a line or stop by any time — we would love to see you!

University of Wyoming Stages Laramie Project Epilogue

On October 12, 2009, the University of Wyoming joined New York at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and over 150 theatres in all fifty states, Canada, Great Britain, Spain, Hong Kong, and Australia in premiering *THE LARAMIE PROJECT: 10 YEARS LATER: AN EPILOGUE*.

THE LARAMIE PROJECT: 10 YEARS LATER: AN EPILOGUE is a compelling follow-up to the highly acclaimed and widely produced play by the Tectonic Theater Project, "The Laramie Project," which chronicled the aftermath of the Matthew Shepard murder in Laramie.

Written by Tectonic Theater Project members Moisés Kaufman, Leigh Fondakowski, Greg Pierotti, Andy Paris, and Stephen Belber, *THE LARAMIE PROJECT: 10 YEARS LATER: AN EPILOGUE* focuses on the long-term effects of the murder of Matthew Shepard on the town of Laramie.

The play explores how the town has changed and whether or how the murder continues to reverberate in the community. The play also includes interviews with Matthew's mother Judy Shepard and with both Matthew's murderers Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, who are each serving two consecutive life sentences. The writers also conducted

many follow-up interviews with Laramie residents from the original piece, including Romaine Patterson, Reggie Fluty, Jedediah Shultz, Father Roger Schmidt, and Jonas Slonaker.



A talk-back session was held immediately following the performance and featured Jeff Lockwood, UW professor in Philosophy; Kate Welsh, Chair of the Shepard Symposium on Social Justice and associate professor in Education; Keith Reynolds, UW student and *SPECTRUM* president; Dave O'Malley, retired Laramie Chief of Police; Cathy Connolly, Wyoming State Senator and UW associate professor of Women's Studies; Dale Stalder, current Laramie Chief of Police; John Dorst, UW professor of American Studies; and Jonas Slonaker, Laramie community member.

"The Tectonic Theater Project set out to find out how Laramie had changed in the ten years since the murder of Matthew Shepard. When we arrived, we were forced to confront the question, 'How do you measure change in a community?' One of the things we found when we got there, which greatly surprised us, was how many people in Laramie were trying to say this was not a hate crime," said Moisés Kaufman, Artistic Director of Tectonic Theater Project.

"We found the people of Laramie still fighting to own their own history, their own identity, their own story, and part of that is shaped by how they understand what happened that night to Matthew," continued Leigh Fondakowski.

"Creating the epilogue also gave us the opportunity to talk to Aaron McKinney about his crime, what his thinking is about it now, and what his experience has been in prison over the past decade," said Greg Pierotti, the company member who interviewed Aaron.

"We were also able to speak with Matthew's mother, Judy Shepard, whose striking transformation from privately grieving mother to civil rights activist has captured the nation's attention," concluded Andy Paris.

SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS Selected as Region VII KCACTF Finalist

The University of Wyoming's original production of *SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS* has been selected as one of four Region VII finalists for the 2010 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF).

Conceived and choreographed by professor Marsha Knight and directed by Knight and assistant professor John O'Hagan, *SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS* is an original theatre and dance work that uses dance, film and audio interviews, and actor re-enactments to capture the voices of immigrants who passed through Ellis Island as children in one of the greatest human migrations of all time. Each "song" represents a different stage of the immigration experience, and every effort has been made to preserve the stories as originally told.

"*SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS* showcases many aspects of our program," noted choreographer and director Knight.

"We appreciate the opportunity to take this on, as it provides another occasion to work the piece and improve. We'll be working in the coming weeks with an eye toward the festival," said Knight.

SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS was chosen as one of four KCACTF regional finalists from a pool of approximately 50 productions. The regional event, which is part of the Kennedy Center's annual competition for student actors, directors and playwrights representing colleges and universities nationwide, will be held February

15 - 19, 2010, at the University of Nevada-Reno in Reno, Nevada.

"I'm thrilled that the extraordinary efforts, work, time and dedication of our students, faculty members, and Marsha, in particular, have been recognized by our region and will have the opportunity to be showcased at the regional festival," said director O'Hagan.

"It's a unique opportunity for many of the students and a real honor for all of us," he added.



A scene from *SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS*.

The other regional finalists are *TWELFTH NIGHT* from Sacramento State University, "The Marriage of Bette and Boo" from Humboldt State University, and "The Servant of Two Masters" from the University of Portland. These shows all have the potential to advance to the KCACTF National Festival in April at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

A special public performance of *SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS* will be held January 29, 2010, at 7:30 p.m. in the UW Arts and Sciences Auditorium. Proceeds from this performance will be used to offset costs of

taking the production to the regional festival.

Two UW student playwrights have also been selected as Region VII finalists and will compete for a bid to the national festival. Finalists in the one-act play division are Jaime Cruz (Laramie), for *CUARTO # CUATRO* and Christopher Wolter (Denver, Colo.) for *VEILED INSPIRATION*.

Also, 15 UW student actors have been nominated to participate in the

Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competition. They are: Harlan Post, Ian Rowe, and Katie Stearns, all of Cheyenne; Dan Cole of Sheridan; Ryan Archibald of Afton; Hannah Osborne of Riverton; Jonathan Hollowell of Littleton, Colo.; Mark Mieden and Noelia Antweiler, both of Westminster, Colo.; Katrina Despain of Loveland, Colo.; Alex Gibson of Orange, Calif.;

Mary Higgins of Santa Rosa, Calif.; Lindsay Neinast of Arlington, Texas; Cameron Rush of Pasco, Wash.; and Phil Kelly of Canandaigua, New York.

Several UW design and technical students will also take part in KCACTF and the Northwest Drama Conference (NWDC) design competitions at the 2010 Region VII festival.

Region VII of the KCACTF comprises Wyoming, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Washington, as well as northern California and northern Nevada.

2009-2010 Guest Artist Series

The newly-established state-endowed professorship for the Fine Arts (funded by the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment through the Wyoming State Legislature) allowed us to establish a Guest Artists Series last year, which is ongoing. We have already hosted several artists this fall that have provided professional training opportunities for students, and we are booking several more for the spring. Here's a quick look at our series for the 2009-2010 academic year:

AMII LEGENDRE was in residence September 29 - October 1 at UW to teach dance classes; hold discussions with students about teaching improvisation; and to participate in the Re:Visioning the (W)hole conference. Amii is a choreographer, dancer, and teacher, a faculty member at Cornish College of the Arts, and sometimes teacher at Velocity Dance Center in Seattle. In 1994, she founded LeGendre Performance Group, which made contact-based contemporary dance work. Amii has taught contact and modern technique, improvisation and choreography, and performed or set work all over the U.S. and in Canada, Hong Kong, Ecuador, and Peru. She has choreographed over 30 works. Amii moved to the Hudson Valley in 2005, where she was in guest residencies at Wesleyan University (Fall 06) and Connecticut College (Fall 07), and where she teaches modern and contact to the Bard community and contact improvisation through Dance New England, hosts a weekly dance lab group with local dance artists, choreographs and performs alternative dance and improvisation work, and teaches Dance Improvisation to men in a maximum-security prison in NY.

BERNIE CARDELL and **RICK BERNSTEIN** were in residence October 22 to meet with student playwrights and actors and to give a response to SEAGULLS IN A CHERRY TREE. Bernie is a free lance actor/director/designer and Co-Artistic Director for Vintage Theatre in Colorado. Rick is a producer and director for Miners Alley Playhouse, Golden, Colorado

JOSH WOODIE was in residence November 3-4 to lead discussion sessions with students on the business of the business in New York. He also covered the role of Mitch during rehearsals of THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE. Josh holds a B.F.A. in Performing Arts and a B.A. in Chemistry from Eastern Kentucky University. Now living in NYC, he has performed professionally for six years, and he has been a diligent student of vocal pedagogy for nine years, making a splash at the 2006 American Traditions Vocal Competition in Savannah, GA, as the youngest quarter finalist accepted. National tour credits: ALTAR BOYZ (Matthew). I LOVE A PIANO (George). NYC credits:

CLEOPATRA-A LIFE UNPARALLELED (Julius Caesar *Outstanding Lead Actor Nomination), **THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED** (Don McLean), **BRUNCH - THE MUSICAL** (Ensemble). Regional credits: **THE FANTASTICKS** (Matt), **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** (Lumiere), **GYPSY** (L.A.), and **TEXAS LEGACIES** (Lead Performer). He is an experienced cabaret performer and has extensive theme park experience.



Peter Pucci.

CRAIG ANTON was in residence November 5-7 to teach both acting and comedy workshops. Craig's workshops were aimed at finding the truth in scene work through simplicity, variety, and clarity, and offering applicable tools for auditioning and working in today's market place. Craig is a working actor in Los Angeles. His emphasis is film and television with a focus in comedy; leads on four series for television, The Disney Channel's **PHIL OF THE FUTURE**, **MAD TV** (FOX), **FIRST TIME OUT** and **THE ARMY SHOW** for The WB. His numerous guest star roles include shows like **CSI MIAMI**, **THE OFFICE**, **CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM**, **RAYMOND**, **ENTOURAGE**, **SARAH SILVERMAN**, **KING OF QUEENS**, countless pilots, plays, commercials and films.

PETER PUCCI will be in residence January 17-22, 2010. With extensive credits in theater, ballet, modern dance, and dance education, Peter is one of the most sought-after choreographers working today. Pucci has been nominated for the coveted Drama Desk Award for outstanding choreographer and was the 2008 winner of the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Achievement, Off-Broadway, Outstanding Choreographer for his work in **QUEENS BOULEVARD**. As a Movement Director, Peter's work has been seen frequently at major regional and New York theaters. As a Choreographer, Peter is the director of his own company, Peter Pucci Plus, which performs

annually in New York and tours extensively throughout the U.S. and Europe. Peter has also choreographed ballets commissioned by the Joffrey Ballet, Ballet Hispanico, Alberta Ballet, and The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. As an educator/innovator, Peter has created an audience-accessible piece that has become an event unto itself: **PUCCI:SPORT**. As a vehicle for outreach, dance education, and just-plain-fun, **PUCCI:SPORT** has been performed in venues large and small, from city playgrounds to Madison Square Garden.

BARBARA HARTWIG will be in residence January 29-30, 2010. Barbara is a professional director, choreographer, and performer. She trained in New York with the School of American Ballet, danced for a year with the San Antonio Ballet after high school, and then earned a BFA in Acting and Directing from the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. Barbara is now a theatre faculty member at Coastal Carolina University in SC, where she teaches dance and choreographs. She is currently the director/choreographer of the University's Musical Theatre Company and Dance Company. She has performed on Broadway with Chita Rivera, danced with Baryshnikov at the White House, toured nationally in **ME AND MY GIRL**, toured Europe twice as **Ado Annie** in **OKLAHOMA!**, performed and worked as a staging specialist for Walt Disney World, and she can be seen as an orphan in the original movie **ANNIE**.

JOHANNA SMITH will be in residence February 9-12, 2010, to perform **OH, SO** for pre K - 1 students; to do a four-day workshop with Theatre for Young Audiences students; and to do a four-day residency with the **ICE AGE: LARAMIE** playwriting and performance project. Johanna is Associate Professor of Theatre, Cal State San Bernardino (Associate Professor). In 1997, she co-founded 5foot2 Productions in Washington, D.C., where her original children's shows, puppets, and workshops were featured at the Smithsonian Institution and other museums. She served as a drama specialist/educator for the Studio Theatre, the Bethesda Academy of Performing Arts, the National Portrait Gallery, the Nashville Children's Theatre, and the Bread and Puppet Theatre. At CSUSB, she has directed numerous Children's Theatre/Puppetry productions including **CROW AND WEASEL**, **THE CRANE WIFE**, **THE INLAND EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES**, and **THE ODYSSEY**. She has provided workshops and presentations for the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, the West Coast Puppet Festival, the International Visual Literacy Association, the California Educational Theatre Association, and the Educational Theatre Associations. She

December 2009 Graduates

Congratulations to December grads Kristin Kissell and Stephanie Thomas!



Dance faculty Jennifer Deckert (center) with Kristin Kissell (L) and Stephanie Thomas (R).

2009-2010 Guest Artists, Cont.

teaches improv and is a proud graduate of Second City sketch comedy writing program (LA).

PAUL KALINA will be in residence February 25-27, 2010. An assistant professor of movement at the University of Iowa, Paul is a founding member of the Chicago physical theatre company, 500 Clown, with which he has performed throughout the U.S. and England. Paul served as Director of Clowning for Chicago Goodman Theatre's production of *ANIMAL CRACKERS*, as well as the fight choreographer and movement director for Steppenwolf Theatre's *CLOSER* and The Court Theatre's production of *THE ROMANCE CYCLE*. He co-created the clown duo Le Pamplemousse and the critically acclaimed clown acrobatic duo, The Bumbinni Brothers. He served as supervisor of the Big Apple Circus Clown Care Unit at the University of Chicago Children's Hospital from 1999-2005. He is a graduate of the Dell Arte School of Physical Theatre and the University of Idaho (MFA). Prior to his arrival in Iowa, he taught acting and directing at the University of Idaho, DePaul University's School of Theatre, Second City, and the professional training program for 500 Clown. Paul is also an invited artist of Cirque du Soleil.

MARTHA CLARK will be in residence March 9-12, 2010. Martha Clarke is an American director and choreographer noted for her multidisciplinary approach to theatre, dance, and opera productions. Her work frequently emphasizes striking visual tableaux, often directly inspired by visual art, especially painting. Though dance is the primary basis of Ms. Clarke's training, she has maintained a career which spans and melds dance, theater, the visual arts, and opera. Probably her best-known original work is "The Garden of Earthly Delights" (1984), an exploration in theatre,

dance, music and flying of the famous painting of the same name by Hieronymus Bosch. In June 2007, a new version of the show opened the 30th anniversary of the American Dance Festival. On November 19, 2008, the re-imagined *Garden of Earthly Delights* opened Off-Broadway at the Minetta Lane Theater in New York City; two extensions later - it ran until April 5, 2009. A world tour will follow. In 1990, she received a MacArthur Award, popularly known as the "Genius Grant."

CHARLIE OATES will be in residence March 25-27. Charlie is a performer, movement coach, and fight choreographer. He has performed on the streets in the U.S. and Europe, collaborated on new performance events with dancers and musicians, developed site specific performances for museums and unusual architectural spaces, created many performances for young audiences, and performed his original solo works at theatres and festivals around the world. He has served as movement coach and fight choreographer at many theatres including the La Jolla Playhouse, The Old Globe, Cincinnati Playhouse and the Denver Center Theatre Company. Oates has been a guest artist and teacher in many leading actor training programs.

CARLOS MANUEL will be in residence April 7-9. Carlos is a playwright, director, choreographer, and performer, and assistant professor of Theatre & Theatre Program Director at Bellarmine University in Kentucky. He has written more than a dozen plays and has an extensive background performing and directing. Carlos holds an MFA from Arizona State University in Playwriting and an MA in Directing from the University of New Mexico.

Faculty Spotlight

Cecilia Aragon received an Extraordinary Merit in Research Award from the College of Arts & Sciences. Congratulations, CiCi!



Jennifer Deckert received an Extraordinary Merit in Teaching Award from the College of Arts and Sciences. Congratulations Jennifer!

Jennifer also traveled to NYC in mid-December to perform with Mink Colbert Ballet and will be performing again with the company in January 2010.



William Missouri Downs' new play *FORGIVING JOHN LENNON* won second place out of over 1000 scripts in The Virtual Theatre Project's international playwriting competition. Besides winning a cash award, Bill's play will be developed at Wake Forest University and receive a workshop production which will star Sean Mahon (who is currently appearing on Broadway in *39 Steps*). In addition, *FORGIVING JOHN LENNON* also came in first place at the Millennium Playwriting Contest. Besides a second cash award, Bill will receive a reading at the Signature Theatre on 42nd street in New York on January 25th 2010. This reading will be directed by Stephen Henderson (who recently appeared on Broadway in *MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM*).

Congratulations are in order to co-directors **Marsha Knight** and **John O'Hagan** for the selection of their production of *SIX SONGS FROM ELLIS* for the Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre festival to be held at the University of Nevada-Reno in February 2010.

Alumni News Update

Megan Antles, BFA, '07, is "plugged into" the Warehouse Theatre Company (in association with Allied Arts Company), in Yakima, WA. She recently played Elizabeth Bennet in the classic, PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, and was thankful for the great dialect coaching she received at UW from Lou Ann Wright. Megan received a "Winnie Award" for best new actor for that role. Megan will direct ALMOST, MAINE at the Warehouse Theatre Company in February 2010.

Anna Brownsted, BFA, '08, is more than halfway done with her practice-based research MA at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. In July, she traveled to Massachusetts to direct a production of J.T. Rogers' WHITE PEOPLE at Shakespeare & Company in the Berkshires. (www.shakespeare.org) Also playing this December at S&Co. is her second writing collaboration with director Irina Brook. CINDY BELLA (OR THE GLASS SLIPPER) is a family-friendly, contemporary musical adaptation of Rossini's LA CENERENTOLA. Last summer, Anna worked with an ensemble of performers to develop a new play called IGGY & EM, which had its first production in September. Anna and her producing partner Hetty Wooding are pleased to announce that May 2009 marked the birth of their new UK-based theatre company: secret creatures. (www.secretcreatures.org). Their focus is to create intimate theatrical experiences. Their inaugural show, THIS IS TINY TOWN, is a city-wide promenade piece with an interactive, scavenger-hunt-style element to it. Anna adds, "All in all, London life is very good and although I'm retaining my Southern accent, I don't expect to be moving back to the States any time soon. That said, feel free to come visit!"

Paige Bowman, BFA, '07, is currently in Chadron NE, getting her teaching certifications at Chadron State in K-8 grade, as well as 7-12 grade drama! She spent last year substituting and discovered that she enjoys being in the classroom. Paige will be student teaching soon and is hoping to come back to Wyoming and teach for a while, ideally in Cheyenne or Laramie!

Emmett Buhmann, BFA, '02, graduated in June 2009 with an MFA in lighting design from the University of California - Irvine. Emmett and Heather have since moved to Lubbock, TX, where Heather is pursuing a master's degree. Emmett has been hired as the Master Electrician/Scene Shop Foreman for the department of Theatre and Dance; a position that didn't exist before he got the job. In addition, he has done some musical and event lighting for local college and semi-professional organizations.



Heather Fisch, Renée Margaret Speltz and Scott Renzoni in Anna Brownsted's and Irina Brooks' wacky new play, CINDY BELLA (OR THE GLASS SLIPPER) at ing at Shakespeare & Co in MA.

Jill Denison, BA, '05, has spent the last seven years studying a movement system designed for dancers to encourage technique and reduce injury called Gyrotonic. She has been employed in Chicago, Washington D.C., Beijing China, and is currently working with the contemporary ballet company, LINES Ballet, based out of San Francisco. Jill has enjoyed traveling the world for a myriad of reasons and continue to dig deeper into the dance world.

Bryce Gill, BFA, '02, finished his second year at NYU's Graduate Acting program and went to Minneapolis in June to participate in the Guthrie Experience at the Guthrie Theatre.

Laurel Goble, BFA, '99, is living in Fort Smith, AR, where she is currently attending the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith for a bachelor's degree in Diagnostic Medical Sonography, which she will complete in May 2010. Laurel married Justin George of Tulsa, OK, in July. He attends the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, where he is pursuing a degree in Math Education.

Kathy Kirkaldie, BFA, '00, husband Shawn Bunning, and big sister Claire Elizabeth welcomed a new baby girl, Grace Abigail, on November 21, 2009.

Kristi (Milner) Quinn, BFA, '95, is celebrating the 10-year anniversary of her Pilates studio, Bodycenter Studio. The studio is moving to a new 3500 sq. ft. space. Kristi's daughter Claire turned two in February 2009.

Steve Peterson played John of Gaunt in RICHARD II for the Up-Rising Theatre Co. in North Hollywood in January 2009, and completed 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.

Kellie Rae (Lawson) Rockey, BFA, '08, shares the following: "Our son Sawyer is three and showing signs of theatre potential. Last year, during election night, he had to accompany me to a tech rehearsal for AN O. HENRY CHRISTMAS because we'd moved the tech so we could all be home to watch the returns come in. As I was getting in makeup he said, "Mommy, you are handsome--we go on stage now?" and a couple of weeks ago as I was visiting a lighting designer friend at work he said, "No, Mommy, you go. I help Aunt Star with these big lights." Rockey is enjoying his job a lot and we are so glad to be back in Denver after living north a bit for the last couple of years. Wishing everyone broken legs!

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We'd like to say a sincere "Thank you!" to all our faithful supporters in the 2009-2010 *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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