

# CENTER STAGE

WINTER 2013



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

# Center Stage

WINTER 2013

Newsletter of UW Theatre & Dance

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## CARMINA BURANA



Dancers in UW Theatre & Dance's and Music's joint production of CARMINA BURANA.

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES  
Department of Theatre & Dance

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## BREAKING GROUND, BREAKING OUT

Season's Greetings to you and yours from the students, faculty, and staff of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Wyoming! After several days of subzero temperatures we are starting to warm up just in time for the holidays.

The 2013 -2014 production season has been filled with the sounds of people hard at work, but not just in our shops! We are in the midst of the expansion and renovation of the newly christened Buchanan Center for the Performing Arts (BCPA), which has made for a lively fall both in and out of the theatre (see BCPA construction update, page ).

This is an exciting time for the department, as we see many years of planning and dreaming come to fruition, and we are energized by the new possibilities that will open up to us with completion of this outstanding new facility.

The 2013-2014 season opened in early October with **FIVE WOMEN WEARING THE SAME DRESS**, Alan Ball's sassy exposé of an ostentatious wedding reception and the bridesmaids bent on avoiding it. Never has so much purple been seen on the UW stage! **Casey Kearns'** rendition of a Southern girl's dream bedroom and **Lee Hodgson's** take on the most unflattering bridesmaid dress imaginable were spot on, and great fun to behold. Directed by **Leigh Selting** and featuring the work of UW Theatre & Dance alumna and guest lighting designer **Krista Billings**, this cheeky comedy played to sold-out houses.

Following was playwright-in-residence **William Missouri Downs'** interactive new play, **AN EVENING WITH AYN RAND**, a timely inquiry into the continuing impact of Rand and her philosophies that featured Downs as director and **Lou Anne Wright** as Ayn Rand. This piece presented some exciting challenges for our student performers, as they accommodated script changes and continued play development, honed their improvisational skills, and turned some normal theatre conventions--such as the



## BREAKING GROUND, BREAKING OUT (cont.)

“fourth wall”-- on their head. Set in a real classroom and at times funny, provocative, and even surreal, Downs’ incisive work gave the audience the final say on Rand’s ideas and life and culminated in a talkback after each performance.

In late November, UW Theatre and Dance and the Department of Music collaborated on Carl Orff’s superlative and wildly popular work, *CARMINA BURANA*. This piece, usually presented as a scenic cantata, became a full-stage extravaganza as conceived and choreographed by **Lawrence Jackson**, and featured our dancers as well as the UW Symphony, directed by **Dr. Michael Griffith**, and the UW Collegiate Chorale, directed by **Dr. Nicole Lamartine** — over 100 performers on the stage at one time! This well-received production was beautifully supported by the striking and evocative designs of **Casey Kearns** (scenic), **Sharon Huizinga** (lighting), and **Lee Hogson** (costumes). A scaled-down version of *CARMINA BURANA* also toured the State just before Thanksgiving.

The fall semester drew to a close in early December with a performance of *I LOVE YOU, YOU’RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE* by the Musical Theatre Workshop class under the direction of **Patrick Newell**.

The spring season opens in early February and promises to be fun and eclectic. On the docket first is *MIDDLETOWN*, a quirky new reinterpretation of Thornton Wilder’s *OUR TOWN* from Will Eno, author of the smash hit *THOM PAIN*. Following on the heels of that show, several faculty and student actors, designers, critics, and playwrights will leave to compete in the Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) at Boise State University.

Our spring dance show, *MOVEMENT LANDSCAPES* runs in early March and will feature new urban, modern,

contemporary ballet, jazz, and vertical dance pieces by faculty **Margaret Wilson**, **Marsha Knight**, **Lawrence Jackson**, **Rachael L. Shaw**, and guest choreographer **Jacob Mora**, with a special performance by guest artist **Julia Mayo**.

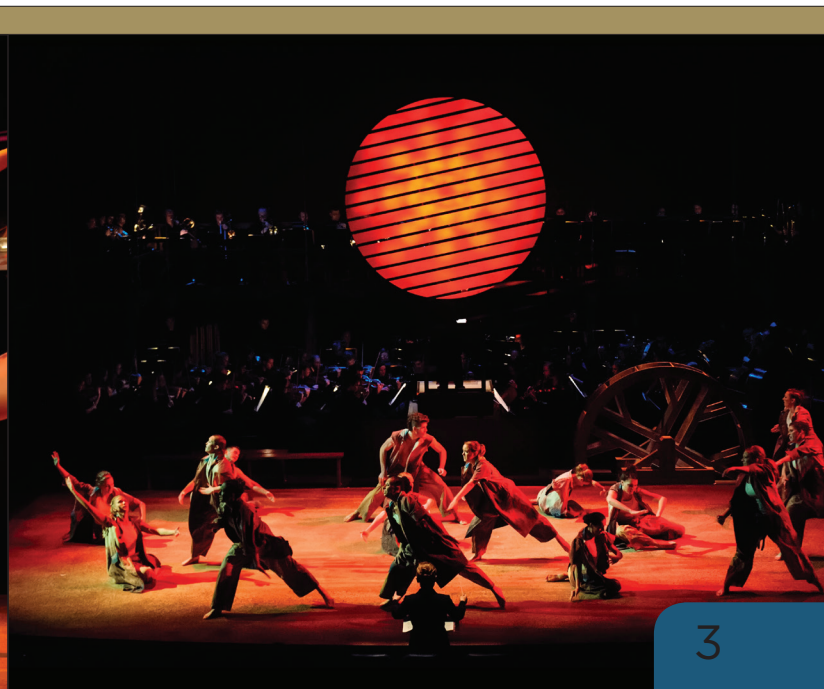
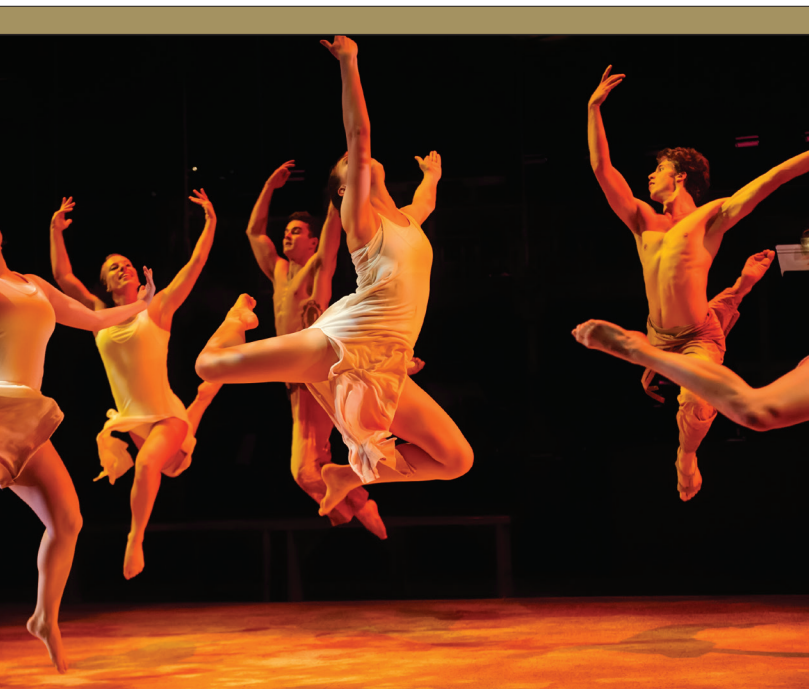
Our technical students will then head off to the United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) annual conference and expo in Fort Worth, TX, while our dancers will compete at the American College Dance Festival Association’s (ACDFA) Northwest Conference at the University of Montana.

Closing our 2013-2014 production season is Stephen Schwartz’s updated musical *WORKING*, based on the Studs Terkel’s best-selling book of interview with real working people. Called “A ‘Chorus Line’ for everybody” (Backstage), *WORKING* portrays common American working men and women in a provocative new light.

Construction work in the interior of the BCPA has picked up pace considerably now that students are on winter break, and work both inside and out will continue throughout this academic year and well beyond. We are not certain how this will impact our summer season and Fall 2014 productions, but we are excited to have an outstanding new facility and will keep you updated on construction news and possible changes in venue.

Please watch for news of our spring guest artists and upcoming summer season, as well as departmental goings-on. We welcome your news and visits at any time. Feel free to stop by and check out the renovation and expansion in progress!

Thank you for your interest in and our support of our programs, our production season, and our students! We wish all good things for you and yours this holiday season.





## BCPA EXPANSION AND RENOVATION

After demolition of the east side of the former Fine Arts Building and months of excavation, backfill, and grading work, the Buchanan Center for the Performing Arts is finally beginning to take shape. Footing excavation, rebar placement and pouring of the building additions are in process, the foundation walls are mostly up, and steel erection is beginning.

The scope of the expansion is becoming more and more apparent, as the footprint of the building moves dramatically to the east, from north to south. It's one thing to examine building plans on paper, but quite another to see them come to be, especially with the addition of 50,000 ft<sup>2</sup> to a 129,00 ft<sup>2</sup> facility! In these photos you can see the new Thrust Theatre shell on the northeast side of the building and the new Recital Hall and band/choral rehearsal rooms to the southeast. Work within the former enclosed atrium is starting to show signs of how the new expanded dance studio will look as well. After the additions are complete, the main entrance and an east lobby will link these two additions and will provide a bridge to the main lobby.

Inside the building, crews are hard at work in the lower level on asbestos abatement, replacing pipes and other types of infrastructure, and refitting some of the practice rooms. Off of the Theatre and Dance wing on the main level, work is beginning on a much needed addition to the faculty and staff offices, which will, hopefully, enable us to come together more as a department and reduce the need for offices across campus and in found spaces (e.g., the Studio Theatre booth, tool room, or AV closets).

Parking to the north of the BCPA has been expanded after the removal of the Wainwright bungalows along Willett, and provides primary access to the BCPA. Please note that the east side of the building, where most patrons historically parked for performances, is not only offline to parking during the construction phase, but also after the project is complete. Once construction staging is removed, this area will become a green space similar to Prexy's Pasture in the interior of campus.

The completed BCPA will be home to UW Theatre and Dance, the Department of Music, Cultural Programs, and Fine Arts Outreach, and will include two new performance spaces, the 256-seat Thrust Theatre and the 100-seat Recital Hall; studios for bands, vocal music, jazz, piano, dance, performance, lighting and sound, theatre design, and recording; conference and seminar rooms; expanded and updated dressing rooms, green rooms, and other support spaces; a centrally located box office; practice rooms; offices; offices and studios, and office support.





## PROGRAM FOCUS: THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

After much planning and development by **Dr. Cecelia Aragon**, and articulation and coordination with the UW College of Education, UW Theatre & Dance recently began offering a Bachelor of Fine Arts concentration in Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA), as well as a Theatre endorsement for educators.

The TYA program and students have been creating and producing work for area schools and others for several years now, and provide significant outreach for the department.

2013 was an exceptionally productive and exciting year for TYA! A course offered in the spring semester, *Teaching Theatre Artists: Service Learning in the Community* taught students a variety of theatre for social change techniques, including drama therapy, process drama, theatre of the oppressed, and playback theatre.

The course led to the creation of an ambitious theatre project that used theatre as a means for social change among disenfranchised populations. The project focused on two distinct and different groups onsite in Laramie and Honolulu, HI, and allowed our TYA students to apply specific theatre practices as tools for individual development, community engagement, storytelling, and social change. The students presented workshops and performed and learned to record moments of “transformation” among children and youth and how theatre can create an awareness and consciousness for young people to participate

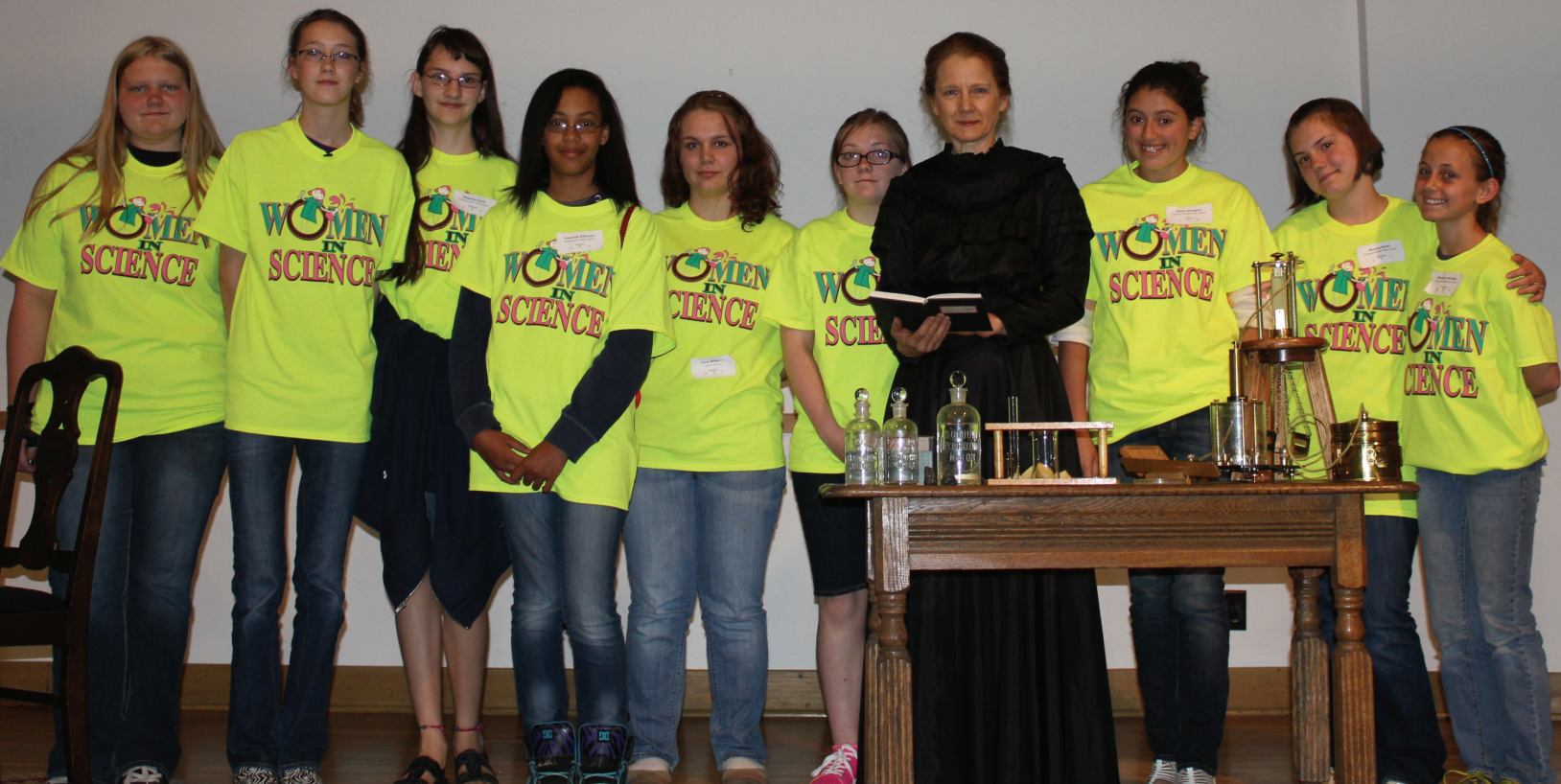
proactively in the story making of their lives. This work and much studio practice also enabled TYA students to transfer their knowledge and work to several local non-profit organizations, including Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Ark Regional Services, Cathedral Home, Safe House, and Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming.

Also in the spring, the Theatre Education/TYA program co-hosted with Gender and Women’s Studies and EPSCoR a production of, *MANYA: A VISIT WITH MADAME CURIE*, a one-woman show by Susan Marie Frontczak. Marie Curie is well known for the discovery of radium, but few understand the obstacles she faced just getting into the laboratory, which the play examined in detail.

This production was seen by over 1,500 students from Albany County, Laramie County, and Carbon County schools, and Frontczak led several post-production workshops for teachers and students. Theatre Education received a Wyoming NASA Space Grant Consortium grant to host the same show for the Women in Science conference, with close to 700 students participating. Women in Science inspires young women to consider science as a major and as a career by providing them with the opportunity to explore all of the possibilities that are offered in the sciences, and the opportunity to meet other young people interested in science and role models who are doing great basic and applied science, and mathematics, engineering, and computer science.







### THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES (cont.)

This fall, TYA students applied lessons learned from Creative Drama in the Classroom, to create and facilitate myriad creative drama activities with children pre-K through 6th grade. The students went out into area schools and led games & improvisational exercises; guided story dramatization and textual adaptation; conducted role drama and other types of Drama-in-Education; and devised performance strategies associated with play-building and Theatre-in-Education.

Students had the opportunity to create a reader's theatre performance piece from the Mexican mythological story of La Llorona and the classic tale of James and the Giant Peach using a variety of puppets that they made in class. This performance toured throughout Albany County Schools and was seen by over 500 students.

Students also put theory into practice this fall by leading workshops in 12 different Albany County schools and pre-schools that used creative drama to teach about animals and insects. The students developed their own extensive lesson plans and puppets to bring a book featuring an animal or insect to life through dramatization or creative activity.

The program in TYA and Theatre Education continues to thrive and serve children and youth in Wyoming and elsewhere, and training inquisitive and innovative educators. We expect more great things in 2014!





## ALUMNI NEWS

**Brad Bond, BTD, '9?**, is currently preparing for a January 11 staged reading of his new tragic musical comedy CELESTINA, a modern retelling of the Romeo and Juliet story from the point of view of the servants and the “old slut” matchmaker woman who brings them together. The original work, written 100 years before Shakespeare’s version, was the first piece of literature ever called a “tragicomedy.” The musical embodies that hybrid, with lovely, sincere ballads followed by fun, raunchy toe-tapping numbers. Brad writes from Scottsdale, AZ: *“I am loving the valley of the sun. Have done a bunch of theatre in my first two years here. Just closed a great production of CABARET. I played the emcee. My favorite role of all time. Very excited to be doing CELESTINA again. Have done some good work on the book. And have a superb cast put together. Very very happy.”*

**Lindsay Cozzens, BFA, '05**, was chosen for the Utah Shakespeare Festival in summer 2013. she played Erma in ANYTHING GOES and Goddess /Ensemble in THE TEMPEST.

**Mykel Hill, BTD '90**, had a busy year in 2013. In February, he directed the world premiere of Christina Anderson’s play BLACK TOP SKY at the Unicorn Theatre in Kansas City, MO. He followed that up by directing Katori Hall’s THE MOUNTAIN TOP in May for the Unicorn as well. During December, he’ll take on the roles of Albert/ Kevin in Bruce Norris’ CLYBOURNE PARK. The production will run at the Unicorn through Dec. 29. In May 2014, Mykel is scheduled to play the King of Siam in The Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre’s production of THE KING AND I.

**Francesca Mintowt-Czyz, BFA, '12**, is currently on a year-long tour in Germany playing Juliet in ROMEO AND JULIET: *“[I] just wanted to say thank you to ...the inspiring professors at the theatre and dance department. I got really scared here, and knew that even if I doubted myself, I couldn’t doubt my training. That helped me a lot. It helped me to approach each audition with all the confidence in the world. And it paid off.”*

**Garrett Neergaard, BFA, '01**, took part in BE THE DEATH OF ME, an installation performance piece that

offers the audience intimate encounters with matters of life and death in NYC. The show, produced by The Civilians, ran at the Irondale Center in Brooklyn in June. Garrett also recently played Bart in the world premiere of Lynn Rosen’s (Apple Cove with Women’s Project) GOLDOR \$ MYTHYKA: A HERO IS BORN as part of The Germ Project at New Georges, one of NYC’s premiere downtown theater companies.

**Lauren Newell, BFA, '13**, recently played Marta in a production of COMPANY at the Walton Theatre of The Mount Baker Theatre in Bellingham, WA. Entertainment News NW wrote this about her performance: “Lauren

Newell brings a sensational voice to the role and her take on “Another Hundred People” is simply brilliant.” This fall, Lauren was in production for THE TUMBLEWEED PIECES, a series of scenes for the web, written and directed by Jaime Cruz. Lauren also recently appeared in PRESERVE, a film entered in the Wyoming Short Film Contest, in which she plays a young wife suffering from cancer. See a clip from the film at <http://vimeo.com/39875652> under “Media.” MERRY-GO-ROUND, Lauren’s first album,

is now available! Go to [aidtam.weebly.com/music](http://aidtam.weebly.com/music) to hear samples of Lauren’s songs and to purchase the entire album.

**Devin Sanchez, BFA, '04**, worked as a stunt double on BLUE BLOODS, standing in for an 11-year old boy. Devin recently screened her feature film 20 MILLION PEOPLE in Casper, WY and is making the festival circuit with the film.

**Pete Simpson, BTD, '93**, recently appeared in GRIMLY HANDSOME at the Incubator Arts Project, St. Mark’s Church, NYC.

**Thomas Stoppel, BFA, '06**, had a photography exhibition in November about his film LIGHT OF LIFE at Oxford House in London. He recently finished worked on the feature film, LISTENING, which is in the festival circuit and slated for release in early 2014. Thomas won Best Actor in a Leading Role at the 2012 Madrid International Film Festival for his work in BUCKSVILLE directed by Chel White.





## GUEST ARTIST SERIES, FALL 2013

Since the 2008-2009 season, UW Theatre & Dance has enjoyed tremendous support for its Guest Artist Series and Eminent Artist in Residence through the Excellence in Education Endowment from the Wyoming State Legislature.

Over the 2012-2013 academic year, the Guest Artist monies brought 16 talented artists and professionals to UW Theatre and Dance to work with and present master classes to our students. Over 25 classes or workshops were presented, with at least one presentation from every artist open to the entire UW community. This represents an outstanding aspect to our program, one that we can use to bolster placement, recruiting, and training of our students.

Five guest artists have already come this fall, including:

- Young musical theatre artist **Jose Luaces**, who has worked on Broadway in *A CHRISTMAS STORY: THE MUSICAL* and *BIG FISH*.
- Conductor, pianist, and educator **Steven Gross**, who has worked on Broadway and the West End as conductor and pianist on such shows as *THE LIFE*, *URINETOWN*, *THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE*, *CHICAGO*, *MISS SAIGON*, *THE WEDDING SINGER*, *SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER*, *DREAMGIRLS*

plus the New York City Opera productions of *A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC*, *SWEENEY TODD*, *THE MOST HAPPY FELLA* and *CANDIDE*.

- Dancer, artistic director, and educator **Li-Chou Cheng**, who has served as soloist, Ballet Master, and rehearsal director for Beijing Central Ballet (the National Ballet of China); as Principal Teacher at the Boston Ballet Company and Boston Ballet Academy; and in faculty positions at the University of Utah, Arizona State University, and Texas Christian University.
- **Brent Schnieder**, a former dancer, rehearsal director, administrator, and trustee at the Repertory Dance Theatre in Salt Lake City, who has performed and choreographed in many dance styles including ethnic, ballroom, musical theatre, tap, jazz and ballet; served as faculty Weber State University, American College Dance Festivals, Regional Dance America Choreography Conferences; and taught and choreographed extensively for dance and theater companies.
- **Krista Billings**, a UW Theatre & Dance alumna, who has worked as a professional lighting designer in the Dallas and Chicago areas.

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

**Cici Aragon** took a group to Hawaii this past spring to lead workshops and attend seminars as an outgrowth of the *Theatre in Education (TIE): Using Theatre for Social Change Among Disenfranchised Populations* course. Cici also helped to bring in the production *MANYA: A VISIT WITH MADAME CURIE* in cooperation with EPSCoR and Gender and Women's Studies.

**Jennifer Deckert** is currently on a year-long sabbatical in Prague.

**William Missouri Downs'** play *THE EXIT INTERVIEW* was selected by the National New Play Network for its 29<sup>th</sup> Rolling World Premiere, the largest rolling opening in its history. The comedy received five full productions through the Network's Continued Life of New Plays Fund at Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, San Diego Repertory Theatre (San Diego, CA, InterAct Theatre Company, Riverside Theatre, and

Actor's Theatre of Charlotte. The National New Play Network (NNPN) is the country's alliance of non-profit professional theaters that champions the development, production, and continued life of new plays.

**Lawrence Jackson** received the 2014 Wyoming Arts Council Performing Arts Fellowship. This fall, he conceived/choreographed *CARMINA BURANA* in collaboration with the UW Department of Music, which opened on the Main Stage and subsequently toured Torrington and Thermopolis, WY. Lawrence will set one new work on the University of Northern Colorado Dance department and will set another on Western Wyoming Community College in Spring 2014. He has been invited to speak on the disparity of African Americans who attend and participate in cultural activities such as theater, opera, art, or dance at the California State University Northridge. Lawrence also teaches master classes in African and Modern dance.

# THANK YOU TO OUR 2013-2014 FRIENDS OF THEATRE & DANCE!

We invite you to join in the work of UW Theatre & Dance by becoming one of the *2013-2014 Friends of Theatre & Dance*. For a contribution over the cost of a season ticket, you can take pleasure in knowing you are helping our program to succeed and to continue its tradition of excellence.

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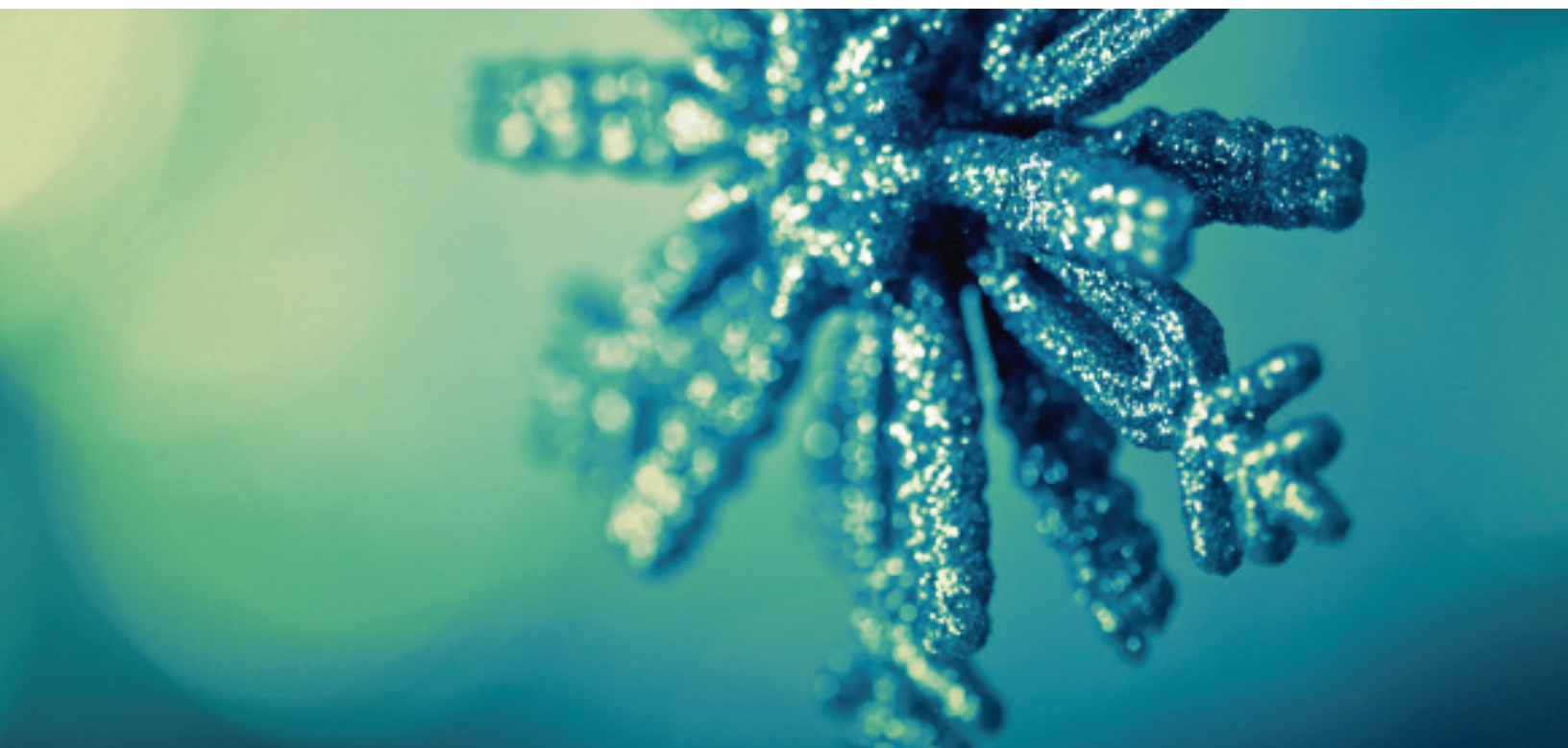






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*Happy Holidays from UW Theatre & Dance!*

BEST WISHES FOR A JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON AND OUR SINCERE THANKS  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. WE'LL SEE YOU IN 2014!