



Center Stage

Newsletter of the UW Department of Theatre & Dance

Winter 2008

If You Can Dream It...

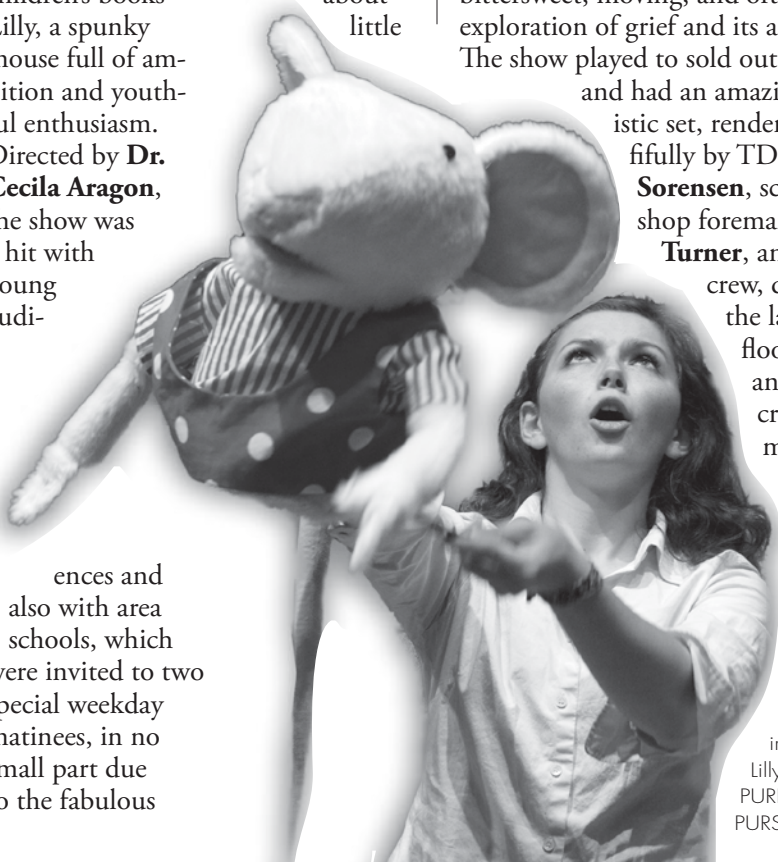
Seasons greetings from the University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance! We hope this issue of Center Stage finds you well and enjoying the holidays!

We have had a varied and exciting fall semester. Our 2008-2009 production season opened with LILLY'S PURPLE PLASTIC PURSE, a charming Theatre-for-Young-Audiences (TYA) piece adapted by Kevin Kling from Kevin Henkes' popular children's books about Lilly, a spunky mouse full of ambition and youthful enthusiasm. Directed by **Dr. Cecilia Aragon**, the show was a hit with young audi-

ences and also with area schools, which were invited to two special weekday matinees, in no small part due to the fabulous

puppets and costumes created by **Lee Hodgson** and **Ellen Bredehoft**. This is the first time a TYA piece has been part of our main production season, so we were excited by the positive audience response!

We switched gears entirely with our next production, RABBIT HOLE, the Pulitzer Prize-winning drama about an idyllic suburban couple coming to terms with a terrible family tragedy. Directed by **Dr. Rebecca Hilliker** in our experimental black box theatre, the production offered a bittersweet, moving, and often funny exploration of grief and its aftermath. The show played to sold out houses and had an amazingly realistic set, rendered beautifully by TD **Shaun Sorensen**, scene shop foreman **Don Turner**, and their crew, down to the laminate floors and the crown molding!



Mary Higgins performs as the

irrespressible Lilly in LILLY'S PURPLE PLASTIC PURSE.

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Closing out the fall season was a double feature of dance. Presented first was a bewitching, altogether lovely production of the ballet A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, choreographed with great wit and assurance by **Jennifer Deckert**. Beautifully lit by **Adam Mendelson** and costumed by **Lee Hodgson**, the ballet featured one of UW's greatest set pieces of all time: a 24-foot tall enormous oak tree designed by **Casey Kearns**. Thanks to support from UW Cultural Programs and the Wyoming Arts Council, the ballet went on tour to Casper, Gillette, and Rapid City, SD, albeit sans the tree.

Immediately following the ballet was a reconstruction of RIDE THE CULTURE LOOP, an evocative modern dance work by influential 20th century choreographer Anna Sokolow that explores alienation and social schisms among New York City's inhabitants. The work was set on UW dancers by special guest Lorry May, Artistic Director of the Sokolow Dance Foundation, and was directed by **Dr. Margaret Wilson**. The recon-

struction was sponsored in part by the Wyoming Arts Council through an American Masterpieces Great Works grant administered by the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with New England Foundation for the Arts and Dance/USA.

As we head into the new year, we look forward to hosting our first Eminent-Artist-in-Residence, **Bill Bowers** (see below, UW Theatre

& Dance Hosts First Eminent-Artist-in-Residence), who will kick off the spring season January 16 & 17 with a two performances of his acclaimed one-man show, *IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING*, followed hard upon by the world premiere of Bowers' new physical theatre piece, *HEY*O*KAH / HOK*A*HEY*, *KCACTF*, *USITT*, the spring dance/jazz concert collaboration, *AWAKEN/*

SHIFT, *ACDEFA*, student works, and the operas *THE MEDIUM* and *GIANNI SCHICCHI*.

We look forward to keeping you up-to-date on our activities in these exciting times 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!

UW Theatre & Dance Hosts First Eminent-Artist-in-Residence

International mime sensation, professional director, and acclaimed Broadway actor **Bill Bowers** is the University of Wyoming's first "Eminent Artist-in-Residence" during the 2008-2009 academic year.

Bowers has accepted Wyoming's second state-endowed professorship funded by the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment, which was awarded this year to UW's three Fine Arts departments — Art, Music, and Theatre & Dance — on a rotating basis.

The Wyoming State Legislature established the endowment in 2006 to create senior faculty positions for "highly distinguished scholars and teachers." The first state-endowed professorship went to UW's MFA Program in Creative Writing. The endowment will also provide monies each year to the three Fine Arts departments to host guest artists (see p. ??, *New Guest Artist Series Benefits Students*).

"Bill brings with him a skill set that crosses many boundaries, from theatre to movement to mime, and all will be put into practice during his residency," said Leigh Selting, department head.

"I can't think of a more exciting occasion for our students to put their training into practice!" added Selting.

Bowers will be in residence on

the UW campus for seven weeks this coming January and February to create and perform in a world premiere physical theatre piece, *HEY O KAH/HOK A HEY*. Drawing inspiration from the "contrairie" trickster—the Heyokah—and from a Lakota battle cry—Hokahey—*HEY*O*KAH / HOK*A*HEY* celebrates the power of difference to reflect, critique, and transform culture. The piece will be set on UW



Theatre & Dance students, and will feature new performance faculty member John O'Hagan, as well as Bowers himself.

Bowers will kick off his residency January 16 & 17 with two perfor-

mances of his award-winning, highly acclaimed one-man play, *IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING*, which had a sold-out run Off Broadway last season, has been produced at Berkshire Theater Festival and the Adirondack Theater Festival and is now enjoying a national tour.

Compared to the work of David Sedaris, Claudia Shear, and Augustin Burroughs, *IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING* is a "75 minute joyride" that blends mime and storytelling into an evening of hilarious and heartbreaking true stories. *IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING* takes you on a scenic tour of Bill's life thus far: from his childhood in the wilds of Montana, to outrageous jobs as a performer across the country, to the whirlwind of Broadway and studying with the legendary Marcel Marceau.

Bowers will also teach a course in creative movement that will investigate how body awareness and movement exploration can support a performing artist's process in training, rehearsal and performance.

"Bill's course will be a wonderful supplement to our movement and combat training, and he will provide additional workshops open to all UW students during his residency," said Selting.

"I hope everyone will take advantage of seeing his work, both in the classroom and on the stage," he added.

Enhance your performance season, guest series or performance training curriculum with the unique talents of

bill bowers

mime
acting
movement
performance

"Bill Bowers is a wonderful mixture of skill and diligence, humor and heart – a real artist for humans.

He makes you laugh and cry, and think, all in one swoop. Maybe he's really an angel."

—ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

Bill Bowers has performed on and off Broadway, and on stages, at schools, and at universities in all 50 states and across Europe.

An accomplished actor, educator and mime, Bill has studied with the legendary **MARCEL MARCEAU**. His solo plays have garnered rave reviews Off-Broadway and across the nation...

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING is:

"Zestful and endearing..."

—The New York TIMES

"Enormously entertaining... at once poignant and hilarious."

—DALLAS MORNING NEWS

"Bill Bowers is a real theater artist. Working with the simplest of tools, he creates a world of poetry, meaning and deep emotion..."

—TERRENCE McNALLY

"To see Bill Bowers' UNDER A MONTANA MOON is to see the technical elements of a style that brings Marcel Marceau readily to mind, joined to the American West. Mime can be wonderful... the air between him and us was his palette."

—THE NEW YORK TIMES



Available for Performances, Workshops and Residencies
www.bill-bowers.com 212.353.8309

ARTIST FOCUS: BILL BOWERS

Bill Bowers is an accomplished actor, educator, and mime and has performed throughout the United States and Europe. His original mime shows, 'NIGHT SWEETHEART 'NIGHT BUTTERCUP, and UNDER A MONTANA MOON have been produced Off Broadway to critical raves.

Bowers' Broadway credits include Zazu in THE LION KING and Leggett in THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL. He has also appeared in New York at Theater for a New Audience, Here, LA MA MA, St. Anne's Warehouse, and the NY Fringe Festival. Bill's regional credits include Berkshire Theater Festival, Cincinnati Playhouse, Rep of St. Louis, Northshore Music Theater, Two River Theater, Arkansas Rep, George Street Playhouse, Montana Rep, PaperMill Playhouse, River Union Stage, the Denver Center, Tennessee Rep, Seven Angels Theater, and the Eugene O'Neill Center.

Bowers is featured in the film TWO WEEKS NOTICE, and on television in Disney's OUT OF THE BOX, REMEMBER W.E.N.N., ONE LIFE TO LIVE, and ALL MY CHILDREN.

Bowers works extensively with young people as a guest artist for organizations such as City at Peace, Very Special Arts (people with disabilities), Make-A-Wish-Foundation, Camp Comfort (for children who have lost a parent to cancer), and the Boston-based In the Best Interests of the Children (an advocacy for children and teens living with HIV/AIDS.)

Bowers holds an MFA from Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts, and an Honorary Ph.D. from his alma mater, Rocky Mountain College. He presently teaches at New York University, and is a teaching artist for the PaperMill Playhouse, Urban Stages, and the Institute for Arts and Humanities Education, and regularly presents workshops and master classes.

Department Establishes New Guest Artist Series

While the state-endowed professorship funded by the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment rotates every year among the three Fine Arts departments to support an Eminent-Artist-in-Residence, this endowment also provides funding each year for the support of several guest artists in each department, some well-established and some emerging.

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 2008-2009 academic year:

CLEO PARKER ROBINSON, acclaimed dancer and choreographer and the Founder and Executive Artistic Director of the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble (CPRD), an affiliate of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, was in residence October 6 and 7, 2008, to teach master dance classes and to present a seminar on her experience as an artistic director of a dance company. CPRD is widely regarded as one of the top modern dance companies in the U.S.

MELANIE MILOW is an Independent Dance Artist and part-time Professor of Dance at Metropolitan State College (Denver). She taught two master dance classes here on November 3 in African Dance. Milow has danced with Brazz Dance Theater and the Sankofa African Dance and Drumming Ensemble. Milow continues to craft original work and perform as a solo artist nationwide. Her ensemble M*SHAKA*FUSION has also performed through the U.S.

RAGHU RAJ B, an acclaimed Bharathanatyam dancer, taught a class in this classical Indian dance form November 10. He began studying Bharathanatyam at three years of age and has been developing and refining his expertise ever since. He has given more than 400 performances, won more than 100 prizes in this dance form, and has also won more than 30 awards for choreography.

ELLIE SCIARRA is a tap dance expert, choreographer, and educator. She taught at last summer's Snowy Range Summer Dance Festival and will be in residence with us January 20-23, 2009, to provide our students to teach master classes in tap. Sciarra conceived, produced and choreographed TAPS ARE TALKING: WOMEN IN TAP, which highlights the stories of female tap artists. She is the president of Taps Are Talking, Inc., a non-

profit devoted to promoting the art of tap. She has toured the U.S. and Europe with NYC TAPworks, has performed on television in DRAPER ON TAP for PBS, in Sondheim's FOLLIES AT LINCOLN CENTER, and in Brenda Bufalino's THE BUFFALO SUITE in NYC, and has served as a guest teacher/ choreographer in many venues.

RAY FELLMAN is a singer, musical director, and pianist who will be in residence January 29-February 1, 2009, to work with The Centennial Singers. Fellman has performed lead roles with several operas and as a soloist with many symphonies in the U.S. He served as musical direc-



Cleo Parker Robinson.

tor for Stephen Schwartz's Off-Broadway production and tour of CAPTAIN LOUIE, and a revue of Schwartz's works entitled RELUCTANT and several other productions. Fellman is an active pianist/arranger and cabaret artist and has been seen behind the piano at The Regency, The Oak Room at the Algonquin, and Jazz at Lincoln Center among others.

PHILIP THOMPSON is Associate Professor of Drama and Head of Acting at the University of California at Irvine, and is a Voice/Speech/Text/Dialects specialist who will be in residence March 4-8, 2009. Thompson trained with Catherine Fitzmaurice, Dudley Knight, Robert Cohen, and Jerzy Grotowski. He has

served as Voice, Speech, Text and Dialect coach for numerous theatres. Thompson is a regular instructor of teachers in the Catherine Fitzmaurice Teacher Certification program and leads workshops in Fitzmaurice Voicework and Knight speech work throughout the country.

JO STRØMGREN KOMPANI is an acclaimed contemporary dance company based in Norway. The company will be on campus April 5-6, 2009, to present POLAROID, a dance/theatre piece that explores what's really going on at the North Pole, much romanticized by adventurers but simply a meeting point for Inuits from different arctic corners sharing gossip and news.

ROBERT CAISLEY is Associate Professor of Theatre and Film and Head of the Dramatic Writing Program at the University of Idaho. He will be in residence April 16-18, 2009 to conduct playwriting workshops and will also respond to the Department's production of THE RELAYS PLAYS. Caisley served as Artistic Director for Idaho Repertory Theatre from 2001-2004. Caisley's play THE LAKE received its Equity world premiere at Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theatre and was later produced by Mill Mountain Theatre. His play FRONT won the 1996 Fourth Freedom Forum Peace Play and his play SANTA FE was a finalist for the 2004 Heideman Award from Actor's Theatre of Louisville.

KEVIN RIGDON is an award-winning Broadway scenic and lighting designer, Professor at the University of Houston, and Associate Director/Design for Houston's Alley Theatre. Rigdon will be in residence April 23-29, 2009 to hold a workshop about his professional experiences and will work with design and directing students to critique their work, conduct portfolio reviews, and teach master classes. Rigdon served as Resident Designer for the Steppenwolf Theatre Company from its inception in 1974 to 1996. He has designed over 345 productions in his long career, including Broadway productions of ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST (lighting), A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE (lighting), THE GRAPES OF WRATH (scenery and lighting), OUR TOWN (lighting), and GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS (lighting).

Several other guest artists are pending for Spring 2009 in design, performance, and dance.

UW Students to Compete at Region VII KCACTF

Several UW Theatre & Dance students have been chosen to compete at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) Region VII Festival in February at the University of Idaho.

UW has four of seven regional finalists in the one-act play category, one of six finalists in the 10-minute play division, and a record 20 nominees in the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship Auditions.

"These nominations, which are juried selections by faculty from other universities and colleges in the region, speak to the high quality of work our students are achieving in our production season," said department head Leigh Selting. "We are extremely proud of all of the UW nominees!"

UW Finalists in the one-act play competition are **Chris Browne** for SHOT CLOCK, **Jaime Cruz** for DEAD IN THE KITCHEN, **Tyler Fall** for

MULCH and **Drew Lyness** for BODY OF AN AMERICAN. **Randi Million** is a finalist in the 10-Minute play division with IDIOT'S GUIDE.

An unprecedented 20 UW student actors have been chosen to participate in the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competi-

tion. They are: **Noelia Antweiler, Dan Cole, Katrina Despain, Rebecca Diamond, Alex Gibson, Mary Higgins, Anne Mason, Mark Mieden, Lindsay Neinast, Kayla O'Keefe, Harlan Post, Rachel Rosenfeld, Steven Rotramel, Ian Rowe, Cameron Rush, Kelleen Shadow, Jake Staley, Katie Stearns, Erin Eloise Tulberg, and Joelle Weber.**



Jake Staley and Rachel Rosenfeld in RABBIT HOLE.

Region VII of the KCACTF includes colleges and universities from Wyoming, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

Faculty Spotlight

Cecilia Aragon directed LILLY'S PURPLE PLASTIC PURSE this fall, which reached ~600 area schoolchildren and brought in many new patrons who had never been to the theatre before. CiCi submitted an article "Social Protest as Social Performance: Examining Oppositional Performances With Latina/o Youth" to Northwest Theatre Review. CiCi also serves as one of the National Judges of the David Mark Cohen Playwriting Award, awarded through the Kennedy Center, and is currently the Vice President of the Women and Theatre Program of Association for Theatre in Higher Education.

John O'Hagan will perform in the world premiere of Bill Bowers' new physical theatre piece, HEYOKAH/HOKAHEY in February 2009. John has also been selected to present a workshop with Rhea Ramey from Rutgers University at UW's Teaching Creativity Conference in February.

William Missouri Downs was honored to win Top Ten Professor from the College of Arts and Sciences for the sixth time. His play COCKEYED took 1st place out of 300 scripts at the HotCity Theatre festival of new plays (St. Louis) and opens there in May. Also, his play BOOKS ON TAPE was featured in North-Northwest, an anthology published by Western Washington University, and will be toured by The Northwest Playwrights Alliance to several theatres in the US and England this spring. Finally, Bill had a monologue in Actor's Choice Published by Playscripts.

Marsha Knight traveled to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum for her third research trip for her upcoming dance/theatre piece, Six Songs from Ellis. She traveled to New York City to film two immigrants who experienced passage through the Ellis Island Immigration Center as children. Loosely Translated Productions, owned by James Weber (BTD, '93), filmed the interviews. Additionally, Janet Levine, Oral Historian/Ellis Island Immigration Library, conducted the interviews. Ms. Levine has conducted over 1,200 interviews for the Ellis Island Oral History Project. Six Songs from Ellis will be part of the Fall '09 Theatre and Dance season.

Lou Anne Wright taught a course in Dramatic Literature and the works of Arthur Miller at Shanghai University in May/June. Lou Anne and husband Bill Downs have many fond memories of the people of Shanghai and are still in touch with numerous students they met. During her residency, she and Bill explored the wonders of China and attended several productions of the gorgeous Peking Opera.

Centennial Singers on Tour Soon!

Centennial Singers, directed by **Dr. Patrick Newell**, will present several performances of INTO THE WOODS during its winter break tour. Performances are as follows:

January 5: Saratoga, Platte Valley Community Center.

January 6: Kemmerer High School.

January 8: Cody High School.

January 9: Sheridan, WYO Theatre.

January 10: Torrington, EWC Auditorium.

All performance are at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are general admission and are \$10 Adults, \$8 Seniors, \$5 students and children, and \$25 for a family package (two adults and up to three children).

Please note that ticket sales for the Sheridan WYO Theatre performance are being handled by its box office, which sets its ticket prices independently.



(L to R) Rachel Slama, Rebecca Diamond, and Carly Jones in INTO THE WOODS.

Alumni News Update

RAMSEY AVERY, BA, '85, recently completed work as the Supervising Art Director for the Bruckheimer/Disney film *G-FORCE*. Other recent projects include designing a talk show for Elvis Mitchell, working out where to add the Captain Jack Sparrow animatronic figures to the *PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN* attraction at Disneyland, and shooting a commercial where he apparently tossed Robbie Knievel on his bike into the side of a bus. Ramsey recently designed for the film *WAITRESS*, starring Keri Russell, which was very well received. In addition, his design of the trailers for the *BEE MOVIE* was nominated for an Art Director's Guild Award. Ramsey is currently one of the lead designers for a Marvel Comics theme park based in Dubai. You can reach Ramsey at ramseyavery2@mac.com.

ANNA BROWNSTED, BFA, '08, directed Bill Down's *COCKEYED* for UW Summer Theatre in June, and then transitioned into residence at the Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, MA, where she directed a studio production of J.T. Roger's *WHITE PEOPLE* at the company's annual New Voices/New Works Festival in August. Anna also worked on the company's adaptation of Oscar Wilde's short story *THE CANTERVILLE GHOST*. Anna will remain in residence in the Berkshires this winter, collaborating with Irina Brook on a devised show, until she begins graduate studies in January at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London.

KIRA GALINDO, BFA, '07, was cast this summer in A.R. Gurney's *THE PERFECT PARTY*, directed by Richard Shultz at Theatre Works Performing Arts Center in Peoria, AZ. You can find out more at <http://www.theaterworks.org/>.

TAMARA (KOCHER) HOWE, BFA, '03, is currently living in Salina, KS with her husband Steven and new son Isak. Steven works for Congressman Jerry Moran in Salina. The couple opened the Tamara Howe School of

Dance in September 2007, which now has about 150 students. You can reach Tamara at <http://www.ths-dsalina.com>, at home at 750 Fairdale Rd. A-8; Salina, KS 67401, and at the studio is at 124 S. Santa Fe/PO Box 1423 in Salina, KS 67402-1423.

SHANNON MAHONEY, BFA, '96, has taken over as director of Lines School of Performing Arts, a



dance studio in Roseville, California. Shannon's choreography has gained recognition and she and her husband took over the operation of Big Idea Theatre (BIT) in Sacramento, CA in January 2008.

MIKE MORELLI, BS, '89, has taken a position with Michigan Technological University as the director of the Rozsa Center for the Performing Arts. Mike and Emily had a new baby girl in February 2007. You can reach Mike at mkmorell@mtu.edu.

DEVIN SANCHEZ, BFA '04, is still in NYC, acting and doing stand-

up. Devin recently performed at The Comedy Store in L.A. and has been performing in NYC at Caroline's on Broadway and Gotham. She was also recently in the Webisode *MICHAEL STAHL-DAVID: BEHIND THE STAR*, which aired September 15 and premiered at the New York TV Festival.

JAMES WEBER, BTD, '93, was in Toronto for the Toronto Film Festival this fall producing three camera shoots for EW.com with Ricky Gervais, Ralph Fiennes, Anne Hathaway, Michael Cera, Ed Harris, Julianne Moore, and others.

GARRETT NEERGAARD, BFA '02, appeared in Thornton Wilder's play *THE MATCHMAKER* at CENTERSTAGE (Baltimore) from mid-September through mid-October.

TWILA (COFFEY) ORTIZ, BFA, '00, is an Immigration counselor at Purdue University and loves working with international students. Twila offers this note: "In all the jobs I have had since graduating from UW, I have needed and used the skills I learned as a Theatre major. It was a great time and I am very proud of my education."

BRIAN SLATEN, BFA, '00, was recently in a national Yellowbook commercial. You can view it at <http://www.yellowbook.com/commercial/?cid=com1-thebreak-up>. Brian also booked two episodes of *THE FRINGE* on Fox, and appeared on *ARMY WIVES* as Army Chaplain Brian James this past August (Season 2: Ep 12, Part 4), which you can see at: <http://www.mylifetime.com/on-tv/full-episodes/army-wives/video/season-2/ep-12/season-2-ep-12-part-4/1774292597/1775769023>.

CHRIS WILL, BFA, '02, and wife Beth welcomed a new daughter, Ashlee, on August 7, 2008. Chris is Instructor of Musical theatre at Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs.

For more Alumni News or to submit a note, please visit www.uwyo.edu/th&d/alumni/AlumniNews/default.asp.

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We'd like to say a sincere "Thank you!" to all our faithful supporters in the 2008-2009 *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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