dance at illinois
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
College of Fine & Applied Arts

LOCATE CENTER. AND GO FROM THERE.

pivot
ISSUE 27 • 2012

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One of the highlights of the year was watching two of our alumni, Krista Nelson and John Hinrichs, dancing on the magnificent Krannert Center for the Performing Arts stage in one of the last performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Krista and John had the unique opportunity to work directly with Merce in his last years and travel the world as part of the Cunningham Legacy Tour. As I watched them dance, I was aware of their ability to link their personal vibrancy to the extraordinary technical skills and the aesthetic demands of the work.

How does one cultivate this type of artistry? All five domains of knowing come into play—context, inquiry, agency, synthesis, and reflection—but perhaps reflection is at the core. Deep reflection helps one find a path that resonates from within. Alumna Whitney Hubbard (BFA ‘07) says that through reflection she “grew to understand what becomes possible out of vulnerability, both as a physical artist and as a human being learning how to navigate this planet.” It all supports our mission to help students... Locate center. And go from there.

This year in Pivot we are featuring the impressive work of our students, alumni, and faculty artists. Whether they are captivating performers in professional companies, touring with musical theater shows, creating new work as artistic directors and independent choreographers, chairing dance departments, touring internationally, or dreaming up new models for dance never before imagined, our dance artist/leaders are inspiring the field of dance through their deep sense of knowing who they are and what they want to do. We also give homage in this issue to the high school and studio teachers and guests artists who have provided our students a space to negotiate the distance between self and the world.

Enjoy!
Guest Artists intrinsically link us to the professional field inspiring our entire community with the here and now of the dancing world.

Chicago multimedia artist Ni'ja Whitson created a big, bold dance rooted in capoeira and hip-hop for the Freshmen Lecture Demonstration Class, a touring company performing works in the public schools. Beverly Blossom and Carrie Erickson Alumni Awardee T. Lang (BFA ’00), from Spelman College, inspired our dancers with her unique fusion of urban funk and high-level, technical dancing. Politically charged Miguel Gutierrez wowed our community in his Ineffable, Intangible Sensational workshops. Partnering with the Wellness Center, students from all over campus showed up in costumes for his late night DEEP Aerobics bacchanal. Israeli artist and former Batsheva dancer Sahar Azimi was a guest artist for the entire semester thanks to the Schusterman Foundation and partners including The Program for Jewish Culture and Society, the Illini Hillel Center, and the Champaign-Urbana Jewish Federation. Champion ballroom dancers Alex Tecza, Katja Lindholm and alumna Laura Chiaramonte lit up the Krannert stages in a piece by Rebecca Nettl-Fiol. Mini residencies by Australian choreographer Lucy Guerin, Thomas McManus from the Forsythe Ballet, and Keisha Turner with Urban Bush Women and master classes by dancers from The Spirit of Uganda, Azure Barton, Compañía Flamenca José Porcel, Mark Morris Dance Group and Merce Cunningham Dance Company provided many jolts of excitement.

Darrell Jones has been an impressive, daring dancer with artists such as Bebe Miller, Urban Bush Women, Ronald K. Brown, Min Tanaka, and Ralph Lemon. Now developing his own work as faculty member of Columbia College Chicago, Mr. Jones will be our fall guest artist, creating a new work for students. This year we have adopted a Student Choice Guest Artist and the students chose Janet Panetta, one of New York City’s most treasured ballet teachers. Her studio has seen just about every major artist including Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, and Fred Astaire. She is also a major teacher in Europe training dancers at P.A.R.T.S., ROSAS, Tanztheater Wuppertal, Ballet Preljocaj, and Impulstanz. Our Beverly Blossom and Carey Erickson Alumni Awardee will be Bay Area choreographer Sheldon Smith (MFA ’91), co-artistic director of Smith/Wymore Disappearing Acts. Mr. Smith’s witty sense of humor and intelligence will be ever present as he creates a dance/music/video for February Dance.

We have started a new partnership with Links Hall, Chicago’s intimate home for independent dance and performance, Link Up with Dance at Illinois. Each year Links Hall selects four Link Up artists to support the development of new work. Dance at Illinois will now provide a one-week summer retreat (rehearsal space, an apartment, and mentorship) to one Link Up artist each year. This year’s artist, Ni’ja Whitson, will also be able to attend rehearsals of David Rousséve/REALITY during his Krannert Center for the Performing Arts Intensive Development Lab residency, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in recognition of Krannert Center’s sustained commitment toward the creation of new work in dance. Ni’ja will return in the fall to present her new solo and conduct a guest artist residency.
Rebecca Netti-Fiol received the Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

“Becky is the reason I now understand that I have dimension, that I am not just meant to do one thing, or have just one thought at a time or be obsessed with end gaining ….what a relief.” Elizabeth Johnson (MFA ’03), visiting Assistant Professor at UNC - Greensboro and artistic director of Your Mother Dances in Milwaukee, WI

Other faculty highlights:

• Tere O’Connor premiered his new work Cover Boy at Dancespace Project in NYC. Wendy Perron of DANCE Magazine considered this new work one of the best new pieces of choreography in 2011.

• Jennifer Monson was awarded a National Dance Project Creative Development Award for Live Dancing Archive.

• Kirstie Simson was the feature artist of the documentary film, Force of Nature, by director Katrina McPherson, which had its world premiere in Scotland in spring 2012.

• Renée Wadleigh attended the 50th anniversary of Paul Taylor’s Aureole, of which she was an original cast member, at the Lincoln Center Gala in NYC.
Kamilla Kinard (BFA ’14), from Columbus Dance Theater, in her piece ‘Kind Pencarp Pith’ for StudioDance II.

L to R: Mya King (BFA ’14), Laina Carney (BFA ’15), and Lindsay Cunningham (BFA ’15) in Marie Lee choreographed by Jasmine Wilson (BFA ’13) and Jade Peeples (BFA ’13). Jasmine, from Chicago’s Whitney M. Young Magnet High School and Gallery 37’s Dance Program, and Jade formed Wrapsody Dance Company and have performed in Chicago and Naperville, Illinois, and in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

L to R: Monica Remes (BFA ’12), from Carey Grove Performing Arts Centre (Cary, IL), and Laura Moschel (BFA ’13), from Adlai E. Stevenson High School (Lincolnshire, IL), in Linda Lehovec’s ‘Full Throttle’. Currently, Monica is getting yoga certification and Laura is studying abroad in Taipei, Taiwan.

L to R: Jade Peeples (BFA ’13), from Rhythm Academy of Dance (Waukegan, IL), and Tiffany Norris (BFA ’13), from MBS Training Center for the Performing Arts (Oak Park, MI), in alumna T.Lang’s ‘Mutha/Mother’ – an excerpt.
Sarah Young (BFA '03) says she appreciated the “opportunity to follow my own path within the rigorous curriculum offered by the Dance Department.” During her four years, she was able to investigate diverse interests by participating in a Ford Foundation program that sponsored a trip to Zimbabwe, taking advantage of a wide variety of classes, performances, and “absorbing whatever information I could.”

After graduation, Sarah moved to New York and worked with choreographers Stephan Koplowitz and David Dorfman before deciding to join the Peace Corps in 2008, where she served in Morocco.

All the while, Sarah was working toward the creation of a dream. She is the founder of Flying Art: An International Exchange of Art Among Youth. The program involves schools or youth groups from around the world, creating artwork to share and discuss with their peers in different locations, generating opportunities for young people to compare their lifestyles and form positive relationships. This idea was born during Sarah’s senior year as a final project for her International Arts minor, which she pursued while a dance major at Illinois. The first “flight” involved second grade students from Leal Elementary in Urbana, Illinois. Students at Leal sent drawings of the birds of Illinois to Kpessi, Togo, where Sarah’s friend was serving in the Peace Corps, and to France, where another friend was teaching English. Since then, children’s artwork has traveled to over 15 countries around the globe.

In addition to directing Flying Art, Sarah is currently studying in the Feldenkrais Method Training Program. She is also dancing with Treehouse Shakers, a company that performs for young audiences, and Hilary Easton + Company. Her new dream is to return to Morocco to develop a retreat, where “artists can come from Morocco and abroad to build their work and engage with the local community. It will be a home for Flying Art as well, so the kids can keep sharing their culture with the kids in the U.S.”

“I learned that hard work, self-discipline, and forming meaningful relationships matter.”

SARAH YOUNG (BFA ’03)

Alumna Sarah Young (BFA ’03) in Morocco, photo by alumnus Paul Singh (BFA ’05).
dance at illinois and THEN what???

BY SARA HOOK

Dance, dance, dance—for Mark Morris (Nicholas Wagner, BFA ’09), Tere O’Connor (Tess Dworman, BFA ’07), Susan Marshall (Darrin Wright, BFA ’02), or David Parker and the Bang Group (Amber Sloan, BFA ’01). Join a national tour of the Broadway show West Side Story (Mark Deler, BFA ’12), or dance on a cruise ship (Caitlin Miles, BFA ’12).

Create your own dance company Acorn Dance in Seattle (Aiko Kinoshita, BFA ’95 & MFA ’98) or Contemporary Dance/Ft. Worth (Kerry Kreiman, MFA ’87), curate a concert of your alumni peers in Chicago (Kate Corby, MFA ’07) or receive a New York Dance and Performance (Bessie) Award (Michelle Boulé, BFA ’99).

Get a LUCE fellowship to study interactive art in Asia (Renata Sheppard, MFA ’07), or like Jenny Gaither (BFA ’09), get interviewed on FOX News because you created the S.E.A.K. Foundation, an organization empowering people through educational programs and events focused on physical and emotional health.

Write a book on dance and somatics (Julie Brodie, BFA ’87 & MFA ’95) or write a children’s book (Patricia Hruby Powell, BFA ’79). Tour with a theater company (Elisabeth Conner, BFA ’07). Create your own dance videography business (Nicholas Petry, MFA ’05) or... become the head of the Dance Division at Boston Conservatory (Cathy Young, MFA ’03) or start your own dance studio (Josh Ford, BFA ’07 and Lauren Vandivier Ford, BFA ’08).

You could build your own eco-friendly, mobile performance dwellings (Hallie Aldrich, MFA ’11 and Sarah Haas, MFA ’11) and tour, perform, and live on your own terms.

Or you could always be a stand up comic... (Dot Kane, BFA ’83).

Dance at Illinois trains you to become YOU, to make a contribution, to seek and model excellence all over the world.

“The dance program at the University of Illinois has prepared me in so many ways for life after college. First and foremost, I gained technique as well as performative qualities that allowed a smooth transition into a professional atmosphere.”

STEFANIA AZZARETTO (BFA ’10)

Alumni, your relationship with us matters!

BY MALLORY RUBIN (BFA ’12)

I began working with alumni this past year for my honors project, and secretly, I was excited to engage with alumni because I wanted to see the various paths Dance at Illinois students have taken after graduation. As an upperclassman thinking about life after college, I had been considering how I could take my interests and turn them into a fulfilling career. I felt overwhelmed by the choices. To be honest, I still feel unsure, but connecting with alumni has made me realize that regardless of the course taken, Dance at Illinois graduates are successful and leaders in their field. When I send out requests to hear about what you are up to, I genuinely want to know what you are doing. Your updates are the narratives current students want to read about.

My goal is to reconnect with you and share all the ways Dance at Illinois can continue along the journey with you. Join our Facebook group to post your upcoming events, keep in touch with classmates, and network with fellow alumni in your area. Visit our website to view alumni updates, the job and training board, and information about the two alumni awards. We are planning an alumni event during Homecoming weekend this fall. Be on the lookout for more information.

We are proud of whatever journey you are taking and we hope to hear from you soon!

www.dance.illinois.edu/community/alumni

“the department trained me as a performer and choreographer, but most importantly...how to be an artist filled with integrity.”

T. LANG (BFA ’00)
dance at illinois

LOCATE CENTER. And go from there.

Left: Chad Miller (BFA ’13) in Philip Johnston’s Undertow.

Middle: Jessica Cornish (BFA ’12) in her StudioDance II piece.

Right: Members of the BFA Senior class in Sahar Azim’s Excerpts from UTF8: L to R: Nora Tonge, Elyssa McNeil, Elby Brosch, Kelsey Middleton, Anna Clarke, Zak Jacobs, Sanda Savianu.
“presence is about generating something of myself and outside myself at the same time.” JOHANNA S. M. MEYER (MFA ’14)
After three years as an MFA candidate here at Illinois, I would say the program is largely characterized by its commitment to a synthesized academic and artistic practice—an expectation that students will actively look to our scholarly research to inform our choreographic practice, our physical research to inform our teaching, our writing skills to shape the way we talk about and construct our work. This past spring, this philosophical commitment was put into curricular practice with the introduction of the graduate “pod,” a class co-taught by professors Tere O’Connor and Cynthia Oliver.

The class, which met daily in the intimate studio/work spaces of the Graduate Dance Center, combined the development of solo choreography projects with group improvisations, readings, discussions, writing projects, and installations. The fluid atmosphere offered challenges unique from the usual composition class. What will we be doing today? Discussing contemporary curatorial practices or spending an hour in silent contemplative choreographic research? Though sometimes disorienting, the structure pushed each of us to constantly re-examine our particular interests from new angles. We talked about what we read, created about what we discussed, wrote about what we made. The focus was on process rather than product, which opened up endless possibilities for experimentation and exploration. Within my own work, I was interested in examining the concept of absence as a choreographic and theoretical concept. A written paper, a series of discussions both inside and outside of class, a series of video projects—all surfaced as eventual iterations of my explorations. This plurality, the construction of a practice where my work existed on several platforms simultaneously, mirrored what I believe was a fundamental goal of the graduate pod course: to locate choreography within academia as a critical method of research which organizes information according to its own unique systems of logic and poetics.

This course has been a refuge for me to unite with my essential being and remember why I dance.”
future plans

MFA FUTURE PLANS

Betsy Brandt will be moving back to St. Louis to continue her work with The aTrek Dance Collective. Nibia Pastrana Santiago plans to move to Europe to continue studying and presenting her work. And Rebecca Walter plans to join the vibrant dance arts scene in Philadelphia.

BFA FUTURE PLANS

The BFA Class of 2012 came from around the world, including Illinois, Missouri, Florida, Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, New Jersey, and as far as Pakistan and Taiwan! With such diverse backgrounds, it was only natural there would be a broad range of interests: performance, choreography, teaching, musical theatre, yoga, fitness, and more. We look forward to seeing how these students will succeed in their future plans with internships, auditions, choreography festivals, yoga teacher trainings, cruise lines, national touring companies, and master’s degrees in NYC, Seattle, Massachusetts, Chicago, Europe, and the Caribbean.

In these pages, I have often emphasized the excellent training and professional success of the undergraduate and graduate majors of the Department of Dance. Dance alumni are some of the best-prepared and most accomplished dancers in the country. As I prepare to retire, I also want to emphasize the broad outreach of the Department of Dance and its commitment to fostering training in the arts to a wide and growing community.

Ed Feser has been announced as the new dean for the college and will take over in Fall 2012. By then, I will have completed thirty-five years at the university and seven years as dean. I have greatly enjoyed working with the faculty, staff, students, and donors of the Department of Dance, and it has been an honor to represent the arts on campus and across the country as dean of an outstanding college.

Robert Graves
Dean, College of Fine and Applied Arts
be a pivotal force—donate now!

Dance at Illinois is an epicenter for the development of the dance artist/leader. Join the excitement and play a pivotal role. Please consider giving a gift, big or small, to support and elevate our programming.

We take this opportunity to recognize and thank all dance contributors. We are profoundly grateful—we couldn’t do it without you! Listed to the right are donors to the Department of Dance from January 1, 2010, through June 1, 2012. We realize there may be mistakes or omissions from this list. We apologize and invite you to contact us regarding corrections at (217) 333-1010.

To make a gift, please designate the desired fund on your check, made payable to the University of Illinois Foundation/Department of Dance, and mail to UIF, P.O. Box 3429, Champaign, IL 61826-3429.

Thank you for supporting the Department of Dance!

For information about how to donate online, please visit us at www.dance.illinois.edu/support-dance-at-illinois/how-to-donate

Guest Artist Ni’Ja Whitson teaching beginning modern.

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Jin-Wen Yu  

contributors
11–12 scholarship recipients

Vannie L. Sheiry Memorial Scholarship (Est. 1994)
Renée Archibald (MFA ’13)
Awarded in recognition of outstanding performance in Renée Wadleigh’s Like This and Nibia Pastrana Santiago’s sweat.

Moe Family Dance Award (Est. 1996)
Betsy Brandt (MFA ’12)
Awarded in recognition of potential for unique contributions to the profession in interdisciplinary work in visual arts and dance.

Wanda M. Nettl Prize for Student Choreography (Est. 2002)
Nibia Pastrana Santiago (MFA ’12)
Awarded in recognition of outstanding choreography.

Patricia Knowles Graduate Travel Award (Est. 2006)
Tamin Totzke (MFA ’13)
Awarded to be used for travel and study in Taiwan and Cambodia.

Beverly Blossom and Carey Erickson Alumni Award (Est. 2007)
T.Lang (MFA ’07)
Enables an alumnus to return to campus to teach, perform, choreograph and otherwise enhance Dance at Illinois.

Lisa Carducci Memorial Scholarship
Jessica Cornish (BFA ’12)
Awarded for out of town summer study in China and India.

Mary Elizabeth Hamstrom Award
Renée Archibald (MFA ’13)
Awarded for summer study in Body Mind Centering in North Carolina.

Senior Magnolia Award
Katy Kantner (BFA ’12)
This award goes to the senior who has shown the most growth and development throughout his/her four years.

Scholarships for Dance Projects (Est. 2010)

These scholarships support dance research and/or study for BFA and MFA students seeking to further their creative, performance, and/or scholarly work. Students are selected based on a diverse range of aesthetics within projects that demonstrate rigorous inquiry, individual voice, and curiosity.

Mary Albano (BFA ’13) Ashley Cizmar (BFA ’13) Nicole Renfroe (BFA ’14)
Ashley Cizmar (BFA ’13) Lauren Vermillion (BFA ’13)
Kristin McCoy (BFA ’14) Kathryn Williams (BFA ’13)
Jade Peeples (BFA ’13) Jasmine Wilson (BFA ’13)
performance calendar 2012–2013

November Dance
November 8–10, 2012

February Dance
January 31, February 1–2, 2013

StudioDance I
March 7–9, 2013

StudioDance II
April 18–20, 2013

Audition Dates

BFA Program: November 10, February 2, March 4
MFA Program: January 30–31

From left: Anna Clarke (BFA '12), Kamilla Kinard (BFA '14), Alana Parekh (BFA '12), Jasmine Wilson (BFA '13), Megan Murphy (BFA '12), Luis Vasquez (BFA '14), and Andrea Chim (BFA '13) in Philip Johnston's Undertow.
faculty/staff list & magazine credits

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Laura Chiaramonte, Visiting Lecturer
Catrina Choate-Heretoiu, Visiting Lecturer
John Dayger, Visiting Lecturer
Sara Hook, Professor, MFA Program Director
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Philip Johnston, Lecturer
Kate Kuper, Visiting Lecturer, Community Outreach Liaison
Linda Lehovec, Associate Professor, BFA Program Director
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Rebecca Nettl-Fiol, Professor
Tere O’Connor, Professor
Cynthia Oliver, Professor
Kirstie Simson, Assistant Professor
John Toenjes, Associate Professor, Music Director
Renée Wadleigh, Professor

Guest Artists 2011–2012
Sahar Azimi, Spring 2012 Artist in Residence
Azure Barton
Campania Flamenca José Porcel
Mark Morris Dance Group
Merce Cunningham Dance Company
Miguel Gutierrez
Aaron Landsman
T.Lang
Angela Fleddermann Miller
Spirit of Uganda
Keisha Turner
Ni’Ja Whitson

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Erez Cohen
Michelle Guera and the Wellness Center
Activities and Recreation Center

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Cover Image – Renée Archibald (MFA ’13) in Nibia Pastrana Santiago’s sweat.
Back Cover – Alison Rhoades (BFA ’13)
“through ‘dipping my toes in the water’ of something different, I’ve been affected.”

ALISON RHoades (BFA ’13)