

2011

Applause²⁰¹¹

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A Fresh Start

Message from Carl Flink, Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance

by Carl Flink, Chair, Theatre Arts & Dance



Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts & Dance Carl Flink pictured here with Emilie Plache Flink performing Dance Program Professor Joanie Smith's "Gist"

PHOTOGRAPH: WILLIAM CAMERON

Let's be realistic. The University is facing a financial crisis severe enough to have imposed furloughs and pay cuts on all employees during the 2010-11 academic year. And while I am mindful of the challenges this creates for the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, I also share a sense of optimism about the opportunities these challenges have created. Most particularly, I see new possibilities for changing our approach to how theater and dance production fits into our pedagogy, our artistry, our scholarship and our engagement with the community. So it is with great anticipation that I welcome you all – students, faculty and alums of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance – to this academic year, even if the welcome does come at the end of the year!

Part of my hope for the future rests on the conviction that, even in a scarcity economy, the department can be propelled forward by a fluid, adaptable vision instead of being driven by cost-saving strategies. For me, this vision includes a commitment that in our artistry, scholarship and our pedagogy we encourage our students (and even our audiences) to be active learners and doers; that is, to think, to make, to understand and to engage. We should prepare our students to be thinking artists and creative thinkers so that they can become both artist/scholars and engaged citizens of the communities in which they live and work. It is also crucial that we become a model of what we are trying to prepare our students for by making the department a key player in building a learning community without walls through extensive partnerships with the extraordinary Twin Cities arts and cultural community.

Last year at this time we were a department very much in transition. Several key long-term staff members had departed the department due to retirement or important life changes, and we were uncertain whether the University would even allow us to retain all of the vacated positions. I am happy to announce that, not only were we permitted to fill the existing positions, but we were given two additional staff positions – in lighting and audio/media. We now have wonderful new colleagues in every position. It is my great pleasure to welcome Jessica Crary as our Department Administrator, Arfasse Gameda as Dance Program Office Specialist, Bill Healey as Lighting Supervisor, Montana Johnson as Audio-visual/Media Supervisor, and Thomas Proehl as Producing Director. Each one of these individuals brings unique skills and passion and the department is better for their collective presence.

A year ago we were also in the early stages of developing RiCAP (Reimagining Community Arts Partnerships), an initiative that involves creating an open learning community through a series of partnerships and joint ventures with local arts organizations. We have now put some flesh on RiCAP's bare bones, so that during this academic year our students have already or will participate in productions with community-based professional arts organizations for credit and/or pay. These collaborations are described in the article "RiCAP Recap" that appears elsewhere in this issue of *Applause*.

I am particularly pleased that we've been able to expand our production efforts into the community while still providing plenty of opportunities for our students and our audiences in our theaters at the Rarig Center and the Barker. Already this past fall, the Dance Program has produced a major symposium entitled "Continuously Rich: Black Women in Cultural Production," supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, that featured lectures by visiting dance scholars Awam Amkpa and Thomas DeFrantz, and informal showings of our students performing in Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's *Walking With Pearl...Southern Diaries* and Nora Chipaumire's *Dark Swan*. Both of these works were later given full productions at the Southern Theater. *Continuously Rich* exemplified the Dance Program's deep commitment to creating a high-powered contemporary program in a global context.

Also in the fall, the wonderfully talented BFA Senior Company performed Tom Stoppard's adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's send-up of early 20th Century bourgeois hypocrisies, *Undiscovered Country*, in Rarig's Thrust Theatre. Besides being a very high

Applause²⁰¹¹

the annual publication of the Department of Theatre Arts & Dance

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RiCAP Recap

by David Bernstein

As we reported in last year's *Applause*, Reimagining Community and Arts Partnerships (RiCAP) is our answer to how to give our students the very finest, most rigorous experience in theater and dance production, given how much the very nature of live performance has changed during the past 20 years while our production budgets for University Theatre have remained virtually the same during that entire period. Under this initiative, we are seeking to develop collaborative productions with community arts and cultural organizations for which our students will receive credit towards graduation and extensive mentoring by professional artists. We see this as an unparalleled way for our students to gain practical experience in theater and dance production, and we are hoping that we can thus create a kind of learning community without walls in which our students study theater and dance production in the classroom, in on-campus student productions and, under RiCAP, in a service learning environment in the community.

Last year, RiCAP was little more than a vision, the framework of an idea. This year, with our newly-hired Producing Director Thomas Proehl as director of the initiative, we are quickly adding substance to that frame. One of Proehl's first acts was to change the name and focus of the project ever so slightly – but significantly. He suggested adding the “and” between “Community” and “Arts” to include possible partnerships with any community organization that uses theater or dance production to support its missions, not just arts organizations. Last fall, he received a fellowship to participate in The Creative Community Leadership Institute, sponsored by Intermedia Arts, which provides comprehensive training and support for arts-based community development. He hopes to use his work at this Institute to develop RiCAP partnerships and projects with all types of community organizations.

Moreover, we now have some actual practice in how RiCAP partnerships with arts organizations can be structured to work for the mutual benefit of our students and a partnering organization. By the end of the 2010-11 academic year, our students will have participated in four projects developed under the aegis of RiCAP, as follows.

The Woyzeck Project, Fall 2008
Norris Hall, University of Minnesota

PHOTOGRAPH: LEIAH STEVERMER



Last fall, our students were involved as performers and crew members in Theatre Novi Most's very physical and stunningly visual production of *The Oldest Story in the World*, directed by faculty member and Novi Most co-artistic director, Lisa Channer, at the Southern Theater. This was followed by *The Woyzeck Project*, also performed at the Southern, which was co-directed by faculty members Laverne Seifert and Carl Flink, and featured Flink's dance company, Black Label Movement, joined by professional actors (many of them alums of our department) and several current theater and dance students. *The Woyzeck Project* was named by the Star Tribune as one of the top 5 productions of 2010.

In December 2010, our annual *Dance Revolutions* concert was performed at the Southern, which meant that a sizable group of our students got the opportunity to work at a professional venue as performers and technicians, and, as important, to work collaboratively with staff members of a professional production house. Finally, this spring, three of our dance and theater students have been cast in the Flying Foot Forum's (FFF) new show, *Heaven*, which performed at the Guthrie's Dowling Studio in March. They had the chance to work with one of the Twin Cities foremost dance/theater artists, Joe Chvala, and also with his company, while being mentored by long-time FFF company member Karla Grotting, who is also an affiliate faculty member of the Dance Program.

With this modest beginning, RiCAP will thus end the current academic year with a slightly changed name, a more substantially changed mission, and the beginning of a track record. There are a couple of major RiCAP collaborations currently under discussion, and we have every reason to be confident that this expanded approach to how our students learn about and participate in dance and theater production will become part of a new, more dynamic

way that production is integrated into our curriculum. Moreover, we should note

The Woyzeck Project, Fall 2010
The Southern Theater, Minneapolis, MN

PHOTOGRAPH: CODY BALDWIN



that in addition to giving our students a terrific opportunity to work with dance and theater professionals at off-campus venues, two of the RiCAP projects we've done so far have been integrally connected with the creative research of members of our faculty. So we have already learned that the initiative meets the needs of both our students and our faculty in very innovative ways that strengthen the connections between our department and the large, energetic, thriving urban performing arts community that surrounds us.

Continuously Rich: Black Women in Cultural Production

An interview conducted on November 3, 2010 by the editor of *Applause*

by Ananya Chatterjea and Nora Jenneman

Applause: Can you briefly describe the events of the recent Dance Program symposium entitled, “Continuously Rich: Black Women in Cultural Production” that occurred on October 21-23, 2010?

Jenneman: We received National Endowment for the Arts support to restage Jawole Willa Jo Zollar’s masterwork, *Walking With Pearl...Southern Diaries*. Two of the Urban Bush Women artists were in residence during the month of September, Keisha Turner and Laurie Taylor, restaging that work with a cast of ten dance major students. So we really started the symposium events with that Cowles Visiting Artist residency. They worked with our dance major students in class, and they also taught a really extraordinary master class to a large group of people from the local community. In addition, they participated in a brown bag lunch with our students and connected with our faculty. The symposium itself happened October 21-23, and started with a keynote address by visiting scholar, Awam Amkpa, whose photo exhibit, *Africa: See You, See Me!* was projected on the exterior walls of the Barker Center from 6:00-9:00 pm throughout the entire week of the symposium. On the evenings of October 22 and 23, the symposium featured informal performances by our students of *Walking With Pearl* and also of Nora Chipaumire’s *Dark Swan*. Chipaumire was here in residence in the month of October, leading up to the symposium, and she reimagined her signature solo work, *Dark Swan*, on a cast of nine men. On Saturday of the symposium there was a series of events, starting with a student panel at which seven of our students presented their research about Black female choreographers, followed by a second keynote address by Thomas DeFrantz. All of the lectures and the performances were attended by anywhere from 65 to 100+ people; we had to turn people away from the performances. So the response we got from our campus community and the surrounding commu-



African Diasporic Movement Class, Winter 2010
Barbara Barker Center for Dance, University of Minnesota

PHOTOGRAPH: CODY BALDWIN

Continuously Rich: Dance Revolutions 2010, Winter 2010
Makeda Thomas’ *A Sense of Place*

PHOTOGRAPH: V. PAUL VIRTUCIO



nity was really extraordinary.

Chatterjea: The symposium was capped off by a collaboration with the Northrop Dance Theater series. On Sunday, they brought in Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, who is celebrating 25 years of her company, Urban Bush Women. The company performed *Zollar: Uncensored*, which has not previously been performed outside of New York City. And the works performed at the symposium were performed again, fully produced, by University Dance Theatre (UDT) at the Southern Theater on the weekend of December 10, 2010.

Applause: Why did you produce “Continuously Rich?” In particular, how does the symposium fit into the current mission of the Dance Program?

Chatterjea: The symposium was produced in order to enhance the current mission and goals of the Dance Program, which are to really encourage our students to be global citizens and to be familiar with history as a broad spectrum, not as specific to mainstream culture. As of this year, we formally started a track with six levels of African Diasporic movement, which has become central to our technique offerings in the department. Our dance studies courses have always looked at dance globally, but this symposium, with its focus on Black women choreographers, allowed us to focus on the intersection of race and gender in the production of work. And we certainly don’t see a profusion of Black women choreographers in the forefront. Our idea was to point out that work by these choreographers is always happening. Indeed, one of the things we forgot to mention in talking about the events was that on Saturday night, we actually ended the symposium in the Barker with a drum circle led by Kenna Cottman and other local Black women at which everyone was invited to dance. That is part of remembering that there is a

continuous legacy of work being produced by Black women, even if it doesn't come to the forefront. Zollar and Chipaumire are really up there: a lot of people know their work. And we are celebrating that, but we're also remembering that work happens continuously.

Jenneman: To build on what Ananya said, Jawole's work is considered a masterwork, but it is also a contemporary work – a contemporary work that looks back historically. So I think that for our students to work with the Urban Bush Women artists, who are young artists doing their own projects in addition to working with Urban Bush Women...it provided a nice continuum for our students to experience both the historical context and contemporary work that is widely recognized. For me the other thing about the symposium was that it really showcased the skills of our students. We often see our students as amazing performers...we see their own creative and choreographic work in various showings and performances. But something that Ananya has really built as a faculty member and as our director, is also showcasing the scholarly work of our students. This has not always been the case, but dance studies work has now become an important part of our curriculum. So the symposium was a way for students to showcase their thinking about dance and dance studies in addition to how that thinking comes through in a creative work. It was really important to me to see students onstage as thinkers as well as amazing movers and performers.

Applause: What would you say is the relationship between this public series of events and the pedagogy, the curriculum and the research directions of the Dance Program? I know we've already touched on this...

Chatterjea: Yes, and maybe I'll just say that one thing has been to really look at the fact that it's not African American women, it's Black women, which means that in the UDT concert, what will be represented is an African American woman choreographer, an African woman choreographer and an Afro-Caribbean woman choreographer. It's important for us to consider a range of work, and in the Dance Program, we are always looking at how different kinds of identities intersect to create very different kinds of work, whether it's race, gender, nationality, class – all of those. This was reflected in the student panel, where we had seven students presenting on seven different choreographers ranging from Katherine Dunham, who is a well-known choreographer; to Germaine Acogny, who is a very



Continuously Rich: Dance Revolutions 2010, Winter 2010
Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's *Walking with Pearl...Southern Diaries*

PHOTOGRAPH: V. PAUL VIRTUCIO

well-known choreographer in Senegal; to Beatrice Kombe, a relatively young choreographer from Côte d'Ivoire who passed away in 2007; to Gesel Mason, a young up-and-coming American choreographer. So there were presentations on a range of work; it was very incredible to see.

Applause: Can you talk a bit about what you learned from producing "Continuously Rich?" What aspects or events were particularly successful? What disappointed you? What lessons did you learn that might inform future events of this type?

Chatterjea: You know, we really planned this for two years, and it was a very well-planned event. I think we were ambitious and I learned that ambition is good. I also think we have great publicity machines here at the U, and it's good to keep using them. I do wish more students had showed up for the scholarly presentations, but that reflects a broad split that exists in the field between dance, which you just see and enjoy, versus dance study, which you think about. That's something we are trying to heal right here at the U, and maybe it'll spread to the broader community. If we do this again, which we will – we will definitely have more symposia like this – we'll build on the model that we created this time.

Applause: What future major events have you been contemplating? What do these projects owe to "Continuously Rich" – in format, in substance or in the ideas that inspired them?

Chatterjea: I would love to think of another symposium that brings together dancers and choreographers and scholars and thinkers to explore the legacy that Asian and Asian American choreographers have left for us – or are continuing to build on at this time. And again, I don't want to make it about American choreographers only, but about choreographers across the world. And it will build on the format of "Continuously Rich."



Continuously Rich: Dance Revolutions 2010, Winter 2010
Nora Chipaumire's *Dark Swan*

PHOTOGRAPH: V. PAUL VIRTUCIO

Charles Nolte: A Memorial

by Michal Kobialka

Charles drove me back to the airport after a tumultuous job interview in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance 22 years ago. He chose the scenic route to show me East River Road and the houses with swimming pools where, of course, I would live. Even though I would have to wait for a job offer from Barbara Reid, Charles already was describing to me the pleasures of living in Minneapolis. . . .

Indeed, the pleasure of living in Minneapolis was Charles Nolte. A colleague, a mentor, a teacher; an actor, a director, a playwright. Today, lingering in my memory is the image of Charles, youthful and charming, whose dreamy eyes would take me somewhere I have never traveled before. . . .

Memories. It is enough to allow them to enter and have the shapes they wish to assume.

Thus, there is a memory of my conversation with Charles about the American regional theatre. He was an incredible interlocutor, posing questions and forcing me to keep explaining myself to him. We often had different views about the nature and function of the arts; however, no matter where we ended up, the conversation was always enriching.

So was his continuous desire to think otherwise about theatre in general. Someone has once said: “identity freezes the gesture of thinking.” This singular statement is an example par excellence of Charles’s relentless passion for theatre, for talking about theatre, including the apocryphal stories about his lectures to undergraduates about the Greeks or Strindberg, and his courage to support what perturbs the known, the seen, and the accepted.

Here is another fragment: the eyes, the words, the movement of the bodies. We talked about the Department, the nature of education in this country, my research projects, his support for the Graduate Student Lecture Series, Nolte Professorship, and, of course, Samuel Foote, that XVIIIth-century theatre personality.

One more fragment: a dinner table—Terry is talking about paintings in one of the galleries Charles and Terry visited during one of their trips to Europe over the 50 years of being together. Charles is sitting at the head of the table—his eyes are smiling; he is ready to



unfold in front of us one of the memories so eloquently recorded in his journal—we had already heard some of them; even today. Even today, his voice reminds us that further on, there is everything—life, passion, commitment, and that intellectual curiosity that filled the shelves of Terry’s and Charles’s house with films, books, and music recording. . . .

Generous and humble; creative and thoughtful; with ideas moving much faster than the body; the mind which could function in many different ways and in many artistic languages; gentle and honest—Charles Nolte.

Life and death. The very intimate forking paths, which demand attention at the most unexpected moments and turns—the garden, the pre-dinner swim, meeting Terry, introducing Tim, heated discussions about politics, the Charles Nolte Graduate Fellowship, the news about Charles’s prostate cancer. Maybe, because we really never knew what it would mean, we—Charles, Terry, Tim, and I—found that one thing, friendship, to keep us on the path of life.

Since that day, things were different. Every conversation had a different shade; every touch a different texture; every emotion a different intensity. Today they return to me unadorned—the imprints and the memories that have waited for my permission to let them enter.

Today, I give them my consent. The imprints of Charles’s presence impressed deeply in my immemorial past.

“What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties; in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world.”

Charles Nolte

Charles Nolte performing with students



H. Lee Adey, 1928 - 2010

by Jean Montgomery

The Department of Theatre Arts and Dance lost a long-time colleague, director, teacher, and friend when Professor Emeritus Lee Adey died September 9, 2010 at the age of 82 after a long illness. Adey came to the University from Allegheny College in fall of 1952 to serve as interim scene designer and technical director while Professor Josal finished his Ph.D. at Northwestern, thereby beginning a 50-plus year association and close friendship. The pair would go on to collaborate on numerous productions over the next several years until 1972, when Lee took over the directing program upon Professor Whiting's retirement. Both Josal and Adey were heavily involved in the interior renovation of the original Minnesota Centennial Showboat

when it arrived in 1957. The collaboration continued outside the University when in 1971 Lee was handed the reins from Robert Moulton as Vice-President and Artistic Director of the Stagecoach Players in Shakopee. For the next 9 years the Adeys and the Josals teamed up to produce melodramas with musical olios in the opera house of the Stagecoach complex.

Not content to stay strictly on the technical side of theatre upon his arrival in 1952, Lee was immediately cast in a major role in the University Theatre's production of *The Witchfinders*. In spring of 1953, he directed his first University Theatre production, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, for the Young People's University Theatre. After stateside service in the Army he returned in the summer of 1956 to direct *The Fourposter*, and completed his Masters degree the following academic year. While a student, he won the Outstanding Actor award in 1956 for his role of Edgar in Frank Whiting's second production of *King Lear*. After a brief teaching and acting hiatus in New York, he returned to the University in 1959 as an Instructor in Theatre Arts and Technical Director of the University Theatre, and was promoted in 1962 to Assistant Professor. He designed scenery for 20 productions for the University Theatre between 1952 and 1971, including *A Night at the 'Black Pig'* and *Lady of Lyons* on the Showboat.

Adey continued acting, appearing in the first play colleague Charles Nolte ever directed – Nolte's own play *Alexander's Death* on the Scott Hall stage in summer of 1963. I was privileged to see a production of this play at Theatre in the Round in 1971 with Lee

in the role of Colonel Mashin – a totally different side to the Lee Adey I knew – he was really scary. The fact that I remember him specifically in that role some 40 years later speaks volumes for his acting ability, especially when you consider that the cast included a fair number of the Scott Hall "greats" from *Camino* and *Pig*.

But Lee's first love was directing. In 1967 he coordinated and directed the first two shows in the Peppermint Tent, *Daniel Boone* and *Androcles and the Lion*. And that year he was also promoted to Associate Professor. He directed the first show I ever designed in Scott Hall – *A Flea in her Ear* in 1968. Some pressure here for me – new grad student, new job, new theatre space, different lighting equipment, opening show of the season – but Lee made it easy. He was relaxed so I could relax – something I watched throughout our association for the next 30 plus years as he put actors and designers at their ease working on his productions.

Over his 37-year career in the department Lee directed 37 productions, acted in 10, and TDed a gazillion in the Scott Hall years. Some of my favorites include *You Can't take It With You* (1972), *The Authentic Death of Benjamin Dancer* (1975), *The Bat on the Boat* (1987), and his final production of *The Last Meeting of the Knights of the White Magnolia* in 1996. And he returned to the stage of the University Theatre in 1999 as a guest actor in Stephen Kane's production of

The Dybbuk. But the picture I will always carry of Lee is the gleeful rubbing of his hands together at the start – the start of a rehearsal, the start of shop time, the start of class, even the start of a meeting. He was just eager to get going – and relished the adventure he was going to share with all the rest of us!

A memorial service was held in September aboard the Minnesota Centennial Showboat. The Lee Adey Memorial Fund for Theatre Arts has been established through the University Foundation in tribute and memory of a unique and gifted teacher, director, colleague, and friend.



Lee Adey performing on the Minnesota Centennial Showboat

Program Highlights

BA in Theatre Performance

The BA Performance Program continues to focus on having the students take risks and create new work. Central to this process is a class called Creative Collaboration, in which students develop original material and then show their work publicly as informal “performance projects” at the end of the semester. Several of these projects have actually evolved into fully-supported productions both on campus and in the community, including our Spring 2011 mainstage production of *Oil! and the Jungle*, based on the two Upton Sinclair novels, which began its life last Spring as a Creative Collaboration led by Kym Longhi and Karla Grotting. The most ambitious example of this process so far has been *The Woyzeck Project*, which made its professional debut at the Southern Theater this past fall with 17 theater and art majors creating installations and performing in the production. This culminates a three year collaborative process between Michael Sommers, Luverne Seifert and Carl Flink, which began as a Creative Collaboration in Spring 2008, moved to the mainstage in the fall, and last November became a professional production featuring Carl’s dance company Black Label Movement, plus community performers and some of our BA theater students.

Last year there were several other quite successful Creative Collaborations. Seifert and Sommers again collaborated to create *Tent*, a show that re-created the showmanship and themes of the revival tent and medicine shows that barnstormed the nation during the 19th Century. Jon Ferguson created *The Maltese Loon*, a clown show that was attended by over 200 students and community members. And site specific performance artist Gülgün Kayim worked with her students to create the original work, *Terror Town*, a kind of *Our Town* infused with Homeland Security, based on the fact that residents of the small town of Playas, New Mexico have been used to “play” participants and victims in simulations of terrorist attacks. After 18 months of negotiations, the Department of Homeland Security gave permission for Gülgün to travel to Playas to interview residents in preparation for a full production of *Terror Town* in 2012.

This year’s Creative Collaborations include *The Wall*, for which Luverne Seifert and alumna Xanthia Walker, currently a graduate student at the University of Arizona, will co-facilitate a five-week examination of the politics and culture of immigration and migration through the border wall between the United States and Mexico. The project will center on two walls: the U.S.-Mexican border (the literal wall, the point of crossing) and the relationship of migration

through that border wall to the Minneapolis/St. Paul community (the more metaphorical, moveable wall). The project is based on the research conducted this summer by Luverne, Xanthia and three University of Minnesota theater students as part of an experience with Borderlinks, a bi-national organization that brings people together to build bridges of solidarity across North and Latin American borders and to promote intercultural understanding and respect.

Last fall, Michael Sommers and his BA Students developed the shadow puppet show, *Gods and Demons*, and performed it in the Experimental Theatre to an audience of 150 students and community members. Vladimir Rovinsky led an exploration on Artaud, Grotowski and The Theatre of Cruelty that was performed last December in the Arena. And this spring, Gülgün Kayim will create with her students a piece based on the *Rubber Room*, a room where hundreds of suspended New York City schoolteachers, who have been accused of misconduct, sit doing nothing, awaiting a lengthy

adjudication process to take its course. They often recount an almost Kafkaesque set of procedures whereby they have been transferred to a Rubber Room without being told what they are accused of, who their accusers are, or even, in many instances, that they have been accused of anything at all. In addition to primary Rubber Room sources, students participating in this project will also explore Franz Kafka’s novel *The Castle* and Jean Paul Sartre’s play *No Exit*.

The BA Mentoring program (BAM) is now in its second year, 80 students strong. BAM was established to provide more guidance and rigor to theater students

who have demonstrated leadership, discipline, and skills in the areas of performance, directing, play making and design. Students meet on Friday afternoons to get more training and experience in different aspects of theatre. Artists they have trained with this past year include: Kari Margolis, Maggie Chestovich, Jim Lichtcheidl, Michelle Hensley from Ten Thousand Things, David Mann, Four Humors Theatre Company, Dana Reitz from the Center for Creative Research, and Children’s Theatre Company (CTC).

Speaking of CTC, a new connection with this revered company is in the works. Artistic Director Peter Brosius and production assistant Nancy Galatowitsch have auditioned students from the BA Performance Program to perform at the CTC next season. It is the start of an on-going relationship between the two institutions and these auditions will continue annually.

The Wickedly Wild and Way Out Winter Workshop Week is now in its seventh season! Some of last year’s artists included:



Gods & Demons: A Shadow Play, Winter 2010

BA Creative Collaboration led by
Associate Professor Michael Sommers

PHOTOGRAPH: CODY BALDWIN

international South African performance artist Peter Van Heerden; Taiko Drumming with Rick Shao-mi; dance artist Shawn McConnell; Four Humors and Sand Box Theatre Companies; and international Indonesian performer Koes Yuliadi.

Stage Elements, our summer intensive workshop program for high school students, continues to introduce prospective students to both the BA and the BFA programs. Now in its seventh year, we were fortunate to have received generous support from the College Readiness Consortium at the U of M for the 2010 Stage Elements, and, for 2011, from the Minnesota State Arts Board's Arts Learning Program (funded by arts and culture heritage dollars). This support has enabled us to offer full scholarships to between one-third and one-half of the participants in Stage Elements, which has made the summer intensive accessible to a much more economically and culturally diverse group of participants than in the past.

Our faculty has been quite active and engaged as well. This past fall, Lisa Channer, co-founder and co-artistic director of Theatre Novi Most, staged *The Oldest Story in the World* – based on the Epic of Gilgamesh – at the Southern Theater, using several BA theater students in the production. She directed this winter's University Theatre mainstage production of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, and is now in St. Petersburg, Russia as a Fulbright Scholar, where she will teach directing and research the Russian poet Sergei Essenin for a new play about his marriage to dancer Isadora Duncan. Dominic Taylor's original play, *I Wish You Love*, about Nat "King" Cole – directed by faculty member and Penumbra founder and artistic director Lou Bellamy – will have its world premiere performance at Penumbra Theatre in April, and then move to The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., where it will be performed in June. Program director Luverne Seifert was in the recent hit production of *The 39 Steps* at the Guthrie. He also played



The Winter's Tale, Spring 2011
William Shakespeare's play directed and adapted by
Associate Professor, Lisa Channer

PHOTOGRAPH: CODY BALDWIN

Iago in the Ivey-award-winning Ten Thousand Things production of *Othello*, co-directed by affiliate faculty member Sonja Parks.

Professor Sonja Kufnec of the MA/PhD Program is co-teaching an intern-based class with Maria Asp of CTC under the Performance and Social Change rubric. The class will provide internship opportunities with Neighborhood Bridges (an arts literacy program in K-12 schools), Washburn High school's drama program, and St. Paul Central High school's theater classes, arts literacy, and Seeds of Change program that are focused on African American males and their allies addressing the educational "achievement gap." A main course objective is to get students involved both as scholars and as practitioners in the process of becoming a teaching artist.

Last summer, affiliate faculty member Barbra Berlovitz played the role of Mother Courage in Tony Kushner's adaptation of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* in Chicago. The show, a co-production between the French company, Collectif Masque, and the Chicago-based company, The Bricklayers, is performed entirely in masks and will be done locally at The Lab Theatre in February. Last winter Barbra took part in a staged reading of *The Laramie Project* produced by Big Fork Productions in Big Fork, Minnesota, directed by Aaron Gabriel of Interact Theatre Company. She was also part of the ensemble that created *The Oldest Story in the World*, which was performed last fall at the Southern Theater. And she has been asked to teach at the Eugene O'Neill National Theater Institute in Connecticut.

The BA Performance Program would like to acknowledge the contributions of all the outstanding professional theater artists who teach for us as affiliate faculty members. With only a handful of full-time performance faculty, we rely heavily on them; indeed, they allow us to be able to offer our students instruction in an enormous variety of theatrical performance styles, theories and techniques. So, a special thanks to e.g. Bailey, Barbra Berlovitz, Sha Cage, Gülgün Kayim, Kym Longhi, Kira Obolensky, Sonja Parks, T. Mychael Rambo, Bob Rosen, Vladimir Rovinsky and Shirley Venard.

UofM/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program

The BFA Program admitted its first class of students in 2000, ten years ago. Among the students in that class was Santino Fontana, who won the 2010 Drama Desk Award as Best Featured Actor in a Play for his performance in the Broadway revival of Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. Fontana returned to Minneapolis to help us celebrate the program's tenth anniversary (and his award) at an event held on the Showboat in August. Invitees to the event included donors, staff, faculty, students and friends of the BFA Program. Star Tribune theater critic Rohan Preston interviewed Santino in a conversational format about his life as a student in the BFA Program and how that has translated into his success as an actor in New York City.

Many of our other BFA alums continue to perform at the Guthrie and at venues throughout the nation. Recent Guthrie performances include Sam Bardwell ('08), Ali Dachis ('09), Hugh Kennedy ('08), James Leighton ('10), Noah Putterman ('10) and Christine Weber ('08), who were all in *A Christmas Carol*. Nationally, Elizabeth Grullon ('09), Whitney Hudson ('08), Ben Rosenbaum ('09), John Skelley ('07), Sid Solomon ('06) and Elizabeth Stahlmann ('08) are all in The Acting Company's 2010-11 repertory production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Comedy of Errors*.

On our own stages, the Senior Company performed this past Fall in the University Theatre subscriber series production of Tom Stoppard's

Ruth Easton



Ruth Easton was born Ruth Edelman in North Branch, MN. At the age of 16, she left North Branch and moved to St. Paul, where she attended Macalester College and the University of Minnesota before moving to Los Angeles, where she earned her degree from the Cumnock School with a strong background in expression and literature. After graduation, with the idea that she would pursue a career in dramatic readings and perhaps take in pupils for private theater training, Easton moved to New York City. In 1923, a friend introduced Easton to Oliver Morosco, a noted producer of the era. After hearing Easton read part of a play, Morosco encouraged her to pursue stage acting and began casting her—first as an understudy then in regular roles—in some of his productions. Regular stage work followed, with Easton appearing in stock roles all over New England.

In 1928, Easton starred in the Broadway play *Exceedingly Small*, establishing her reputation as a versatile professional stage actress. After five years on Broadway, Easton appeared in radio dramas on the Rudy Vallee Hour and the Fleischmann's Yeast hour opposite many notable actors of the time, including Lionel Barrymore. Before her retirement in the 1930s, she also appeared with Clark Gable, Eddie Cantor, Edward G. Robinson, and Al Jolson.

A commitment to philanthropy characterized her retirement. Ms. Easton made many generous contributions to the theater and literature programs of her Minnesota alma maters, including the creation of the David E. Edelman & Thomas A. Keller, Jr. Endowment in Creative Writing at the University of Minnesota.

adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's *Undiscovered Country*, directed by John Miller-Stephany, Associate Artistic Director at the Guthrie Theater. The preview performance of this production included a pre-show reception with a discussion about the play's background, which was hosted by CLA Dean Jim Parente and the Center for Austrian Studies. The discussion featured Joe Dowling, Artistic Director of the Guthrie Theater, who talked about Tom Stoppard, and Jenneke Oosterhoff, instructor of Dutch and Schnitzler expert, who provided a historical perspective on the playwright.

In faculty news, the BFA program is sad to announce the departure of faculty members Kenneth Mitchell and Elisa Carlson, who both left at the end of Spring semester 2010 to pursue other opportunities, expand their careers and tend to family matters. While we are all excited for them to be able to move forward with their careers, they will be sorely missed. Both have contributed a great deal to the construction of the BFA Program and we are very grateful to have had them as colleagues for many years. We have been extremely fortunate to have had such consistency in the program, but change is inevitable and a good thing, albeit challenging.

BFA Program Director, Judy Bartl, expressed the following sentiment in her e-mail to the department announcing their departure: "I wish Kenny and Elisa the best in this new chapter of their lives and careers and thank them for everything they have done. The community of theater is small and I trust that we will stay connected to them and continue to reap the benefits of their expertise, wisdom and connections. Please join me in expressing gratitude for their years of caring and service!"

Kenneth Mitchell, who was one of the BFA Program's two full-time Acting Teachers, had been with the program since Fall 2002. He has family and friends in New York, who he wants to be closer to, and is also excited about working in the Northeast as a teacher and director. He has joined the faculty at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in founding the New Studio. Kenny has devoted himself to the students and to the program for almost ten years, and he felt it was time to focus more on his professional development. Elisa Carlson, also with the program since Fall 2002 as a Voice-Speech-Dialect Coach and Instructor, worked at both the Guthrie Theater and the University. She has moved back to Atlanta, Georgia where her extended family is, and will be working as a teacher, director and actor with the Gainesville Theater Alliance.

Steve Cardamone, the program's remaining full-time Acting Teacher, has taken on some of the administrative responsibility involved in season planning. And Bruce Roach joins the program on a one-year appointment to teach and direct. In November 2010, he directed the Sophomores in *Picnic*. Lucinda Holshue remains with the BFA Program as the current Voice Teacher and Vocal Coach at the Guthrie Theater. She will be teaching both Freshmen and Sophomores this year, in addition to her Roy Hart work with the Juniors and Seniors, coaching for BFA performance projects, and continued responsibilities at the Guthrie. There will



Undiscovered Country, Fall 2010

BFA Senior Company production directed by John Miller-Stephany

PHOTOGRAPH: CODY BALDWIN

be searches for both positions in Spring 2011, with new faculty members joining our team in Fall 2011. The search committee is made up of representatives from both the U of M Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, and the Guthrie Theater.

This Spring semester we will again collaborate with the BA Performance Program and the Dance Program to create a class called New Voices. This class will consist of a series of Saturday workshops which are primarily geared towards Freshmen but open to all students. The purpose of this class is to help create community within the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. This year, we have decided to make some changes to New Voices. The content and scope of the workshops offered will be expanded, but we will focus on enlisting workshop leaders from the University community, unlike in the past, when community-based theater and dance artists taught many of these sessions. And while we will still offer workshops in theater and dance, we intend to offer sessions in a wider range of disciplines as well.

Fundraising continues to be a focus of the BFA Program, especially in the current economy. We are working both locally and nationally to find funding for scholarships and guest artists. And while our donor base is increasing, we are still looking for new donors to help us match a fund that was established to celebrate our 10-year anniversary.

Our annual recruiting continues to be successful. The program has now had students from 30 states and from the countries of Germany, Mexico and Canada. This year we started out at the International Thespian Festival in Lincoln, Nebraska in June. In November, Judy traveled to Texas, meeting potential students in Dallas, Houston and San Antonio. In January 2011, auditions are being held in Minneapolis and then, in February, in New York City, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles.



Picnic, Fall 2010
Part of the BFA Studio Series
directed by faculty member Bruce Roach

PHOTOGRAPH: CODY BALDWIN

Judy and Ken Washington, Director of Company Development at the Guthrie, will then narrow the audition pool, and these students have been invited to campus at the beginning of March for Call Back Weekend. More than a typical call back, this weekend for prospective students includes workshops, one-on-one time with current students and faculty, and seeing shows at the Guthrie and at the U of M (the BFA Junior Company Greek project). The BFA Faculty have the opportunity to meet the students, see their auditions and have time to interact with them. So prospective students get a chance to know more about us, and we learn a lot more about them before we make the final selections.

Dance Program

Centerpiece of the Dance Program this academic year was the symposium, "Continuously Rich: Black Women in Cultural Production" and the two Cowles artist residencies associated with it, one featuring Keisha Turner and Laurie Taylor from Urban Bush Women and the other, Nora Chipaumire. Turner and Taylor restaged with our students Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's masterwork, *Walking With Pearl...Southern Diaries*, while Chipaumire reimagined her signature solo work, *Dark Swan*, on a student cast of nine men. Both works were shown at the symposium and then later given full productions at the annual *Dance Revolutions* concert, which this year took place at the Southern Theater, a professional venue located not far from the Barker Center for Dance on the West Bank. Further details of these signature events are contained in the article, "Continuously Rich: Black Women in Cultural Production," an interview with Dance

Program director Ananya Chatterjea and Cowles Guest Artist coordinator Nora Jenneman which can be found elsewhere in this issue of *Applause*.

Upcoming Cowles highlights for Spring 2011 include a faculty residency exchange with the University of Illinois. Carl Flink was in residence in Urbana in January, and Linda Lehovc joined us as a Cowles Visiting Artist for two weeks in February, teaching and setting a work for the Spring Concert (which took place March 4 and 5). Also the recognized composer and dance accompanist Scott Killian was in residence for one week in February to work with students in Dance Composition courses, accompany classes, and connect with students, faculty, staff and the community. Planning for next year's visiting artists and scholars is underway, and it has been decided that the Cowles residencies



Continuously Rich: Dance Revolutions 2010, Winter 2010
Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's *Walking with Pearl...Southern Diaries*

PHOTOGRAPH: V. PAUL VIRTUCIO

will include at least one masterwork or work by a master teacher, as well as duets from the Dance faculty.

Several dance faculty members were honored for their work during the past year. Joanie Smith was recently named by City Pages as one of their 2010 Artists of the Year. Dance Program Director Ananya Chatterjea, Theatre Arts and Dance Chair Carl Flink, and dance faculty member Toni Pierce-Sands (co-artistic director with

her partner Uri Sands of TU Dance) were all featured during 2010 on segments of Twin Cities Public Television's new arts series, *Minnesota Original*. And *The Woyzeck Project*, co-directed by Flink, and featuring his company, Black Label Movement (joined by several current Theatre Arts and Dance students and recent alums), made Star Tribune theater critic Graydon Royce's top five list for 2010.

MFA Program in Theatre Design and Technology

In addition to our core faculty, we had a strong team of affiliate faculty members teaching classes in Design and Technology. This included Th 5520: Scene Design, which was team-taught by Ivey Award winning designers Joel Sass and Kate Sutton-Johnson. Joel is a Director and Designer whose work has appeared locally at The Guthrie, Jeune Lune, The Jungle, and his own company, Mary Worth Theatre, among others. For the University Theatre, Joel directed *Arabian Nights*, *Black Comedy*, and *The Rocky Horror Show*. Kate is a locally based scenic designer who has designed for The Children's Theatre Company, Indiana Repertory and Mixed Blood. She recently designed the scenery for *Grey Gardens* and *Beauty And The Beast* at the Ordway.

We were also fortunate to have Andrew Saboe, who returned to teach a topics class in Computer Aided Design, and Andrea Moriarity, who taught a year-long class in Wig and Hair Design and Production. Andrew is an alum of the program and has worked for countless theater companies in the Twin Cities area as well as for VEE Corporation. Andrea is a Wig and Makeup Master and Instructor. Currently she is a Wig Assistant at the Guthrie Theater, where she has worked on numerous productions, most recently *Caroline, or Change* and *Little House on the Prairie*.

The Design/Tech program, in conjunction with the Guthrie Theater, hosted the fall workshop for the Northern Boundaries Section of United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) in September. Workshops were presented by members of our faculty as well as professionals from the community, including the following. "Lighting and Sound at the Guthrie," presented by Tom Mays, Guthrie Theater Lighting Supervisor and Scott Edwards, Guthrie Theater Sound Supervisor; "Costume Design and Realization for *The Importance Of Being Earnest* and *When We Are Married* at the Guthrie Theater," presented by dj gramann II, lead draper at the Guthrie Theater, and Mathew J. LeFebvre, designer (and UM faculty member); "Scene Painting the Brockman Way," presented by MFA student Carla Sandoval; and "A Hands-on DL3 Projector and VL Workshop," presented by UM faculty members Martin Gwinup and Bill Healey. In addition, a number of our faculty



Lance Brockman's Scenic Painting course

PHOTOGRAPH: LEIAH STEVERMER

members and students attended the national USITT Conference in Kansas City, Missouri in March 2010. Examples of student and faculty designs were featured in the Design Expo exhibit.

We had another successful MFA Design/Tech Showcase at the end of the last academic year. A gallery-style exhibit of student work was presented on the Proscenium stage on May 9 and 10, 2010. It was an opportunity for professional Directors, Artistic Directors, Designers, and Technicians to see the extensive work of our design students. It was also a wonderful opportunity for the students to get feedback and advice from a wide range of theater artists and practitioners. This year's Showcase is scheduled for May 9, 2011. Please check the departmental webpage for updates (<http://theatre.umn.edu/>).

Last summer's production of *The Triumph Of Love* on the Minnesota Centennial Showboat featured the design work of several MFA students. Amanda Wambach was scenic designer, Annie Cady designed costumes and Mark Larson designed the lighting.

MA PHD Program in Theatre Historiography

For the current academic year, the MA/PhD program is focusing on two main issues. First, to bring in guest lecturers to speak on topics tied to coursework and to the interests of both MFA Design/Tech and MA/PhD graduate students. Second, to revive a dramaturgy program tied to our production season that is similar to the program our graduate students developed several years ago but has been dormant for the past couple of years.

The program continues to maintain a high profile nationally and even internationally because of the outstanding work of its faculty, graduate students and alums. This is apparent in the listing of accomplishments that follows.

In 2009-10, professor Sonja Kuftevec published *Theatre, Facilitation, and Nation Formation in the Balkans and Middle East* with Palgrave Macmillan Press (July 2009). She also organized, with

former U of M professor Tamara Underiner, the national American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) conference. This year she is co-organizing a national conference for Imagining America, a consortium of universities and colleges engaged in public scholarship in the arts, humanities and design. In the Spring of 2009, she was named Scholar of the College by the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), and is using that award's research funds to travel to India for a Theatre of the Oppressed Festival.

In 2009, professor Michal Kobialka's second book on Tadeusz Kantor, *Further on, Nothing: Tadeusz Kantor's Theatre*, was published and he also held the Belle van Zuylen Professorship at the University of Utrecht. In 2010, he served as guest editor for the special Tadeusz Kantor issue of *Polish Theatre Perspectives*, while his first Kantor book, *A Journey Through Other Spaces*, was translated into Romanian. He is also the 2010-2012 Arts and Humanities Imagine Fund Chair at the University of Minnesota.

This past year, professor Megan Lewis organized and hosted a weeklong residency with South African performance artist Peter van Heerden, after which she published "Uprooting & Re-routing the Afrikaner Male: Peter Van Heerden's Abject Performance Art" in *Positions South Africa*, Vol. 3 (Academie of Arts, Berlin & the Goethe-Institut, 2010). She gave presentations at the ASTR conference, at PSi in Toronto, and at the Mid-America Theatre Conference (MATC). She is currently editing a documentary film that traces the ensemble theatre-making process of Theatre Novi Most as they brought their recent work, *The Oldest Story in the World*, to fruition.

Professor Margaret Werry was awarded a prestigious fellowship to study at the International Centre for Research, Free University of Berlin during the 2010-11 academic year. She also published articles or chapters in *Transformations XX, no. 1* (2009), *Debatable Lands*, edited by Iain Biggs, and *New Theatre Historiography*, edited by Scott Magelssen and Henry Bial. Her book, *The Tourist State: Performing Leisure, Liberalism, and Racial Imagination*, is forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press. She gave invited presentations at the University of London, University College Cork and the University of Munich. Finally she Organized MA/PhD Lectures by the group Yes Men, and by Professor Daphne Brooks.

Professor Cindy Garcia was awarded a prestigious 2010-11 Ford Foundation Fellowship for Postdoctoral Scholars and received a Selma Jeanne Cohen Conference Presentation Award from ASTR for Scholarship in Theatre and Dance/Movement-based Fields. She was also elected to the Board of Directors of the Society of Dance History Scholars in Spring 2010.

Our graduate students have also fared quite well. Will Daddario received his PhD degree, and married Joanne Zerdy (PhD in Theatre, 2009). Rachel Chaves also graduated in 2010 with a PhD, and is currently an assistant professor at Young Harris College in Georgia. Shannon Walsh is the recipient of a Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship and Eric Colleary of an Institute for Advanced Study fellowship. Merle Ivone Barriga and Pabalelo Mmila have received Compton Fellowships from the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC). Elliot Leffler was awarded

an OIP (Office of International Programs) Spotlight grant for research on community-based intercultural theatre in rural South Africa, while Kimi Johnson received an SSRC (Social Science Research Council) fellowship. Carra Martinez was awarded a CLA DOVE (Diversity of views and experiences) Summer Research Fellowship, and Kelly McKay is currently a Graduate School Fellow. Finally, Stephanie Lein Walseth completed her MA last spring, and is currently working on co-authoring articles for publication with professor Margaret Werry about the process and findings of the WEC (Writing Enhanced Curriculum) project in our department, for which she served as a Research Assistant.

We also have quite a few distinguished alums, who continue to be active teaching and doing research throughout the country. Lisa Peshel (PhD, 2009) is currently an Alan M. Stroock Fellow for Advanced Research in Judaica at the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University. Her English-language edition of plays written during the *Holocaust, Performing Captivity, Performing Escape: Cabarets and Plays from the Terezin/Theresienstadt Ghetto*, will be published by Seagull Press in 2011. Scott Magelssen, who teaches at Bowling Green State University, was awarded tenure this past spring and promoted to associate professor. He is currently the editor of the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* and his book, *Theater Historiography: Critical Interventions*, co-edited with Henry Bial, was recently published by the University of Michigan Press. This work includes essays by other alums of our program, including Rob Shimko ("The Spark of Strangeness: William Davenant, Piracy, and Surprises in Theatre History").

Megan Sanborn-Jones is a member of the faculty in the Department of Theatre and Media Arts at Brigham Young University. This past fall, she directed *Romeo and Juliet*, her tenth show at BYU. And her book, *Performing American Identity in Anti-Mormon Melodrama* (Routledge 2009) won the Mormon History Association Smith-Hewitt Best First Book Award. Lauren Love is on the faculty of the Department of Communication & Theatre Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Baraboo/Sauk County. She is also the Artistic Director of the Summerset Festival of the Arts at UW-Baraboo/Sauk County, a multi-disciplinary, full-blown, hands-on, indoor/outdoor celebration of the arts that will debut in July 2011. Last Fall, she co-directed the world premiere of *White Buffalo* by Don Zolidis with Sherman Funmaker, director of the Ho-Chunk Players, which she hopes will be the first of many future collaborations between the University Theatre and performers and artists from the Ho Chunk Nation.

John Fletcher was honored as an outstanding alumnus by The Oklahoma City University Alumni Association. And Patricia Ybarra recently obtained tenure at Brown University in the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies, where she also serves as Director of Graduate Studies. She is working on an anthology entitled *Neoliberalism and Theatre: Performance Permutations*, co-edited with Lara Nielsen, an Assistant Professor at Macalester College, that will include essays from U of M faculty members Margaret Werry, Diyah Larasati and Michal Kobialka. She will also be the Co-chair, with Patrick Anderson, of ASTR 2012.

Alumna Profile:

Kalere Payton, MFA in Design, 2009

Annie Katsura Rollins, MFA in Design, 2010

An interview conducted on October 28, 2010 by the editor of *Applause*

Applause: You both recently graduated with an MFA in Theatre Design from the U of M: Kalere in 2009 and Annie this past spring. Can you talk a bit about your design interests, and about how your education at the U of M, particularly (but not necessarily exclusively) in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, has helped you launch a career in design for the theater?

Payton: That's a big question. I think one of the main things that's really great about the University's program is that every designer works on several designs throughout the course of her time here. There are other graduate programs where you get a lot of classroom time, but you don't get as much practical time actually designing a show that is produced. At the U of M, I think there are a lot of opportunities for realizing your designs on actual productions, and that experience is really invaluable. Obviously you learn a lot in class, but I think you need practical experience; there are issues that come up with the design, and ways that you'll work through these issues, that you can't really create in a classroom environment.

Rollins: And those design opportunities are very varied. We have four different types of theater spaces here and also the types of productions put on here are very diverse as well: traditional plays, period plays, experimental plays, new works, creative collaborations. I worked on five shows here. A couple of them really helped me hone in on and solidify my own aesthetic; others forced me to exercise skills that I might not have otherwise had to develop.

Applause: And in your time here did you develop the interests that you now have, or did you start with particular design interests?

Payton: I think that I came into graduate school with some design interests, but they definitely became more focused. As Annie said, working on actual productions that are being put on stage really helped me create my own style. I do all costume design now and I think that the productions I designed here were so varied. The first show I did was *Arabian Nights* with a small budget and a big ensemble cast, which was on stage the entire time, and that created a set of challenges. And then I did *The Wiz*, which was huge with a bigger budget – it was my first musical – followed by *A Bright Room Called*

Day, which was totally different. Also, I designed for several *Dance Revolutions* concerts. Since the dance concert every year is made up of multiple pieces, most of the costume grad students got to design at least one dance piece per year, which is nice because it gave me a little bit of experience working with choreographers.

Rollins: When I came into the program, I thought scenic would be my focus, and it still is – I would say it's my main interest. But I definitely wanted to branch out and learn more skills in more fields of design in order to strengthen what I knew I wanted to do (or thought I knew, anyway). But actually I ended up loving costume design, but

not in the traditional way. My designs are more “janky” – you know, a little slapdash, a little crazy – but I actually ended up doing more costume design since I graduated than scenic design, though I think I will end up going back to scenic design. The other opportunity I had here was that I delved much more into puppetry than I ever had before and that's actually turning into my main focus. That's what I mean by diverse; there are so many things going on here that if you want to tap into them you can, and if you don't want to, you don't have to.

Payton: While you chose to spread out more, my approach was to dig deeper in one area. I did costume design, and costume technology was my other emphasis. A lot of times, I wanted to know how the costumes were built. I wanted to know more about construction and technical things so that

when I'm out doing my own work, I can do what's needed and so that I can talk with a technician working at a costume shop in a language we both understand. This approach has really taught me what can realistically be done and what's unreasonable to ask for when I design costumes for a show.

Applause: What attracted you about the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance when you applied to graduate school?

Rollins: I would say that one of the things most attractive to me was the location. I'm from here, but, that aside, the community itself is an amazing place to be – a perfect mid-sized city with a ton of culture and a ton of different types of theaters. There's a lot going on and it's a great place to start if you indeed want to move on, though I want to stay here. I think it's a perfect place for a practical graduate school where you can work while you're in school.

Payton: Yeah, I think the location coupled with the faculty – and the connections they have to the different professional theaters



A Bright Room Called Day, Spring 2009
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, MN
featuring designs by Kalere Payton & Annie Katsura Rollins
PHOTOGRAPH: CODY BALDWIN



The Woyzeck Project, Fall 2010
The Southern Theater, Minneapolis, MN
 featuring designs by Annie Katsura Rollins
 PHOTOGRAPH: CODY BALDWIN

in the community – are invaluable. I had work available to me when I got out of graduate school because of the connections I had made through Matt [Lefebvre]. Most of the directors that I worked with this year either knew me from working with Matt, or met me when they came to the MFA design showcase. Theater really is about who you know because people like working with people they know, or who are recommended by people they know. And the faculty here are well-known in the theater community.

Applause: Can you think of a special moment you experienced or a special project that you worked on at the University of Minnesota that has informed subsequent design work – or that’s special for other reasons?

Rollins: We both worked on *A Bright Room Called Day* and had a lot of fun. It was one of those great col-

laborations where you work with someone you can talk to and communicate with...we had a color party at our house...I think we had pizza and we worked on a color palette...

Rollins: Yeah, and I feel like it was one of those moments that showed us that we will be working with the people we’ve gone to school with, and our faculty members, and people in the community. But I was going to say that I think *The Woyzeck Project* we did here my second year, in the Fall [of 2008], was very much an affirmation of the things that I want to do, and the way I want to work, and the styles I want to work in. And I’m doing it right now; it’s open right now at the Southern. We remounted it – not with the same design, but a similar one.

Payton: You know, *Bright Room* was kind of the culmination. I feel that *Bright Room* was the show where I really polished my design aesthetic. I still feel very proud of that design. *The Wiz* holds a special place in my heart because it was the first big show that I did, and I remember seeing Glinda walk out on stage and I was taken aback because I thought, wow, she started as a sketch on a piece of paper and ideas in my head, and my fellow student, Kelsey Glasener, the draper, really made her come to life. I think that was an amazing experience.

Applause: What, in your opinion, are the strengths of the theater design and technology program in our department? What could we do to strengthen our program in design/tech?

Rollins: Many programs force you to have tunnel vision in your design field. This one encourages you to study in more than one area; you choose three design fields and then you focus on one. I really liked that. I do think that there are a few areas in which the program can improve. One is simply keeping up with the commercial theater world. Academic theater often lags behind – I think it’s just the nature of being in an academic setting, where things can’t stay as ahead of the game or as progressive. But we’ve been making great strides. In my third year, big things were happening, and I just hope they keep happening – like the RiCAP program, which I think can go in a really

positive direction in terms of keeping up with the theater world outside the academy. Also, updating the facilities is a really big deal, as are increasing our materials and resources, and getting more of the kind of passionate and engaged faculty that we currently have.

Payton: I think one of the huge strengths of the program is the faculty, but for me, specifically, it was Matt Lefebvre’s connection with Penumbra and Lou Bellamy. I came to the U of M pretty much because of Matt – I felt he would be an incredible mentor – and because I wanted to work in Black Theater and to get into that community. So for me, this was kind of the perfect place to do that. And I think it’s an amazing asset to the program that Lou is a part of the theatre department; that he’s here, he’s teaching classes. I worked on shows with Matt and with him, and we built a professional relationship while I was here. I think the other thing that’s great – and it suggests a direction the program could grow in as well – are the adjunct faculty members who came in to teach classes. We had Doreen Johnson who was at the Guthrie in years past as the dyer/painter come in and teach a dye class, and it was a great experience because she is an amazing artist. DJ Gramann came in and taught costume shop management, which is a class that is not often taught, and a corsetry class as well. It’s great to get people from the community to teach different specialized classes like those because, as Annie said, you get to build more connections to people in the community. It would also be advantageous to the design program if there was a graduate directing program at the University. That’s the one thing that I wish I had had. I actually feel like I don’t know any directors who are my own age. Not that I don’t love the directors that I work with – they’re amazing and they’re talented – but I feel that I don’t really know the next generation of theater directors.

Rollins: Yes, I think the biggest learning curve I have had getting out of school was the process of working with directors. We had done a lot of design work: how you come up with a design and the practical elements of making it happen by communicating it to a shop. But we had not explored much the relationship between director and designer, so I’ve had to learn that as I work.

Applause: Can you both talk a bit about an exciting current project that you are working on, and your plans for a project that you hope to be working on in the near future?

Payton: I’m working right now at the Guthrie as the design assistant for *Christmas Carol*, which is really exciting. Matt Lefebvre is the costume designer, and that’s great because while we’ve worked with each other some over the past year that I’ve been out of school, it’s really nice to work with him again on a major project. It’s also a great opportunity to develop my skills as a design assistant. I’m being pushed further, and I’m excited about that. For the future...in the Spring I’m designing an opera, a one-woman show, and an ensemble piece that’s like a choreopoem, so it’s going to be an interesting Spring.

Rollins: *The Woyzeck Project* is open right now at the Southern, and it’s awesome. That space – if you know that space – is totally unrecognizable when you walk inside, and we put a chain link cage installation onstage. Then I’m scenic designer for *Julius by Design* at Penumbra in the Spring, which is an incredible new play by Juilliard graduate Kara Lee Carthon...I believe it’s a world premiere. And then there’s the Fulbright, which is my favorite upcoming project, so I have to stop in February and go away, which is nerve-wracking. But when I come home, I’m going to be doing a shadow play about the experience and about folks in China.

Producing Director Thomas Proehl: a Memorial

This interview, conducted by the editor of *Applause* on October 20, 2010, was to be a faculty profile of Tom Proehl, the Producing Director of University Theatre. Following Tom's unexpected, tragic passing on April 5, 2011, we have decided to include it in *Applause* as a memorial to Tom, who, in the words of our Chair, "brought so much vision and energy to our department."



Applause: Can you talk a bit about your background: what got you interested in theater, particularly theater management, and how and why you made the journey from the Signature Theatre Company in New York, to the Guthrie and State Arts Board in Minneapolis, to the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, and now back to Minneapolis to join the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance as our new Producing Director?

Proehl: My father was a music teacher and a theater director in a high school when I was a kid, so I got my first exposure to theater by going to shows he directed. I didn't personally get involved in theater until my senior year in High School when a friend of mine asked me to audition for the melodrama, *Gold in the Hills*. I auditioned, got cast, and it changed my life. The experience lit a passion in me that I didn't know existed. I began college as an accounting major which I switched halfway through to a theater major. After college I moved directly to New York to be, I thought, an actor. After auditioning for a number of shows, I realized that, though I was cast in college, I had a lot more competition in New York. This is when I began to think of other ways to work in the theater – I didn't necessarily have to be onstage. I started thinking about arts administration as a career.

Applause: So you grew up in Minnesota, and your high school experience was in Minnesota?

Proehl: Yes, Moorhead, Minnesota. I was born in Hastings, grew up in Moorhead. So a true Minnesotan. When I got to New York, I ran an off-Broadway ticket office where I discovered that I really enjoyed understanding the different ways I could support what's onstage. After working at many theater jobs in New York, I was hired by the Dramatists Guild. With the support of the Executive Director, I was allowed to pursue my masters degree, which I did at Brooklyn College under Stephen Langley, who was the then-guru of Theater Management. During my time in that program – one of the first Theater Management programs in the country – I met Jim Houghton, who was just starting to work on Signature Theatre Company as the Founding Artistic Director. I was instantly inspired by Jim's vision for Signature and told him that if he needed any help with the company to just let me know. He called me the next day, and that was the beginning of my career with Signature. The first season featured playwright Romulus Linney. From that point on, the company began to grow – rapidly. I was at Signature for eight years, the first five on a "volunteer" basis" as the company didn't have the resources to support a fulltime staff. We were very fortunate to have playwrights who lent their names to actually help establish that theater. We spent three years in a small 80-seat theater way off-off

Broadway, then we were hosted by the Public Theater for two years, and finally we built our own space on 42nd Street. That was the first theater that I got to build, both as a company and a building. After that, I said, OK, what's next?

Applause: So, even with all that success you left Signature?

Proehl: I'm a firm believer in the idea that when the time is right to leave, one must leave. . My journey in theater has been the result of pursuing opportunities as they come, and not being afraid of them. That's when a job at the Guthrie came across my desk and I decided to pursue it. I began as General Manager working closely with then-managing director, David Hawkanson. This was at the very beginning of the planning process for the new building on the river. David was (and still is) a great mentor to me and one that I really appreciated having in the theater management field. He taught me a great deal and when he left, I stepped into the role of Managing Director. The challenge at the Guthrie was obviously overseeing, planning and then building the new Guthrie on the River while still producing a full season. The entire process took about nine years and I was fortunate to have been at the Guthrie for all of those years. After the new building opened I decided that it was time for me to leave -- someone else should take this and run with it to the next level. I had planned to take a year off and do nothing. Alas, that did not happen. I was called by the Minnesota State Arts Board and asked to serve as interim Executive Director, which I did for a year. What I enjoyed most about that experience was meeting with the artists – actually observing the work and talking to artists. But my real passion is in the theater, so when the ACT job came up, I thought that it would be a great opportunity – I could live in San Francisco! I took the job, working as Director of Administration and Operations for two and one-half years. What I found exciting at ACT was the combination of the graduate conservatory within the structure of the theater itself. That's when a friend of mine told me about the job at the U of M. I thought that this would be perfect opportunity for me to combine my passions for theatre and education. The students, who give you so much vibrancy and so much energy, are remarkable and truly provide endless inspiration. To be back in Minneapolis with such a vibrant theater and arts community made me think that this was a perfect time and a perfect opportunity to re-establish myself in Minnesota. And that's why I pursued the Producing Director position at the University of Minnesota Department of Theatre Arts and Dance.

Applause: What besides your interest in education and wanting to re-establish yourself in Minnesota attracted you about the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance?

Proehl: I've always known of the department, and when I was at the Guthrie, I got to work with some of the students in the BFA Program. But I also really enjoy the diversity of the department in that the BA Program in theater is about new and experimental work on the cutting edge, while the BFA Actor Training Program in

theater focuses more on classical training. Additionally, the dance program has a reputation for exciting new work. Add the MFA and the MA/PhD program and this dichotomy offers great diversity in both talent and exposure—practical and academically. Also, given the University's history and reputation, this was a really interesting opportunity and a great time for me to come in, especially with the RiCAP Program, which is one of the main activities that I was brought in to develop further.

Applause: Your position as Producing Director emerged as a result of departmental discussions we had during the year prior to your arrival – discussions that reaffirmed the centrality of theater and dance production to the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. These discussions also inspired us to begin a process of reimagining what our production season might look like in the future, and rethinking the relationship of production to our pedagogy, creative research and scholarship. Can you talk about the idea of an “integrated production season?” In particular, how will the integrated season address the changing relationship of theater and dance production to our other departmental programs, and what will be your role in making the new ways we think about production function in practice?

Proehl: Since I'm relatively new to this position and the U, I'm doing a lot of observation, trying to understand what a totally integrated production season would look like, and what it means. I have actually posed the question to the departmental leadership committee: what is the purpose of our Mainstage Season? Is it pedagogical or is it audience development? Because we really have to figure out how to frame it so that we can actually give it exposure and celebrate it for what it is – what's unique. I think what we really have to understand is that, in my opinion, the performance opportunities for students are some of the most important parts of their training because that's where they actually get to do the work or experience the work. And the audience is a very important part of that. So looking at how we prioritize and schedule projects and shows so that we're sharing spaces and that we're actually creating work that can celebrate all the different programs is going to be our biggest challenge – and also our biggest opportunity. And we must understand that we need significant resources – human, financial, etc.-- to do this.

Applause: One of the ideas to emerge from our past discussions about theater and dance production is RiCAP, or Reimagining Community Arts Partnerships, a new way of thinking about community-engaged teaching and creative research that involves integrating production at the University with production in the very active Twin Cities arts community. Can you describe your own vision for RiCAP – and steps we can begin to take immediately to pursue the goals of this exciting project?

Proehl: RiCAP was one of the determining factors that led me to take this position. I thought it was a really great idea. There is such a vibrant community here, and we should be working cooperatively with them somehow, somehow. We are starting the process – we're identifying some partners right now, and we're talking to them about what it would mean to be a RiCAP partner. I think we need to understand what the roles and responsibilities are from both sides, specifically, when a company takes on students in a mentoring role, there really has to be a mentorship component. We're trying to figure out what those pieces are. One of the things that really stood

out for me about RiCAP was that there was one word missing in its name. I am actually looking at it as not just the arts community, but the community in which we live, and the communities that make up the Twin Cities. As I'm envisioning it and approaching it, it is reimagining community and arts partnerships, so that we can look at both of these and serve more than one constituency. I've actually been accepted into the Creative Community Leadership Institute, run by Intermedia Arts and supported by the Bush Foundation, which will give me tools to reach into communities and figure out how we can serve them – and how they can serve us. I'm trying to make RiCAP a much more embracing idea that includes not just the arts community, but also the communities in which we live and work. I would like to see a vibrant and interesting and useful project for all. It is on its way and, as I have been saying, we just have to do it...we have to try it...we can't figure out all of the issues that may arise...we just have to start it and address the challenges as they arise. We have a number of RiCAP projects in progress and planned for the future. That's where we are now.

Applause: What do you see as the department's main challenges in the area of production, and what do you hope to accomplish to meet these challenges as we look toward the future of production at the University of Minnesota?

Proehl: If we look at production from the point of view of how we produce plays and dance pieces, I think our biggest challenge right now is resources. We need significant improvement within our facilities so that we can actually be a Tier I, top 10 school when it comes to theater and dance. Our facilities are adequate, but they're not state-of-the-art anymore. We really need to update our facilities so that we can actually provide the resources to the students that they will be using in their professional lives. In a time of fiscal belt-tightening around the University this is hard to justify in a lot of people's minds, but I think that upgrading our current facilities is going to be our number one priority and biggest challenge. Secondly, we have to identify what our purpose is for our production season – and how we market it. It is going to take some time for us to understand how to target our desired audience -- we are in a campus community of 60,000 people, and we need to tap into them – they're right here on campus. So for me it's about providing the resources to support the artistic vision, and then getting audiences to see it. Those are our biggest challenges right now, and I think they are the biggest challenges in for all arts organizations.

Applause: Do you think the vision might have to be altered to suit the audience?

Proehl: I think that depends on what we identify as the priority. If our priority is audience development, then more-popular programming would have to be chosen so that larger audiences would come. But if it's about educating an audience, which is ultimately what we are – an educational institution – then we need to determine who our audiences should be and invite them in. That's cultivation and engagement!

Bill Healey is the Lighting Supervisor of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. He manages the department's lighting laboratory, and supervises the student electricians/lighting technicians, both in the lighting laboratory and for every production. He was the Head or Assistant Electrician for the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts between 1996 and when he joined the department in February 2010. He has also served as Production Manager and Resident Lighting Designer for the

Montana Johnson, our Audio and Media Supervisor, got her undergraduate degree from the University of Evansville, her MFA in Sound Design from California Institute of the Arts, and most important, her high school diploma from South High right here in Minneapolis. For the past seven years she has worked as a freelance audio technician and sound designer around the metro area. Recent sound designs include *The Full Monty* for Theatre Latte Da, *The Crowd You're in With* for Walking Shadow Theatre and

Jungle Theater from 1993-96 and as Master Electrician in-house and on tour for the Children's Theatre Company from 1989-93. As a freelance lighting technician, he has worked at the Guthrie Theater and Theatre de la Jeune Lune. Healey is the recipient of an Emmy Award in Lighting Design in 2003, and is a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 13.

University Theatre's production of *The Winter's Tale*. It has been a great joy to come back and work in the theater community she grew up in, and also to teach for the first time. Aesthetically speaking her biggest thrills are hot coffee, beautifully mixed sound, occasional triathlons, and twizzlers (if you are looking for bribe options). She looks forward to many exciting future productions with the University, and hopes to get to know more students in the coming year.

A Fresh Start

Message from Carl Flink, Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance (*continued*)

quality program, the BFA program is also a cornerstone in our ongoing efforts to establish RiCAP within and beyond the walls of the department because of its partnership with the Guthrie,

This spring, the 2010-11 Subscriber Season features two plays that span the range of genres and styles in our BA Performance Program: Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, and *Oil! and The Jungle*, an original piece created and performed by our BA students in collaboration with faculty members Kim Longhi and Karla Grotting, based on the two Upton Sinclair novels that make up the work's title. And this summer, the Showboat Season will feature *The Demon Barber of Fleet Street: The Melodrama of Sweeney Todd*, together with the triumphant return of the Showboat's much-loved musical *Oliver!*

As always, but never to be forgotten, there is also a series of partially-produced offerings throughout the year, including the student-run Xperimental Season, various BFA performance projects, and, from the Dance Program, the Spring Concert, several informal showings and the Student Dance Coalition Concert. So, despite declining resources, our students will have a broad range of performance and design opportunities, and our audiences will have a chance to experience a wide variety of artistic visions and performance styles. What's most exciting is that this year these will happen not only at the Barker, in Rarig, and on the Showboat, but at a few community venues as well.

Despite my excitement about the possibilities for this department, it was nonetheless quite sobering to hear that SUNY Albany announced last spring that it was cutting its theater program (in addition to the more highly publicized cuts to its foreign language programs). This suggests to me that now, more than ever, we need to focus on what we value as a department and how this fits into a vision for what a great university of the 21st Century should be. I believe such a vision must be built on the following ideas: that a liberal arts education is inherently valuable in ways beyond those that can be measured by economic yardsticks; that we need to value both artistic and scholarly excellence, broadly defined by measures that include embracing difference, community engagement, social justice

and daring artistic exploration; that we must continue to exist at the intersection of scholarship and practice; and that we need to foster local connections with a global perspective.

We need to be vigilant about this department and not take for granted that it will always be here as SUNY Albany recently learned. And while I am deeply optimistic that this department will continue to be supported at this university, I still feel that we need to publicly articulate the most compelling arguments for continuing to study the performing arts, and a vision for what theater and dance should be in this new century.

It is my hope that what we are thinking and DOING here in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance inspires you as much as it does me. If we can capture your passion, your interest and your active support, this will help guarantee our growth as a department that leads the way in defining the future of the field of theater and dance, and also in showing what a contemporary research university can look like.

Intrigued by all this? Then I urge you to visit our website at <http://theatre.umn.edu/>, where you can find out more about our students, our faculty, our public performances and other events. Better yet, call me directly at 612-626-1049, or e-mail me at flink003@umn.edu. Best of all, if you are not already on campus, come visit us – to see a show, or meet our faculty and students, or just to walk around the West Bank Arts Quarter. After you do, I think you'll agree that, despite the state of financial exigency in which we currently find ourselves, this year is one that offers the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance a chance at a fresh start, particularly in the area of theater and dance production.

Best wishes for a great Spring Semester!



Carl Flink
Chair, Department of Theatre Arts and Dance

About the X

by the Xperimental Theatre Board

Greetings from Rarig Center! We are the Xperimental Theatre, the largest student-run theater on campus. We provide opportunities for all students on the University of Minnesota campus to participate in all aspects of theater, both on stage and off. We strive to create quality theater performances while still fostering a welcoming environment to students at all levels of theatrical experience. All of our performances and events are free to provide accessible admission for everyone at the University.

The Spring Semester X Season kicked off on January 22, 2011 with *24 Hour Theatre*, a festival of shows that are written, rehearsed and performed within 24 hours. Next up is *How the Other Half Loves* written by Alan Ayckbourn and directed by Krystle Igbo-Ogbonna, which will run February 24-27.



In April Mark Larson and Monica Rojas will direct an adaptation of the viral online musical, *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog...the Musical!* Running April 7-10 and April 14-17, the show is sure to be a hit as freeze-rays and superheroes abound in this sometimes silly, sometimes profound adaptation of one of the internet's biggest hits. And to cap off the season, Katrina Zahradka will direct *May Morning*, which will run April 28-May 1, and be performed outdoors in the Ferguson amphitheatre.

It is worth repeating that our performances are always free, so bring a friend. If you would like more information about the Xperimental Theatre or would like to place reservations for any of our shows, please contact us via email at thex@umn.edu or by phone at 612.625.1876.

Supporting Theatre Artists... Today's and Tomorrow's

by Joe Sullivan, CLA Development Officer for the Arts

My son, Jack, is currently in his 10th production at our neighborhood community theater. He was bit by the theater bug at a summer camp in 2004, and it has been an adventure ever since. Long nights of rehearsals. Showing up for call long before show time. Striking the stage, followed by a cast party after the final performance. Sometimes tears, but far more often, joy. And always a new challenge ahead. It has been a fun run.

How could I possibly quantify all the positive benefits that Jack (and our family, his school and the wider community) has received from theater? We have watched him evolve from a shy boy in the chorus to a confident young man playing a leading role. In addition to the many public skills that theater has developed in him, Jack's personal life has also grown tremendously through the development of lasting friendships with other actors, musicians and dancers.

I would venture that Jack's story is similar to your own experience or that it mirrors the story of many others you know. Theater changes people for the good. It is a form of human expression that is second to none. It helps us feel fully alive.

Perhaps that is why there are currently 360 undergraduate majors and minors enrolled in the U of M Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, and 35 graduate students. Nothing else, for many of our students, is quite as life-giving and sustaining.

Not that a college education has ever been an easy road to take. In the past, many middle income families made it work by

getting a second job, taking out a second mortgage, taking out a line of credit, or even by putting the tuition bill on a credit card. But today jobs are scarce and credit is tight. The average debt load for students graduating from the U of M is nearly \$25,000. According to a recent article in the Star Tribune, more sticker shock is ahead because many public colleges and universities have relied on federal stimulus money that won't be there in future years. Philanthropic support is even more critical than ever. If you have been thinking about doing something to make a difference for our students, consider making a gift now! The need is so great. You can make a difference because your gift will have a real impact on today's theater and dance students.

Thanks again to all of you who support the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance students and faculty through your gifts to the annual fund and our endowed funds.

We are deeply grateful for your generosity.
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