

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2008

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Alumni and Friends:

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The end of the spring semester is in sight and, as usual, we've had some wonderful performances to close the semester. BFA Junior Juries and Senior Graduating Presentations were sophisticated programs with fine dancing, choreography and production elements. Western Dance Project's year-end concert in Studio B showcased the company and presented its touring repertory to an enthusiastic and appreciative audience. Choreography classes had public showings of their final projects. Just like spring, the talent is blossoming.

Though we are very busy with performances on campus, our students and faculty are very busy in the community as well. **Ebony Vision**, a group of dance majors and minors, presented work in several venues this year. They performed in the Martin Luther King, Jr. convocation at Miller Auditorium, in a concert downtown for Save for Darfur, and for several church events at the Radisson. In addition, **Hip Hop ConnXion** presented work in a sold-out concert in Chicago. Their on-campus master classes open to the public drew large crowds. BFA seniors provided salsa master classes for a local Girl Scout troops. Junior Jeremy Neal and Senior Angelina Grima taught a hip hop master class at Kalamazoo Central High School. Sophomore dance major Michael McDonald is dancing in Wellspring's performance of Erick Hawkins' "Classic Kite Tails." Finally, **Western Dance Project** has made 25 presentations in public schools and festivals throughout the state. Many of our students work in the community as dance teachers, as well. I am proud of our students' and department's public mission.

Our plans for the 08-09 academic year are shaping up. We have decided to focus on deepening ties with Chicago, so next year's Great Works artists and other guest teaching artists have strong affiliations in Chicago. Please check our website later in the summer for announcements about special WMU dance events in Chicago. We'd really love to connect with our alumni and friends in the Chicago area.

Please keep in touch; we love to hear your news. Also, please let us know if your email address or mailing address has changed.

Best wishes for a fabulous summer,

Nina

www.wmich.edu/dance



ALUMNI UPDATES

Ellen Aspinall (2007) reportedly loves her job as a dance teacher, having “been blessed with a great boss and some very motivated students.” She was recently hired for a second job where she will be scanning archive materials for a company called NACE. Ellen is also looking at coauthoring a book, putting together a compilation of her poetry, as well as sharing her ideas for two other books as well.

Cindi (Murray) Bosma (1993) has danced professionally with the Grand Rapids Ballet Company for 2 years. She returned to school at KVCC to graduate with an Associates of Science degree in Dental Hygiene and is currently working in Parchment, MI as a dental hygienist. Cindi also teaches advanced ballet, pointe, and modern dance at the Patti Herm dance studio in Otsego, MI. She is married to Andrew and the couple has a 4 year old daughter, Kenison.

John Bradley (1985) continues his work in early music as director of the New York-based ensemble Polyhymnia www.polyhymnia-nyc.org. John took his first conducting lesson with Ray Zupko in the Music for Dancers course at WMU. Most recently, John and his ensemble collaborated with one of NYC's other leading early music organizations, Music & Art at St. Luke in the Fields, to produce A Fiesta of Mexican Baroque Music, a week of concerts, lectures and receptions honoring the wealth of music composed in the Americas in the 17th and 18th centuries. Polyhymnia performed a concert called Elected of the Lord, featuring ceremonial music composed for state occasions and festal liturgies accompanied by a band of exotic early instruments, including lutes, guitars, cornetti, sackbut, dulcian organ and percussion. John researched and provided new critical editions of music by Lianas and López Capillas for the concert. He would love to hear from classmates, his email is john@polyhymnia-nyc.org, and if you are in the area he knows some really great pubs. He is still living in Jersey City with his partner Charles and their two enormous cats.

Lisa Bredhal (1998) was recently involved with a “Dancing With the Stars” type fundraising event in Parchment MI where she was one of the professional dancers paired with a community member from Parchment. The event took place Saturday March 29, 2008 and Lisa and her partner, a NFL referee and local coach in the Parchment area, came in 2nd place. Lisa adds, “wow, a ballet prevailed.” The pair is pictured below.



Meagan (Young) Bublitz (2006) has been teaching full time at a studio in Bay City and reports it as being “a very rewarding and exciting experience thus far.” In November Meagan married Paul Bublitz, with a number of WMU alum in attendance. Lisa (LaMarre) Wilmot was her

matron of honor and Erin (Dudley) Marken, Noel Powers, Molly Britson, and Ryan Schmidt were bridesmaids. Lisa Scurlock, Jenny Stulberg, and Brienne Dluzniewski were also able to come. The couple plans to remain in Bay City, with Paul following in grandfather and father's steps and continuing the family farm. Meagan adds, “I am now a little farm girl.”

Renee (Kachudas) Cardani (1995), who has been studying Apple's video editing software “Final Cut Pro,” took the exam recently and is now an “Apple Certified Final Cut Pro.” The study course for the exam was full of industry professionals from CNN, HBO, BBC as well as smaller independent companies, leaving Renee with several places to consider for video editing internships.

Lindsay Conklin (2007) is living in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico where she has three jobs, one at a real estate company doing the webpage and all the e-prospect follow-up, one at an agency modeling and one dancing at a resort there.

Annette (McDonagh) Donnelly (1993) is currently living in Carson City, Nevada and has recently married “the love of my life— Sean.” Annette has also recently become the Executive Director at Saint Mary's Center for Health & Fitness, a medically based fitness center. She encourages everyone to check their website at www.saintmarysreno.com/fitness or go to powerwellness.com to see some of the other centers around the United States. “Wonderful husband, great job, and beautiful mountains.... I couldn't ask for anything more!”

Michelle (Hodgkin) Elliott (1985) has been married to Craig Elliott for 20 years and has two dancers (children) Katherine 12 and Maddie 8. Michelle and her children dance at Denise Paavola School of Dance in Flint, Michigan. Katherine and Michelle are about to perform in ballets with Young People's Ballet Theatre with original choreography by Dale Brannon. Katherine is sleepy in *Snow White* and she and Michelle are appearing *Little Women*, Michelle as “Hannah the Maid” and both of them appearing in the Waltz and Polka scenes. Next year Maddie looks forward to joining the company (YPBT). “I think of WMU, the dance faculty and friends I met while dancing there and feel very blessed to have had the wonderful experience!”

Jennifer Fiero (1998) is teaching at a local performing arts school in Niles. “I teach everything from ballet, jazz and modern to piano and voice. I enjoy watching students grow to love dance and become performers.” Jennifer also keeps busy with her 14 year old son Jacob and 5 year old daughter Taylor.

Frank Folino (1977) has been in Wisconsin for the past four years. He has been a friar now for 13 years, and a priest for nearly 3.

Sara (Gauthier) Frier (1995) is still living in Alaska, the “North Pole, of all places!” She has two children – Trevor, age 5, and Warren, age 3 who keep her extremely busy. Sara reports that “Trevor is in Kindergarten, just had his tonsils out this weekend, and is going to play soccer this summer. Guess my stint as a ‘soccer mom’ is about to begin! Warren is in the throes of being a 3 year old...very emotional time!” Sara's husband works at a fuel refinery in the distribution department. She started her own business last year – The IT Girl (<http://www.itgirlfairbanks.com>), doing computer training and consulting for different clients. Sara is also a consultant for a home

based party business (called Two Sisters Gourmet) selling gourmet food products. She's been teaching computer and culinary courses for the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In her spare time Sara's been taking yoga classes and is thinking about getting a teacher certification this fall.

Helene Kelly Frucci (1981) reports that she and Jennifer (Sterling) Beccard still live in Fort Collins and are involved in the dance community there. Jen is on the board of a local modern company and Helen stage manages for the modern and ballet companies in town. In addition, Helene still takes classes and works at a Pilates studio. She has been married to her husband Jim since 1983 and they have two sons ages 17 & 14.

Jennifer (Galvin) Shoemaker (2000) has opened a Pilates studio in Holland Michigan. Check out the website at <http://www.corephilosophystudio.com>.

Christine Gruca (2002) has lived in Chicago for the last 5 years. She is no longer dancing with Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre (jazz company), having just left that company to join a different one-- a modern company called "Jay-Son Tisa Dance Company" They have a show coming up in June and you can check out their website at www.jaysondancecompany.com Christine's other big news is that she is getting married in June to "a wonderful man named Andy Schaefer :)"

Connie Dobson Tresedder continues to teach at Bay College with an increased number of classes. She has been keeping busy with her three children and their sporting events and activities as well as helping her son, a senior in high school, through the college application process. Connie and her family recently moved into a new home.

Michelle Kaiser (2006) has been living in Memphis, TN for 7 months. She is teaching "full-time-ish" in a medium sized dance school, ballet classes mostly. Michelle is reportedly "loving it!" She also is "enjoying the weather... didn't get below mid 30s most of the winter..."

Ann Marie Kneebone will be graduating in May with her Master of Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary. She is now Interim Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Chicago.

Graham Kurtz (MTP) moved to New York City after finishing out the West Side Story tour in October '06 and since that time has performed in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* at The Gateway Playhouse, and *Hello Dolly* at the Arkansas Repertory Theatre (where he joined AEA). The world of TV/Film/Print has beckoned as he has done copious background (extra) work on all sorts of sets. His claim to fame this year is the gay club scene in *PS I LOVE YOU*, where he can be seen "actin' a FOOL in a blue t-shirt" between Gina Gershon and Lisa Kudrow, and making "kitty" faces behind Penn Badgley in the "Handmaiden's Tale" episode of *GOSSIP GIRL* where he was a featured dancer (and also earned SAG eligibility). He has been freelancing with the DDO Agency, and has been offered an exclusive contract through Basic Model Management. For further updates, find him on MySpace, Facebook, or just www.grahamkurtz.com.

Erin Lamont (2001) lives in California and is working full time as a choreographer. Her current projects include: assistant choreographer for a Skechers industrial, assistant choreographer for the Miss USA pageant, guest artist residency at Broadway Dance Centre Tokyo, guest artist residency for "dance master class" an intensive in Urbana, Italy, choreographer for LA Clippers Spirit Dance Team, choreographer for EMI artist Natalia's new hit music video "fall", along

with being on faculty at the EDGE Pac. Hoctors dance convention, and off and on judging for Showstopper. Erin is constantly traveling around the U.S. doing studio intensives and master classes and is "loving life!" <http://www.erinlamont.com> / <http://www.fusionentertain.com> / <http://www.dancevisionary.com> / <http://www.dancemasterclass.com>

Corey Yarnell Lozier (2000) recently "retired" from performing with the internationally touring dance company, Jump Rhythm Jazz Project, after more than 5 years of dancing and spreading rhythm with them. She decided to take some time for herself and for her husband, and is excited to be able to focus more of her energy on working with the students she teaches at Kristina Pospeshil's studio. Corey also recently received an Emmy Award for her performance in the documentary about JRJP, called "Getting There: Jump Rhythm Jazz Project". Corey says "Hi to everyone!!"

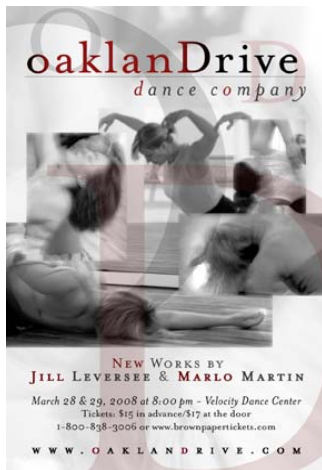
Christina Maley (2004) is still enjoying being a part of Motus Dance Theatre in Indianapolis where the group just performed a repertory concert of their favorite pieces for their fifth year as a company. Christina danced in the performance as well as designed the lighting. Pictures are below. "It was lots of fun and a challenge as the space was a black box made into a proscenium with a limited supply of dimmers, lights and no wing space." Christina reports that the performance was well received as "there was a little something for everyone." The group has another small performance in April for the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and then the Indianapolis Fringe Festival at the end of August. Check out their website at www.motusdance.com. Christina is also continuing her work at the Honeywell Center as the lighting technician.



Erin Malley (2001) has completed her first year as Artistic Director of her NYC-based company, Malleable Dance Theater, and is thrilled to announce that it will be included in an article in the July 2008 issue of Dance Magazine! (Look in the "Dance Matters" section). Her company will be performing in the windows of the Danskin Store and at the Cunningham Studio in May, and in the Philly Fringe Festival in the fall. Erin will be teaching a residency at the United Nations International School and has completed her second Pilates certification program at the Kane School of Core Integration this spring.

Erin (Dudley) Marken (2005) is in Dallas, Texas and wrapping up her second year as a high school dance teacher at the DeSoto Freshman Campus. She is directing the Freshman Dance Company and is "loving the chance to get to impact my girls through dance." She has received the nickname of "Coach Ernie" after an announcer mispronounced her name at a football game. In May she and her husband will celebrate two years and Erin is reportedly "still loving married life!"

Marlo Stafford Martin (2001), artistic director of *OaklanDrive Dance Company* is having her new work premiered on March 28 & 29 at the Velocity MainSpace Theater in Seattle, WA. Other WMU alums in the company are dancers Kristen Legg, Stacy Brenner and Mary Kirkpatrick.



Trent McEntire (1998) is living in Grand Blanc, MI with his wife Jennifer and their two daughters ages 7 and 4. Trent adds "Jen has the real job since she stays home with Kassia and Zana!" This April marks 5 years for McEntire Pilates in its current location in Rochester, MI. Trent is spending his in-studio time seeing clients, training new Pilates instructors and serving as Vice President for the Pilates Method Alliance (an international governing body for quality control for Pilates). This April, Trent is taking 8 of his clients to Piedmont, Italy for a Pilates and Cookery Retreat.

Niki (Smith) Mejeur (2002) has been married for almost 5 years and has a daughter named Layla. They live in Kalamazoo. Niki mostly stays home with her daughter, and also teaches dance for Jen Hanes (Wurm) at her studio in Rockford, Michigan. She continues to do some teaching for WMU and she "loves getting a chance to be involved in the department." Niki and Curt were involved in the starting of the church, The River, which is "doing great and thriving in downtown Kalamazoo!"

Jen Mesch (1996) is still operating the Jen Mesch Dance Conspiracy out of Princeton, New Jersey and is dancing for other choreographers as well, and sharing the stage with dancers retired from the Martha Graham Dance Company and Momix. The Conspiracy is continuing to perform at interesting venues such as Grounds For Sculpture and The Chocolate Factory in Long Island City. Check out their website at www.dance-conspiracy.org About 2 years ago Jen married a sound artist. Jen works at the local hospital doing ultrasounds of people's hearts. Jen would also like to pass along an update on alumnus Stephan Moore, who some of you remember as a composer at WMU that she collaborated with (as did Jeanette Mueller). Stephan has been the Sound Engineer and Music Coordinator for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company for several years now (!!!).

Anastasia Wozniak McGlothlin (1988) currently lives with her family in Ann Arbor, MI. She is dancing with Detroit Dance Collective and setting works on Michigan State University dancers as well as DDC dancers for concerts this spring.

Katrina Childs-Muller (1996) is keeping up with her 2 little ones and her 15 year old step son's busy dance schedule. She danced in

Media City Ballet's *Nutcracker* and is dancing in *Prince Igor* this April. Katina is also assisting in cleaning and coaching Saugus 6th time National Championship High School Dance Team. Her own team is gearing up for their national competition in NY in July at New York City Dance Alliance. They are taking 8 numbers and plan to take class at STEPS and Broadway Dance Center, and see some shows. Katina choreographed *Aida* this fall and winter and *What Love Is*, the Cuba Gooding Jr. film she and her husband co-produced will soon be released on DVD. "Hugs to all my old dance buddies..... miss you deeply!"

Mary (Sieklucki) Murphy (1986) recently completed her MAT in Dance Education. For the past twenty years she has served as the Director of Dance for the Creative and Performing Arts High School program in Livonia, Michigan. She resides in Milford, Michigan with her husband Jim, an instrumental music educator, and their two children: Ian, 17 and Mallory, 9. Mary and her family enjoy their summers camping and relaxing by the ocean. She sends the best of wishes for good health and peace to her fellow classmates and to her former students that now study or have become alumni of the WMU dance program.

Meredith (Hall-Barlow) Nelson (1993) is "finally getting back into the dance world after a 7 year hiatus ('cause of having children!)." She is currently a member of the choreographic team for Chelsea Area Player's summer musical theatre production of *Crazy for You*. She is reportedly "nervously excited about experiencing the creative process again and I am looking forward to the choreographic challenges of this particular show."

Katrina Phillip (2003) has one of her dance routines featured on the website <http://dance.mtv.com/video-all-that-jazz-33> <http://dance.mtv.com/video-gene-kelly-eat-your-heart-out-34> <http://dance.mtv.com/video-jazzy-dazzy-35> <http://dance.mtv.com/video-theater-dance-36>. Her routine has to be cut in 4 segments, so she recommends watching them in order. In addition, Katrina is featured in the April issue of Dance Magazine in an article for Broadway Bound Guys & Gals. In the article her free dance classes (Strong Like Cattle) are mentioned as long as her personal struggles auditioning and some background information about her childhood. Aside from her recent publicity, Katrina was just accepted into another showcase by the Bridge Center for Dance. The show called "The Uptown Performance Series" will be presented May 16th & 17th. She also showed her work at the STEPS performance lab on April 5th "I am so very excited, simply because I feel my work is really beginning to gel."

Kathe (Tenniswood) Powell (1982) continues to teach part-time at Saint Mary's Hall, examine for the Cecchetti Council of America, of which she is the Chairman of the Southwest Committee, and to teach at workshops. Kathe has had multiple trips to Roswell, NM this year for workshops.

Lori Roof Racine (1991) and her family recently settled down outside of St. Louis, Missouri this past year. In December, she completed her Masters of Arts in Education and looking forward to taking a full-time teaching position in the fall. Presently, Lori choreographs for children's programs for local schools every winter and spring and also continues to enjoy being a realtor. Lori enjoys every moment with her soon-to-be 5 year old daughter, spending countless hours dancing and singing in every square inch of the house and yard.

Peter Riopelle (MTP 1992) is currently touring in the Broadway First National Tour of *The Drowsy Chaperone* playing "Gangster #2"... Other recent professional highlights include "John Adams" in 1776, "Bobby" in *Crazy For You*, "Oscar" in *Sweet Charity*, and the title role in *Hamlet*. Peter also had the "pleasure" of teaching Acting as a guest lecturer in the WMU theatre department during the Fall Semester of 2006. "I can't tell you how WONDERFUL it was to be back on campus, 'giving a little back' to this amazing University that has done so much for me! LOVE to Jane and EVERYONE ELSE there who might remember me!!!"

Kara (Facknitz) Rosengren (2003) is in Chicago and producing her first dance concert under the company name Against the Grain Dance Project. Kara's show is the last weekend in June at Links Hall and she will be holding auditions in April for this particular project. She and fellow alum Tracy Monaco (2003) will be performing a duet in the show also. Kara reports that married life is good and she and husband Ken just purchased their first condo in the city and should be moving in early April.

Jenny Stulberg (2006) recently moved to the upper west side of New York City. She is working as a personal trainer for an independent fitness company called 11th St. Fitness and recently passed the national certification exam through the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) enabling her to be insured for the personal training that she does. Jenny is also teaching jazz/hip-hop to 6-8th graders at the Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School in Brooklyn 3 days a week until June. She has been dancing with a company called BeMoved, which participated in a hip-hop showcase on January 26th in NYC. In addition, Jenny has been taking voice lessons since the end of the summer and has auditioned for several musicals.

Judy Sykora (2005) is currently dancing on the "Voyager of the Seas," her third contract with Royal Caribbean. She is engaged to a man named Dario Diaz whom she met during her first contract and they hope to marry in fall of 2008 or early 2009. Judy adds, "Let Shari know I'm teaching ballet classes for all the dancers on the ship once week. :)"

Lutin Tanner (1995) is currently splitting his time between performing and tech work as well as staying busy with 4 year old Lucien and 1 year old Ellington. Recently, he performed in an evening concert for Duhon Dance, had a five month residency at Mabou Mines working with Spessard Dance, where he dances, speaks and plays the harmonica. Lutin has also been involved in smaller showings/showcases like M.E.L.D. Danceworks and other performances like "Play the Dance" for WMU alum Erin Malley. He has also set aside time to do his own choreography and is currently "flushing out ideas for a piece to set on Rasta Thomas's Bad Boys of Dance (BBOD)". For his tech work, Lutin returned to Jacob's pillow this past summer as a lighting designer for the BBOD at the Doris Duke Theater. He is a freelance tech for an entertainment lighting company in NY and dance theater "as it comes my way." Lutin also returned to theater "doing a few staged readings here and there." The below picture is of the Howard Pflanzler play *On the Border*, that he acted in this past fall for the Medicine Show Theater. Lutin adds "NYC is a hustle, but I'm happy with family and work."



Wynter S. Thomas (1999) recently completed her Master's in Public Relations/Organizational Communications, Suma Cum Laude from Wayne State University and finished her study in Aix-en-Provence, France. Additionally, Wynter will be starting a new job as the assistant/publicist for Marvin Winans and has also choreographed a dance that will be featured in his concert at the Fox Theater in Detroit.

Gina (Neubauer) Thompson (2002) married her WMU college sweetheart, Chris Thompson, in August 2007. The couple met while living in Ackley-Schilling their freshman year in 1998. This past January (2008), Gina's studio, Neu Wixom Dance Academy, entered its third year. It has over 200 students and a brand new dance company called Neu Wixom Dance Company. Her website is www.wixomdance.com. Gina hopes everyone is doing and dancing well!

Channon N. (Bessant) Washington (1998) is currently on maternity leave from Stoney Creek High School in Rochester, Michigan after giving birth to her second baby, Caleb James Washington on February 29, 2008. Prior to her maternity leave, Channon served as choreographer and assistant director for the school's annual spring musical, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* in 2007-2008. In September Channon will return to Stoney Creek High school to teach Economics, US History and World Geography as well as resume her work on the school musical.

Laura Wiacek (2004) has been keeping very busy and "loves every minute of it." She is currently with the same seating company as a full-time engineer, has recently purchased her own home, is dancing for her 2nd season with Michigan Dance Project, and is also developing their website www.michigandanceproject.org. Laura also teaches at 2 different studios, periodically travels to judge dance competitions, has recently started doing some independent choreography work for soloists, duos and trios, and is working toward her MBA at Eastern Michigan University. Laura is looking forward to the summer and water skiing. "Other than that...I'm always looking for more dance opportunities to express and educate!"

Lisa (LaMarre) Wilmot (2005) is now in her 3rd season dancing with Detroit Dance Collective, where she has taken on a new title as Director of Education. This has allowed her to become involved with bringing creative movement and dance to students of all abilities, including cognitively impaired, Autistic, POHI, and other severely multiply impaired students, in and around Detroit. In addition, Lisa continues to teach at Detroit Country Day School and the Dance Academy of Bloomfield Hills where she has her senior & junior Company dancers.

Christine (Sitler) Wilson (2002) is still living in the Boulder, Colorado area where she has been working in a Physical Therapy office teaching Pilates. Soon she will begin teaching at a local Pilates studio as well. This past December, Christine married "a sweet southern man from Alabama." The couple reportedly "has a blast skiing, hiking, and enjoying just about anything outdoors or in the mountains."

Amber Wisniewski (2007) will be moving to Tampa, FL in the middle of May due to her husband's acceptance into the PhD program at the University of South Florida. She is auditioning for a few companies and will update us on her progress.

Angie (Wieland) Yetzke (1994), mom of 2, is still dancing, choreographing and teaching in Grand Rapids, and currently teaching sections of modern and jazz for WMU.

WMU DANCE ALUMS CURRENTLY TEACHING IN THE DEPARTMENT

As you have read through the alumni newsletter in recent years many of you might have noticed familiar names on the list of faculty and staff. A number of WMU Department of Dance alums have returned to teach dance classes at Western. In the following article, we feature four of our current faculty alums.

Niki (Smith) Mejeur

Niki Mejeur is a 2002 graduate of Western Michigan University, earning degrees in Dance and Exercise Science. She has been teaching Beginning Jazz and subbing for the jazz technique classes since 2005. When asked how she got involved with teaching dance, Niki responds “I have taught dance since I was 16. I love most everything to do with dance and want others to experience all it has to offer.” In addition to teaching at Western, Niki has taught at many studios in west Michigan, Detroit, assisted at the Broadway Dance Center in New York, taught at various churches and is currently teaching at the Rhythm Dance Center in Rockford, Michigan.

When asked what it is like to be an alum and be back at Western teaching Niki responds, “it is a lot of fun to watch others learning and growing. Everyone is so excited to learn something new and look ahead to the future.” When asked what brought her back, Niki says “I enjoy working with the talent level of dancers at Western. It is a lot of fun to teach adult students who are prepared to work hard and learn a lot!”

While a student at Western, Niki shares that she has so many great memories but her favorite memory was her trip to Prague. “Traveling to Prague with Lindsey Thomas is very far up on the list, as well as many amazing times with Derrick Evans and all my friends.” For a favorite teaching memory she shares an anecdote: “I have had some crazy MTP students over the past couple semesters. I suppose a very funny story is when two of my male class clowns decided to rip their shirts off just when the music started for their final! Caught on tape!”

Aside from teaching, Niki performs for churches around the area. “I would love to be doing more, I need to put my dance management skills to work and get going on a jazz company :)” She also loves to spend time with her husband, Curt and daughter, Layla, as well as gardening, decorating, being active outdoors, and spending time with friends and family.



Deb Norton

Deb Norton graduated Cum Laude in 1985 with a degree in Fashion Merchandising with a minor in dance. Since she began teaching at Western in 1993, Deb has taught Ballet 111 (which no longer exists), Ballet Tech I and currently teaches Beginning Ballet. When asked how she got involved with teaching dance, Deb responds “I had worked in my major field of retailing for a number of years and after trying many different areas in that field I found myself looking for something different. I started dancing again and had a couple of people ask me to teach. I wasn’t interested but thought that I could teach for a short time until I figured out my next career move. I have been teaching ever since!” In addition to teaching at WMU, Deb has been teaching ballet, character, tap and jazz at the Ballet Arts School of Dance since 1991. During the mid 90’s she taught with fellow alum Patti Herm. Currently, Deb is the dance teacher at Woods Lake Elementary School– A Magnet Center for the Arts, where she teaches creative movement, improvisation, choreography, folk dance and jazz dance to students in kindergarten through sixth grade. In addition to her work with three dance companies at the school, Deb works with the students and classroom teachers to integrate dance into the core curriculum at Woods Lake through the Kalamazoo Arts Integration Initiative. Aside from her work at Woods Lake, Deb also teaches for Education for the Arts, a program based on the Lincoln Center Institute’s program in New York City. Teaching as an Aesthetic Education teaching artist, she is a trainer for EFA’s summer teacher institute and will be on the training team for the National Educators



Workshop for the Lincoln Center Institute in June. Deb has also taught in EFA's Excellence for the Arts High School Program and PACE program. She has been a guest artist in the public schools, bringing dance and curriculum together for special grant projects and she has been a teacher at the Junior Day Camp at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp for the past five summers.

When asked what it is like to be an alum back at Western teaching Deb responds, "It was like coming home! I loved my time in the dance department and was thrilled to become a part of the staff."

When asked her favorite memory as a student at Western Deb shares "I met my husband while attending WMU! Dancing with the University Ballet Theatre was a great experience and I loved my dance classes and teachers. I also loved walking from the dorm to Baskin-Robbins for an ice cream cone with my roommate." As for her favorite teaching memory Deb responds "Oh, so many! Some of my favorites are of the tradition I keep going in honor of my former teacher and mentor, Eugene Mills... and that is Halloween class." When asked to elaborate she adds, "what happens in Halloween class stays in Halloween class... need I say more? :)"

Aside from teaching Deb performs with the Ballet Arts Ensemble doing character roles such as Clara's mother in the *Nutcracker* and the step sister in *Cinderella*. Over the past couple of years Deb has choreographed and performed for the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra in their Family Discovery series and Youth Concerts series. She has choreographed *Cinderella* for the Kalamazoo Civic Theater and a Tarantella for WMU Theater's production of *A Doll's House*. Over the years Deb has been fortunate to have received grants from EFA to attend workshops around the country that have helped her to continue her professional development. She has studied with creative dance teacher Anne Green Gilbert, music and movement specialist Kerri Lynn Nichols, and character dance teachers Nina Kolesnikova and Vladimir Kolesnikov. She has attended workshops by the National Dance Educators Organization, the Lincoln Center Institute's NEW programs and seminars by David Howard, Finis Jung and the Cecchetti Council of America. Deb is also on the board of directors for the Ballet Arts Ensemble and WMU's Partners in Dance.

When her busy schedule permits, Deb enjoys spending time with her husband Mike and their two cats as well as going to concerts and shows and getting together with friends for dinner and a movie.

Angie Yetzke

Angie Yetzke is a 1994 graduate of Western Michigan University with a degree in dance. From 1994-1995 she taught Improvisation and Beginning Jazz at WMU and came back this year to teach Beginning Modern and Jazz Skill Building. When asked how she got into teaching dance Angie responds, "Always knew I wanted to. I used to watch Nina, Jane and Lindsey balancing their dance careers with little ones at home. I wanted that life. It's a lot harder than I thought!" In addition to teaching at Western, Angie has taught at Grand Valley State University, Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and several area schools and studios. She also taught Beginning Modern at the ACDFCA conference held at WMU this March.



When asked what it is like to be an alum teaching in the department Angie responds

"I love it. I told Nina 'I accept (the position) with bells on.' I loved being a student. Oddly, the current students are a lot younger and smaller than we ever were."

When asked about her favorite memory as a student at Western Angie shares that it was "dressing up as Wendy for Halloween with keys clipped to my leotard." Her favorite teaching memory? "Maybe not a favorite memory, but a favorite feeling. I feel Lindsey. It's been 14 years since I've graduated, and her 'stuff' still comes out in my teaching. I like the idea that maybe I'm keeping her spirit alive in the department. And I hope I'm making her proud."

Aside from teaching, Angie has danced the last two years in an independent project called *Arctic Journey*, choreographed by John and Elizabeth Kilbourne from Grand Valley State University. Prior to their arrival, she co-directed a modern company in Grand Rapids with fellow alum Melissa (Johnson) Chapman (1996) for about 5 years though a local arts organization. During that time Angie received the 2002 statewide Maggie Allessee New Choreography Award through the Michigan Dance Council. "We've both taken a break to be moms, but I hope to resume soon." Angie also stays busy with her two sons ages 6 and 3. "They are my hobby."

Kathy Williams

“ My name is Kathy Williams, in the old days known as ‘Red.’ I graduated from WMU in April 1981 with a Bachelor of Science degree. Dance Education K-12 was my major, with a Communications minor, with an emphasis on Creative Dramatics. Western didn’t have a Musical Theatre degree then, so I made my own by taking extra classes in theatre, art and dance, knowing the learning would serve me well as a performer and choreographer.

I started dancing as I started to walk and couldn’t imagine any other life than performance and choreography, although theatre, visual arts and poetry kept calling my name. I began teaching and choreographing at a local studio at age 16 and began my career as a Musical Theatre Choreographer at that young age. I continue as an active, successful choreographer in southwest Michigan and have just completed my 108th production! I danced in community and professional theatre, educational and liturgical settings until 1986 when, like football players, I ‘blew’ my left knee. With ice, Tylenol and patience I continue.

The first time I taught at WMU was a Jazz dance class in 1981-82. I was the choreographer for a dance team with the Bronco Marching Band for three years (we take what gigs we can, yes?) Lindsey and Wendy insisted they take jazz, so I taught here and Kalamazoo Valley Community College. At that time I had the first of seven surgeries and serious health problems, so I began to work in retail for the benefits and did “showbiz/dance” at night. Gilmore Brothers’ Department stores supported many of us in the “business” and would work around our crazy schedules. I served as a Sales Associate, Merchandiser, Visual displays, Special Events Assistant, and Fashion Show coordinator-choreographer-model-narrator with Ramona Bernhart for many years. While still in retail, I heard there was an opening at WMU for the class ‘Dance in Elementary Schools,’ applied and began my many years as Part Time Faculty for WMU Dance Department. I love teaching, I love creating assignments and I love that ‘light-bulb-pop-moment-of-understanding-goofy-smile’ students get when they learn something new and have success. I have developed materials and taught: Special Studies in Musical Theatre., Jazz Dance, Musical Theatre Performance Workshop, Dance in Elementary Schools, Roots of Jazz (for dancers and MTPs), and now spend much of the time teaching Experiencing Dance, which counts as a humanities credit for non-dancers. I have taken two exciting workshops in Kalamazoo out of the Lincoln Center in New York and am certified as an Aesthetic Educator, and have begun to teach as a guest artist for Education for the Arts programs in Kalamazoo County. I love to juggle these moments with teaching classes and choreographing for the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, where I have worked since 1978! This will also be my fourth summer teaching drama, dance and art classes for the Gilmore International Piano Festival piano camp for children ages 9-16 at Sherman Lake in Augusta, MI.

I perform occasionally at the Civic, but everyday in the classroom (it’s a great place to try out stand– up comedy material!) I loved WMU as a student and love it as a teacher. My favorite moment as an undergrad was dancing final projects on a snowy afternoon before Christmas vacation in the old Walwood Union ballroom. Clara, Lindsey, Wendy, Eugene and Jane were there and as a blossoming young dancer, surrounded by friends and mentors, knowing friends and family were moments away, I remember thinking ‘Kath, this is a great moment...never forget it.’ And I never have.”



COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN DANCE DEPARTMENT & ATHLETIC TRAINERS

Thanks to the efforts of Professor Jane Baas and Carrie Janiski, WMU dance minor alumna now in medical school at Michigan State University, there were athletic trainers at both the Winter Concert of Dance and Graduating Presentations in Dance. A certified athletic trainer and athletic training interns attended to the performers’ injuries during final rehearsals and performances. Having this kind of expertise had a calming effect on the dancers and the production crew. Beginning this fall, the collaboration will continue with the addition of the athletic trainers and interns to the assessment process for the Dancer Wellness Project which screens all students in Conditioning for Dancers class. For more on this on-going project, visit www.dancewellness.case.edu. Special thanks go to faculty members Jennifer O’Donoghue and Aimee Pienta and the athletic training program for making this possible. It is a great new collaboration!

WMU STUDENT CHOREOGRAPHER'S DANCE SELECTED FOR GALA CONCERT AT THE EAST CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE DANCE FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

A dance by Western Michigan University senior BFA dance major Marissa Staniec was selected for the gala concert at the East Central Conference of the American College Dance Festival Association. The dance, entitled *Carson Keepsake*, was one of 12 selected from 37 dances adjudicated during the conference. The conference, which took place March 5-8, 2008, was hosted by the Department of Dance at Western Michigan University. The gala concert dances were selected by the three adjudicators as the best of college/university dance in the east central region. More than 450 dancers and faculty from eight states attended conference. The distinguished adjudicators for the conference were: Claire Bataille, former leading dancer with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago; Donald McKayle, internationally-renowned choreographer named by the Dance Heritage Coalition "one of America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures: the first 100;" and Igal Perry, the Artistic Director of Peridance Center in New York City.

Carson Keepsake premiered in the October 2007 WMU Orchesis Dance Concert and was featured in the Department of Dance's February 2008 Winter Concert of Dance. The dance is about the balance between our perceptions of reality and imagination. In addition to its selection for the gala concert of the east central conference, Staniec's dance was selected as the alternate to represent the region at the National American College Dance Festival in NYC at Barnard College in June 2008.

Marissa Staniec is a dual major in dance and communications from Sterling Heights, Michigan. She has been a scholarship recipient since 2005, receiving the Jean Warner Labelle dance scholarship, the Ethel Perry Eaton dance scholarship and most recently the Dalton Exceptional Dance Major scholarship for 2007- 2008 year. She was selected by audition to perform in two of the Department of Dance's "Great Works" choreographed by Doug Varone and George Faison. She has performed at the Kennedy Center in the 2006 national conference of the American College Dance Festival Association and in the 2005 Masters of African American Choreography concert series.



Carson Keepsake by Marissa Staniec. Pictured are dancers Jackie Nowicki & Erica Pedersen

WMU DANCE IN PRINT

This summer, look for another article in Dance Teacher magazine by Associate Professor Sharon Garber. The article takes a look at the *Dark Elegies* Great Works residency by Willy Shives. Alumna Katrina Phillip was featured in an article in the April 2008 issue of Dancer magazine. The article is entitled *Getting There: Leading Your Students to the Great White Way* and discusses paths to the Broadway stage.

PARTNERS IN DANCE UPDATE

For Partners in Dance it was another banner year. Membership contributions exceeded last year's by nearly \$3,000, with a total of \$14,000+ in contributions. Because of the generosity of members, Partners in Dance allocated \$8,000 in scholarships for the 08-09 academic year. In addition, for the first time, Partners in Dance has allocated \$2,500 to help students cover some of the costs related to summer dance study. Eleven students were awarded scholarships to attend workshops such as the American Dance Festival, the Paul Taylor Summer Intensive, and the City Ballet of San Diego Summer Intensive.

Activities that helped bring greater awareness of dance to the Kalamazoo community included hosting a trip to the Detroit Opera House to see the Miami City Ballet. In addition, Partners in Dance awarded the second Community Dance Advocacy Award to Cori Terry, artistic director of Wellspring, Cori Terry and Dancers. The Great Works Dinner was held in the spacious Grand Tier of Miller Auditorium on opening night of the Winter Concert of Dance. At the dinner, guest artists Willy Shives and Eddie Taketa previewed the Great Works dances. Through the efforts of Partners in Dance, nearly \$2,000 has been added to the Great Works Dance Project endowment. This endowment helps provide funds to support residencies and production costs (including licensing, costumes, and sets) for Great Works dances. Partners in Dance also hosted lovely receptions for the fall and winter dance concerts, and the East Central Conference of the American College Dance Festival, and will co-host a brunch for graduating seniors.

The Department of Dance is so fortunate to have Partners in Dance. Membership funds help make so much possible for our students. Look for the membership drive in late August/early September. If you would like to be on our mailing list to receive the Partners in Dance annual membership appeal, please let us know. Thanks for another great year, Partners!

TRANSITIONS

At the end of the Spring semester we will say "good-bye" to three individuals who have contributed so much to the Department of Dance. Rosemary Hubek, our office coordinator, will retire at the end of April. We will miss her incredible spreadsheets, research know-how, and good cheer. Tony Calucci has resigned to pursue his many entrepreneurial projects. Tony has been a great mentor to our students and has helped move our recruitment efforts forward. The department has had a long association with Tony and we expect that relationship to continue into the future. Rhonda Cinotto taught modern and jazz during the 07-08 academic year, and ushered in freshmen students by teaching our new course entitled Freshman Experience. Rhonda will return to her hometown of Seattle to work at the University of Washington. We wish Rosemary, Tony and Rhonda all the best as they start new phases in their lives!

FIRST WMU DEPARTMENT OF DANCE CHAIR PASSES AWAY

We are sad to report the passing of Elisabeth Hetherington, the first chair of Western Michigan University's Department of Dance. Elisabeth, known as Bits to her friends, passed away on October 31, 2007 in Loveland, CO. She came to WMU in 1963 as a member of the Women's Physical Education Department and was instrumental in the establishment of the Department of Dance. She served as the department's first chair from 1972-1979. Following her tenure at WMU, she moved to Colorado to serve as the director of the dance program at Colorado State University. According to Bob Luscombe, who served as associate dean when Bits was department chair, "Elisabeth was an exceptional spokesperson and advocate for the discipline of dance. She mentored the dean and associate dean about the discipline and what it takes to have an outstanding dance program on a university campus."



Bits earned a B.S. degree from Miami University (Ohio), an M.A. degree from The Ohio State University and an Ed.D. degree from Colorado State College. According to friend Sally Fitt, Bits "enjoyed going to various dance, theater and music productions, writing in a writing group, going to political and book club meetings with friends, reading, travelling, selling and buying houses, playing with her cat, and telling jokes" during retirement. In her writing group she wrote a series of short stories entitled, "Elisabeth with an S" that she self-published. Bits forged great friendships with faculty and students and maintained those friendships throughout her lifetime. She is survived by three nieces and nephews.

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**" E L E V A T I N G T H E
H U M A N C O N D I T I O N
T H R O U G H T H E
A R T S "**

2008-2009 Audition Dates

Friday, October 17, 2008

Friday, November 14, 2008

Friday, February 20, 2009



WMU Department of Dance

Faculty—Staff

Jane Baas, Professor

Tony Calucci, Assistant Professor

Frank Chaves, Adjunct Professor

Rhonda Cinotto, Faculty Specialist II

David Curwen, Associate Professor

Anders Dahlberg, Part-time Instructor

Jill Dailey, Graduate Assistant

Sharon Garber, Associate Professor

Dorothy Giovannini, Ballet Accompanist Coordinator

Rosemary Hubek, Office Coordinator

Nikol Mejeur, Part-time Instructor

Jeff Moehle, Modern/Jazz Accompanist Coordinator

Nina Nelson, Professor and Chair

Debra Norton, Part-time Instructor

Carolyn Pavlik, Assistant Professor

Patricia Plasko, Education for the Arts

Megan Slayter, Assistant Professor

David Smith, Part-time Instructor

Kathryn Williams, Part-time Instructor

Angie Yetzke, Part-time Instructor

Happy Spring!