



dance at illinois

LOCATE CENTER. ● AND GO FROM THERE.

# pivot



# locate center

From Department Head Jan Erkert

I SIT IN MY NEW HOME, RIGHT SMACK IN THE CENTER OF THE UNITED STATES, CONTEMPLATING THE MYSTERIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF THIS OPEN SPACE WITH THE EARTHY SMELL OF GRASS.

The vibrant towns of Champaign and Urbana are attracting a gathering of dance artists unlike we have seen anywhere, anytime. In my first year, as leader of the Dance Department I was delighted to welcome Tere O'Connor, celebrated avant-garde dance maker, as he joined our ranks. In January 2008, one of the leading figures in dance improvisation, Kirstie Simson, will settle into our department, and Jennifer Monson, an environmental activist and dance artist, will relocate to our energetic hub. (See Faculty Update on p.6) They join an already strong group of core faculty, which includes Sara Hook, Philip Johnston, Linda Lehovc, Rebecca Nettl-Fiol, Cynthia Oliver, John Toenjes, Renée Wadleigh, and Yutian Wong. Champaign-Urbana is also a Mecca for somatic research and training. There are two Alexander Technique training programs, both Pilates and Yoga certification programs, numerous innovative healers exploring energetic techniques, not to mention brilliant scientists exploring mind/body connections. Author and interdisciplinary artist Jane Desmond is now calling these spaces home, as well.

What draws these artists here? Maybe it is the endless grassy plains, but perhaps this strong dose of central intensity allows us to move in new and unexpected directions, crossing invisible boundaries of space and time, language and culture, domains and disciplines. No wonder *New York Times* writer,

Gia Kourlas used the word "progressive" to describe our Department in *Time Out New York*.

Whether it is exploring the space of a river as students in Tere O'Connor's class did this year in collaboration with Landscape Architects—or—collaborating with the U of I Black Chorus as Cynthia Oliver did in her joyous work *Whisper to Shout*—or—participating in tele-immersion, web performing, virtual spaces, and interactive performances (see Creative Process/Technology articles on p.7)—or—improvising with musicians, dancers, and actors in atriums, parks, or swimming pools under the direction of guest artist Kirstie Simson (see Improvising in Collaborative Spaces on p.9)—or—spilling into bathrooms and parking lots in site-specific dances—or—performing in streets and parks as the Student Dance Movement did this spring—dancers are facilitating new ways to perceive and interact with the world.

Although we are physically located in the center of the nation we don't stay "center" for long. Students and faculty performed at Summer Stages in Massachusetts as part of a collaboration between Associate Professor Sara Hook and David Parker, Artistic Director of The Bang Group. Three of our students were selected to shadow The Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) while in residence on our campus. They also traveled to NYC to take a summer workshop with MMDG and go on tour with the company in Chicago. (see Mark Morris Shadow Program Launched! on p.12). Tere O'Connor will be setting his magnificent work *Winter Belly* on seven alumni living and dancing in NYC. They will return home to Champaign-Urbana



Martin Novak, Photographer

- New faculty member Kirstie Simson performing in the Boneyard Arts Festival at the Krannert Art Museum during the Branded and On Display exhibit

to perform at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in our Festival Dance 2008 concert. Here to there—we are ready to go anywhere, and our newest faculty members Kirstie and Jennifer are sure to add many unexpected places to travel!

The news of our extraordinary faculty is traveling as well, and while we garner national attention, we look forward to the future and imagine a new building for Dance at Illinois. This year graduate students from the School of Architecture worked with us to design a Sustainable Dance Center, which would be as efficient with its energy as dancers are with their bodies. (see Designing Dreams for Dance on p.5).

Big dreams require big support, both financially and emotionally, so we look forward to building connections throughout the year with our friends from the past and the present to partner with us in making our vision a reality. President B. Joseph and Mrs. Mary White have generously offered to host a party, *New Dances at Sunset*, in Fall 2007 at the U of I president's home to celebrate the Department of Dance. Our guests will enjoy a dance specifically created for the formal gardens at the president's house. We are also hoping to produce a performance of Tere O'Connor's masterwork *Winter Belly* at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in NYC in Fall 2007 performed by alumni.

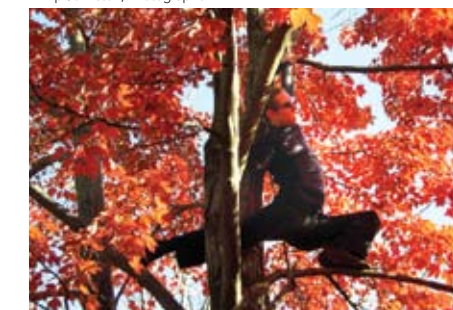
In this newly designed annual magazine, *Pivot*, I hope you will enjoy reading about the exciting activities of faculty, students, and alumni both ahead and behind a symbol of the fertile nature and wide-open possibilities of my new home in Illinois.

# 06/07

## looking back 2006–2007

This past year, our students encountered an array of cultures and techniques as guest artists visited from around the world. World-class improvisation artist Kirstie Simson inspired both students and the community during her spring semester residency. Kirstie held a pilot course in interdisciplinary contact improvisation for actors, musicians, and dancers as well as multiple community engagement workshops and performances across campus and the community at large. Stephen Koester, former Co-Artistic Director of Creach/Koester and faculty member at the University of Utah, set a work for MFA candidates for November Playhouse Dance. Lynn Simonson, creator of the Simonson Technique and co-founder of Dance Space Center now called Dance New Amsterdam, shared her expertise in jazz and somatics during her weeklong residency. Through the guest residencies sponsored by the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, students benefited from master classes with Liz Lerman and the Martha Graham Company. In addition, students engaged with the Batsheva Dance Company from Israel, Susan Marshall & Company, and the Mark Morris Dance Group, and were honored to participate in a discussion on *D-Man in the Waters* with Bill T. Jones. The Department also sponsored master classes with the following: Bill Young, Artistic Director, Bill Young and Dancers; David Parker, Artistic Director, The Bang Group; David Marchant of Washington University, St. Louis; and Teena Custer, freelance dance artist based out of Columbus, Ohio. We have a strong commitment to support our alumni, so it was a pleasure to have Aiko Kinoshita (BFA 1995, MFA 1998), Director, Acorn Dance, Seattle and Heather Klopchin (MFA 1998) of St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, return in the fall to perform in Festival Dance 2007 with Linda Lehovc and teach master classes for our students.

Philip Johnston, Photographer



- Guest Artist David Marchant from Washington University performs a Tree Dance on campus



Daniel R. James, Photographer

- Chun-Chen Chang and Hsin-Yi Hsiang improvise at the Dance + Architecture reception where the new designs were unveiled for a Sustainable Center for Dance on the U of I Campus

# dance + architecture

## shared space, movement, and light

By Department Head Jan Erkert

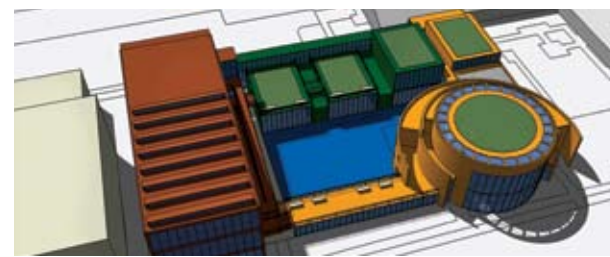
There is a deep, meaningful relationship between the Department of Dance and the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois. When I became Head of the Department I invited faculty from Dance, Landscape Architecture, and Architecture to celebrate our linked history at the Erlanger House. The spectacular Erlanger House was built for the inimitable founder of the Department, Margaret Erlanger in 1964 by renowned Professor Emeritus of Architecture at the U of I Jack Baker. It is a dancer's dream space with a studio overlooking outdoor gardens, a sunken, sparsely-furnished living room, and unintrusive glass and brick walls that seamlessly link the entire house. I have a special fondness for this house. In the 1980's I was a guest artist at the U of I and had the extraordinary opportunity to live temporarily

The spectacular Erlanger House was built for the inimitable founder of the Department, Margaret Erlanger, in 1964 by renowned Professor Emeritus of Architecture at the U of I Jack Baker.



(from left o right) Mrs. Mary White, Jack Baker, Jan Erkert, and President B. Joseph White at the Erlanger House

in this unique home. Living daily in a simple yet elegant space where the indoors and outdoors are one, transformed my aesthetic sense of time. Jack Baker says, "I think of architecture as one of the performing arts – an art dealing with space, movement, and light. Once the initial performance of creating the physical space is finished, the living performance continues, affecting the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of all who come in contact with it." New relationships and activities spawned from this small interdisciplinary gathering I hosted; Tere O'Connor collaborated with David Hays from Landscape Architecture and we began to imagine a new sustainable dance center that would house our future dreams for the Department.



• **Building A:** Kyuwan Kim designed a facility that will not only be danced in—but danced on. Audiences will not only see dance in the new performing spaces, but be able to enjoy a glass of wine in the café while watching dances in the reflecting pool and on the grass rooftops



• **Building B:** Mathew Niermann's design allows us to dance into the sky, attracting attention to the rehearsal process. The micro-wind turbines harness the energy around us and the recycled rubber interior floors with radiant heat provide warm springy floors, which will not only help the environment, but also keep our bodies free from injuries

## designing dreams for dance

Dance at Illinois has ambitions to become a national epicenter for the development of dancers/artists/leaders. We are uniquely positioned to make this goal a reality. Our faculty and our performance facilities at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts are unparalleled. But in order to realize this vision, we need the tools for research, which for dancers means space. This new space on campus for Dance will not only allow for a celebration of dance, but it will be an innovative example of sustainable energy. Dancers should and will lead the way toward a new relationship with the earth. Imagine a kinetic dance floor generator that harnesses the energy of dancers jumping and turns it into electricity to heat the building. Imagine a building that uses energy as efficiently as a dancer. Imagine green roofs that not only cool the space but also provide outdoor performance spaces. Our creative process will be transparent as we welcome the public into our space with cafés overlooking studios, reception spaces, new flexible performance and rehearsal facilities, technology studios, and new offices for the growing faculty.

As our first step toward this vision, Dance at Illinois collaborated with Assistant Professor Thomas Kamm in the School of Architecture and four [first-year] graduate students to create designs for this Sustainable Center for Dance. Each designer was challenged to create an architectural vocabulary which represented their response to the mission of the new center and the proposed site. The results were inspiring. These designs will surely serve as a springboard for the future development of our dream.

## a creative jump

By Kate Corby, MFA 2007

I fell in love with Budapest's old world charm, decadent cafés, and tree-lined boulevards as a bright-eyed exchange student in 1997. I knew even then that I would like to return to the city later in life. In turn, I began research on dance in Hungary for my Fulbright application in the summer of 2005.

During the Fulbright Scholarship application process, I was invited to teach a modern technique class for pedagogy students at the Hungarian Dance Academy in the fall of 2006. This affiliation, I believe, won me the Fulbright fellowship. With limited Hungarian language skills, I navigated through the confusion and joy of a semester with 15 talented and inspiring young women, most of whom spoke little or no English. This course, along with other research, was part of a larger project exploring the communicative cross-cultural potential of dance, a subject I am particularly passionate about in our current global political climate.

My experiences as a Fulbright Scholar in Hungary affected me long after my return to Urbana in January 2007. My experiences while abroad were a direct inspiration for my thesis work, *Rift*, which was performed in Urbana this May by a cast of American and Taiwanese U of I dancers. The work explored the construction of identity in the twenty-first century, with a particular interest in transience, community, and language. It was extremely gratifying to be able to apply my rich experiences of living in Budapest to my creative process at home. The result had a huge impact on my choreographic perspective, pushing me forward as an artist. Without the curricular flexibility and individualized nature of the MFA program in the Department of Dance, this creative jump would not have been possible. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to produce my work and will savor the entire process for the rest of my life.

## the politics of latinidad

Dr. Cindy Garcia, Chicana feminist ethnographer, was a Guest Lecturer in the Department of Dance in November 2006. Her lecture, *Sequins, Double Dips, and Silver Shoes: The Politics of Latinidad on Salsa Dance Floors*, took place in the Levis Center. Dr. Garcia has been studying the political and social affects of salsa dancing and the Latin Culture since 1993 and has developed unique insights on the topic of dancing Salsa in an age of globalization. She taught a master class in Salsa for all dance students, a class in Dance History, and participated in a community outreach project for the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

Dan Merlo, Photographer



• Chun-Chen Chang, Whitney Hubbard, and Kuan-Yu Chen in Fulbright recipient Kate Corby's *Rift* inspired by her residency in Budapest

## jennifer monson and kirstie simson join dance at illinois!

### Jennifer Monson

New faculty member Jennifer Monson\*, environmental activist and choreographer, will be a transformative force on campus through her innovative projects integrating the sciences and the arts. She has been brought to our Campus and our Department as part of an innovative cluster hire organized by the Environmental Council at U of I. Titled *Human Connections to Global Environmental Change*, the goal of the cluster hire is to “recruit faculty with outstanding scholarly achievement and demonstrated leadership capacity in connecting people and society to global environmental and ecological change.”

Jennifer Monson has been transforming the nature of cross-disciplinary research among artists, environmentalists, scientists, and urban designers in order to, in her own words, “...illuminate our kinetic understanding of the world,” and to move people to social and political action. In the last six years she created the *BIRD BRAIN* projects, three comprehensive tours following migratory animals, including the Gray Whales

(Spring 2001), Ospreys (Fall 2002), and Ducks and Geese (Spring 2004). She has also created iLAND, (Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art Nature and Dance). This organization raises funds, implements selection processes, and financially supports numerous innovative environmental and arts related projects submitted by artists and scientists.

Ms. Monson has received two New York Dance and Performance Awards (Bessies): one in 1997 for *Sender* and one in 2005 for both the *BIRD BRAIN* project as well as for Sustained Achievement in the Dance Field. She has received major fellowships including a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2003, a Foundation for Contemporary Art Fellowship in 1998, numerous National Endowment for the Arts Choreographer Fellowships, and two New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowships. Jennifer has performed at top venues such as the Baryshnikov Arts Center and Dance Theater Workshop in NYC, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. In addition, she has consistently performed in museums, nature centers, and site-specific outdoor spaces in order to bring dance to people who have little access to the arts. She has been featured in numerous publications including *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, *Time Out New York*, *Dance Magazine*, *The Miami Herald*, and *The Chicago Tribune*.

\* pending Board of Trustees approval



Anja Hitzenberger, Photographer

- Environmental activist and choreographer Jennifer Monson



- Improvisational master Kirstie Simson

### Kirstie Simson

New faculty member Kirstie Simson\* will build and expand the field of improvisation here in the Midwest while connecting us to communities and artists throughout the world.

Kirstie Simson's presence has been explosive in the contemporary dance scene, bringing audiences into contact with the vitality of pure creation in moment after moment of virtuosic improvisation. Called “a force of nature” by *The New York Times*, she is an award-winning dancer and teacher who has “immeasurably enriched and expanded the boundaries of New Dance,” according to *Time Out Magazine*, London. Simson's eternal subject is freedom, as she dares to go beyond the boundaries of form and structure to create movement out of the rhythm of life itself. She is a renowned improvisational performer and has performed with other master improvisational artists such as Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith, Lisa Nelson, Andrew Harwood, Chris Aiken, Russell Malliphant, Ming-Shen Ku, Christian Burns, and Andrew Morrish. She is much in demand as a master teacher and has taught for such companies as DV8 Physical Theater Company and Siobhan Davies Dance Company in London, Mudances Company in Barcelona, Ku & Dancers in Taiwan, Pauline de Groot Dance Company in Amsterdam, and Sasha Waltz and Guests in Germany. Kirstie has been invited to perform and teach at major international improvisational festivals such as the 10th Anniversary of Contact Improvisation at St. Marks Church in NYC, the Jacobs Pillow “inside Out” series, the New York Improvisation Festival and Dance Theater Workshop in NYC, the Dance Umbrella Festival in London, Dartington Festival in Devon, International Summer School in Tokyo, and Hong Kong Dance Academy. She has been a regular guest teacher at P.A.R.T.S. School in Brussels and the Laban Center in London. She is currently working on a film about Dance Improvisation with renowned dance filmmaker Katrina McPerson.

\* pending Board of Trustees approval

## interactive dance

By Assistant Professor John Toenjes, Music Director

Dance and technology are coming together. Video projections, dances composed specifically for video, and Internet collaborations are all broadening the scope of choreography. Another genre of dance technology, known as “interactive dance,” incorporates a computer into the choreography. A dancer wearing a suit with motion sensors is tracked by means of a camera and communicates with a computer to control sound, lighting, and video projections. As revolutionary as this sounds, this alone does not make “interactive” dance. Interactive dance requires performers to have a computer “partner” whose independent and unpredictable response must directly affect the form or the performance of the piece.

Profound changes in the relationship between dance and music, video, and staging are developing through interactive dance. Movement can cause the video to alter speed or aspect, the lighting to change, or the music to sound which in turn influences the choreography. These advancements are developing a new kind of artist, one who is fluent in the arts and sciences because performance elements are created through an interactive system.

A team of several artists including myself, working as composer/programmer, choreographer/dancer/musician David Marchant from Washington University, St. Louis, and video artist/programmer/composer Ben Smith, U of I graduate research assistant, created the interactive work *Leonardo's Chimes* which premiered at November Playhouse Dance in 2006. The movements of the dancer, tracked by the computer

- *Leonardo's Chimes*, a collaboration between David Marchant (dancer) and John Toenjes (musician) was performed at November Playhouse Dance 2006

Dan Merlo, Photographer



# creative process: technology

## tele-immersion: a virtual duet

By Renata Sheppard, MFA 2007

via an overhead camera, cause the music to sound (if he stood still, you would hear nothing). However, the computer decides when to change the musical pitches, requiring him to periodically change his conception of the music score. As the video projection changes, he moves with a different quality to achieve a unity of effect between movement and projection. The dance had to be conceived with the capabilities of the system in mind, which was created for and by the artists.

This area of dance technology relates to computers as artistic partners rather than mere tools. It also redefines ideas of what a computer interface is (we don't type on computer keyboards, we dance them!), and what goes into the making of an artist. Dance is making important contributions to the development of modern art and technology in the twenty-first century.



- On December 8, 2006 the first public tele-immersive dance performance was held at the UC Berkely Center for Information Technology. Renata Sheppard and Lisa Wymore (MFA 1998) were featured in a tele-immersive duet that was danced in a virtual room across thousands of miles

The interface for the presentation of dance is constantly evolving. Cross-disciplinary research between fields is a new movement, creating an environment that is charged with creativity, technical knowledge, and adventurous minds. As a graduate student at U of I, I have had the unique opportunity to be involved in the advanced tele-immersive cyber infrastructure project, called 3D Tele-Immersion, or TEEVE, Tele-immersive Environments for Everybody. The Thomas M. Siebel Center for Computer Science at the U of I, in collaboration with the University of California at Berkeley, computer science professors Klara Nahrstedt and Ruzena Bajcsy are exploring the world of virtual space. An advanced 360 degree surrounding camera clusters, captures, streams, and renders the images of two dancers, one at Illinois and one at Berkeley, into a virtual room projected onto a large screen. The physical body and mind are transported to another dimension where movement, choreography, and collaboration expand their potential. Digital options allow size manipulation, special effects, and many interesting possibilities, such as dancing with oneself. This offers new avenues for teaching, collaborating, and making dance. In the Fall of 2007, we are beginning research to plan a course in 3-D tele-immersive choreography. How does the virtual space challenge creativity? How can we use tele-immersion as a choreographic and possibly archival tool for dance? This project is an exciting step into the avant-garde that promises to impact the field of dance and thinking within the humanities.

## a learning teacher

By Professor Tere O'Connor

My leap into the first semester of my appointment in the Department of Dance happily coincided with the emergence of some new ideas I have about teaching. I have been very fulfilled and surprised by the work I have done with young artists for the past 15 years. Teaching creative thinking through my "making dances" course has altered my own art by forcing me to confront the same questions I offer the students. Over time, this has dismantled some assumptions about teaching — above all the role of teacher as keeper and dispenser of knowledge. It has brought a sense of searching, which I readily employ in my choreography, into my teaching. I try to be a "learning teacher", one who engages in information gathering alongside the students by offering navigational guidance into the complexity of knowing. I am interested in transparency to let the students in on my own methods to clarify and demystify the process of making. I have choreographed for many years, and what I thought were going to be my intentions as a young maker kept shifting as I built my process. In the hands of an art form whose most fundamental attribute is change, I began to let go of "goals" and allowed process to take over. This empirical creative research taught me that choreographic information is investigational and systemic. It offers few facts and shifts frequently in response to the situational dynamics of the moment in which it is created. I find that these ideas are applicable to all learning and that many themes can be looked at through the choreographic lens of changeability and flow.

Two projects in particular were born of these thoughts. One of these was a collaborative course I taught together with Professor David L. Hays of the School of Landscape Architecture, which involved his students and mine working on collaborative projects in a course called "performing space". It involved several experiments which brought into evidence shared elements of architecture and dance. The class ended with a final project created by the students. Each group was comprised of half landscape architect students and half dance students. The generative word we used for this project was Darfur.

The second project was a work that I created on students from our Department. I, too, used the keyword Darfur in an attempt to ask the same questions as the students and challenge beliefs about what art can do in the face of injustice. This unanswerable question drove me to make a piece in the studio I would not have imagined before. The piece was entitled *DEE* or Pondering the suffering of fellow humans created by other humans in the Darfur region of Africa and the importance or futility of making art in response to subjects like these when maybe it would just be better to go there and help. I want to learn and to teach how choreographic thought can offer new methods for processing information and foster different, less polarizing types of engagement. These projects allowed me to bring my own research into my teaching in a way that is so correct for a university education. Along with the marvelous interactions I had with students, faculty and the community of Champaign-Urbana, these projects contributed to a year that was much more than I could have hoped for.

Dan Merlo, Photographer



• Hsin-Yi Hsiang in her work double shot baby

Daniel R. James, Photographer



• Professor Tere O'Connor rehearsing DEE in the Nevada Studios



• Improvising at the Krannert Art Museum

Daniel R. James, Photographer

## re-examing work through the critical process

By Hsin-Yi Hsiang, BFA 2007

September 25, 2006 was a memorable day for me as a choreographer. I was honored to present a solo work titled, happened (minus one), for a Liz Lerman Critical Response workshop. This workshop was intended to stimulate dialogue between students and faculty of the Dance and Theatre Departments. Through the four steps designed by Liz Lerman, I was encouraged to view my work as a process instead of a final presentation, and was eager to explore my solo more deeply.

Lerman opened the workshop with an invitation to the audience to observe what was meaningful about my solo while encouraging opinions and images. Thoughts that particularly inspired me were: "the work touched a piece of viscera" and "the presence of heat brought by juxtaposition of cold." This sharing discourse offered me diverse perspectives and allowed me to re-examine my solo.

Lerman led us to the next step, which was for the choreographer to ask the observers questions. I was particularly interested in how observers' emotional states were stirred up. For instance, I asked, "How did you really feel after viewing the work?" These answers reminded me to pay closer attention to my sensations and the arrangement of the movement dynamics in each section.

The third step involved audience questions. The audience raised profound questions about the choice of props, which were plastic and ice, while others were wondering about the use of music and text. Their observations made me curious about what worked or what needed more investigation. With these questions in mind, I discovered that the structure of my solo and how the music layered through the work needed further clarification.

At the last part of workshop, Lerman solicited the observers' opinions. She demonstrated how to make requests, by asking, "I have an opinion about your work, would you like to hear

about it?" I appreciated this step because sometimes it is easy to get carried away by other people's opinions. For example, a professor from the Theatre Department commented about the use of my "deadpan" delivery in performance. I had made a conscious choice to be calm, a decision he felt made it easier to follow my solo and allowed him to appreciate the humor. Through this process, I found myself interested in the chemistry between my solo and the observers.

With all the insightful offerings and exchanges, I would like to emphasize how much this workshop invigorated me to revisit my solo and further investigate the essence of the dance. The Department continued the Critical Response process throughout the year, discussing works of faculty and students. These critical sessions were invaluable in building our abilities to discuss and analyze dances.

## improvising in collaborative spaces

By Janis Dingels, BFA 2008

During her time here, Kirstie Simson was, to borrow an overused metaphor, "a breath of fresh air." Her process-oriented work gave dancers a chance to find their own movement vocabularies and voices. While it is true that Kirstie brought together students of different technical levels and varied experience in improvisation, the most incredible part of her work was her engagement with the rest of the world. Kirstie brought dance to the community through her Saturday Contact Improvisation classes for the public (organized by local community member Todd Presson) and through her active search for different rehearsal and performance spaces. The Siebel Center, Temple Buell Hall, the Krannert Art Museum and Campus Rec Center-East's (CRCE) pool were all utilized for dance improvisation.

Kirstie collaborated with local musician Jason Finkleman, a dance accompanist and an incredible artist in his own right, to explore the relationship between improvised music and movement. Working together as equals, Kirstie and Jason's rehearsal process also allowed students to dance with amazing musicians from the local community. The interdisciplinary quality of Kirstie's explorations led to involvement with adventurous visual artists, who also moved their bodies while working with dancers in experimental sessions that included drawing. Daniel James, a talented photographer and production coordinator for the Department of Dance, often photographed rehearsals and performances to give dancers the opportunity to see their improvisation through his photographic art.

Considering the plethora of artists associated with Kirstie's work, the movement and dancing itself could have gotten lost, but Kirstie never allowed that to happen. She created a safe space in rehearsal that allowed dancers to experiment and taught them to trust their own bodies. Through bodywork, dancers increased their sensitivity and in turn, their responsiveness to other bodies which led to coordinated group energy. This unique rehearsal environment followed the group into performative settings, bringing the heart of the process to all who watched. In an environment where it is so easy to stay within the confines of the dance performance, Kirstie Simson encouraged everyone to reach outside those boundaries. Kirstie will continue to inspire new risks, collaborations, and innovative processes in the semesters to come.

# creative process

# dance at illinois

LOCATE CENTER. ● AND GO FROM THERE.

- Alitra Cartman, Laura Chiamonte, and Catherine Hamilton in Paige Cunningham's *Just Add Flower*

Dan Merlo, Photographer



- Laura Chiamonte and Renay Aumiller in Erkia Randall's *Tea for Thirteen*



Dan Merlo, Photographer

- David Marchant in *Leonardo's Chimes*, a collaboration between John Toenjes and Marchant



Dan Merlo, Photographer



- *Whisper to Shout*, Cynthia Oliver's collaboration with Ollie Watts Davis and the U of I Black Chorus

Dan Merlo, Photographer

- Aiko Kinoshita (BFA 1995, MFA 1998) in Linda Lehevec's *Unveiled*



Dan Merlo, Photographer

- (from left to right) Angela Fleddermann Miller and Justin Jacobs in *You Too* co-choreographed by Sara Hook and David Parker; Rebecca Netti-Fiol's *Café au Lait*



Dan Merlo, Photographer



Daniel R. James, Photographer



College of Fine and Applied Arts  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

[www.dance.uiuc.edu](http://www.dance.uiuc.edu)

# real world opportunities

## mark morris shadow program launched!

By Associate Professor Rebecca Nettle-Fiol

The Mark Morris Shadow Program was launched this year through the generosity of Mark Morris and Executive Director Nancy Umanoff, along with Krannert Center for the Performing Arts Director Mike Ross. Nineteen students applied for the three fellowships, one of which was designated for someone keenly interested in teaching and community outreach. The fellowships went to dance juniors Rosemary Robertson and Whitney Hubbard and sophomore Nicholas Wagner who were invited to shadow the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) during their residency in March and take company classes, watch rehearsals, and join company members for dinners and other social events.

The students' names were included in the company's tour book, giving their schedules along with the rest of the company members' during their week at the Krannert Center. Rosemary Robertson's responsibilities included assisting company members in outreach activities.

"I especially enjoyed dancing with them at Cunningham Children's Home, and I'm excited to spend a week in Brooklyn learning more about the company and their repertory."

- U of I undergraduate students (from left to right) Nicholas Wagner, Rosemary Robertson, and Whitney Hubbard at the Mark Morris Dance Building for the Mark Morris Summer Intensive Program



The second phase of the Shadow Program was at the Mark Morris Summer Intensive Program, which the three students attended on full scholarship, and the third is to shadow the company during their Chicago tour in August 2007.

Whitney Hubbard commented, "I think the best part of my experience with the Shadow Program was the firsthand look into the professional dance environment outside of academia. The Program has opened my eyes to the gap between the university setting and a professional company. Now I am even more aware of how I can be active in bridging that gap for myself and others." The Department thanks Mark Morris, Nancy Umanoff, and Mike Ross for supporting this invaluable program for our students.

- After ballet class Summer Intensive 2007



## summer high school dance intensive

The University of Illinois Summer High School Dance Intensive expanded this year providing an insight into university training to more students than ever before. Talented young dancers from all over the country came together to study with faculty and alumni of the Department of Dance. This truly memorable week included classes in ballet, modern, jazz, improvisation, and composition. On the last day, family and friends were treated to a student performance that included combinations from class as well faculty repertory. Although the days were long and very tiring, these energetic young dancers still made time for fun. They toured the campus while eating their favorite ice cream, dressed up and attended School of Music recitals in the gorgeous Smith Hall, played games on the quad, watched movies, did crafts, and of course, cooled off in the pool. If you or someone you know is interested in the Summer Intensive for June 2008 please contact us at (217) 333-1010 or dance@uiuc.edu.

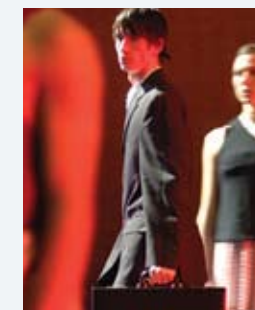
THIS PAST YEAR WE HONORED OUR RECURRING STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP DONORS AT A RECEPTION PRIOR TO FESTIVAL DANCE 2007. WE SINCERELY THANK JACK BAKER, JACQUELYN AND DONALD CARDUCCI, MARILYN MOE FIEDLER, BARBARA HORNE, KAREN KEENER, PATRICIA KNOWLES, WANDA AND BRUNO NETTL, AND THE LATE VANNIE SHEIRY, WHO HAVE PROVIDED ONGOING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR OUR STUDENTS.

## dance department scholarship fund

This fund provides funding for students to participate in festivals and workshops. The Department also has four endowed scholarship awards that welcome contributions all year long through the University of Illinois Foundation:

- Vannie L. Sheiry Memorial Dance Fund (Est. 1994)—Awarded in recognition of outstanding performance
- Moe Family Dance Award Fund (Est. 1996)—Awarded to a student with the potential for unique contributions to the profession which may lie outside the realm of performance in the traditional sense
- Wanda M. Nettle Prize for Student Choreography (Est. 2002)—Rewards and encourages student creative work
- Patricia Knowles Graduate Travel Award (Est. 2006)—Awarded to a Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) candidate to be used for travel and study that deepens his or her artistic life

- (from left to right) Lisa Carducci Memorial Scholarship awardee Hsin-Yi Hsiang; Mary Elizabeth Hamstrom Scholarship recipient Esteban Donoso; Members of the Carducci family pose with alumni and past Carducci award recipient Kathleen Fisher (MFA 2003) at a fall 2006 reception honoring recurring student scholarship donors



- (from left to right) Patricia Knowles with award recipient Janet Charleston; Marilyn Moe Fiedler with award recipient Renata Sheppard; Wanda and Bruno Nettle, Rebecca Nettle-Fiol with award recipient Kate Corby; Karen Keener with award recipient Renay Aumiller

## 06-07 student scholarship recipients

Lisa Carducci Memorial Scholarship—Hsin-Yi Hsiang  
 Vannie L. Sheiry Memorial Dance Scholarship—Renay Aumiller  
 Moe Family Dance Award—Renata Sheppard  
 Patricia Knowles Graduate Travel Award—Janet Charleston  
 Mary Elizabeth Hamstrom Award—Esteban Donoso  
 Wanda M. Nettle Prize for Student Choreography—Kate Corby  
 Mark Morris Dance Group Shadow Program—Whitney Hubbard, Rosemary Robertson, Nicholas Wagner

## department awards

Senior Magnolia Award—Kate Mcllvain (award funded by the graduating seniors of the Class of 2006)  
 Summer Study Scholarship—Julia Radomyski, Amy Swanson  
 Graduate Magnolia Award—Justin Jacobs  
 Service to Department Award—Elisabeth Conner, Monica Graves, Kate Mcllvain  
 Performance, Teaching & Choreography "Combo" Award—Elisabeth Conner  
 Potential Powerhouse Award—Corie Patterson  
 Powerhouse Performer Award—Alitra Cartman  
 ACDFGA Gala Acknowledgement Award—Steve May, Rebecca O'Connell  
 Student Activism Award—Janis Dingels, Steve May  
 Outstanding Teaching Certificate—Janet Charleston, Paige Cunningham, Angela Fleddermann Miller  
 Scholar Award—Esteban Donoso  
 Emerging Choreographic Voice Award—Tess Dworman



• Elizabeth Johnson, MFA 2003

“...everyone’s continuing encouragement changed my life and put me back on track to be uniquely and bravely myself.”

## featured alumni

By Lecturer Philip Johnston

Elizabeth Johnson’s time at the U of I as an MFA candidate in dance and faculty member prepared her well for the future even if it was not in the ways she had anticipated. Meeting and marrying fellow alum Luc Vanier was not something she could have imagined and now their partnership makes so much of what she is doing possible. They have relocated to Milwaukee where Luc teaches as an Assistant Professor in the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Dance Department.

Elizabeth has become certified in Laban Movement Analysis. She received an academic excellence tuition scholarship from Columbia College Chicago to complete her studies. She has taught somatic theory courses and technique at the University of Wisconsin in Madison (2005/2006) and currently teaches at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

Elizabeth is a regular guest artist with David Parker and The Bang Group, performing Parker’s *Nut/Cracked* at Summer Stages, Dance Theatre Workshop in tours to Boston and Scotland, and at the International Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Elizabeth and Luc continue to perform David Parker and Sara Hook duets and solos.

As her network of colleagues has expanded so have opportunities to choreograph. Elizabeth taught a residency and choreographed for students at Texas Christian University and adjudicated the Fort Worth Dance Festival. David Parker presented her work at the West End Theatre in NYC, which led to an invitation to present work for DancenOw’s DancemOpolitan at Joe’s Pub in September 2006.

Elizabeth and Luc decided to independently produce their own work with their company “Your Mother Dances” that underscored their aesthetic values. The performances opened in May 2005 at the Danceworks Studio Theatre in Milwaukee and were sold out and praised by the press. Elizabeth was “an instant star” of the local dance scene. They have produced two more shows and continue to garner critical praise. They have a small group of committed dancers with whom they are cultivating a distinct look and voice in the Milwaukee arts community. Elizabeth and Luc are raising three children, and this Elizabeth calls this her “real” life.

Of her time in the Department of Dance, Elizabeth states, “The rigor, wisdom, humor, and demand for excellence in Renée, Sara, and Cynthia’s composition, technique and theory courses, Becky’s Kinesiology, Somatic, and Alexander courses, Pat’s survey courses, and everyone’s continuing encouragement changed my life and put me back on track to be uniquely and bravely myself. I had superb artists and thinkers to emulate and the ‘food’ from that time still nourishes and richly feeds me.”

Please visit our website for the latest news on our Alumni!

[www.dance.uiuc.edu/students.html](http://www.dance.uiuc.edu/students.html)

alumni

## future plan

### BFA class of 2007

Future plans for the undergraduate class of 2007 are diverse. Some of this year’s seniors are capitalizing on the variety of their strengths. While continuing their dance training and art-making, they will pursue a variety of careers to support their artistic endeavors. Others have already obtained arts-related positions, including the program director for a new arts center in a Chicago suburb, or are exploring the contemporary dance scene in New York and other US cities. Geographically, their long- term future plans range from teaching dance in Zimbabwe to dancing with Batsheva in Israel or delving into graduate study.



Dan Merlo, Photographer

- Linda Lehovec’s *Passing Fancy*. (from left to right) Elisabeth Conner, Josh Ford, Sarah Hudelson, Monica Graves, Suzanne Mena, Kathryn McIlvain, Tess Dworman, Jennifer Meister, Hsin-Yi Hsiang, and Elizabeth Veile

### MFA class of 2007

2007 MFA graduates are embarking on a variety of positions/ journeys as they scatter across the nation. They will be teaching at Milikin University, Decatur, Illinois, Columbia College Chicago, and the Cunningham studio in NYC. Summer workshops such as ImPuls-Tanz in Austria and Summer Stages in Massachusetts will propel our graduates into the professional dancemaking arena, and they will continue breaking the boundaries into new areas of dance making through projects in tele-immersion at the Siebel Center on the U of I campus. We look forward to seeing them perform on stages in NYC, Chicago, and throughout the world.



Dan Merlo, Photographer

- Stephen Koester’s *3 Light/Gesture*. (from left to right) Justin Jacobs, Paige Cunningham, Angela Fleddermann Miller, Janet Charleston, and Renata Sheppard

## transitions

### fond farewell

This year marks the end of Erika Randall’s three-year appointment as Visiting Assistant Professor. As she relocates to Boulder, as an Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of Colorado, we bid a very heartfelt farewell. Erika has shared her remarkable teaching in multiple disciplines including ballet, modern, dance composition and freshman orientation. Erika’s genuine caring and dedication to students have made her a valued advisor and mentor. She created numerous works for students, performed in faculty work and in a self-produced concert with U of I alum, and friend, Anna Sapozhnikov. This collaboration will continue into next fall when they produce a second concert together in Chicago. Erika was very active in BFA recruitment activities, teaching at ACDFA festivals, National High School Festival and the annual U of I Summer High School Dance Intensive. Erika’s many skills, boundless energy, and extraordinary dancing will be missed greatly by both students and colleagues. We wish her the best in her new adventures!

- Erika Randall performs in *Once Removed* co-choreographed with Guest Artist Teena Custer



Dan Merlo, Photographer



# looking forward

# 07/08

our students will be dancing with not one, but many masters in 2007–2008.

Under the auspices of the American Masterpiece Grant sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and Dance USA, our students will perform Bill T. Jones' classic work *D-Man in the Waters*. Catherine Cabeen will be reconstructing and former Jones company member Janet Lilly will share her experience as an original cast member. Randy Martin, a scholar on public policy and arts activism will present lectures about Bill T.'s continuous work as an artist/political activist. Because this work has become a symbol for the AIDS movement, we will take this opportunity to move into the community to advocate health education and AIDS awareness. Seven of our alumni will have an extraordinary opportunity this year to dance in *Winter Belly*, by master dance maker Tere O'Connor at Festival Dance 2008 and possibly at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in NYC. Ann Murphy of DanceViewTimes.com writes of *Winter Belly*, "Winter in O'Connor's world is an existential state of translucent beauty, unpredictable encounters of animal intensity and inevitable aloneness."

• Bill T. Jones and Jan Erkert in a brown bag discussion with Dance Majors on the upcoming work to be performed in Festival Dance 2008, *D-Man in the Waters*



Fall semester guest artist Germaul Barnes, former dancer with Bill T. Jones and Artistic Director of Viewsic Expressions, will deepen our immersion into Bill T.'s world and expand our knowledge of dance. Our students will also train with a vast range of contemporary ballet specialists including Christian von Howard, Artistic Director of the Von Howard Project, Richard Colton, former member of Twyla Tharp and the American Ballet Theater, Richard Siegel, founder of The Bakery, a contemporary company in Paris and former dancer with William Forsythe, and Ligia Pinheiro, a Brazilian scholar. View their biographies at [www.dance.uiuc.edu/guest.html](http://www.dance.uiuc.edu/guest.html).

We will continue to expand our abilities to cross borders by immersing ourselves in dance forms from around the world. Djibril Camara, a master dancer from Guinea, Africa will teach African Dance, Denis Chiaramonte, a master teacher from Brazil will teach Capoeira, and Putu Oka Mardiani, an exquisite dancer from Bali will teach Balinese dance. The Krannert Center for the Performing Arts will present dance from around the world with such companies as Ballet Folklorico de Mexico, Georgian State Dance Company and St. Petersburg Ballet Theater from Russia, Aniruddha Knight from India, and Tango Buenos Aires. Students will also be thrilled to see performances and participate in Krannert guest artist residencies with Diavolo from Los Angeles, and renowned contemporary companies such as the Mark Morris Dance Group and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.



• Guest Artist Christian von Howard

The reconstruction of *D-Man in the Waters* was made possible by American Masterpieces: Dance, a program of the National Endowment of the Arts, which is administered by the New England Foundation for the Arts with Dance/USA.



## calendar 2007–2008

### september

- 18 Ballet Folklórico de México, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (KCPA)
- 25 Tango Buenos Aires, KCPA

### october

- 9 Merce Cunningham Dance Company, KCPA
- 24 Georgian State Dance Company, KCPA

### november

- 8–10 November Playhouse Dance, KCPA
- 9–10 BFA Open House and Audition
- 13 Savion Glover, KCPA
- 30 Sinfonia da Camera and the C-U Ballet, *The Nutcracker*, KCPA

### december

- 1–2, 8 Sinfonia da Camera and the C-U Ballet, *The Nutcracker*, KCPA

### january 2008

- 18–19 St. Petersburg Ballet Theatre, *Carmen* and *Swan Lake*, KCPA
- 29–30 MFA Audition
- 31 Festival Dance 2008, KCPA

### february

- 1–2 Festival Dance 2008, KCPA
- 1–2 BFA Open House and Audition

### march

- 3 BFA Audition
- 6–8 Studiodance I, KCPA
- 8 Diavolo, KCPA
- 27–28 Mark Morris Dance Group, *Love Song Waltzes*, KCPA

### april

- 17–19 Studiodance II, KCPA
- 20 Aniruddha Knight, *From the Heart of a Tradition*, KCPA
- 25–26 Senior Concert

[www.dance.uiuc.edu](http://www.dance.uiuc.edu)

for ticket information

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## an extraordinary faculty is gathering.

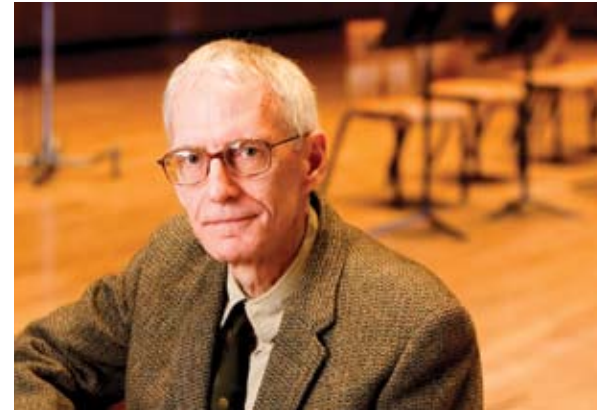
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[www.dance.uiuc.edu/faculty.html](http://www.dance.uiuc.edu/faculty.html)

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Sara Hook, Associate Professor  
Philip Johnston, Lecturer  
Patricia Knowles, Professor Emeritus  
Kate Kuper, Visiting Lecturer  
Linda Lehovec, Associate Professor, Associate Department Head, BFA Program Director  
Putu Oka Mardiani, International Council Visiting Professor  
Jennifer Monson, Professor  
Rebecca Netti-Fiol, Associate Professor  
Tere O'Connor, Professor  
Cynthia Oliver, Associate Professor  
Kirstie Simson, Assistant Professor  
John Toenjes, Assistant Professor, Music Director  
Renée Wadleigh, Professor, MFA Program Director  
Yutian Wong, Assistant Professor

### Guest Artists in Residence 2007–2008

Germaul Barnes  
Catherine Cabeen  
Djibril Camera  
Denis Chiaramonte  
Richard Colton  
Janet Lilly  
Ligia Pinheiro  
Richard Siegel  
Christian von Howard



Dean Robert B. Graves

## a message from the dean

*"With the fresh and focused direction of Jan Erkert, the new head of Dance at Illinois, we have seen a tremendous burst of energy, innovation, and scholarship within the Department. Recruiting world-class faculty members, increasing outreach efforts, and partnering with other disciplines on campus are recent accomplishments that begin a defining era for Dance."*

*The College is proud to partner with Dance at Illinois to achieve its greatest aim—to be one of the nation's leaders in training tomorrow's dancers, choreographers, and movement experts."*

these people play an extraordinary role in the activities of the department and we're grateful for their dedication and collaboration.

### Staff

Kimber Andrews, Graduate Assistant  
Ken Beck, Specialist in Music  
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Kimberly Hardin, Physical Therapist  
Cindi Howard, Program Coordinator  
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Lindy Loyet Lewis, Assistant to the Head  
Anna McIlroy, Secretary  
Alyssa Schoeneman, Intern  
Renata Sheppard, Graduate Video Media Coordinator

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We thank all of the people we partnered with from the following: College of Fine and Applied Arts, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Office of the Provost, Office of the Chancellor, Office of the President, Ninth Letter Collaborators.

### Magazine Credits

Lindy Loyet Lewis, Editor, Project Manager  
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SURFACE 51, Design — [www.surface51.com](http://www.surface51.com)  
Dan Merlo, Cover Photos  
Back Cover, Jeffrey Kazin and Amber Sloan (BFA 2001) in *You Too*  
Co-Choreographed by Sara Hook and David Parker.



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An unrestricted fund established for innovative programming and departmental needs such as:

**Guest Artists.** Core to Dance at Illinois is the ability to bring in diverse guest artists who provide fresh ideas and new perspectives. These residencies enable our students to make valuable connections for their future careers.

**Alumni Projects and Residencies.** Opportunities don't stop when our students graduate. Supporting collaborative projects with our alumni enhance their careers and provide invaluable connections between our current students and our experienced alumni.

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

For information about giving online please visit us at [www.dance.uiuc.edu/donor.html](http://www.dance.uiuc.edu/donor.html)

thank you for supporting the department of dance!

### dance department scholarship fund

This fund provides scholarships for students to participate in summer festivals around the world. These summer experiences can be a turning point in a student's education. The Department also has four endowed scholarship awards—the Vannie L. Sheiry Memorial Dance Fund, the Moe Family Dance Award Fund, the Wanda M. Netti Prize Award for Student Choreography, and the Patricia Knowles Graduate Travel Award—all are open to contributions all year long through the University of Illinois Foundation.

For more information on establishing a scholarship fund in your name please contact Jan Erkert (217) 333-1010.

We take this opportunity to recognize and thank all dance contributors. Your gifts are reflected in all the many exciting stories you are reading about in this edition of *Pivot!* We are profoundly grateful—we couldn't do it without you! Listed below are donors to the Department of Dance from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007. We realize there may be mistakes or omissions from this list. We apologize, and invite you to contact us regarding corrections.

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