

I dance at illinois



pivot

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Newsflash

Just before Pivot went to press, the world exploded once again with pain, rage, and suffering from the senseless killing of Black bodies that served to highlight 400 years of oppression. James Baldwin's words resonate... "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." Dance at Illinois' revised mission statement, established in February 2020, came about as a result of our acknowledgement of the historic systemic racism embedded in Departments of Dance throughout the nation, the steps toward change we have made, and our aspirations to build a more just and equitable community.

mission

"The mission of the Department of Dance at the University of Illinois is to contribute to dance's positive impact on the world, as a distinctive generator of new knowledge and as a vital cultural agent and signifier. We activate the power of dance to root out historically unbalanced, hierarchically oppressive perspectives and are committed to investigating the dynamic intersections between research and teaching in academic, professional, and community settings. **We promote ethical, anti-racist, and progressive practices, operating from a deeply held belief that diversity and inclusion are critical for the advancement of the artform and for humankind.** Utilizing a range of experimental and canonic approaches, we generate choreographic, pedagogical, performative, and scholarly research that centers dance in global discourse. We aim to forge innovative and sustainable lives as artist educators and to model that practice widely, compelled by our collective, passionate dedication to dance as a transformational process."





Studio Theatre, photo by Krannert Center for the Performing Arts/Ricki Alford

the light is still on!

by Professor and Head Jan Erkert

It was a year unlike any other. Let's just start there.

Many years ago a fire ripped through my home. It was unrelenting in what it stole ... a shark's tooth necklace from New Zealand given to me by my now deceased mother shortly after conceiving a child that I ultimately lost before birth, a beloved sweater that had been hugged by a slew of boyfriends all the way up to my husband, and a pair of shorts I was going to throw out anyway. No rhyme or reason, as they say.

As we left our studios way too soon, there was much to mourn, but let's not go there yet, because this year we were awash in front light!

We welcomed three artists/scholars, Peter Carpenter, Joe Goode, and Ramón Rivera-Servera, who did a deep dive into our program as part of an external review. We were proud to hear that they believed our program was "...among the top 10 in the nation." Professor Cynthia Oliver became a Center for Advanced Studies Professor, joining an elite group of the most celebrated professors on campus; two out of four campus leadership awards went to dance faculty—Distinguished Leadership to Jan Erkert and Faculty Mentoring to Sara Hook; Professor Abby Zbikowski received the College Excellence in Research Award; Professor Endalyn Taylor became the first Black Arts Dean's Fellow in the college; and alumna Leslie Cuyjet (BFA '03) won the 2019 New York Dance and Performance Bessie Award, considered the Academy Awards of dance, adding to our shelf of Bessies (eight for faculty and three for alums). Dance at Illinois now has more Bessies than any other dance department in the Big Ten. Just sayin'. These collective awards represent a major coup for one of the smallest units on campus, confirming our respect on campus and growing national stature. This year's stunning photos in *Pivot* taken by Natalie Fiol

capture the vibrancy of the dancing that exploded from our stages and communicate the values that hold us together. Another major accomplishment—graduate student Danzel Thompson-Stout's work *Manifesting our Movement; Manifesting Our Dance* was selected for the National Gala in California, which was to be in June. Not. I think of the shark tooth, which even though lost, sits in my memory as strong as this dance will, forevermore.

Perhaps now I can address the losses ... Our 2020 graduating class' dances disappeared ... here one moment and poof ... gone the next. But even more disheartening, the very essence of our practice—matching each other's heartbeats, surging through space together, responsibly sharing intimate touch—was gone. Like my sweater, it so quickly unraveled as we all went spinning off to our own worlds.

Or so we thought.

Creative responses to limitations are our forte. Our artists began inventing in ways that will long outlive this COVID moment. *Creative Dance for Children Online* delighted housebound parents as they watched their children bouncing across the living room. *Distance Dances* captivated the urge to move, whether it was on a couch, in the driveway, or in a kitchen. A Zoom popcorn night revealed new dances that springboarded from the lost dances.

As we plan for the future, we will return ... and we will be different. There are certainly no shortages of creative ideas. But more importantly, it will be interesting to see what we will shed—what will represent the pair of shorts no longer necessary?

I'll end there for now. The real story will keep going. Meanwhile, the light remains on, waiting for our return.



Omri Drumlevich, Guest artist

looking back

by Professor and Head Jan Erkert

This year we returned to the Department of Dance tradition of presenting historic masterpieces. Our students wrestled with the specificity and rhythmic complexity of José Limón's *Psalms*, under the expert guidance of graduate student Roxane D'Orléans Juste, a dancer with the Limón company for over 33 years. Guest artists Omri Drumlevich and Zina Zinchenko, former members of Batsheva Company, demanded an internal, visceral commitment from our students, as they reconstructed *Decadance* by Ohad Naharin. We collaborated with our age-old partner, the Department of Theatre, in producing two works: *Gem of the Ocean* and *Cabaret*. The energy captured in photos of the productions shows why these dances brought down the house.

ACDA

Just before the lights went off and we sequestered in our homes, Michelle Burns, Roxane D'Orléans Juste, and Danzel Thompson-Stout represented DAI well at the American College Dance Association's East Central Conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Thompson-Stout's work *Manifesting Our Movement; Manifesting our Dance*, was selected for the National Gala. The adjudicators, Charles Anderson, Lauren Edson, and KT Niehoff, describe the strength of his work:

"Built upon the foundations of hip-hop and house dance, *Manifesting Our Movement; Manifesting Our Dance* is an exquisitely crafted contemporary dance work that exemplifies what is possible when form, content, and intention are in complete harmony. It is masterfully performed by this generous and physically brilliant ensemble who are nuanced, self-assured, and sublime. Enough cannot be said about these 11 dancers! Their comfort with and deep embodied understanding and relish of the hip-hop/house choreography, exhibited through intricate footwork flows; shoulders, torsos, and hips that are galvanized into liquid and independent articulation takes on transcendent proportions when experienced onstage. The choreographer's deep knowledge of hip-hop dancing (especially house) is on full display resulting in a satisfyingly complete work with undeniable artistic integrity. The work is a clear homage to the sophistication of hip-hop dance specifically and Black-informed and Black-inflected dance forms in general. Through rhythm, it does not preach, it seduces. Through propulsive, spiritual, and expertly performed movement, it does not ask, it demands. It is a masterpiece."



Nia Khan (BFA '22), Jeannette Williams (BFA '21), Angel Anderson (BFA '21), and Taylor Adams (BFA '20) in Ohad Naharin's *Decadance*, reconstructed by Omri Drumlevich

moving forward

by Professor and Head Jan Erkert

Uncertainty reigns, but we will dig away at what is important. What we do know for certain is that dancing will happen—whether online, outside, in small spaces, alone, or together. We will make work, inhabit and create new stages, and we will present work to others whether it is in the form of a dance for camera, a solo for a neighbor, or live concerts streamed globally. We will use technology to every advantage, networking with artists all over the world, and we will get the world dancing. Due to the tremendous strain from the pandemic and the continued assaults on Black bodies, we will focus on health and well-being, joining our Theatre and Music colleagues to create special days to rejuvenate bodies and souls.

The faculty will continue their ongoing work to design a new undergraduate BFA curriculum that fully embraces difference in all aspects of human dimensions. As part of this work, we are critically reviewing the policies, requirements, nomenclature, syllabi content, and practices of our curriculum for systemic racism. Through forums and town halls, we look forward to working with our students to build a new curriculum for the 21st century that will be at the forefront of the field.



decadance

by Ohad Naharin, written by Jacob Henss (MFA '22)

Decadance, known as a masterpiece of our time, was choreographed by Ohad Naharin for the Batsheva Dance Company. As Artistic Director for the company from 1990–2018, Naharin has created immensely physical, provocative, and community-based choreography influenced by his Israeli heritage. *Decadance* is a collection of 16 excerpts, spanning over 21 years of the choreographer’s creative past.

DAI’s version of *Decadance* was restaged by Omri Drumlevich and Zina Zinchenko, both former Batsheva dancers. Their

embodied expression and memory of *Decadance* throughout the reconstruction process was integral to our learning. Drumlevich and Zinchenko are also instructors of the movement language called Gaga, created by Naharin using improvisation to research movement expression and mind-to-body exploration. All members of our cast participated in Gaga class throughout fall semester, diving deep into movement improvisation, both individually and with each other. We found how to be one with the community, while being one with our true selves.

psalm

by José Limón, written by Madeline Mellinger (BFA '20)

Psalm was choreographed by José Limón in 1967 and later reconstructed in 2002 by former artistic director of the Limón Company, Carla Maxwell. November Dance 2019 is the second time *Psalm* has been shown on a Krannert stage. In 1996, former Limón dancer Risa Steinberg restaged the work on DAI students, a cast which included current Associate Professor Linda Lehovec (MFA '96) and Assistant Head Anna Sapozhnikov (MFA '02, BFA '98). In the most recent restaging of *Psalm*:

A *Suite*, past Limón Company dancer and MFA candidate Roxane D’Orléans Juste led a cast of 15 women. *Psalm* is a magnificent work to take on: Its musical score is constantly changing between intricate rhythms, dancers come in and out of the work while complicated spatial patterns unfold. It’s a real test of endurance. I was empowered by the support and strength I constantly felt from the group of fierce women dancing with me.

manifesting our movement; manifesting our dance

by Danzel Thompson-Stout, written by Jeremy Taylor (BFA '20)

As a cast member of *Manifesting Our Movement; Manifesting Our Dance*, it was truly an honor to be a part of this process and masterwork by Danzel Thompson-Stout. The creation of the piece spanned over a year and included education and training in house dance, including its history and vernacular. From a blank slate and an empty cup, Thompson-Stout poured a wealth of knowledge into all of us

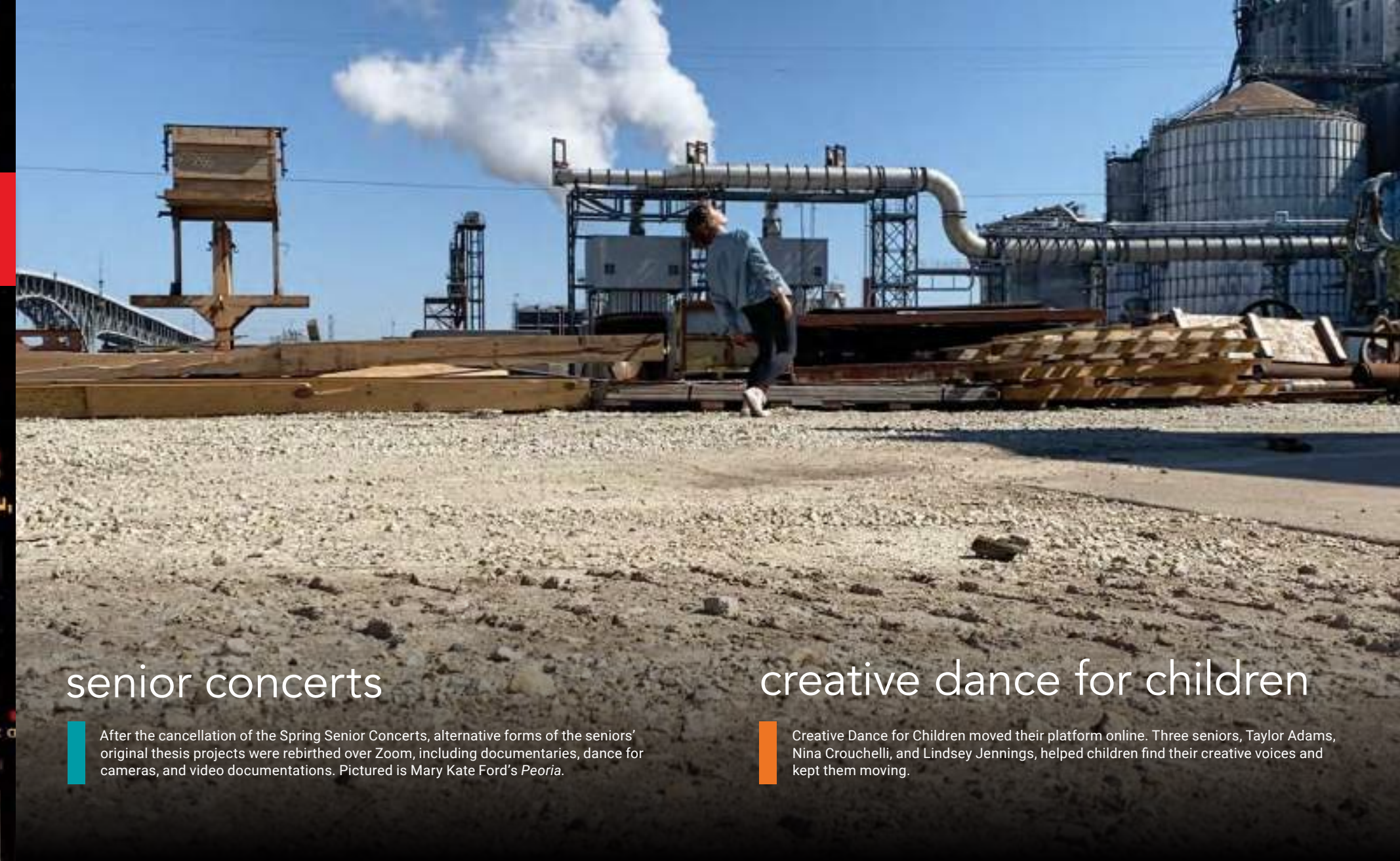
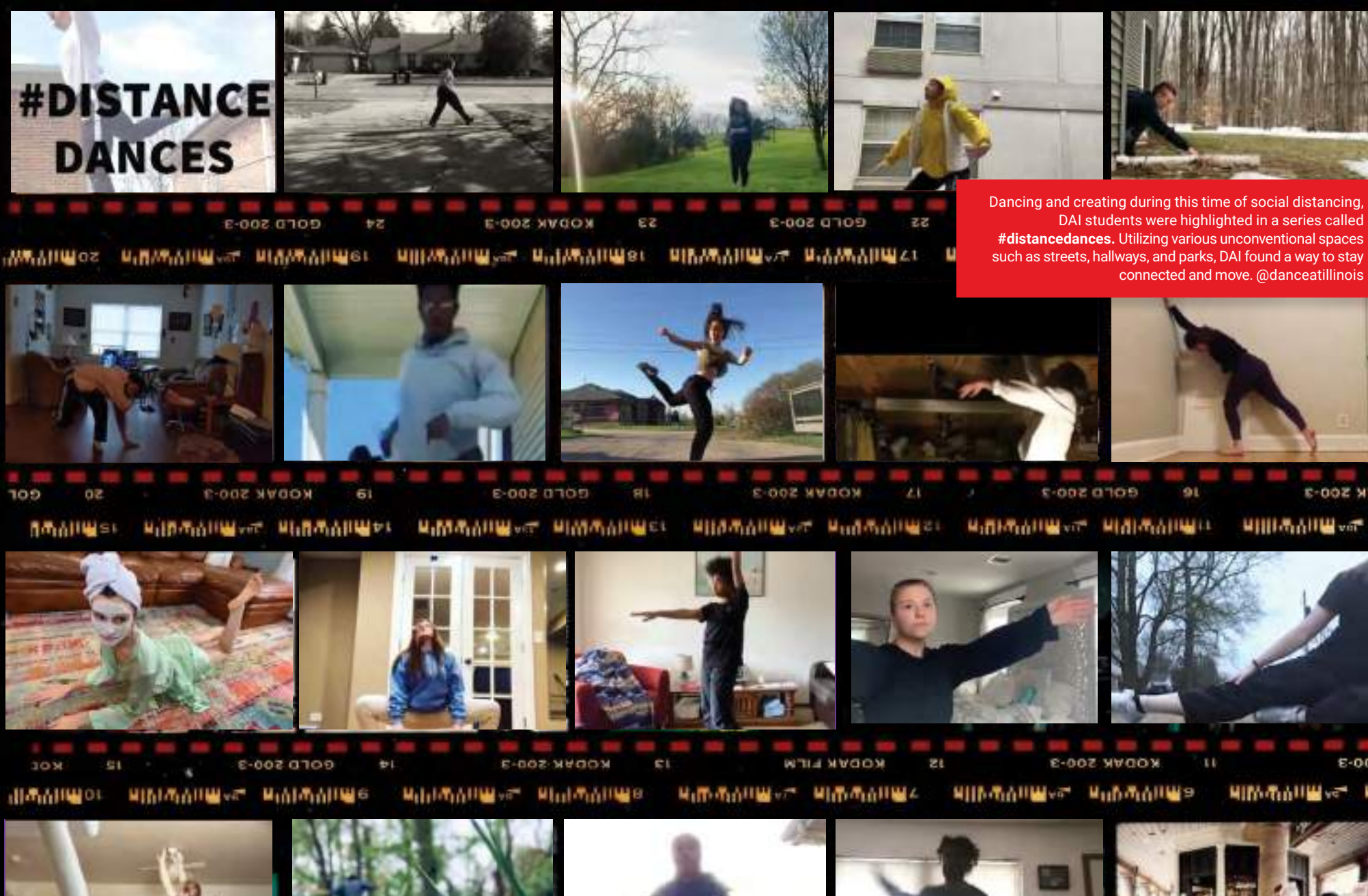
and created something unique utilizing the strengths of his cast. The material was brilliantly placed together by strategically layering one section of movement onto another, leaving a sea of joy and energy. For the dancers, it was more than just a dance. It was a way to invite the audience to indulge, immerse, and understand the liveliness, complexity and nuance of the street dance community.

gorge, idling gorge, idling gorge just, just idling, just

by Professor Jennifer Monson, written by Rachel Rizzuto (MFA '21)

I was a performer in Jennifer Monson’s dense and enigmatic work *gorge, idling gorge, idling gorge just, just idling, just* in November Dance 2019. Dancing for Jennifer is a thrilling and wonderfully exploratory process. You get to grapple with thought-provoking improvisational scores; wear yourself out with athletic, powerful dancing; and dig into movement via pathways and approaches that allow you to meld abstraction and your own experiences.

gorge was a particularly powerful experience because Jennifer—an unfailingly generous and exciting performer herself—eventually let us talk her into performing with us. As someone who saw Jennifer perform her work in New York before coming to graduate school, I’ve always been in awe of her as a dancer and choreographer, let alone as a fellow cast member. Getting to perform alongside her was both exhilarating and intimidating, in the best way.



senior concerts

After the cancellation of the Spring Senior Concerts, alternative forms of the seniors' original thesis projects were rebirthed over Zoom, including documentaries, dance for cameras, and video documentations. Pictured is Mary Kate Ford's *Peoria*.

creative dance for children

Creative Dance for Children moved their platform online. Three seniors, Taylor Adams, Nina Crouchelli, and Lindsey Jennings, helped children find their creative voices and kept them moving.

gem of the ocean

by Faith Brown (BFA '21)

As described by Chuck Smith, previous dramaturg for the world premiere of *Gem of the Ocean* in 2003, the City of Bones scene within the play always seemed to be missing something. Smith finally decided to attempt a dance version of the scene and chose to premiere the first of its kind in partnership with the Departments of Theatre and Dance at Illinois. Participating as one of the first City of Bones dancers in August Wilson’s legendary *Gem of the Ocean* was nothing short of amazing. Choreographers Professors Kemal Nance and Endalyn Taylor took this project seriously, educating the cast about the African American history of slave trade that exists within the play. This ultimately allowed me to intertwine the work with my own ancestral heritage as an African American woman, thus allowing me to dive into a more personal realm of performance. Through historical reference, Africanist movement explorations, and the stories of our ancestors on our backs, the City of Bones scene finally came to life and left a profound impact on both the cast and audiences alike.



Jeremy Taylor (BFA '20), Mya McClellan (BFA '21), and Alexandria Kinard (BFA '22), photo by Darrell Hoemann



Nicholas Hittle (BA '20), Aliah Teclaw (BFA '23), Symone Sanz (BFA '20), Rachel Maramba (BA '21), and Nia Khan (BFA '22)

cabaret

by Elliot Reza Emadian (MFA '20)

This spring, in celebration of 50 years of the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Dance at Illinois embarked on a historic collaboration with Illinois Theatre and Lyric Theatre at Illinois. *Cabaret* provided a vehicle for director Latrelle Bright, music director Dr. Julie Jordan Gunn, and me to harness the talents of 17 performers from the three programs in addition to a host of student designers and technical crew. Creating something totally new and wholly reverent of the time and place—1930s, Weimar-era Berlin, on the precipice of the Nazi rise—I set out with assistant choreographer Emily Schwartz (BFA '20) to create a dynamic and challenging vocabulary that would be in conversation with real-life performers of the time. We confronted a different sense of reality: the fact that our imagined rendering of these people—those fringe folx who might have become the iconic artists of the time but were ripped from the earth by a terrorist regime—is perhaps the only “record” that exists of many of them. In our diverse cast of students and creators, we found unsettling resonance in watching the rise of extreme right-wing ideology, and we were constantly forced to ask ourselves, “What would *we* do?”

dance at illinois

Michelle Burns (BFA '20) and Cassidy Zins (BFA '21) in Rachel Rizzuto's (MFA '21) *Period Piece*



Nia Khan (BFA '22), Mya McClellan (BFA '21), Jacob Henss (MFA '22), and Symone Sanz (BFA '20) in Ohad Naharin's *Decadance*



Nia Khan (BFA '21), Symone Sanz (BFA '20), Aliyah Teclaw (BFA '23), and Rachel Maramba (BA '21) in *Cabaret*





transitions

by Professor Philip Johnston

I left Ireland 42 years ago to begin my dance career in London, where I was based for eight years and toured globally. A further seven years were spent dancing and directing in Norway before one year in Chicago, and the past 26 years in Urbana, where I originally planned to stay for just two years! At the invitation of Patricia Knowles, I began graduate studies in Dance before accepting an Assistant Professorship at Illinois State University, where I taught for six years. I graduated from the Urbana Center for the Alexander Technique under the direction of Joan and Alex Murray. Upon completion of my PhD in Theatre History, I began to teach for the Departments of Dance and Theatre at the University of Illinois.

Teaching a wide spectrum of majors and non-majors has been an enriching experience and one of the most expansive and productive periods of my life. I am grateful to the many phenomenal students I have had the pleasure of teaching and sharing creative endeavors with in classrooms, studios, and stages at the Krannert Center and in the Urbana-Champaign community. It has been inspiring to collaborate with outstanding faculty in Theatre and Dance and to have co-taught Exploring Arts and Creativity for Krannert Center with faculty from across campus. I have experienced countless sublime evenings at the Krannert Center. I am about to begin a new chapter of my life in Northern Ireland, but I will always remember life on the Prairie and the creative energy that is at the heart of the University of Illinois.



by Professor Kirstie Simson

Have I really taught in the dance department at the University of Illinois for 13 years? It can't be. Where did that time go? Not bad for a nomadic soul of no fixed abode, who for 30 years prior to joining the faculty at the Department of Dance at Illinois, roamed the planet teaching and performing in a variety of venues, in multiple countries. I came of age as an "independent artist."

It was a life I adored and one I feel incredibly fortunate to have lived. I have learned a great deal over these years in the department and have benefited in so many ways. Perhaps the biggest learning has been the opportunity to collaborate with an illustrious group of people who hold a variety of perspectives on dance. This has challenged me to scrutinize my sense of certainty about how I know what I know. Opening up to the

richness of our diverse voices without having to protect, elevate, or compromise my own viewpoint is the biggest takeaway I will be packing in my suitcase. I will also take with me a multitude of wonderful memories of working with students. I have been enriched by their contribution to our collective learning; their life force being added to the mix of our improvisations has always been thrilling to experience. How lucky we are to be able to communicate through this language of dance. A BIG thank you to Dance for being my home for the past 13 years and thanks to Jan for bringing me here in the first place.

A hug, a jig, and a big smile.

ahmad issa (1936–2019)

Dance at Illinois will deeply miss the vibrant spirit of **Dr. Ahmad Issa** (BS '62, MS '63, PhD '67 BUS), who generously gave back to his Alma Mater by creating perpetual scholarships for the Department of Dance and the School of Music in support of exceptionally talented students. Dr. Ahmad Issa has had a full and prestigious academic career as well as starting his own advisory firm, Integrated Financial Planning, in 1986. He taught finance at Western Michigan University for 26 years. His legacy of service, which permeated both his professional career and his active retirement, included receiving the Alumni Teaching Excellence Award and work for organizations such as the American Association of University Professors negotiating team, the Kalamazoo Humane Society, and the United Holy Land Fund which he founded in 1968.

alumni



Julie Hall (1952–2019) (BA '75, MFA '83) passed away on March 17, 2019, at the age of 66. Described by her friends and colleagues as "vibrant, energetic, a creative force, with an awesome laugh and 'southern' velvet voice," Julie had a magnetic personality that touched and inspired many. After receiving her BA, Julie lived in NYC, studying at the Hawkins studio and dancing with Kei Takei Moving Earth Dance Company.

During her graduate student years, Julie distinguished herself as a choreographer, performer, and beloved teacher, producing her own MFA concert in DRK, and performing with Beverly Blossom, whom she continued to work with after graduation. Julie received two NEA choreography grants and produced two full evenings of her work in NYC in the early 1990s. In 1990 Julie returned to Illinois to reconstruct Blossom's "Brides" for a faculty performance in honor of Beverly's retirement. In 1994, Julie performed a solo concert of her choreography at DTW. At the time of her death, she had retired and was living in Long Eddy, NY.

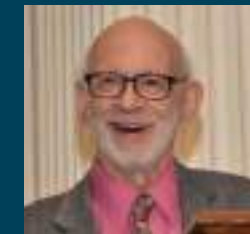


Charles Roe Vernon (1953–2019) (BFA '76) Charlie was a creative, funny, undaunted, and fearless person who connected with a wide variety of people and found beauty in art, nature, and everyday life. After college he moved to Chicago and became a dance critic for the *Chicago Reader* and began creating his own work. He formed the Charlie Vernon Performance Company, which was active from 1977–1983, and was a beloved Urban

Gateways teaching artist, bringing dance to thousands of Chicago schoolchildren.

In 1979 he co-founded Links Hall Studio, which still operates today as a vibrant center for emerging artists. Links recently restaged one of his pieces for its 40th Anniversary, which was a great joy for him. The recipient of five National Endowment for the Arts Choreographic Fellowships, his was the first Chicago company to perform at New York's Dance Theatre Workshop, and he was selected as young choreographer in residence at the 1982 American Dance Festival.

bruno nettl (1930–2020) by Professor Rebecca Netti-Fiol (BFA '75)



Since my father's passing on January 15, 2020, many have written about his vast influence on the field of Ethnomusicology, a discipline he was instrumental in establishing and developing throughout

his lifetime, with publications of over 20 books and 100+ scholarly articles. An enthusiastic teacher, he introduced the field at Illinois and built a program that was considered one of the national leaders. But even more meaningful perhaps, in

the tributes that have been pouring in from around the world since his passing, have been the words that characterize him as a mentor, nurturer and storyteller, connector of people; with a vibrant and engaging personality, great wisdom, and charming wit; the embodiment of scholarly wisdom and humane warmth. Words cannot adequately describe what it was like to grow up with my dad, to be surrounded by music of all kinds, to learn lessons of acceptance, generosity, and curiosity about all people. And also to be supported in the dance field right from the beginning. My father's relationship with Dance began in 1964, just prior to our move to Champaign, when he paid a call to then Department Head Margaret Erlanger to

inquire about dance classes for me (I was very unhappy about leaving my creative dance classes for children in Detroit). Upon hearing about his work, she promptly asked him to be a guest in her dance history class, which he continued to do for a number of years. Of course with my joining the department as a student, and later as a faculty member, my parents were loyal concert-goers and supporters, culminating in the establishment of the Wanda M. Netti Prize for Student Choreography in 2002, in honor of my mother who continues to be a lover and supporter of the art of dance.

Pictured right: Bruno Netti with Margaret Erlanger, Founder of the Department of Dance and Jack Baker (Professor of Architecture)





undergraduate news

by Professor John Toenjes

For our 17 graduating seniors (13 Bachelor of Fine Arts and four Bachelor of Arts degrees), 2019–2020 was a very special year in more ways than one! They experienced joy during the fall semester when they grew in their dancing and creative abilities and produced a wonderful first Senior Thesis concert. In the spring semester, the second Senior Thesis concert was canceled due to the pandemic. Not to be defeated, the seniors pulled together and produced a virtual Senior Thesis concert online, which broadened their creative outreach and expanded their skills. Our graduating BA students also presented their research in an online BA Symposium. The Dance faculty is extremely proud of these graduating students, who underwent such a disruption to the end of their senior year, yet came through with a fighting spirit that will serve them well as they go out into the world. Dance at Illinois is certain that they will fulfill their dreams of dancing professionally, opening dance studios, becoming choreographers and media artists, and going on to graduate school. We are looking forward to watching them change the world with their creative energy and indomitable spirit!

graduate news

by Anna Sapozhnikov (MFA '02, BFA '98)

Due to Covid-19, all MFA Thesis concerts were canceled just a few weeks before they were scheduled to perform. The graduating MFA cohort pulled together to present their research in an online Oral Thesis Presentation at the end of April. As Dance students and staff witnessed over Zoom, **Evvie Allison**, **Elliot Reza Emadian**, **William Ervin**, and **Kaitlin Fox** graciously shared their findings on their process, creative research, and their hopes and future plans after graduation. We have no doubt that they will continue finding their way in this field with strength and compassion.

Convocation

In years to come, our graduates will be telling their grandchildren about this convocation. We were excited to unveil a special parting gift created by graduating BFA student Mary Kate Ford—a portrait of graduates to be installed in the Dance Administration Building—as a way of remembering this class in perpetuity. Our convocation was graced with a surprise alumna guest speaker Leslie Cuyjet, New York Dance and Performance Bessie Awardee, who gave a moving speech to our students about the beauty and perseverance of dance artists. Students Jeremy Taylor and Elliot Emadian presented heartfelt words about the journey of the 2020 class, and we ended with a toast by Professor Philip Johnston, who will be retiring and moving to Ireland.



Leslie Cuyjet (BFA '03) in Cynthia Oliver's *Boom!*



“Art reimagines. Art articulates and implicates. It is free of conventions. It has no rules. And when we choose to show up, art demands we meet it. And so you must reimagine and you must articulate and you must implicate. And, no pressure, but we’re counting on you.

—Leslie Cuyjet (BFA '03)

Angel Anderson (BFA '21), Mya McClellan (BFA '21), Alexandria Kinard (BFA '22),
Jeremy Taylor (BFA '20), Faith Brown (BFA '21), Kennedy Cowan, (BFA '22)
Photo by Darrell Hoemann

student awards & scholarships

Moe Family Dance Award (est. 1996) for unique contribution to the profession.
Danzel Thompson-Stout (MFA '21)
Elliot Reza Emadian (MFA '20)

Patricia Knowles Graduate Travel Award (est. 2006)
Catherine MacMaster (MFA '22)
Sarah Mininsohn (MFA '22)

Beverly Blossom and Carey Erickson Alumni Award (est. 2007)
Leslie Cuyjet (BFA '03)

Lisa Carducci Memorial Award for an overall outstanding student. Established in honor of Lisa Carducci by her family.
Lindsey Jennings (BFA '20)

Mary Elizabeth Hamstrom Award for Graduate Summer Study
Rachel Rizzuto (MFA '21)

Senior Magnolia Award for the most development throughout their four years.
Jeremy Taylor (BFA '20)
Michelle Burns (BFA '20)

Dance Partner Undergraduate Project Awards (est. 2010)
Angel Anderson (BFA '21)
Faith Brown (BFA '21)
Alexandria Kinard (BFA '22)
Cassidy Zins (BFA '21)

Leadership Award (est. 2018)
Kaleigh Dent (BFA '20)
Nina Crouchelli (BFA '20)

Courtney B. Kellogg Memorial Scholarship (est. 2015) for an outstanding sophomore undergraduate student. Established in honor of Courtney B. Kellogg Wojcik, a 2000 BFA graduate from Dance at Illinois.
Nia Khan (BFA '22)

A. Raheim White Scholarship is a merit based award for an underrepresented/ minority first-year student. This award is named in honor of alumnus A. Raheim White (BFA '11), who has cultivated an imaginative, innovative, and sustainable artistic life.
Isabella Saldana (BFA '24) for 2020–2021

Ahmad D. and Dulce G. Issa Dance Scholarship for overall outstanding achievements.
Jordyn Gibson (BFA '23)
Kennedy Cowan (BFA '22)
Jenna Dike (BFA '24)

Fernadina Chan Scholarship (est. 2019) by DAI alum Fernadina Chan to help make education more affordable for student dancers at the University of Illinois/Urbana-Champaign.
Drina Canjura-Kaufman (BFA '24)

faculty awards and recognition

- **Jan Erkert** received the Campus Executive Officer Distinguished Leadership Award and a Public Voices Fellowship.
- **Sara Hook** received the Campus Faculty Mentoring Award.
- **Abby Zbikowski** received the College of Fine & Applied Arts Excellence in Research Award.
- **Cynthia Oliver** was named Center for Advanced Studies Professor, the highest award for faculty at Illinois.

- **Endalyn Taylor** has been named Black Arts Dean's Fellow in the College of Fine and Applied Arts, working to enhance the research synergies of FAA Black faculty.
- **Endalyn Taylor** and **Abigail Zbikowski** received tenure and were promoted to associate professor.
- **John Toenjes** was promoted to full professor.



Michelle Burns (BFA '20) in her solo, *an echo of a rerun*

Moving Forward Grants

Instead of giving out the traditional awards for best choreography and dancing (an impossible task given the year), we asked our donors to help us raise over \$11,000, so we could give every graduating student a \$500 *Moving Forward Grant*. These grants were made possible from the generous contributions of Jacqueline Carducci in memory of Lisa Carducci, Regina McClellan in memory of William McClellan, Jennifer Monson, Wanda Nettel, The Vannie L. Sheiry Memorial Dance Scholarship, and our Dance Partners—Fran & Marc Ansel, Diane Baker and William Worn, Jerry Carden, Jan Erkert and Bernt Lewy, Timothy Hutchison, Michael Lambert, Dirk Mol, Mark Rhodes, Tim Temple, and Jerry Wray. We send applause and virtual hugs and thanks to our donors and Dance Partners who gave so generously to make sure each student received send-off support!

faculty responses to covid



by Professor Tere O'Connor

After teaching my first online ballet barre, I was reminded of artist Richard Serra's comment, "We go to museums to be alone together." It helped me transition to this format where each student is in his/her/their own frame, even as we do a group exercise. I realized that there could be more of a coaching sensibility in the class. I'd set out some "technique" goals for each class and after the barre,

we could all come up close and talk about achievement. It was very democratic because each student was visible for me to say something to, and it gave us time to assimilate the day's work. I think I will incorporate a post-class check in from now on. Mostly, I was very impressed with the commitment of the dancers to work so diligently in these surprising, difficult circumstances.

by Professor Abby Zbikowski

The sudden shift of classes from in the studio to the virtual world of Zoom happened in what felt like the blink of an eye. No time for preparation. No time for closure. No time to digest the reality of what was happening in and around us. But we made it through as a unit. As the realist that I am, teaching technique in an online format initially sounded like misery. How were we going to feel one another's energy or keep our bodies grounded in alternative, and often not ideal, dance spaces? ... and then we danced. And by continuing to do what we know and care about so deeply as a community, fears of the

unknown began to subside, and we found our footing in new territories. Teaching contemporary physical practice to first year students and holding open departmental classes revealed new layers of what had always lived inside what we already did. We found new strengths in our determination and resiliency. And we tapped into our deep wells of creativity to adapt, adapt, adapt, to ever evolving new realities. Our students embodied the life affirming values of dance this semester and are more than ready to take on whatever curveball life may throw at them next.



by Professor Kirstie Simson

Contact Improvisation for Musicians/Actors/Dancers & the Colab class taught by Kirstie Simson.

Teaching Contact Improvisation online seems implausible when much of the practice happens in close contact with a partner through the language of physical touch. Looking for ways to make the virtual classes convincing really challenged my ability to be imaginative. I wanted the students to continue enjoying the thrill of discovery when exploring improvisational scores and assignments. I created audio recordings, taking students through physical warm up practices, scores, and assignments, much as I would do in the studio. Facilitating opportunities for them to surrender into the depth of embodied experience with closed eyes, I asked students whenever possible to do these practices at the same time that our normal class would meet; to imagine they were in the studio, surrounded by their peers, or connecting with their friends at a distance as we practiced together. Students reflected that these ways of imagined connection were important for them. Students created E-Zines from these discoveries. They were free to do this in whatever way they chose, mainly using still images, text, and added links to audio and video recordings when assignments required this. Overall this was a successful experiment in shifting to online learning.

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Donors play a pivotal role in the realization of the department's ambitions to become a national center for the development of dance artists and leaders. The collaborative work generated in our program has been spreading across campus and out into the world, and we can do even more to share what dance can contribute to our society. Dance Partners—our generous donors—provide the core strength for our students, our creative work, and our vision for advancing the art of dance.

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Jeremy Taylor (BFA '20), Jan Erkert, Jerry Carden (DPAC member), and Omri Drumlevich at First Views: *Decadance*



Madeline Mellinger (BFA '20) in Jose Limón's *Psalm*

dance partners

We take this opportunity to recognize and thank all Dance Partners for contributing to the vibrancy of Dance at Illinois. Your gifts are reflected in all of our performances, and we are profoundly grateful for your support. Listed below are the donors from July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020.

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dance partner advancement committee

We are mentors and bridge-builders between the Dance Department and the community. We promote, support, celebrate, and engage the public, students, and faculty/staff by making connections, forging opportunities, and diversifying audiences.

- | | |
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Bryn Maxwell (BA '22), Jeremy Taylor (BFA '20), Helena Gorgol (BFA '22), and Mya McClellan (BFA '21) in Ohad Naharin's *Decadance*

2020–2021

performance calendar

Flatlands Dance Film Festival

September 4–5

November Dance

November 5–7

February Dance

February 4–6

Studiosdance II

March 4–6

Senior Concert

April 30–May 1

audition dates

Undergraduate Program

*November 6–7 Open House and Audition

*January 23 Chicago (Dovetail)

*February 5–6 Open House & Audition

Graduate Program

*Feb 10–11

*all dates subject to change

2019–2020

faculty/staff list and magazine credits

Dance Faculty

Betty Allen, Lecturer, Creative Dance for Children Director

Maria Cynthia Anderson, Lecturer

Laura Chiaramonte, Lecturer and Media Coordinator

Jan Erkert, Department Head and Professor

Sara Hook, Professor

Philip Johnston, Assistant Teaching Professor

Patricia Knowles, Professor Emerita

Linda Lehovec, Associate Professor

Jennifer Monson, Professor and Graduate Program Director

C. Kemal Nance, Assistant Professor

Rebecca Nettl-Fiol, Professor and Undergraduate Co-Director

Tere O'Connor, Professor

Cynthia Oliver, Professor

Anna Sapozhnikov, Lecturer

Kirstie Simson, Associate Professor

Endalyn Taylor, Assistant Professor

John Toenjes, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Co-Director

Renée Wadleigh, Professor Emerita

Abby Zbikowski, Assistant Professor

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Citlali López-Ortiz, Assistant Professor,

Kinesiology and Community Health

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College of Media

Sandra Ruiz, Assistant Professor,

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Magazine Credits

Anna Sapozhnikov, Editor

Natalie Fiol, Photographer, unless otherwise noted

Anne Jackson, Copy Editing

Natalie Fiol, Communications and Marketing at the College of Fine & Applied Arts, Design

Cover Image: Danzel Thompson-Stout's *Manifesting our Movement*; *Manifesting our Dance*

Rachel Rizzuto (MFA '21) and Jennifer Monson in Monson's *gorge, idling gorge, idling gorge just, just idling, just*

Taylor Adams (BFA '20) in her solo, 3:33

William Ervin (MFA '20) in his solo, *I will, I-Will, I-WILLLL*

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Dance

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