

Backstage Pass

November 2008

Check out our *Moving Texts*



BRIDGE PROJECT₃ **DANCE CONCERT**

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MOVING TEXTS

7:30 P.M.
EVENING PERFORMANCES
THURSDAY & FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4 & 5

1:00 P.M.
NEW MATINEE PERFORMANCE
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2008

FEATURING PIECES CHOREOGRAPHED BY
ANDREAS GUEST ARTISTS:
CYNTHIA GUTIERREZ-GARNER
AND MORGAN THORSON

Photograph by V. Paul Virtucio,
Stephanie Narlock in "Dream Work"
Choreographed by Mary Fitzgerald.

Concert has 10 pieces, multiple choreographers and styles

The Dance Program of the Minnesota State University, Mankato Department of Theatre & Dance will present its third annual *Bridge Project Concert3: Moving Texts*, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Dec. 4 and 5, and 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6, in the Ted Paul Theatre of the Performing Arts Center.

This early winter concert connects dance to another discipline or idea. This year the theme is moving texts. The inspiration for choreography was text, whether spoken live, recorded, as part of set pieces, or

projected in the form of video clips. Andreas Guest Artists, faculty and student work will be presented in the 10-piece concert.

Two pieces are choreographed by Andreas Guest Artists: Morgan Thorson, a Minneapolis-based choreographer, created a piece in the vein of the post-modern dance aesthetic, and Cynthia Gutierrez-Garner created a jazz work to the music of Alice Russell entitled "Heart Strings" that is based on a message of love. The department's newest faculty member, Daniel Stark, will present a quartet

called "Ripple." This work is based on the metaphor of waves as the dancers toss and tumble, crash and cling.

Faculty member Paul Finocchiaro and Nadine B. Andreas Teaching Assistant Nikki Swoboda co-choreographed a work called "Hernando's Hideaway." With a cast of 15 dancers, the work showcases the tango in various interpretations as it melds song and dance. Dance Program Director Julie Kerr-Berry choreographed a dance-theatre piece

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Dance on the Road

Lawrence, KS, gets a taste of Stark, dancers' skills

Nine Minnesota State University, Mankato dancers joined faculty member Daniel Stark in presenting works at the Regional Choreography Festival Nov. 7-8 at the Lawrence Arts Center, Lawrence, KS.

Stark was invited to teach a master class in Modern Technique and present his piece, "Ripple," at the Invitational Showcase. Dancing in "Ripple" were students Aaron Brownlee, Nicole Curry, Stephanie Narlock, Travis Shafer and Kaitlin Johnson (understudy).

Five student-choreographed pieces were presented during the Open Showcase. Choreographer Nicole Curry presented "Threads," featuring dancers Katie Drietz, Jennifer James, Sara Jump and Jessie Loisel (understudy); choreographer/dancer Sara Jump presented "Contorted Dialogue"; choreographer Katie Drietz presented "Remote ... Control" with dancers Aaron Brownlee and Stephanie Narlock; choreographer

Kaitlin Johnson presented "Ties Become Broken" with dancers Kelsey McGowan and herself; and choreographer/dancer Jennifer James presented "Never Ending."

This year's Regional Choreography Festival was expanded to two days with the goal of advancing high-quality, regional, professional dance and to support emerging choreographers. In addition to their presentations, Minnesota State students participated in master classes in dance composition and improvisation, and a panel discussion on "Creative Survival and Fundraising."

In his program notes, Stark said this about his piece: " 'Ripple' explores the instability we face when stirred by the turbulent forces that impact our lives. In one moment these external influences can bring us together, and in the next, carry us apart. Tossed and tumbled we crash and cling. This work is inspired by photos collected by Steve Hawk in his book 'Waves.'

Taken by photographers as they traveled around the globe, the pictures capture the power, serenity, violence and persistence of our oceans as they interact with the obstinate shore."

Stark joined the Minnesota State Department of Theatre & Dance as an assistant professor in the fall of 2008. Recently his choreography was featured in "Earth: Healing the Rift," a performance in Kenya, Africa, involving collaborations between visual and performing artists from Africa, Russia, Italy, India, Greece, New Zealand, U.K. and the U.S.

He also has set dances on the Beijing Dance Academy in China, Quad Cities Ballet in Illinois, the Aha! Dance Theatre in Kansas City, 940 Dance Company in Kansas, Vandance Inc. in Pennsylvania and Duarte Dance Works in Iowa City. He holds a B.S. in Psychology and an MFA in Dance from the University of Iowa.

Daniel Stark awarded Faculty Research Grant for trip

Daniel Stark, Assistant Professor in the department, has been awarded a Faculty Research Grant from the University to travel to Cuba and research Afro-Cuban folkloric history, dance and music with some of the most prominent leaders in the tradition.

The purpose of the trip is to collect and document the lore, techniques and histories of Afro-Cuban folkloric tradition for use in the instruction and creation of Afro-Cuban dance and music to be disseminated to students, faculty and community. Due to the rarity of Afro-Cuban instructors and research materials available in the United States, research in the field requires travel

to the source. The research involves travel to Cuba for viewing and documenting performances of Afro-Cuban folklore, participation in drumming, singing and dancing with Cuban artists, and recording interviews with prominent figures in the field. Video and audio recording, as well as transcriptions and notes, document the research and are instrumental for later analysis and assimilation.

Study is focused on Los Munequitos de Matanzas, considered one of the leading groups in traditional Afro-Cuban, and Grupo Afro-Cuban, world renowned for their artistry and athleticism. Dissemination of results is

achieved through four main pathways: 1) instruction of Afro-Cuban dancing and singing to students in Afro-Caribbean Dance Forms class; 2) the creation and presentation of a dance in the Afro-Cuban tradition open to all; 3) presentations and instruction in other courses at Minnesota State Mankato; 4) possible future publication in a scholarly journal such as Dance Research Publication.

This will be Stark's second trip to Cuba for Afro-Cuban study, but he has also traveled to Canada, San Francisco and other parts of the U.S. to study this rare art form. Havana and Matanzas, the two cultural centers in Cuba, will be the focus for the January trip.

Playwright attends opening night, holds master class

See *What I Wanna See* playwright/composer Michael John LaChiusa visited Minnesota State Mankato on Thursday, Nov. 20, attended the opening night performance of our production and conducted a three-hour master class with students from the department that Friday. His visit was made possible through the Andreas Guest Artist monies provided to the College of Arts and Humanities from Lowell and David Andreas.

By all measures, his visit was a great success. Department students filled opening night to over-capacity levels and were immediately taken by LaChiusa's openness, constructive and insightful feedback, and his gracious manner.

Nine students performed songs for him on Friday at the master class, with LaChiusa offering comments on their interpretation, presentation and preparation. He provided both a critical eye and helpful advice.

See What I Wanna See is a non-

linear musical telling of three different stories in three different worlds: Medieval Japan (the first story, *Kesa & Morito*), New York City in the 1950s (the second, *R Shomon*), and post-9/11 Central Park (the final story, *Gloryday*). It is based on the short stories of Ryunosuke Akutagawa, paying homage to its Japanese roots with its Asian-infused jazz musical style. Throughout the course of the action, one certainty prevails: people are now and always have been searching for universal truth...and end up creating their own version of it.

The show was directed by Nikki Swoboda. The cast consisted of undergraduate students Jared Oxborough, Mathias Becker, Liz Dowd and Claire Wellin, as well as Jerry Jay Cranford, an MFA Directing candidate. The design team was composed of all MFA candidates: Ben Inniger (set and sound design), Nicole Pullaro (costume design), Jake Yenish (lighting design) and Megan Gredesky (props master).



Above: Jared Oxborough was invited to perform his musical selection again, this time while holding up a stool, in order to show him the importance of air control and lung capacity in his performance. **Below:** LaChiusa brings Oxborough back up so Deanne McDonald, MFA candidate in Acting, had someone to whom she could direct her emotion.



LaChiusa accompanies Tristin Rupp, BFA candidate in Musical Theatre, on drums.



12 actors going to KCACTF Festival in January

Dancing at Lughnasa



J. Alexander Coe and Lolly Foy

Miss Saigon



Andrew Umphrey, Craig Daniel Stastny

Hamlet



Micah J. L. Kronlokken, Claire Wellin

Lysistrata



Tristin Rupp and David Wasylik

Thorough Modern Millie



Mollie Fisher and Jared Oxborough

Harvey



Michael James, Deanne McDonald

Twelve Minnesota State Mankato actors will be among the nearly 400 competing for the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship at the 41st annual Region V Festival Jan. 18-23 at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. Among them is Micah J. L. Kronlokken, nominated for his performance in last season's *Hamlet*, who is the reigning regional co-winner.

Students are nominated for outstanding performance in the entered productions, as selected by a regional responder and/or the department. The winner will go on to compete at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in April.

In addition to the nominees' partners and accompanist, the Minnesota State Mankato contingent will include other students who will attend workshops and seminars as well as nominated costumes from the last year's shows: *Hamlet*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Lysistrata* and *Miss Saigon*.

Students also may enter production work done as production stage managers, show designers, poster designers, or original writing or directing projects. Lastly, the regional festival is a great opportunity to make professional and academic contacts for students and faculty. Auditions will be held for Highland Summer Theatre 2009, too.

CONCERT: Choreographers are Andreas Guest Artists

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entitled "Baggage Claimed, Storied Lives" that used autobiography as a basis for work. She developed movement sequences and text based on the stories of the nine dancers in the piece.

Graduating Senior Jessica Bowers will present her senior project, "Deciphered Reflections." There are several other student works that reflect

the work of students that are also nearing graduation.

Tickets for *Bridge Project3: Moving Texts* are on sale online now at MSUDance.com or by calling the Theatre & Dance Box Office at 507-389-6661 between 4 and 6 p.m. Monday-Friday. Cost is \$9 regular admission, \$8 for youth, senior citizens or groups of 15 or more, and \$7 for current Minnesota State Mankato students.

Bridges Concert is one of two for the season

The Dance Program of the Department of Theatre & Dance presents its *Spring Collection Concert* at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, and 1 p.m. Saturday, April 30-May 2, in the Ted Paul Theatre. It's the culmination of a year's worth of work.

Tickets are on sale NOW.