To The Pointe...

A newsletter produced by the Mercyhurst University Dance Department.

Letter from the Dance Chair

As we enter the holiday season I reflect on my many blessings, including the addition of a wonderful new faculty member, Melissa Bobick, and the return of alumna Noelle Lelakus ’05 as the administrative assistant to the department. Both of these amazing ladies bring a wealth of experience and a positive and welcoming energy to the space.

We are all sliding into university status and looking forward to the challenges of a new semester calendar for 2013-2014 as well as a restructured core curriculum. I have been awarded sabbatical leave for winter term and some of my leave will be devoted to working out the nuts & bolts of these major changes. I will also be working with principal pianist Tatyana Grigoryants on producing a classroom CD of her music and traveling to New York City and Washington, D.C. to meet with dance alums in both cities.

The entire department is working toward a goal of raising $15,000 to build the endowment of the Jenni-Lyn Watson Memorial Scholarship Fund. This fund assists graduating seniors with audition expenses. The Erie alums have formed a “Magic Circle” fundraising arm to promote three events. On Halloween, we invited alums to participate in a Ghost Gala in honor of Anna Pavlova. On Saturday, Feb. 2, 2013, please join us for a premiere event aimed at bringing alums and benefactors together in support of the many remarkably talented dancers of Mercyhurst University. We will finish our campaign in March with a direct mail solicitation to top off our goal. I look forward to seeing many names on the list of contributors in support of this worthy cause.

Lastly, I am so excited to be joining for the first time with the Mercyhurst Symphony Orchestra to present La Fille Mal Gardee, May 3-5, 2013. If you can’t make it in February, take a road trip in May to be with us for this Erie premiere. It will definitely be worth it.

Enjoy our blog, check out our new website, and don’t forget to join us on Facebook and Twitter.

I wish you all a happy and memorable holiday season.

Tauna Hunter, Dance Chair
The Mercyhurst Dance Department kicked off its performing season with Beyond Words II, the second annual showcase for the Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre and SoMar Dance Works. The performance was an example of incredible dancing, and seamlessly worked in Halloween festivity while saluting the Mercyhurst University “Freedom Season.”

The program opened with the Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre. The dancers demonstrated that a year of experience only made them an even more striking company. Artistic Director Tauna Hunter put together a concert that showcased all of the dancers and also proved that ballet does not have to fit into a particular mold. The pieces were bright and fresh, executed flawlessly by the capable and versatile dancers.

SoMar Dance Works presented an equally compelling second act. The company implemented the use of audio and video, which elevated their program and gave whisper to the future of concert dance in conjunction with technology. The company’s cast of female powerhouse dancers performed with grace and athleticism, attacking each piece with strength and enthusiasm.

The close of the weekend’s performances brought with it not a sense of finality but rather anticipation for the department’s upcoming performances. In the wings is the quickly approaching Holiday Concert, which presents another diverse program showcasing not only the Mercyhurst dancers but also the work of the incredible faculty, who devote themselves to the cultivation of their students. Sure to be a crowd pleaser, the Holiday Concert will offer family-appropriate material designed to get everyone in the holiday spirit!
The Mercyhurst University Dance Department was delighted to welcome a new instructor in our midst this year. Melissa Bobick joined the faculty as the newest ballet teacher in the department. She is a graduate of Indiana University and Purchase College, Conservatory of Dance. Throughout her career she performed with Eugene Ballet, Ballet Idaho, the National Choreographer’s Initiative and the New York City Opera before turning to choreography and teaching. Ms. Bobick also is an ABT Certified and Affiliate teacher and has set pieces on Belhaven College, Bucknell Dance Company, and Eugene Ballet.

Ms. Bobick and her family are currently enjoying the scenic change of Erie as compared to their previous home in New York City. She explained, “This move couldn’t have come at a better time in our lives,” and is ready to raise her newborn daughter, Juliette, in a smaller city. She finds the department to be very supportive and welcoming and is ready to begin her academic career here as well as to become involved in various Mercyhurst activities.

Sophomore Kelsey Sawyer, a student of hers this fall, stated, “I loved having Ms. Bobick as a teacher this term. You can tell she truly cares about each of us and genuinely wants us to improve as dancers. She makes an excellent addition to the department!” Ms. Bobick’s willingness to go out of her way to help students is making quite the impression on all of the dancers.

Furthermore, the Dance Department did not hesitate in putting Ms. Bobick to the task of choreographing. She is premiering “Babes in Toyland” for the holiday show Dec. 7-9 at the Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center. The piece follows the story of two children’s journey to Toyland on Christmas Eve, and is a new addition to the performance that has become a tradition for the Dance Department. Junior Abby Savage, a member of her cast, said, “It was great to be able to work with Ms. Bobick since she is new to the faculty. She was very collaborative and really tried to see what worked best for us”. All the dancers in her piece agreed and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of working with Ms. Bobick.

In addition, Ms. Bobick says she is looking forward to getting to know all the students in the department. Although new to the area, one of her top priorities involves the famous Erie weather, and she stated, “I don’t know if I have any big plans yet except to make it through my first Erie winter”. Ms. Bobick will be teaching Ballet, Pointe & Variations, & Dance History, a subject she is extremely passionate about. Students and faculty alike are thrilled to see what’s to come next from Ms. Bobick and her new ideas.
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS OF THE DANCE DEPARTMENT!

- Savanna Alfanos
- Sophia Andreyev
- Cara Benko
- Mary Connolly
- Esmae Gold
- Hannah Green
- Emily Hashiguchi
- Kayla Kelly
- Brianna Marci
- Hailey Meert
- Justin Minsk
- Caitlyn O’Neel
- Veronica Plys
- Karly Schwab
- Patricia Stefancin
- Margaret Sullivan
- Elaina Sutula
- Molly Thvedt
- Angela Trivelli

AWARDS

**Etoile Leadership Award** - Kelly Clymer ('12)

**Nu Delta Alpha Academic Excellence Award** - Melissa Sheffield ('12)

**Palmer Service Award** - Kristen Marincic ('12)

**Senior Spotlight Award** - Amy Deer ('12)

DEAN’S LIST 2011-2012

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<th>Meredith Allgood</th>
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WORKING WITH LISA DE RIBERE
by: Elisabeth Wilson

Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre was fortunate enough to work with guest choreographer Lisa de Ribere in “Eye of the Wind” for this year’s Beyond Words II performance. Ms. de Ribere, a native of Pennsylvania, received her early dance training at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, and was a dancer with both the New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theater. She is now a faculty member with the School of American Ballet, and a repetiteur of the George Balanchine Trust. Ms. de Ribere was a unique choreographer in that she brought to the studio both a peaceful and quiet atmosphere, yet one that also demanded focus and hard work. She wanted the dancers to use the music to influence their movement quality, allowing them to encapsulate their inner artistic freedom and to be an expression of visual poetry. The use of scarves throughout the piece was challenging, but they added texture to the piece and exhibited the fluidity she wanted the dancers to emulate. It was inspiring to hear her speak of stories of her dance career, especially when she talked of working with the great George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins, and it was easy to see how these men influenced her dancing career as well as her choreographic style. In addition, all of the ballet levels were also able to work with Ms. de Ribere when she taught technique classes during her residency. Her class was simple yet challenging as she incorporated aspects of her training at School of American Ballet as well as her choreography into her combinations. It was a wonderful experience to work with Ms. de Ribere, for she provided the dancers with new opportunities and insights on what lies ahead in their future dance careers. Being able to learn from such reputable artists as Ms. de Ribere is always exciting, and it was an honor to perform her choreography in Beyond Words II.

Photo credits: Rick Klein
Summer Adventures!

Emily Reed (’14) worked as a Resident Counselor at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts Summer Program for six weeks.

Ashley Cook (’13) attended the Complexions Summer Intensive, and worked and danced at Steps on Broadway in New York City.

Emily McAveney (’14) danced at her home studio, went to Disney World and the beach, and attended the Ballet X Summer Intensive in Philadelphia.

Maggie Sullivan (’16) worked as a dance intern at Wyoming Seminary’s Performing Arts institute for five weeks.

Megan Lawrence (’15) attended ABT’s Collegiate Summer Program and went to a traditional Indian wedding!

Tess Sinke (’13) performed with G.R. Dance Project as a guest company member, and attended and performed with the MasterWorks Festival.

Andrea Lankester (’14) worked as a Resident Assistant at the Orlando Ballet Summer Intensive.

Ana Welsh (’13) was a counselor and guest teacher at the New York State Summer School of the Arts, and began an internship at the Erie Dance Conservatory.

Roni Plys (’16) attended the Joffrey Ballet Summer Intensive in Chicago.

Alex Orenstein (’14) worked as a Dorm Director at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet.

Emma Rishel (’13) worked as a Resident Assistant at Next Generation Ballet in Tampa, FL.

Katie Boatright (’14) danced and performed with the Osage Ballet, and was a part of a world premiere titled Wàhzhazhe, a ballet about the history of the Osage Indians.

Elena Cvetkovich (’15) attended the ABT Collegiate Summer Program and took a yoga teacher training course.

Kelsey Chamberlain (’13) worked as a model at Abercrombie, danced, and competed in a scholarship program in Las Vegas.
THE BLACK AND WHITE SALON
by: Roni Plys

Once again, the Dance Department presented their Black and White Fall Salon, an informal arts showcase, in the Dance Space on Thursday, Nov. 1. The Salon served as a memorial for a past Mercyhurst student and dancer, Jenni-Lyn Watson, and donations from the audience members helped to raise money for the scholarship fund in Jenni's name. The scholarship provides financial assistance for the audition expenses of graduating seniors, in honor of Jenni-Lyn's great passion for and dedication to this art form. Even the title and color theme of the Salon was inspired by her favorite animal, the panda. All forms of art were welcome at the showcase, and it included a variety of singing, dancing, painting and poetry, which revealed many aspects of Mercyhurst’s creativity. However, with the Dance Department as the host, the majority of the acts to be performed were, in fact, dance choreography in multiple styles, including ballet, jazz and modern technique. It was an exciting experience for the dancers to be given the opportunity to reveal the result of their rigorous training, especially for such a great cause, and to come together in honor of a beloved friend. In addition, the work of the choreographers was entirely unique, and it was wonderful to see them express their own personal style and flair in their choice of music, movement and theme. This year’s Salon was a huge success, and it is quite evident that Jenni’s spirit continues to be felt strongly by all members of the department. The department continues to work hard on the salon and to find other ways to raise money for the Jenni-Lyn Watson scholarship fund. The showcase was well worth the time and effort, and everyone shared enthusiasm in their preparations. As last year's showing was quite a success and full of enjoyment, the Dance Department and Mercyhurst students alike are looking forward to continuing this amazing tradition!

Photo credits: Kathleen Hays
YOUNG! TANZSOMMER
by: Mary Kersey

While the academic calendar had ended for most of Mercyhurst’s students, the Mercyhurst Dancers had a busy schedule planned for the summer of 2012. In a new partnership with Young! Tanzsommer dance experience, Dance Department Chair Tauna Hunter brought faculty and five students to Austria to participate in this international summer dance festival.

The dancers, Rachel Bauer, Melissa Carabrese, Kathleen Hays, Bethany Schaffer, and Tiffani Thomas had the opportunity to perform six works created by their faculty over the course of a ten day tour which spanned four venues and drew crowds of thousands. The dancers performed three works by Tauna Hunter and two by Mark and Solveig Santillano. The program gave the dancers a true sense of the reality of being part of a touring dance company. They would often step off the plane only to immediately go into rehearsals for the performance later that evening. Dancer Tiffani Thomas said that “It was great for learning how a traveling company works. It was very tiring, but very fun and provided us with lots of experience.” The students gained valuable insight into the rigors that traveling performers faced, but also experienced some of the perks: in their downtime they were able to enjoy many attractions that Austria had to offer, while creating stronger bonds with their faculty.

Dancers and faculty alike came away from the program feeling fulfilled and enriched by the culture and dance that Young! Tanzsommer offered. The partnership offers performance and networking opportunities and is a testament to Ms. Hunter’s dedication to exposing her students to the best and most diverse programs both in the states and internationally. The success of the first collaboration between Young! Tanzsommer and Mercyhurst promises for a continued relationship in the future. It is a prime example of one of the many great programs that the Mercyhurst Dance Department has to offer its students.

Photo credits: Tiffani Thomas
Congratulations to the Class of 2012!

- Haley Bradstreet
- Kelly Clymer
- Anna Daught
- Amy Deer
- Juliana Franks
- Kristen Marincic
- Eden Mishler
- Tori Scott
- Melissa Sheffield
- Bridget Toms
- Rachel Torgesen
- Kristina Weimer

MASTER CLASS SERIES GRANT

by: Tricia Stefancin

John Lehrer master class

This year, the Dance Department was fortunate to have received an Academic Enrichment Grant that has allowed faculty member Noelle Partusch to arrange for a master class series to be held in the danceSpace throughout the year. The grant, worth $1,000 dollars, is to provide learning opportunities for a larger group, which means the department is able to bring in renowned teachers, choreographers and artists to share some of their vast knowledge with the students.

There are five master classes scheduled to be taught throughout this year. Several have already taken place, including one from Danielle Feller, a Mercyhurst alum who taught contemporary classes at the beginning of fall term, and John Lehrer. Erin Rehberg also arrived to teach modern to the upperclassmen, and Hannah Fuller taught evening hip-hop classes.

In the winter term, Scott Puttman will be visiting Mercyhurst to work with choreography students and possibly give a ballet class. He will also be teaching his Elemental Body Alignment system (EBAS), a preventative exercise movement to help prevent and even heal injuries.

In April, Maria Caruso, the director of Bodiography, will teach a three-hour ballet class and choreography workshop, which will be mandatory for all seniors to attend.

While some classes are only open to certain levels, students who cannot participate in the master class may still watch. According to Ms. Partusch, “Sometimes you learn more from doing nothing rather than doing.”

Ms. Partusch also said that the series works well for pretty much anybody and everybody, as the visiting artists bring in many different movement styles and life experiences to share with the students. “It’s nice to have the ability to bring so many different people in to teach these classes.” she stated.

Luckily, the Academic Enrichment grant can be renewed for consecutive years, so the department is hopeful that this wonderful opportunity will be able to continue in the future.

Performance Calendar

Beyond Words II - Oct. 26-28
‘Tis the Season - Dec. 7-9
Raw Edges - Feb. 1-3
La Fille Mal Gardee - May 3-5

Congratulations to the Class of 2012!
The Magic Circle

Your tax-deductible contribution is recognized in performance programs and supports scholarships for study abroad, guest artists, master classes and residencies for dance majors

$50.00 Believer $25.00 Friend $100.00 Patron

$250.00 Benefactor $500.00+ Angel

Make checks payable to Mercyhurst College Dance Department and send to: Mercyhurst College Advancement Office, Mercyhurst College 501 East 38th St. Erie, PA 16546
Include your name and mailing address along with your check.

You may also contribute to the Jenni-Lyn Watson Memorial Fund by visiting http://giving.mercyhurst.edu/jennilyn
For Information on Planned Giving Opportunities, contact Institutional Advancement (814) 824-2241