

December 2011

Volume 20, Issue I

To the Pointe...

A newsletter produced by the Mercyhurst College Dance Department

Special Interest Articles:

- Beyond Words
- Fall Term Guest Artists
- Upcoming: Holiday Concert
- Student Spotlight
- A Black and White Event

Individual Highlights:

- Class of 2010 2
- New Dancers 5
- Awards and Dean's List Recipients 5
- Summer Adventures 3-4

Newsletter Staff:

Chief Editor/ Layout design

Andrea Lankester

Contributing Writers

Rachel Cockerham
Eliza Davidson
Megan Lawrence
Emily Reed
Emma Rishel
Chelsea Robicheau

Letter from the Dance Chair

As I reflect on what I'm thankful for, I know that my life is filled with so many blessings. First and foremost is my husband. There is no way that I would be able to do what I do without the support of my partner, Michael Gleason. We have been a team since the first day we met and, as we move toward our 25th year together, I have to acknowledge him as my rock, confidant, friend, advisor and collaborator. Together we have worked endless hours to build this department and mentor our students toward better lives.



In addition to his position as the department's technical director and resident designer, Michael teaches ballet, pas de deux, men's class, choreography, music appreciation and production practicum. As technical director, he oversees production work studies and production practicum students in all the aspects of supporting the technical needs of the department, such as laying our dance floor, hanging lights, editing music, hiring additional technicians and basically setting up, running and tearing down every performance in the theatre as well as for outreach performances. As our resident designer, he designs and builds our sets, orders our drops and makes sure that all of our props are ready and tracked. He loves working with the students and enjoys educating and mentoring them.

As co-directors of Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre, he and I were so proud of the invitation to perform in Cleveland with the renowned *Ballet Magnificat!*. We also delighted in MBT's tremendously successful premiere performance with SoMar Dance Works and the recent lecture demonstrations held in Erie schools, which we will continue throughout the year. We are excited to showcase the company this spring with the Cleveland Ballet Conservatory and in Pittsburgh at the Byham Theatre with Bodiography and La Roche College.

We are very excited about our upcoming holiday concert, *'Tis the Season*, showcasing The Mercyhurst Dancers and Liturgical Dance Ensemble in *The Skaters*, *Multitudes of Angels* and *Santa's Toy Shop* Dec. 9-11.

As we move forward with the lessons that Jenni-Lyn has taught us, taking time to reflect on the one-year anniversary, I pray that as our daughter, Caitlin, goes off to college next year, she will hold those lessons close to her heart and make safe choices. Our Black and White event in honor of Jenni-Lyn's love for panda bears was a reminder to us all to hold close those we love and to be forever thankful for the many blessings that we enjoy. Among mine are my family, my students, my friends and my freedom.

Happy Holidays,

Tauna Hunter

**Congrats
to the
Class of
2011!**



**Caitlin Burke
Jessica Borowczyk
Heather Gorres
Claire Hinde
Sarah Hricko
Nicole Lyons
Sarah Mastrocola
Heather Mills
Lindsey Smith
Chris Taddiken
Christine Wilbur
Hailey Glover**



Alumni Updates

Christine Wilbur ('11) is taking dance classes at a local studio to stay in shape, and is planning to audition for modern companies in the spring. Christine also started a master's program in management with a marketing concentration at Wilmington University.

Claire Hinde ('11) is living in New York City working as a waitress at the Landmark Tavern in Hell's Kitchen, working and taking classes at Steps on Broadway, and auditioning.

Lindsey Smith ('11) is dancing with Storling Dance Theater in Olathe, Kansas, while also teaching classes at local studios. Working as an innkeeper at a bed and breakfast, Lindsey has a very demanding schedule.

Alicia Peters ('03) is living in Elmira, NY, working out of her home office as a Compensation & Benefits Analyst for a national healthcare company. She is married with three little ones, and is also teaching ballet for Rafael Grigorian.

Alyssa Alger ('10) has recently been accepted to graduate programs at New York University, Florida State University, and the University of Arizona.

Trevor Sones ('10) is working for Royal Caribbean and had the opportunity to tour Europe with them.

Dara Swisher ('08) is currently married and living in Jacksonville, FL, and is performing and choreographing professionally with Braided Light Dance Project. In addition, she is pursuing an MFA in Choreography from Jacksonville University with a residency at White Oak Conservation Center.

Danielle Thienel ('95) has returned to the Nashville Ballet as School Director.

Jessica Stanley ('04) is living in Pittsburgh working at the Human-Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University - Communications and Event Planning while also teaching classes at the Larry Cervi School of Performing Arts. In addition, Jessica is recently engaged!

Dena Quarantillo ('03) moved to Boston, MA, to start a dance program at Clarence R. Edwards Middle School.

Hailey Glover ('11) is touring with Sesame Street Live!

Sarah Hricko ('11) is working at DANCECleveland as the Administrative Coordinator and is teaching ballet at a local studio.



Summer Adventures

Megan Dunphy ('12) spent the summer at home in Columbus, OH, working as the Risk Management/Treasury Intern at Battelle Memorial Institute.

Amy Deer ('12) did her Arts Administration Internship in Erie for the Summer Dance Experience, and spent the rest of the summer working in her father's biotech lab.

Juliana Franks ('12) went on a mission trip to Mexico and built a house with no power tools in 4 days outside Tijuana.

Tori Scott ('12) worked as a Resident Assistant at the ABT Austin summer intensive.

Desi and Daria Laemmerhirt ('14) attended the Nutmeg Summer Intensive on full scholarship for 8 weeks, were maids of honor in their sister's wedding, and helped kick off their sister's new photography business.

Eliza Davidson ('14) spent 3 weeks at the ABT Collegiate Summer Intensive, and also experienced Vermont Cheese festivals.

Chelsea Robicheau ('15) worked as an RA at the Orlando Ballet Summer Intensive.



Tiffani Thomas ('14) taught classes at her home studio and choreographed a small piece for a ballet company at home

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

Andrea Lankester ('14) worked as a Resident Counselor at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, then took a train across the country to San Francisco and back.

Rachel Torgesen ('12) attended the Lehrer Dance summer intensive, did an arts administration internship with Ballet Concerto, and worked for the New York City Ballet during their summer residence in Saratoga.

Desi and Daria as maids of honor at their sister's wedding



Ali Stacy ('15) took classes at her home studio, worked at Panera Bread, went to Bethany Beach, and went to all of the big amusement parks on the eastern part of the country.

Katherine Boatright ('14) attended the ABT Collegiate Summer Intensive for 3 weeks.

Ellen Koeppel ('14) attended the ABT Collegiate Summer intensive for 3 weeks.

Rachel Cockerham ('15) babysat, took dance classes at her home studio, went to Rehoboth Beach for a week with her family, and went fishing on her grandfather's boat.

Emily McAveney ('14) attended the ABT Collegiate Summer Intensive for 3 weeks.

Emily Reed ('14) attended the ABT Collegiate Summer Intensive for 3 weeks, worked at home at Nibblins Edibles and Gifts, and went to a candy conference in Williamsburg, VA, to sample new candy products and trends.

Tauna Hunter (Dance Chair) mentored faculty member Noelle Partusch in the Summer Dance Experience, went to see the Royal Danish Ballet at the Kennedy Center, went to New York to recruit dancers at the New York Dance Alliance Competition, saw Cirque du Soleil at Radio City Music Hall, and visited her sister in Denver, Colorado.

Theresa Power-Natale (Administrative Assistant) rented a cottage on Lake Chatauqua and had a full week of much needed vacation time with her family.



Sophomores attending the ABT Collegiate Summer Intensive in New York City.



Dancers attending the Mercyhurst Summer Dance Experience took an excursion to the beach.

Welcome New Members of the Dance Department!

Meredith Allgood

Melissa Carabrese

Rachel Cockerham

Elena Cvetkovich

Maggie Doherty

Mikhayla Dolson

William Dula

Anna Edens

Katarina Fitzpatrick



Marchetta Genis

Rica Iwai

Mary Kersey

Megan Lawrence

Alexa Lucente

Courtney Naughton

Chelsea Robicheau

Kelsey Sawyer

Emily Schwarting

Allison Stacy

Kathryn Tokar

Rebecca Wilson

Dean's List 2010-2011 Congratulations!

Kelly Clymer ('12)

Amy Deer ('12)

Emily McAveney ('14)

Eileen McDonnell ('13)

Melissa Sheffield ('12)

Jane L. Barr Scholarship Recipients

Emily McAveney, Melissa Sheffield

Based on dance merit, CPA, dance service and goals these individuals have earned an endowed one-year scholarship, due to their commitment to the dance department and its mission of service.

The David Palmer Service Award – Christine Wilbur ('11)

The Étoile Leadership Award – Claire Hinde ('11)

Nu Delta Alpha Academic Excellence Award –

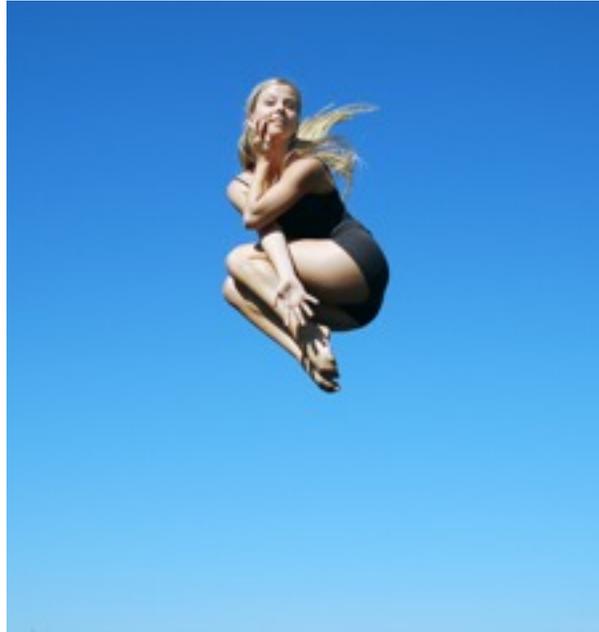
Christopher Taddiken ('11) and Sarah Mastrocola ('11)

The Senior Spotlight Award – Christopher Taddiken ('11)

"Beyond Words" - Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre & SoMar Dance Works

By: Chelsea Robicheau

As October drew to a close bringing the cold, crisp weather of a Pennsylvania autumn, the Mercyhurst Dance Department's production *Beyond Words* provided an opportunity for audiences to warm themselves in a rich performance that seamlessly mixed contemporary and ballet studies as presented by the Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre and SoMar Dance Works. In its premiere performance, newly formed Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre presented stunning pieces that spanned a wide range from classically beautiful to fun and spicy. Providing an extracurricular performing opportunity for Mercyhurst dancers, MBT demonstrated the diversity of its members with an exciting program and promises of many more to come.



Junior Kelsey Chamberlain

SoMar Dance Works flawlessly combined the use of audiovisual aid, set and scenery, costume, and of course dance in an equally expansive set of works. Leaving audience members with much to chew on, the dancers attacked each piece with an emotion that seemed to permeate the air of the theater. Commentary on the 9/11 terrorist attacks brought back personal memories of that day for each individual both in the audience and on stage in a piece that was striking and real.

In contrast, the light-hearted and sometimes silly "That Which Lurks Where Shadows Fall" successfully lightened the mood while still exploring parts of human thought that kept audience members thinking. The close of the weekend's performances brought with it not a sense of finality but rather anticipation for the Department's up and coming 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!

Performance Calendar 2011-2012

October 28-30
December 9-11
February 3-5
May 4-6

Beyond Words
'Tis the Season
Raw Edges XIV
Viva la Danse!



SoMar rehearsing for *Beyond Words*

2011 Guest Artists

By: Andrea Lankester

It has been an exciting Fall Term for dancers and faculty alike within the Dance Department. We have all benefited from the many guest artists who have graciously offered their time and expertise to the training of the Mercyhurst dancers. Coming in the form of Adjunct Faculty, Guest Choreographers, and performing Guest Artists, all of us within the danceSpace have been impacted by the new perspectives provided by these people and their rich backgrounds and experiences. Getting everyone amped up for the coming year during Jump Start week, Thom Clower brought energy and life to

studios and kicked everyone into high gear as we got back into shape and braced for the approaching term. His extensive experience as an administrator, holding the position of Artistic Director for Ballet Dallas and Ballet Master at Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, was demonstrated through his collaboration with the newly formed Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre. MBT's striking performance in the "Beyond Words" concert presented the students as a talented and professional unit. Guest artist and former Dayton Ballet member Justin Koertgen

brought strength and presence to the stage, elevating Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre's first performance as a humble yet fierce male dancer. Adjunct faculty members Lesley Bories-Scalise and Nathaniel Johnson worked primarily in the studios but brought new insights that will surely transfer to the stage for those that worked with them in the Fall Term. Ms. Bories-Scalise's attention to detail coupled with her intense love and respect for ballet provided her students with classes that were packed with information. Even those not in her classes felt themselves enveloped by the vitality that she brought to

the department. Mr. Johnson's hands-on approach to jazz technique forced his students out of their comfort zone with new movement styles. His knowledge opened the doors of discovery for students, with the potential to influence choreographic and career choices in their futures. The privilege of having these guests around has impacted not only the entire Dance Department, but the community at large through the "Beyond Words" performance. As the term comes to a close we all look forward to the opportunity to work with more gifted and experienced leaders in the dance community, ready to soak up the information they so generously give.

Paul Taylor Company

By: Rachel Cockerham

Mercyhurst students received a unique and rare opportunity to see Paul Taylor Dance Company in the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center this past October. The company is a world-renowned modern dance company based in New York City, and they performed three very different pieces from their repertoire. The first, *Oh, You Kid!*, was set to popular American ragtime music and portrayed a rather comical view of the time period. Throughout this amusing piece the dancers maintained exceptional technique and their facial expressions added the final touch to the brilliant choreography. The second, *Beloved Renegade*, was inspired by Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. The dance had

an ethereal haze about it most likely inspired by Whitman and his view of transcendentalism. This haze wasn't produced through props or scenery, but simply through exquisite dancing and a transparent scrim. Finally, the dancers also presented *Brandenburgs*, a piece originally performed in 1988, but still being used by the dancers today. This piece was beautiful not because of a theme or inspiration, but simply because the dancers, in unison and on their own, kept the audience watching through the attention they gave every single movement they made. Katarina Fitzpatrick, a dance major and freshman student at Mercyhurst, said: "I was impressed by the diversity of the repertoire and also how the same dancers were featured in these very different pieces. It allowed them to showcase their versatility."

Continued on page 8...

The Mercyhurst Center for Dance Education

By: Eliza Davidson

Do not be alarmed by the potentially bumping bass that may surprise you on a Tuesday night as you walk by the dance space, nor by the multitude of unfamiliar faces in the studio. It's merely Jessica Stachelrodts's popular hip-hop class, one of the fun, free open classes offered by the Mercyhurst Center for Dance Education. Mercyhurst Center for Dance Education offers a variety of open classes to not only dance majors, but also Mercyhurst students and even the Erie Community. In the previous term open classes were unquestionably a success, especially the jam-packed hip-hop and belly dance classes. Winter term will have much of the same to offer with a new Ballet teacher Tuesdays and Thursdays, Haley Bradstreet. Saturday Ballet class is also offered and taught by a different faculty member each week. Ballet class cards can be purchased in the lobby of the DanceSpace. Stay tuned for the spring schedule, which may include modern and yoga.

The Mercyhurst Center for Dance Education was also responsible for the Mercyhurst Summer Dance Experience, a three-week intensive in July. The program incorporated many exciting guest instructors such as Marianna Tcherkassky, Ballet Mistress of Pittsburgh Ballet Theater,



Jess Stachelrodts, Junior

Michael Vernon, Dance Department Chair at Indiana University, and Carla Hughes, to name a few. Some of the faculty this year were even Mercyhurst alumni. Alum Justin Hogan taught Ballet and lyrical and Caitlin Roberts taught Broadway jazz. Additionally, Ms. Roberts choreographed a duet for herself and senior Amy Deer to the live accompaniment of Percussionist Charles Hall. The Summer Dance experience achieved record-breaking enrollment of thirty-eight students from all over the country.

Continued from page 7...

Many of the dance majors also got a chance to take a master class with one of these phenomenal dancers, Michelle Fleet. Taking the class and learning small parts of the repertoire was beneficial to the students, but even more beneficial was the culture that was imparted to the students through this class. Ms. Fleet taught the dancers steps and combinations, but she also told the dancers about the innovation and inspiration behind the movements. Michelle gave the dancers new insight into Paul Taylor by giving them advice about their own dancing and potential careers. Quoting Ms. Fleet, "In class do the exercise in the purest form possible. Be aware of your tendencies and don't allow them to affect the choreography unless you are asked to." Purity of technique is what allowed these dancers so much versatility as they quickly transitioned between three very different pieces and yet presented each one in a beautifully captivating way.

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

By: Emily Reed

There are many changes occurring this year in both the Dance Department and the Mercyhurst community. One of the more exciting changes was the addition of another show to our schedule. This new show, slated for December 9-11, has been deemed a holiday concert. Entitled *'Tis the Season*, this show features three premiere pieces encompassing an array of styles to showcase the diverse talent Mercyhurst Dance Department has to offer.

Ms. Christine Hay set Frederick Ashton's *Les Patineurs*, a classical pointe piece based on ice-skating. The ballet features a corps of ice skaters, two soloists called patineuses, and a lead romantic couple. The original piece was choreographed by Ashton in 1937 and has been adapted to be performed here. The piece is a great addition to the program because of its winter feel and the light-hearted atmosphere it showcases as well as the technical virtuosity possessed by the dancers.

A liturgical piece by Ms. Corrine Noelle Partusch brings the religious side of the holiday season into the program. Her piece depicts the part of the nativity story where the angels come to the shepherds to tell them of the birth of Jesus.

The dancers in the piece are the angels themselves and dance to an oratorio by Bach that is inspired by the same part of the nativity story. The German singing in the oratorio is actually the telling of the story as well. This piece truly brings the religious aspect into the program in a very beautiful way.

A new work by Mr. Mark Santillano will premiere at this show. *Santa's Toy Shop* shows the activities inside the workshop before Christmas Eve. The piece opens with the elves hard at work wrapping presents and getting ready for Christmas day. There are floppy dolls and stiff tap-dancing toy soldiers that add to the chaos. A duet between a flirtatious elf and a bashful elf leads into a rogue elf that dresses up as Santa and plays around with some elf-reindeer. Ribbon-dancing candy canes and another boxed elf build up into the finale where the whole cast appears together to close the piece with a big bang. This piece is a festive and fun way to not only entertain the audience, but to show off the quirky sides of the dancers in the department.

'Tis the Season will be a family-friendly addition to the shows lined up for this coming year. The diverse program will show off the talents of the dancers as well as the choreographers in a new way. The department is very excited for this new opportunity for the Mercyhurst Dancers to perform and hopes to continue this newfound tradition for years to come.

Our holiday treat for Erie!
The Mercyhurst Dancers & Liturgical Dance Ensemble

'Tis the Season

A holiday dance concert to delight the whole family

Dec. 10, 2 and 7 p.m.
Dec. 11, 2 p.m.
Dec. 9, 4:30 p.m.
(preview performance)

Mary D'Angelo
Performing Arts Center

Tickets: \$5-15.50 • 824-3000

Mercyhurst COLLEGE
pac.mercyhurst.edu

Student Spotlight: Emily McAveney

By: Megan Lawrence

Dancer Profile

Full name: Emily Francis McAveney

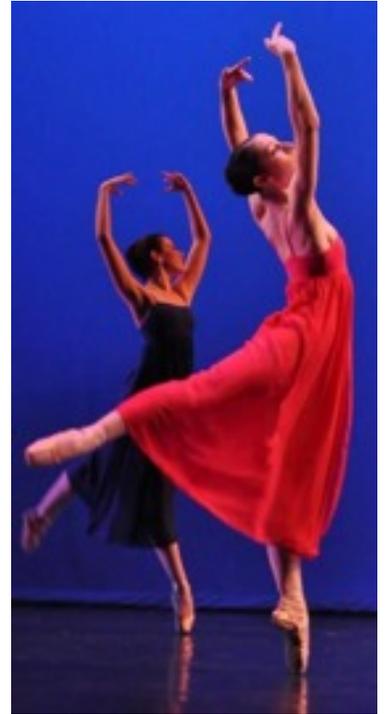
Age: 19

Hometown: West Chester, Pennsylvania

In her short time here at Mercyhurst, sophomore Emily McAveney has already made a name for herself. After quickly moving up through the department, she now takes level four classes and takes part in Mercyhurst Ballet Theatre, a prestigious addition to any résumé McAveney is foremost a classical ballet dancer; her strong technique and impressive footwork make this clear. When asked which ballet she has most enjoyed performing so far in her life, she cites Balanchine's *Serenade*, which she danced at her home studio.

Like the rest of the dancers in the department, Emily works hard in academic classes as well. She enjoys English when she is not in the studio, and is excited to take *Western Classics* in the winter term. It is apparent, however, that dance is McAveney's focus. After graduation she hopes to join a company with a classical ballet foundation. She is drawn to Pennsylvania Ballet's diverse repertory, which includes full-length classics, Balanchine pieces, and contemporary works.

Over the summer, McAveney traveled to New York with friends and fellow Mercyhurst dancers to take part in American Ballet Theatre's collegiate summer program. The three-week intensive included many long days of classes and rehearsals, including learning variations from the second act of *Giselle*. This was Emily's first time dancing in *Giselle*, and she described it as "gorgeous, but really difficult". At the end of the program, she danced as a wili in the corps de ballet. When asked about life outside the studio, she says "I'm not sure if I could live in New York City, but three weeks to explore and see the different people was interesting and fun." It can be certain that no matter where Emily is dancing, she will be making Mercyhurst proud.



Performing with Mercyhurst Ballet Theater



Backstage after a performance of *Firebird*



Rehearsing the Kitri variation from *Don Quixote*



A Black and White Informal Arts Showcase

By: Emma Rishel

As the one-year anniversary of Jenni-Lyn Watson's passing approached, the dance department presented a Black and White Informal Arts Showcase. It took place in the dance space on November 10, and was a casual showing of student choreography, songs, poetry, and art. The intentions of the event were to be uplifting, a celebration of Jenni-Lyn's life and her joy of dancing. Those attending were required to wear black and white to represent Jenni-Lyn's love of pandas. It began with a coffee house event followed by a presentation of the selected dance pieces. Requesting a suggested donation of \$5 or a stuffed panda bear, all contributions will go to the Jenni-Lyn Watson scholarship fund.

As we began heading into November and remembered all of the wonderful and joyous times each of us had with Jenni-Lyn, there were definitely many moments tinged with sadness. What was most important for each of us to remember at the special event were all of the happy times we treasure, in celebrating the life of our dear Jenni-Lyn. The atmosphere of the dance department is like a close-knit family, and for most of us, not a day goes by when we aren't reminded of Jenni. The Black and White event brought us all together to celebrate and remember this amazing person by doing what she loved best - dancing.

The Watson family is still taking each day at a time but, with kind hearts, have expressed their concern for all of Jenni-Lyn's friends at Mercyhurst. As Jenni-Lyn would want all of us who loved her to always remember, "Take the good with the bad, smile when you're sad. Love what you got and always remember what you had."



Seniors at the Black and White Event



Seniors Amy Deer and Tori Scott giving the panda a kiss at the showcase

A Letter from an Alum...

Dear Ms. Hunter,
(and the rest of the Mercyhurst Dance Faculty)

I just wanted to say hello. First of all, I wanted to say that you and the rest of the dance family at Mercyhurst have been in my thoughts the last few days. I am sure you have all been keeping each other strong this past weekend and week and celebrating Jenni! I know Heather, Nicole and I have been in close contact. Second, I was excited to tell you that ironically, on Saturday, I was actually offered a full-time job working for DANCECleveland as the Administrative Coordinator! Part of me really feels that Jenni was looking out for all of us not to be upset, but to celebrate. I was happy to celebrate that I will be working in the communications field for a dance organization and fully using the knowledge I learned at Mercyhurst. I will also be continuing to teach ballet at the studio I have been teaching at. Thank you for all that you and the rest of the dance faculty taught me. I have realized upon graduation just how blessed we were to have such amazing faculty and how much we really did learn to become dancers, advocates, supporters, teachers etc... My new employer was very impressed as well. You really prepared us!

Thank you. I hope you and the rest of the dance family there has a peaceful and happy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Sarah Hricko

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