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UA68/17 WKU Dance: Creating, Thinking, Artists

WKU Theatre & Dance

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Spring 2024

WKU Dance

CREATING | THINKING | ARTISTS



WKU Dance Program

The WKU Dance Program has brought the curtain down on Spring 2024, and we are excited to share our many activities from the semester. In this edition, you will see a collection of photos from the Dance Program's coursework, guest artist workshops, faculty, and student research endeavors, the Department of Theatre & Dance's 50th anniversary production of Evening of Dance, The Dance Project, and Last Chance to Dance.

Spring 2024 was a busy yet special semester as we celebrated 50 years of our exhilarating spring dance concert Evening of Dance! This season's production featured the WKU Dance Company performing an array of work featuring choreography by WKU dance faculty and nationally acclaimed guest artists along with a special treat prepared by alumni of the Dance Program.

We welcomed four alumni guest artists who returned to the hill for one more adventure with us. Shyama Iyer (WKU 2018), Mitchell Haley (WKU 2013), Jessica Tenbusch (WKU 2012), and Stephen Loch (WKU 2006) each brought their rich professional and creative experience to share with our students and composed choreography for the WKU dance company. We also welcomed national guest artist Karen Mareck-Grundy and her company Mareck Dance for a residency and public performance at Van Meter Hall. During Mareck Dance's Bowling Green residency, Mareck-Grundy and company member and Bowling Green native Ashleigh Sewell, reset company repertoire on our WKU dancers.

As always, the WKU dance program strives to create thinking artists. Each semester, our incredible students engage in technique, theory, performance, and focused research while pursuing degrees in second majors and/or minors. Through an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to dance education and training, our students discover enhanced leadership, advocacy, and learning opportunities as depicted in the following pages.

Anna Patsfall
Associate Professor



Inquiries about the WKU Dance Program may be directed to Amanda Clark, Dance Program Coordinator, at amanda.clark@wku.edu.

*Photo Credits:
Meghen McKinley, Shura, Pollatsek, Jeff Smitty,
and Brinlee Price*

Guest Artists



Shyama Iyer

Shyama Iyer is an Indian-American performance artist who works through the mediums of Bharatanatyam, Carnatic music, and American Musical Theater. She holds a BFA in musical theatre from Western Kentucky University and is working towards her MFA/DFA from the Yale School of Drama. Her recent work includes *A Game of Dice*, *The Rasa Jar*, and *Journeys: A Bharatanatyam Dance Play*. Through a combination of research and praxis, she has developed *The Bhaya-Rasa Method*, a *Natyashastra*-based performance practice that is focused on inciting spectator feeling. She has taught workshops, choreographies, and compositions using this new method. In addition to her creative work, she co-directs the *Guru Vandana Arts Academy* (An Indian classical dance company) and *Geeva Arts Festival* (Indian Classical dance and music festival) in Louisville, Kentucky.



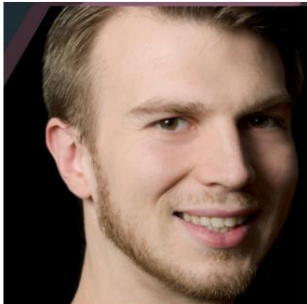
Stephen Loch

Stephen Loch is a movement artist and teacher who got his professional start performing and teaching in Atlanta, Georgia before returning to school and receiving his MFA in choreography from the University of North Carolina Greensboro. He enjoys keeping his movement aesthetic fluid, sourcing inspiration from classic modern techniques and contemporary styles of movement. Stephen studied at the Alvin Ailey School under the tutelage of Ana Marie Forsythe and faculty while completing the Horton Teacher Training program at the beginner and intermediate/advanced level. He has also studied Safety Release Technique with B.J. Sullivan and presented and performed at the American Dance Festival Workshops and American College Dance Association. Stephen is currently serving on the American College Dance Association Board of Directors of the Central Region and as Co-Chair of the Screendance Committee. At Kansas State University, he is a Teaching Assistant Professor teaching Ballet, Contemporary, Musical Theatre Dance, and Dance as an Art Form in the Dance Program.



Jessica Tenbusch

Jessica grew up in Collierville, TN where she danced at Ginny Mount School of Dance. After graduating high school in 2008, Jessica attended Western Kentucky University, earning her Bachelor of Arts in Dance with a minor in business in 2012. From Kentucky, Jessica moved to Chicago where she joined Chicago Tap Theatre (CTT) as an apprentice for three years. Dancing with CTT she had the opportunity to dance in Barcelona and Toulouse. Also while dancing with CTT, she began dancing with Tristan Bruns in his company TapMen, getting to tour around Chicago and attend Fringe Festivals in St. Louis and Indianapolis. She also danced with Chicago Human Rhythm Project's resident company, Stone Soup Rhythms, while it was under the direction of Dani Borak, serving as its rehearsal director as well. In 2018, Jessica was given the opportunity to create a dance program at a public high school in LaPorte, Indiana, where she continues to teach today. She is so thankful to WKU and her professors who gave her the means to live out her dreams through dance.



Mitchell Haley

Mitchell Haley was born and raised in Harrodsburg, Kentucky. He graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration with a Dance minor from Morehead State University. He then went on to complete his Bachelor in Dance from Western Kentucky University. After graduating Mitchell moved to Chicago to dance for Inaside Chicago Dance in 2013, where he danced with them for 7 years. Mitchell has shifted into the Program Manager and resident Choreographer role for Inaside Chicago Dance. Mitchell is also the Studio Manager and one of the Head Trainer at Studio Lagree Chicago, a megaformer fitness studio. He also operates his own travel agency Magical Keys Vacation LLC with his partner. Mitchell has been blessed to perform with the Gus Legacy Company, B. I. S. I. Chicago Dance Company, Ardent Dance Company, Jayson Tisa Dance Company, and numerous amounts of gig work. You will find Mitchell teaching all throughout the Chicagoland area.



Karen Mareck-Grundy

As the Artistic/Executive Director of Mareck Center for Dance, Karen Grundy says her goal is, "to give dancers a positive yet disciplined space to discover their center core and expand their hearts and minds, while also allowing them to explore diverse styles of dance." Karen's unique experience is reflected in her fresh and innovative style, which combines her classical ballet and modern dance training with a twist from the productions of Las Vegas, resulting in work that's accessible to all. Born and raised in Vegas, Karen began dance training at the age of 3. By age 8, she was training in modern dance with Ronnie Greenblatt, who trained under Martha Graham. Karen's extensive classical ballet and jazz training was under the direction of Inez Mourning and Belinda DeBecker. Grundy has taught master classes throughout the country and as an assistant for choreographer Tiger Martina. Through Mareck Center for Dance, Karen is thrilled to be able to create her vision while collaborating with artists of all genres, and the many supporters of dance in Columbia, across the state of Missouri, and throughout the Country.

Guest Artists Pictures



Student Research



Lindsey Simpson

Lindsey Simpson's Honor's CE/T and FUSE project titled "Advocating for Tap Dance Through the Study of Tap Dance Pedagogy" provided her with the experience of studying pedagogical techniques in relation to tap dance through participation in Karida Griffith's Tap Teacher Training. Creating her own pedagogical methods, she developed a lesson plan that she taught at four private dance studios in the KY/TN area. Implementing her second major in Advertising, she designed promotional materials to be shared with the studios and on the Instagram profile she created for this project, effectively reaching her target audience, and advocating for tap dance in private dance studios.



Jenna Lett

In May 2023, I received a FUSE Grant to study contemporary ballet choreography. With the grant, I was able to travel to Chicago and attend the Visceral Dance Chicago Intensive. For three weeks, I not only enhanced my technical skills but I also was mentally challenged by constant thought-provoking prompts and new thought processes from each artist. Utilizing the choreographic tools I learned from the intensive, I created a piece called "白", which was performed in Last Chance to Dance of Fall 2023 and Dance Project this past Spring. The piece embodies an experience that is unique to me as an Asian-American and compares it to the Chinese legend of the White Snake.



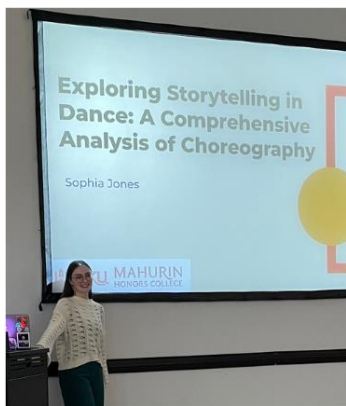
Madelyn Groth

My FUSE project will study the timeline of ballet partnering from the fifteenth century to today. Partnering is ballet dancing performed by a pair of dancers, typically one male and one female. The pair works together to achieve coordinated movements in harmony in an effort to keep the audience unaware of the mechanics and work that goes into each step. In classical ballet, this is called "pas de deux", which translates to "step of two". Pas de deux first appeared in operas and ballets in the early 18th century. The dances were performed by couples' side by side performing identical steps and occasionally holding hands. Through the years, partnering has evolved to become more dramatic, romantic, and impressive. The pas de deux of today includes steps that the dancers cannot execute independently from one another. The world of professional ballet is currently confronting issues related to its lack of diversity. The lack of diversity is directly tied to the strict gender roles of classical ballet. In an effort to appeal to modern spectators and keep the art of ballet relevant to more diverse and informed audiences, ballet directors are exploring ways to make ballet partnering more inclusive. To Study these more contemporary aspects of partnering I will be traveling to both Miami City Ballet, and the Dutch National Ballet to see rehearsals, processes, and performances of contemporary partnering work.

Student Research

Grace Becker

Dance and creative writing have slowly meshed together over the course of my four years at WKU. Dance has always been a constant companionship in my life, and has given color to my writing, which is my second passion. In both disciplines, I have been provided with so much creative freedom, which I like to believe I have used to my advantage. As an Honors dance student, extra creative aspects are expected from projects, and this is where I have continually integrated creative writing. I have written a sampling of works that include a short story, poetry, creative nonfiction, and news articles for various projects and extracurricular activities, such as my choreography.



Sophia Jones

The title of my thesis was Exploring Storytelling in Dance: A Comprehensive Exploration of Choreography. I defended my thesis on April 12th and was awarded distinction. It was a culmination of research on the pieces I created during my time at WKU.

Lindy Fischer

For my FUSE project, I will study the relationship between classical ballet and the Gaga movement language. Gaga is considered an emerging, experimental form of dance, which aims to expand the dancer's capacity for unique movement through multi-layered, sensation-based tasks. These concepts stand in contrast to the codified ballet technique, which places a strong emphasis on precise lines and shapes. I will evaluate how the methodologies of Gaga support classical ballet with regard to artistry, personal voice, and the presence of movement in performance and choreography. I will be traveling to Sorrento, Italy to participate in the Staibdance Italy program this summer to conduct physical and movement analysis research.



Faculty Research



Amanda Clark

Professor Amanda Clark took the final steps in the publication of “Dance Pedagogy.” Alumni Sara Pecina also authored three chapters and contributed to the editing process. This Rutledge publication will be coming soon and will be out there for all to read, learn, and apply to their pedagogical needs in dance.

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Meghen McKinley

Professor Meghen McKinley had a solo performance in reflection of Marilee Salvator’s solo show at the Downing Museum titled “Generative Growth” in November. This was an improvisational work in reflection of the vignettes of her pieces while wearing a collaboratively created skirt of Marilee’s prints.

Professor Meghen McKinley submitted and was accepted to present her original choreographic work “Ardent Stillness” at MADCO’s Dare to Dance Festival in St. Louis in January with other choreographers across the US. This trip was made possible by PCAL’s Quick Turn-Around Grant. Members of the WKU Dance Company were the performers in this work: Lindy Fischer, Cordelia Newton, Sophie Jones, Jenna Lett, and Grace Becker as understudy/rehearsal assistant.

Professor Meghen McKinley also has continued movement lab research through Zoom master classes with Trisha Brown Dance Company, Ohad Naharin/Gaga for People, and Alexandra Beller’s Laban/Bartenieff Applications Class.



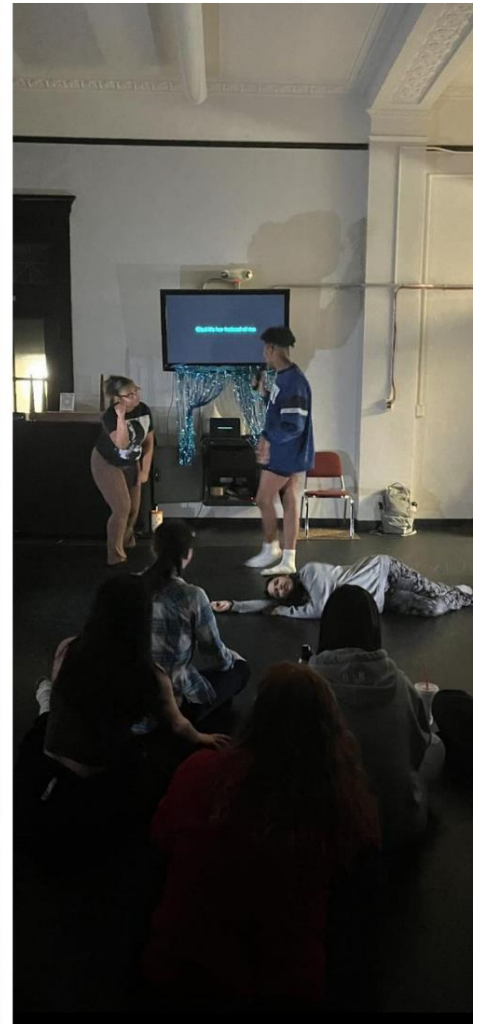
Anna Patsfall

Associate Professor Anna Patsfall received a QTAG grant to accompany dance major and FUSE grant awardee Madelyn Groth to The Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam. Professor Patsfall engaged in ongoing creative research related to current and future trends in contemporary ballet choreography, teaching, and performance.

Professor Patsfall is also collaborating with students from the Computer Science program to develop computer software that uses sensors to track the velocity, force, and placement of weight when dancers land from jumps. The future use of this software could be instrumental in dance injury prevention.

NDEO

The WKU National Dance Education Organization participated in Ideafest this semester and hosted many fundraisers. They also had some fun with a spirit week and karaoke night.



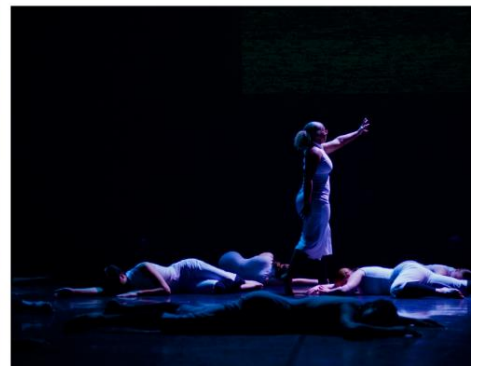
Dance Project and Last Chance to Dance

Dance Project and Last Chance to Dance are two concerts where students can showcase their choreography. Dance Project is a formal adjudicated concert held early in the spring semester. Last Chance to Dance is an informal concert at the end of the semester where the Choreography I class gets to showcase their final projects along with other dancers dancing on stage one final time before summer break.



50th Anniversary of Evening of Dance

The 50th anniversary of EOD had pieces from the current WKU dance faculty, four WKU dance alumni, and one professional company.



Evening of Dance Fun

WKU Dance hosted a dance day for prospective students as well as dance alumni. EOD brought many alumni back together and brought back many memories along with making new ones.

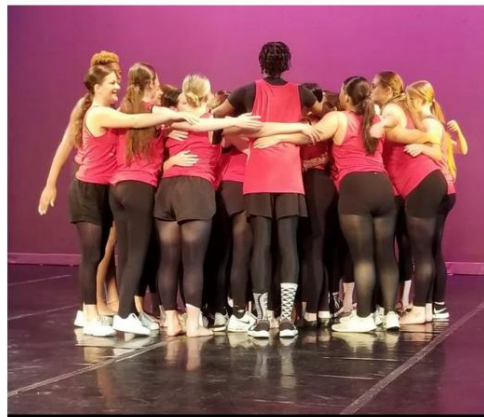


Summer Dance Intensive

July 21-27, 2024



The WKU Summer Dance Intensive is designed for intermediate to advanced dancers (grades 9-12) as a unique opportunity to explore college-level dance and the WKU experience. Following the mission of the WKU Dance Program, students will be challenged as "thinking artists," with a variety of classes to enhance their technical and artistic skills. The program of study will include daily ballet, jazz, and modern dance technique classes along with coursework including pointe, tap, dance improvisation, dance history, and world dance forms. Daily discussions and events will highlight special interest topics designed to help prepare and inspire the pre-professional dancer. The week-long intensive will culminate in a performance featuring university faculty and guest artist choreography.



For more information visit the program's website:

<https://bit.ly/wku-dance>



[Follow the WKU Dance Program on Social Media!](#)