A Note from the Chair

We take pride in knowing that the rigorous studies and practical experiences at the University serve our graduates by helping them grow as individuals and find the path that is best for them. As we continue to train and develop the next generation of artists, technicians, directors and managers, it is always a pleasure to hear about the successes of our former students.

In this Stages, we honor the past and the contributions made by our alumni, faculty and staff as well as celebrate the exciting future of our current students and UA Theatre & Dance as a whole. We thank you for being a part of our past, present and future, and hope you enjoy the journey as much as we do.

—William Teague, Department Chair
UA Theatre & Dance Welcomes New Staff

**Todd Roberts**  
*Costume Production Specialist*

Todd came to The University of Alabama after 10 years as Supervisor/In-house Designer for Birmingham Children’s Theatre. During that time, he was also Head of Costumes/Designer at the Stagedoor Manor Performing Arts Training Center in New York. With design credits that top 100 shows, Todd has worked with numerous national tours and on projects with Cirque Du Soleil, The Radio City Music Hall Rockettes and The Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. Todd recently received the 2014 BroadwayWorld.com regional theatre award for Best Costume Design for *Three Little Kittens* at Birmingham Children’s Theatre.

**Molly Page**  
*Patron Services Manager*

Molly joins UA Theatre & Dance this spring as the Patron Services Manager. A graduate of Louisiana Tech University with an MA in Speech/Theatre, Molly recently completed a Walt Disney World College Program internship. She has been honored by KCACTF for achievement in costume design and as a member of the Region VI O’Neill Critics’ Institute. During a Kennedy Center fellowship, Molly worked with Artists Striving to End Poverty teaching at the Refugee Youth Summer Academy in New York. An Alabama native, Molly also holds a BA in English from The University of Alabama and previously taught at The Rise School.
“It finally sinks in. It’s the world they’ve dreamt about… it’s finally here. Here’s the dream. And it’s a realistic dream. They finally get to compete in the art form they admire and adore.” –Seth Panitch

When Associate Professor of Musical Theatre Raphe Crystal joined the UA Theatre & Dance faculty in 2002, he started Bama on Broadway, a UA student showcase in New York City. Twelve years later, Raphe is taking 30 aspiring professionals to the Studio Theatre on 42nd Street over spring break. Though the number of students changes annually, this will be the most students to ever participate in this program.

This year, students will perform four times over two days. Each actor will take the stage twice, performing monologues, scenes or songs they have prepared specifically for the hour-long event. Associate Professors of Acting Seth Panitch and Allison Hetzel also help students select their pieces, provide weekly coaching and direct the show.

As the largest group of UA Theatre & Dance alumni lives in New York, the showcase also provides an opportunity for alumni to support current students and reconnect with their former professors. Seth says he enjoys catching up with alumni and hearing about their recent work. “Their success is why we work so hard as teachers. We impact each generation of actors. This showcase reenergizes us and gets us excited about the possibilities we will discover in the classroom when we return to Tuscaloosa.”

Even the College of Arts & Sciences Dean attends one performance and hosts a casual dinner for alumni and friends. Raphe says, “Dean Olin does a fantastic job of making connections among alumni, current students and industry professionals.”
Raphe, Allison and Seth have been cultivating and developing relationships over the years with agents and casting directors that attend annually. Many of the same agents attend year after year, and Raphe is honored they make time in their busy schedules to attend. “Getting onto an agent’s schedule is tough,” says Raphe, who invites more industry reps as the showcase continues to grow. “They trust the product and know it will be a good hour of their day.”

Seth and Allison each shared their favorite part of the showcase. For Seth, it’s right before the first show after he gives them their final notes: “They’ve spent hours in and out of class preparing for this moment. It’s NYC at night and it’s a thrilling experience. This is their opportunity to make a statement about themselves to the industry.” Allison’s favorite part is after the first performance is done in New York. “After that, they find a new sense of confidence and make deeper connections with their pieces and the space.”

“The purpose of the showcase is to introduce students to the New York scene,” says Raphe. Raphe encourages students to stay for the week, take part in workshops with actors and casting directors, visit theatres in the area and explore the city. Most students do not immediately get cast, but instead hear about an opportunity months later. “This is just the first meeting,” says Allison, “It is a well-structured opportunity to audition and establish relationships.”

Some students learn they do not want to move to New York after all. “They may discover that this is not really what they want,” says Seth, “perhaps they love acting in the classroom, but do not enjoy the competition of the city.” The showcase helps them realize this with time left in the semester to set alternative goals. Whether or not they intend to move to New York, Allison says the students come back to Alabama with more focus, ready to plan and prepare for post-graduation. “It gives them a renewed sense of focus, drive and direction.”

Allison and Seth agree that the showcase pieces are different than what the students worked on in their classes. “At UA we indulge in the process of acting and stretching beyond comfort levels, whereas the showcase is about a polished product that shows them off the best,” says Allison. Seth adds, “Sometimes students get bored with their pieces, but we remind them that the industry has not yet seen it.”

For an actor that has never been outside of Alabama, Bama on Broadway can be very overwhelming. But Seth, Allison and Raphe say they are there to encourage and calm the actors as they take the stage and launch the next adventure in their acting careers.
Travis Ray
UA Theatre & Dance, 2011
Master of Fine Arts (Arts Management)

Where are you now? I live in Sarasota, Florida, where I am the Operations Manager at the Westcoast Black Theatre.

What have you been up to since you graduated? After graduation, I moved to Chicago to work for the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago. A year later, I became the House Manager at the Goodman Theatre. While working for the Goodman Theatre, I earned a grant from the Joyce Foundation, through which I pursued a Multicultural Development Fellowship position at Steppenwolf Theatre Company. I worked at Steppenwolf by day and at the Goodman Theatre by night!

I was given multiple opportunities to lead special events at Steppenwolf; I helped raise $60,000 at the Red or White Ball and $1.2 million at the annual gala. After my fellowship ended, I moved to Sarasota with my husband Jonah to become the Westcoast Black Theatre Operations Manager. This position and company are amazing! There is tons of room for growth and it feels like we are on the threshold of something great!

What advice would you offer for current students about to enter the field? It’s so important to get to know the people you’re working with and their past. Make sure to schedule one-on-one meetings with other professionals at UA and ask as many questions as you can. Have back-up plans to your back-up plans, but also know when to roll with the punches. Lastly, stay connected to your alumni network. You never know who can help you land that job; usually its people you went to school with or those that taught you.

Do you have a favorite story from your time at UA? My favorite moment was the first day on campus in August 2009. UA alumni Omar Surkatty and I came into our office and looked at the mountain of work that needed to be done. We looked at each other, looked back at the work, shook our heads at the same time and just started working! We hope that the program continues to thrive and keep placing stellar arts managers in the field.
Abigail Jones  
UA Theatre & Dance, 2013  
Master of Fine Arts (Acting)

**Where are you now?** I’m teaching English at a music high school in Macedonia, and I am helping facilitate an embassy-sponsored project called the Dreams and Friendship Exchange at a middle school in a nearby village. I maintain the blog for the Dreams and Friendship Exchange at www.abigailjones.me/blog.

**What does a typical day look like for you?** Most days include climbing a lot of stairs, feeding stray animals, a debate with myself about whether or not my shoes are comfortable, attempting to learn a new word or phrase in Macedonian and having coffee with friends.

**How do you think UA prepared you for what you are doing now?** My experience at UA helped me find my teaching and directing styles. Studying acting gave me a different perspective on listening, being present with another person, the gift of vulnerability and the power in small actions. UA gave me the opportunity to own my strengths, be gentle with my weaknesses and look at myself with non-judgmental honesty.

**What is it like teaching in another country?** Fitting into a different educational system without completely surrendering my own teaching style has been a challenging balancing act. Still, I enjoy working with the students and navigating differences.

**What advice would you offer to students considering a Fulbright scholarship?** Use the resources at the Center for Community-Based Partnerships. Dr. Hawk, Dr. Wise and the rest of the UA Fulbright committee are expert advisors. Listen to them. Start early. Revise. Revise again.

**How long will you be in Macedonia?** I will be in Macedonia until June. At that point, I would like to continue traveling to pursue a music project I hope to produce. I’d also like to get back onstage.
Ashley Smith  
UA Theatre & Dance, 2014  
Bachelor of Arts (Dance and Apparel)

Where are you now? I live in Annapolis, Maryland, about an hour from where I grew up in northern Virginia.

What have you been up to since you graduated? I’ve been dancing since I was four and as a teenager I decided that I wanted to pursue it as a career. I didn’t think I’d ever be able to dance for a ballet company, so I am very grateful to be a trainee with Ballet Theatre of Maryland. I take classes, rehearse and perform with the professional company and school.

I really like the company’s philosophy and emphasis on artistry in dance (not just the technical aspects). There are many very talented dancers in the company who all work very hard to put on productions that touch the audience through stories and aesthetic beauty, and I am honored to be a part of that.

I also teach art and music appreciation to kindergarten and first grade students and work part-time at Starbucks!

How do you think UA prepared you for what you are doing now? The most valuable lesson I learned was to let go of fear. The faculty helped me grow both in technique and in artistry, and I had some amazing opportunities to perform and choreograph. I grew so much as a person and as a dancer, and my time at UA has helped me in every area of my life.

What advice would you offer for current students about to enter the field? First, don’t let fear of what other people think hold you back from being assertive and finding your unique voice. You have strengths and gifts that no one else has. Second, hard work will always set you apart. That’s a more valuable quality in a dancer than anything else.

Do you have a favorite story from your time at UA? One of my favorite memories was working with guest choreographer Jane Weiner. She had us sit in a circle before every rehearsal, and each one of us had a few minutes to talk about our day and how we were feeling before officially “checking in” to rehearsal. We repeated that after each rehearsal to officially “check out.” It was a great way for us to bond and reminded us that the rest of our lives affect and inform our dancing, and in the end our experiences enrich our art.
Terry Martin  
UA Theatre & Dance, 1981  
Bachelor of Arts (Acting)

Where are you now? I am starting my 15th year as the Producing Artistic Director of WaterTower Theatre (WTT), a professional regional theatre in the Addison, Texas. Since I started at WTT, I have overseen over 100 productions, directed over 50 productions, and helped grow the company subscriber base from 400 to 2500 with an annual operating budget of $1.5 million. I also teach Sanford Meisner Technique acting classes and serves as an Adjunct Professor of Acting at the University of Texas at Dallas.

What have you been up to since you graduated? I moved to New York almost immediately after graduation and continued training to pursue an acting career. I spent 12 years in New York City working in theatre, television and film as well as many other jobs. While there, I was fortunate to direct and act at The Village Theatre Company, Carnegie Hall Studios and Theatre at St. Marks, and made television appearances on ABC’s “One Life to Live” and NBC’s “To Serve and Protect.” I moved to Dallas in 1992 to be close to family and slowly began to build a career there. After working for several years around the Dallas/Fort Worth area, I was asked to be the Artistic Director for WaterTower Theatre in 1999.

How do you think UA prepared you for what you are doing now? I think the most important thing that I learned was to not take my talent for granted; I shouldn’t expect to be cast or to get opportunities, I have to make it happen myself. If I wanted to succeed, I had to remain humble and work for it. I was taught by tremendously talented individuals like Allen Bales, Edmond Williams and John Ross who instilled a respect for the craft in me and an understanding that theatre is an art to be practiced and cherished.

What advice would you offer for current students about to enter the field? I think the greatest advice I could give to a student is to remain a student. Continue to practice and learn. Talent is only a small part of what it takes to be successful in this field. Be prepared to work hard - very hard. Most importantly, learn to love the failures. We don’t learn anything or get better if we get things right every time.

Did you have a favorite production during your time at UA? I was the Emcee in a production of *Cabaret* directed by graduate student, Paul Looney.
Joy Spears
UA Theatre & Dance, 2011
Bachelor of Arts (Dance)

Where are you now? I continue to travel for work, but I am excited to now have my home base in Nashville, TN.

What do you hope to do in your career? Eventually, I would like to teach at a performing arts high school or university and choreograph for television and film.

What have you been up to lately? Since moving to Nashville, I have performed on the 2014 CMT Awards with Dierks Bentley, the 2014 CMA Awards with Kenny Chesney and was the featured dancer in Thomas Rhett’s music video “Make Me Wanna.” I recently worked with Christina Aguilera on the ABC show “Nashville” (the episode airs on March 18!).

How do you think UA prepared you for what you are doing now? I am truly thankful I was able to study dance at UA. It expanded my knowledge as a dancer, teacher and choreographer, and the entire faculty contributed greatly to the artist and person I am today. It means a lot to me that the professors I had at UA continue to be supportive and provide guidance.

What advice would you offer for current students about to enter the field? Ask as many questions as you can and don’t be afraid to try new things. The more versatile you are, the more opportunities you will have in your career. Be humble - people want to work with nice people. Always be yourself, and know your worth. Strive to be an inspiration but also allow yourself to be inspired by all that surrounds you.

Did you have a favorite production during your time at UA? The faculty trusted me to push limits when it came to the pieces I did for Dance Alabama!. In the fall of 2009, I wanted to use a wall as a prop and Cornelius asked me if I could make the wall move. Lyndell said he would help me but that I would have to come to the shop and help build the wall… needless to say that was a new experience for me! Dance Alabama! allowed me to explore as a choreographer and experience everything that goes into making a production.
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Faculty and Staff Highlights

Lyndell McDonald

Last October, Dance Technical Supervisor Lyndell McDonald was the lighting designer for the Contemporary Choreographers Collective Dance Festival in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. There, he worked with the Battery Dance Company from New York, artists from Florida and Texas and several local dance companies. Lyndell will be the lighting designer for American College Dance Festival at Texas Tech University over spring break and the Shelton State Community College production of *Brigadoon* in April.

This summer, Lyndell will be the lighting designer for the American Ballet Theatre program and technical supervisor for the Boys and Girls State camps on campus. He will also be a lighting designer for showcases at The Pointe, N.S. Studio and Birmingham Dance Theatre in Birmingham.

Donna Meester

In addition to designing over 300 costumes for the UA Theatre & Dance production of *42nd Street*, Associate Professor Donna Meester is reconstructing a dress from the Lillian Hellman play *The Little Foxes* (as seen in the film version featuring Bette Davis). The dress will be featured in the Smithsonian Museum exhibit entitled, “The Way We Worked,” and is funded by a grant through the National Endowment for the Arts. Donna is collaborating with Assistant Professor Jacki Armit to design and recreate the piece.

Donna is also working with Associate Professor Seth Panitch on his film project called “Service to Man” and is the costume designer for the SummerTide production *Ring of Fire* in Mobile, AL, this summer. Donna is also the Vice President of the Faculty Senate and serves as a complaint and compliance officer for the College of Art and Sciences.
Emily Herring

Assistant Professor of Musical Theatre Voice
Emily Herring is thrilled to teach a musical theatre workshop at the upcoming Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) and travel to New York for the Bama on Broadway student showcase in March.

Last summer, Emily was one of three vocalists selected for a master class with Broadway composer Andrew Lippa in Boston. She has also been a guest vocalist with Super Jazz, Alabama Winds, Alabama Cavaliers, Celebration Winds, and regularly sings with the Just Friends Big Band throughout Alabama.

Emily was invited to sing for a Central Alabama Theatre benefit concert last August in New York, and can frequently be heard performing the music of Patsy Cline. She will be playing Mrs. Banks in Red Mountain Theatre Company’s production of Mary Poppins this summer.

Andy Fitch

This semester, Associate Professor/Director of Scenic Design Andy Fitch is collaborating with graduate student Meghan LaLonde to design the UA Theatre & Dance production of 42nd Street. Additionally, Andy recently completed a design for The Whipping Man at the Warehouse Theatre in Greenville, SC, and has been the scenic designer for Theatre Tuscaloosa on numerous occasions, including the December production of Little Women. Andy has begun designing The Countess of Storyville, which is part of the UA Theatre & Dance 2015-16 Season.

This upcoming June, Andy will teach a period decor class in Greece as part of the UA in Greece program. Following the program, Andy intends to visit the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space. Beyond the stage, Andy is working on a new film project with Associate Professor Seth Panitch, called “Service to Man.”
The Countess of Storyville
*World Premiere*
Sept 28–Oct 4
Countess Willie Dupree moves back to her birthplace in New Orleans, where “pursuits of pleasure” are legal and family ties are deadly. Stories of forbidden love unfold in this gumbo of soaring music.

Tartuffe
Nov 17–22
Orgon moves from flattery to obsession over his new house guest, Tartuffe. Watch as he gives away everything despite what everyone knows Tartuffe really is: the hypocrite.

The Laramie Project
Feb 23–28
A small town responds to a hate crime that resulted in Matthew Shepard’s death in 1998. Inspiring national debate, *The Laramie Project* reveals that Laramie, WY, is not the only town to face these issues.

Cabaret
April 19–24
Set in a Berlin night club throughout the decade leading up to WWII, *Cabaret* follows a young American writer named Cliff as he experiences the tumultuous and heartbreaking era.
Morgan Auditorium
This season, The Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre and Dance Alabama! students return to the stage to showcase faculty and student-choreographed and designed works that you do not want to miss. Including everything from classical ballet to modern, jazz and hip-hop, these dance concerts have something that will delight every person in the audience.

Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre
Fall: Oct 13–16 and Spring: Feb 16-20

Dance Alabama!
Fall: Nov 10–13 and Spring: Mar 29 - April 2

Dance Collection
Fall: Dec 4 and Spring: April 22

Allen Bales Theatre
Seduced
Sept 21–27
Hennry Hackamore had it all. Now living in fear and paranoia with his inevitable mortality, he flies in two beautiful women from his past to rejuvinate the American Dream he once had.

Equivocation
Nov 9–15
It’s never a simple case of writer’s block when bringing current events to the stage (especially when treason is the plot and the king is the producer). How will Shakespeare balance loyalty to the crown with artistic integrity?

Ghosts
Feb 15–21
Mrs. Alving hides her husband’s torrid affairs from everyone, including her son, Oswald. But when he returns home, scandals surface and Mrs. Alving must take action in this classic Ibsen play.

Arcadia
April 11–17
With scenes alternating between the 1800s and present day, researchers uncover the stories that have been lost in time as they are played onstage. Arcadia explores truth, nature and the impact of romance and sex on family.