

STAGES

Fall 2016



A Note from the Chair



Our alumni, faculty, and students have experienced great success over the past year. We attribute this success to the exceptional training and quality of students who attend the University each year. As we continue to promote excellence, our students and faculty are committed to bringing engaging programs to the community.

In this *Stages*, we celebrate achievement and initiative. Our alumni and students are dedicated and passionate as they pursue their careers. Every year, our impact continues to grow and bring more supporters. We thank you for being a part of our community and look forward to more success in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Teague". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

—William Teague, *Department Chair*



UA Theatre & Dance Welcomes New Faculty



Annie Levy

Assistant Professor - Directing & Stage Management

Annie Levy joins UA Theatre & Dance all the way from New York City. As an Assistant Professor, Annie will lead the MFA Directing Program and teach courses in stage management. Though Annie has been a stage manager in the past, her true passion is directing. With a focus on modern mythology, scientific breakthroughs and historical turning points, Annie is always busy with projects. Recent projects include shows about the myth of Persephone and the Higgs Boson discovery.

Since moving to Alabama she has become very interested in the story of the meteorite that struck Ann Hodges in 1954. Currently, she is working on a project about The Civilian Conservation Corps that focuses on the creation of the National Parks during the New Deal. After festival pieces and presentations, she is now working on completing a full, finalized script for *TREE ARMY: The CCC Project*.

Along with her directing projects, Annie is part of a collective known as World Wide Lab, where directors from all over the world collaborate and explore different models of co-directing. As part of this group, she will travel to Taipei, Taiwan in November to teach workshops on devised theatre and work on a project that explores trauma and coping. The work will feature minimal language and focus more on movement and spectacle as many of the actors do not speak English.

Annie is very excited to work with UA Theatre & Dance and looks forward to directing the spring production of *The Philadelphia Story*.



UA Theatre & Dance Welcomes New Staff

William Gantt

Music Rights and Patron Services Manager



William joined UA Theatre & Dance last spring as the Music Rights and Patron Services Manager. Since then, he has been working tirelessly with the management team to provide our patrons and subscribers with everything they need to ensure a great experience.

William's fascination with theatre began early. His mother organized class trips for her English students to New York City and returned with Playbills and souvenir show programs. The University of Alabama Law School graduate still has his Playbill for *Hello, Dolly!* He recalls, "It's in a scrapbook of our family trip to the 1964 New York World's Fair. I was so young that I have no memory of the fair, but I can remember all the curtain calls for Carol Channing at the end of the show."

While practicing law in Birmingham, William produced Doug Wright's *I Am My Own Wife* and *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage for Birmingham Festival Theatre. In 2007, he founded The Southern Literary Trail that recognizes famous writers and playwrights of the South including Tennessee Williams and Lillian Hellman whose Demopolis family members inspired *The Little Foxes*. In June 2009, William introduced a screening of William Wyler's film version of the play for the American Cinematheque in Los Angeles as a companion event to the play's revival at the Pasadena Playhouse.

William is a member of the Selection Committee for the Alabama Writers Hall of Fame. The inductees at a ceremony in the Bryant Conference Center on September 29, 2016 included Truman Capote, Edward O. Wilson, Fannie Flagg, and playwright Rebecca Gilman. He observes, "It is great to be with UA Theatre & Dance where the best of classic and contemporary writing for the stage is celebrated every day."

High School Theatre Festival Heats Up



On October 8th, UA Theatre & Dance hosted its 3rd annual High School Theatre Festival for area students. The festival is designed to provide high school students a day of fun and engaging workshops in acting, musical theatre, design and technical theatre and audition preparation. Each year, the festival grows and new workshops are introduced to encourage

repeat attendance for the high school students. For the past three years, however, a few workshops have returned by popular demand. One of these workshops is Stage Makeup Techniques, taught by third year MFA Costume Designer, Eryn Brooks.

Eryn has taught this workshop at all three festivals because of the reaction from high school students. “Stage makeup is fun. I usually try to do some kind of blood & gore application for the workshop because it’s close to Halloween.” She also notes the creativity and flexibility involved with the makeup applications. “They don’t need to be very specific to be successful.” The students are always excited when they come out of the workshop with their “injuries”. In years past, students have learned to create burns, black eyes and open wounds.

For Eryn, working with high school students is rewarding because that was when she found theatre as her niche. Theatre was her “team sport” in high school and seeing a new group of students finding that same passion helps Eryn renew her own passion. As Eryn prepared for her last festival, she was excited that it coincided with the department’s production of *Hamlet* because she could bring in the ghostly stage makeup techniques and designs used in the show.

For more information about the High School Theatre Festival and other departmental events, please visit theatre.ua.edu.



Dance on Film:

Dance Alabama's Annual Film Festival



Dance Alabama!, a popular student organization on campus, produces two productions in Morgan Auditorium each season with UA Theatre & Dance. But outside of these productions, which feature student choreographers and dancers, the organization wants to bring more dance opportunities to the campus and community.

Dance Alabama! will produce the first annual dance film festival. President For the past two seasons, Dance Alabama! has fetured films as part of their concerts, and the festival seems like the next step. Bobby McClure and Secretary Natalie Brown are working hard to coordinate the festival, which will happen in January. Dance filmmaker and Assistant Professor, Rebecca Salzer, is serving as the advisor for the process. Ms. Salzer is helping to guide students during the creation process, and will also select the final films included in the festival.

The dance industry is moving toward film, so the festival will provide a great opportunity for dancers and choreographers to learn and create pieces for their portfolios and experiment with different camera angles and lighting techniques. Choreographers have a chance to produce their work outside of the studio, which brings an even more dynamic aspect to the interpretation. With film, the dance is no longer confined to one viewing angle like the dances performed throughout the season. This allows choreographers to experiment with their movements and focus on smaller details that may not be visible in another medium.

Choreographers often do not take a lot of risks in their staging of dances when they are designed for multiple live performances. However, with film, the dance only needs to be performed a few times to get the takes and then it can live on forever. Because of this, many dances for film make bold creative choices that really push the limits of the dancers and the art and create

pictures and scenes that wouldn't be possible in a live performance on stage

One of the goals of the festival is to encourage more collaboration across several art disciplines and departments. Choreographers are collaborating with students in Telecommunications and Film and with composition students from the School of Music.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of dance on film and the festival is the production process. Since the filming will take place on site for many of the pieces, the public has a chance to experience the piece both live and later on film. But these experiences will both be unique, once editing of the film is complete.

Eventually, Bobby and Natalie hope the participants of the film festival will be able to send their work out to other festivals and help build their portfolio. One of the best aspects of bringing dance to film is the wide net it casts for accessibility. Not only is film an easier medium to transport around a community, but it also allows more flexibility in viewing options for audiences who are unable to attend live performances.

For more information about the film festival and other Dance Alabama! projects, check out their Facebook and Twitter pages or visit uadancealabama.weebly.com. Make sure to check out the *Dance Alabama!* fall concert November 15 – 17 at 7:30pm and November 18 at 5:30pm in Morgan Auditorium. Tickets are available at ua.tix.com.



ARDT, Spring 2016. Photo by Porfirio Solórzano
Dance Noir, Still from film by Nick and Cate Kroehnke

Alumni Focus: Michael Luwoye

From Al.com



When Seth Panitch got a call from Michael Luwoye saying he'd been tapped to play the lead in the biggest Broadway musical in decades, Panitch wasn't surprised.

"On the other hand, I was thrilled for him in the giddiest of ways, as all professors are when the best of things happen to the best of our students," said Panitch, a theater professor at the University of Alabama who taught Luwoye when he was a student.

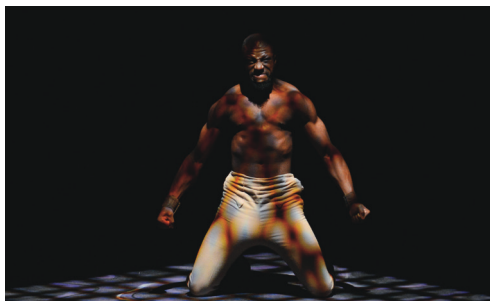
Theater-loving friends, families and communities across the state are celebrating the news that Luwoye, a 2009 graduate of Lee High School in Huntsville and a 2013 graduate of the University of Alabama, will make his Broadway debut onstage in New York City as the lead role in *Hamilton*.

Luwoye was named as the alternate to actor Javier Munoz in the title role in *Hamilton*, a hip-hop musical about American founding father Alexander Hamilton. The Broadway show, which has seen sold-out crowds for months, won a near-record 11 Tony Awards this year.

"You'll often hear people talk about the 'It factor' when it comes to performing; it's impossible to describe, more like a feeling you get when you watch someone in their element. Michael had the It factor in spades," said Sarah Brown, a Lee High graduate who performed with Luwoye in Huntsville Community Chorus's 2006 production of *Seussical the Musical*.



"He was great in any role, but his incredibly sweet nature made him a perfect fit for leading roles," she said. In that show, Luwoye played a main role of Horton the Elephant.



After graduating from Lee High School's arts magnet program, Luwoye went on to the University of Alabama where he majored in theater with a concentration in musical theater.

Panitch said he performed in musicals and plays of "all kinds and styles" while at UA, and

recalled his "fierce work ethic, prepared to share any side of himself that a role demands."

Productions at UA included *St. Joan*, *Moby Dick* and *Othello*, as well as a production with Cuban actors in Havana. While a student at Lee High School in 2008, Luwoye won best actor in a one-act play for his performance in *Godspell* at a regional high school theater competition.

Since graduating from UA in 2013, Luwoye has appeared in professional productions regionally and in New York City. "He has made an incredible name for himself in a very short time in the industry," said Panitch.

Luwoye most recently performed Off-Broadway in *Invisible Thread*. For that performance he received a 2016 Lucille Lortel Award nomination for outstanding lead actor.

After the announcement was made that Luwoye would be the Hamilton alternate on Broadway, the show's creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, tweeted that he'd been a fan of Luwoye since he saw him in a workshop production of *Invisible Thread*. "Tremendous talent, AWESOME Hamilton," tweeted Miranda.

The thing to know about Luwoye, said Panitch is "Michael is an incredibly generous actor – to fellow actors, the directors who work beside him, to the teachers that train him.

"When you talk about doing something 'the right way,' you are talking about Michael."

Alumni Spotlight: Wendy Riggs



There's never a dull day on the job for Wendy Riggs. She is the Vice President of Operations at the Walton Arts Center and the Walmart Amphitheater in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Throughout the season at the Walton Arts Center, Wendy oversees production, facilities, housekeeping and front of house employees to make sure that everything runs smoothly. There is no such thing as a typical day for her and things can change quickly, which is one of her favorite parts about the job.

Though the season at the Walton Arts Center is not currently year round, the operations never stop, especially with the new amphitheater. She is not directly involved in day-to-day operations at the Arkansas Music Pavilion, but Wendy does coordinate with the General Manager and check in to make sure that everything is under control for their outdoor concerts. Working with multiple venues is a different world than some of her other positions have been, allowing her to get the “best of both worlds” working with Broadway shows and rock & roll tours.

For the last two to three months, Wendy has been finalizing the new Walton Arts Center building renovation, set to re-open in November. As part of this \$23 million project, Wendy is responsible for overseeing the construction and making sure that all the details are perfect. From furniture and equipment to every light bulb in the lobby, Wendy is in charge of coordinating installation and making sure that the project is on time and on budget.

Wendy graduated from UA in 1996 with a MFA in Management and Arts Administration. After 13 years working in the industry after completing her undergraduate degree, it was time to take the next step. She says, “The smartest thing I’ve ever done was to go back and get my graduate degree because it gave me the language that I was missing for my level of experience.” While she had more experience than most others in the industry who were applying for the same jobs, employers were looking for individuals who had master degrees too.

For Wendy, coming to UA for graduate school was an obvious choice. Growing up in Tuscaloosa, it was full circle for her to return to work with John Ross, Ed Williams and Bill Teague. Though she spent much of her time in Montgomery with the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Wendy says her class was very involved both with graduate and undergraduate students. Her work at ASF was rewarding because of the hands-on experience that she received and the networking opportunities. Throughout her career, she has continued to work with people that she met at ASF and UA.

Wendy stressed the importance of a degree that not only provides critical hands-on experience, but also promotes venue crossover and that's exactly what The University of Alabama provided for her with the arts administration program. As the arts administration industry continues to grow, it's become more sports and hospitality driven than just the traditional non-profit arts organizations. Combined with her experience, the arts administration degree has helped her get to where she is today in her career through development of skills that cross over to venues of all kinds.

The biggest advice that Wendy has for students is to take advantage of the many opportunities that are available. For undergraduate students, she recommends taking time to gain some work experience before going to graduate school. She remembers college as a time that she was out on her own for the first time and learning to grow up, rather than really focusing on her studies. By taking time to work in the real world after undergraduate studies, students can find direction for their true passions. Once you have determined where you really want to go, graduate school will allow you to focus and refine the skills needed to get you where you want to be.

Above everything else, Wendy stresses the importance of lifetime learning. Things are constantly changing, both inside and outside the arts industry and learning how to solve problems creatively is one of the most useful skills so that you can put an X through the phrase "we've always done it this way".



Faculty and Staff Highlights



Lawrence Jackson

Lawrence Jackson, Assistant Professor of Dance, has been very busy over the past year. This summer he taught master classes with the American Ballet Theatre Summer Intensive on campus, at the Gulf Coast Dance Alliance and the Ballet Society of Colorado Springs.

He recently received a grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts to tour pieces from this semester's *Dance Alabama!* throughout the state. The program will visit middle school and elementary schools in six counties this spring. This program not only provides a great opportunity for the participating schools to experience dance, but also gives the dancers a unique professional experience.

He choreographed an original contemporary work for this fall's production of *Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre* and will be choreographing a piece for the Wichita School of Performing Arts in November. His choreography has also been performed at California State University, Northridge, Dancer's Workshop in Jackson, Wyoming and Moving in The Spirit in Atlanta, Georgia. In January, he performed in a piece called *Raindance*, choreographed by Milton Myers, at the International Association of Blacks in Dance Conference in Denver, Colorado.

When Lawrence isn't in the studio, he's busy writing. He is currently writing an article for the Journal of African American Studies titled *Dance For Me: Prince's Contributions to Black Dance*. The article is set to be published in the summer edition of the journal. He is also co-writing a book about the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, which combines a biography of Cleo Parker Robinson and an historical overview of the company as a whole. Lawrence presented his paper *Does Classicism Have Color: Where Are All the Black Ballerinas?* at the 14th annual Hawaii International Conference of Arts & Humanities.

Dominic Yeager



Over the past year, Director of Arts Management, Dominic Yeager has stayed busy serving on multiple committees for different organizations and working on a few different projects. Last summer he worked on the feature film, *Service to Man* as the Business Manager. One of his many responsibilities was to execute all contracts between the actors, crew and vendors and the production company, Gettin' Grown Productions. Earlier this year, Dominic served as the General

Manager for the University's production of *The Countess of Storyville*. He states, "I enjoyed collaborating with the general management company Foresight Theatrical to afford our students this amazing opportunity." Most recently he served as the General Manager for the Off- Broadway production of *Here I Sit Brokenhearted: A Bathroom Odyssey*. The task of developing an audience for this production was a challenge Dominic enjoyed, and felt the management team completed successfully. He stated, "Developing an audience in a new city where the company is not known is always a challenge. I am happy we were able to average a 47 percent capacity throughout the run."

To ensure every minute of every day is filled with some sort of activity, Dominic volunteers his services to several organizations both on campus and off. On campus, he serves on the Faculty Senate as the Parliamentarian and the Faculty Senate Governance Committee, as a member of the Museum Studies Certificate Committee, Faculty Advisor for Crimson Stage and several committees in the department. Off campus, he serves as the Chair of the Arts Administration ad-hoc committee for the Southeastern Theatre Conference and the Membership Committee for the International Association of Venue Managers.

Dominic has great expectations of his students. He wants them to succeed in life outside the walls of Rowand-Johnson Hall. Not only to be successful arts managers but to be good people who strive to perfect their imperfections through constant evaluation of self. Dominic says he likes to "empower the students to fail. Create an environment where failure is seen as an opportunity to learn and make yourself a better person." In order to empower the students to fail he has to create the opportunities for them to do so. He looks forward to these daily challenges but most of all he loves to watch his students grow into the next generation of arts managers.

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