

STAGES

Fall 2020



A Note from the Chair



Fall 2020

Stages

Department of Theatre and Dance

The Servant of Two Masters, Spring 2020. Photo by Porfirio Solorzano.

As with everything else, The Department of Theatre and Dance feels different this year. I am grateful for the resilience, creativity, and problem-solving of our dedicated faculty, staff, and student body as we adjust how we make art, teach, and learn in this challenging time. Preparing our students for the multidisciplinary nature of the arts industry is still our top priority as we adapt to a unique and growing reliance on technological tools. Perhaps because of this, we are amplifying artistry and wellbeing, acknowledging that to “teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.” (bell hooks) As we face these challenges head-on, we are excited to welcome new faculty to our team and look forward to offering our first-ever virtual season. Finding opportunities within obstacles, we will be sharing more about our art-making process through Q&A and documentary-style videos. Finally, though we miss everyone’s physical presence, we remain steadfast in our mission, knowing that theatre and dance have the power to bring people together in ways that transcend space and time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sarah M. Barry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Sarah M. Barry,
Department Chair



Meet the New UA Theatre and Dance Faculty and Staff!

Matt Davis



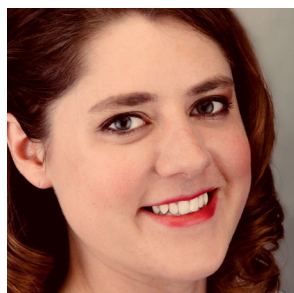
Matt is an Artistic and Academic Professional with over 20 years of experience. He is the new Assistant Professor heading up the Directing and Stage Management programs. Matt is the previous owner and Artistic Director of The Bon Ton Theater, a for-profit regional space in Michigan, where he acted as the producer of over 50 theatrical performances and cabarets. Matt is a director, actor, and playwright of works in the Regional, University, and Conservatory arena. He received a Master

of Fine Arts with a concentration in Directing from the University of Alabama, and is certified to teach the Michael Chekhov methodology through the Great Lakes Michael Chekhov Consortium at Kent State University. Matt has continued his development with the Chekhov technique as the founder of Open Motion Studio – a space developed for theatre artists and business professionals to present honest work through the Chekhov techniques, with a focus on the study of the psychophysical connection between music therapists and their clients. His directing and teaching experiences include the Michigan Shakespeare Festival, The University of Alabama, the University of South Alabama, Theatre 68 in NYC, among others. Matt's original play *Noise* was recently workshopped with the Bailiwick at Victory Gardens in Chicago.

Department of Theatre and Dance

theatredance.ua.edu

Cami Huebert



Cami Huebert is the new instructor of Costume Technology. She has her MFA from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill and her BFA in Costume Design from Stephens College. The Utah Shakespeare Festival has been one of her favorite places to spend her summers for the last 8 years. Working in costumes has been her career choice since she was twelve and she is very excited to start a new chapter of working with costumes as an instructor here at The University of Alabama.

Cindy Franks



Cindy is new to the department as our administrative secretary. She is a native of Tuscaloosa and has been on-campus since August 1996, although this is her first new department since coming to UA. She has a 21-year-old daughter (Alison) and a tabby cat (Dawn). Her daughter is pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Development and currently works at First Baptist Child Development Program. Cindy will soon be a returning student working to finish up her undergraduate degree. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends although now it is more at a distance. Cindy loves to talk and will socialize with anybody, and she can't wait to be able to do that again. She's excited to start this new chapter and can't wait to meet everyone (face-to-face).

Matt Stratton



Matthew Stratton has recently come to join the Department of Theatre and Dance from Vanderbilt University. He is our new Assistant Professor of Technical Direction. He holds a BA in Theater from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and an MFA in Scenic Technology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Matt has worked at several venues including Glimmerglass Opera ('05 and '06 seasons) and was the Technical Director of the McLeod Summer Playhouse ('08 and '09 seasons). In 2007 Matt served as Assistant Technical Director aiding in the construction and leading the installation of the United States Exhibit for the Prague Quadrennial in Prague and at the 2008 USITT Exposition. Matt's interests include and are not limited to scenic automation through pneumatics, hydraulics, and motorization, shop layout and organization, as well as health and safety protocols as they pertain to theater.

Chris Mueller



Chris is thrilled to be joining The University of Alabama this year as the new Scene Design Instructor. He recently received his MFA in Scenic Design from Indiana University and received his BFA in Technical Theatre from the University of Idaho in 2011. Chris is originally from Portland, OR, but he has been privileged to work across the nation at theatres including Flat Rock Playhouse, Idaho Repertory Theatre, Theatre West, Oregon

Shakespeare Festival, and more. For more information, visit his website at chrismuellerdesigns.com.

Misha Hadar



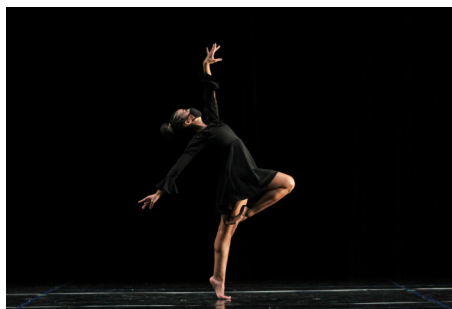
Misha Hadar is a new instructor of Theatre History in the department. He received his PhD in Theatre Historiography from the University of Minnesota. Misha researches and writes on recent theatre history, with a focus on European theatre that deals with questions of migration and refugees. His article on multiculturalism and Turkish theatre in Germany is published in the Theatre Journal. His book and theatre reviews have appeared in The Brecht Yearbook and the Walker Reader. He also works as a dramaturg. During his time in Minneapolis, his drama-

turgy work included projects at Penumbra Theatre (St. Paul, MN) and St. Olaf Collage (Northfield, MN). Misha holds a MA in Theatre Education from New York University. Prior to his move to the US, Misha lived in Israel, where he was a middle school theatre teacher, and facilitated Theatre of the Oppressed (theatre for social justice) groups for Israeli and Palestinian youth.



Contending with COVID!

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many changes, and UA Theatre and Dance has worked diligently to adapt to all of them. Read on to find out what changes the leadership, faculty and students have made to ensure the safety of everyone at the department.



Over the summer, the university and the department worked relentlessly to find ways to balance in-person classes and a virtual season with the safety and well-being of the faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders.

When talking about classes, Assistant Professor Matt Davis, who heads the Directing and Stage Management

programs, says that though many classes have adopted a hybrid approach, scene work is done in-person. For him, the focus is on “movement, atmosphere, rhythm, tempo and blocking in a socially distanced, and safe, face-to-face environment”. He adds that when following scene work, “as actors move through the space, they are at least 10-feet apart from each other.”

For Assistant Professor of Acting and Stage Movement, Kelley Schoger, the biggest challenges have been the distance and technical issues. “So much of my content in Movement and Alexander Technique is consent-based physical contact and proximity, whether that is through contact improvisation, general space explorations or my own hands-on guidance in the Alexander Technique. In the hybrid classes, the issue of the group attending by Zoom every other class not being able to hear their classmates (and sometimes me) is a real challenge.” But she adds that the distance has led to increased creativity.

Aidan Nettles, instructor of Dance, echoes that sentiment. While her classes have reduced floor work and eliminated contact work and partner work, the process of creating a duet work within the parameters of the distance has been an interesting puzzle for her students which has only bred creativity.

Assistant Professor Matt Reynolds, whose focus is on Lighting, Sound and Digital Design, says “My general approach has been to give students as much outside-of-class help as possible. I still need them to walk away with the

necessary knowledge and skills, but they might need more time, guidance, or help with accessibility than usual to get through this rough time.”

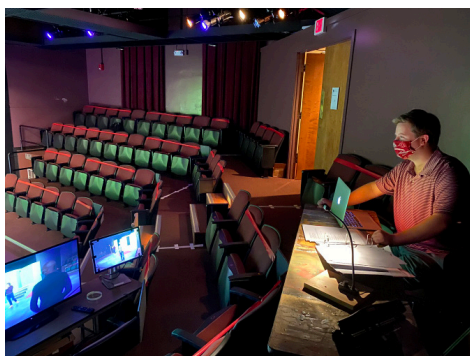
Emilia Stuart, a dance student in the department, is thankful for the awareness by professors and the administration. “The students are so lucky to have professors who continue to advocate on our behalf... creating safe and positive environments, something that is few and far between right now.”

Elizabeth Blanco Saenz, a second-year MFA Costume and Design and Production student, says that her biggest change this year has been adjusting to online classes. “Last semester, I was taking a pattern and draping class which required a good table space for drafting patterns and cutting fabric, and access to a dress form. Things turned interesting when the university closed and classes were moved online. Although my space at home is not ideal at all for sewing, I figured out ways to improvise a cutting table with cardboard and an ironing table with towels and fabric so that I could keep working on my assignments.”

For Musical Theatre senior, Christian Hatcher, the amount of singing he has done in a mask and over Zoom has been comical at times. Still, that does not change his education. “My teachers have been able to give us a quality education... we are getting more creative in what and how we produce. For instance, we are producing original radio shows this fall!”

Collaboration and connection in a virtual space at the department are at the forefront of Associate Chair of Dance, Lawrence Jackson’s mind. “I want our audiences to understand that the benefit of having art in your life doesn’t have to disappear despite the current challenges we face. The ‘stage’ is now a word describing physical spaces as well as online space.”

The process of socially-distanced creation and virtual learning is evident in the department’s ultimate goal. The Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance, Sarah Barry, further expands on this goal and adds that navigating this new learning world comes with challenges but also provides additional opportunities for students to learn in innovative ways. “Building costumes without the actor, filming on a green screen, and dancing and singing through a mask,” are all ways the department is adapting. Dominic Yeager, Associate Chair of Theatre, summarizes the departments COVID-19 approach - “allowing our students to create art in the safest way we can. To be able to perform, design, engineer, manage, etc. is the reason the students came to school.”



Scholarship Spotlight

Kara Kuczkowski

Department of Theatre and Dance
Stages
Fall 2020

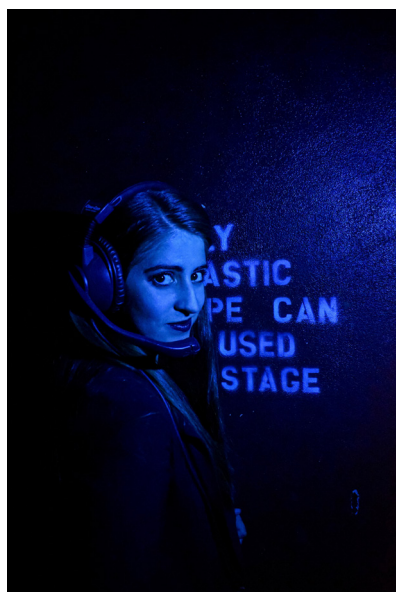


Kara Kuczkowski is a senior dual-degree student studying Theatre with a minor in Psychology, and Public Relations with a concentration in Nonprofit Communication Management. She has been a part of the stage management teams of *Little Women*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Hand to God*, and *The Merchant of Venice* at UA.

Kara has also been active in Alpha Psi Omega, serving as a Production Chair for the 2019-2020 season, and the APO Show stage manager in 2017. She has enjoyed working with Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre and Freddyburg Youth Theatre in her free time.

Kara is incredibly grateful for the generous donations of the scholarship donors. She says, "If you had asked me three years ago where I saw myself at the end of my senior year in college, I doubt that I would have ever expected to have found myself in a stage management position. However, through the help of dedicated UA faculty and staff members, and the support of my peers, I was encouraged to explore an entirely new facet of theatre. Studying stage management has allowed me to work with actors of all ages and backgrounds, learn how to be a strong communicator, and explore the process of a production from beginning to end. It truly has been a wonderful journey and I'm very excited to be graduating this semester with my BA in Theatre."

After graduation in December, Kara plans to pursue her MFA in Arts Management at The University of Alabama.





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College of Arts & Sciences

Theatre and Dance

2020-2021 Season

Theatre

Fall 2020

The Merchant of Venice

November 2020

When Antonio, a merchant, defaults on a loan by Shylock, a moneylender, drama ensues as Bassanio, Antonio's close friend and Portia, a rich heiress set out to save Antonio. Set in 16th century Venice, the Shakespearean play, an exemplary benchmark of friendship, explores the constant struggle between the quality of mercy and equity.

Stages

Department of Theatre and Dance

Antigone

March 2021

Within Fitts and Fitzgerald's translation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, we explore the never-ending struggle between the individual and state, human and natural law, and how the need to protect one's culture and family can often lead to tragedy. In this timeless Greek masterpiece, we are reminded why the human race remains what we are, who we are, and where we are.

Shooting Star

December 2020

It is 1972, and a young Billy Griffin, his voice and attitude forged on the desperate streets of race-torn Baltimore, puts his dreams where his mouth is, fleeing the comfort of home for the brilliant lights of "Motown" Detroit.

Spring Awakening

April 2021

Based on Frank Wedekind's play with the same name, *Spring Awakening* follows a group of adolescents' journey to adulthood. Witness a group of friends navigate life in the presence of adults who exercise control but withhold advice set to an unforgettable blend of rock, pop and folk music.

Dance

Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre (ARDT)

October 2020

This concert is comprised of a collection of screendances produced by the esteemed dance faculty at UA. We hope you will be treated to a transformative visual experience that merges both performance and cinematic aesthetics, while capturing your imagination around the infinite possibilities of how movement may be presented.

MFA Dance Concert

December 2020

UA Theatre and Dance presents a collection of works with original sound scores in collaboration with the School of Music, choreographed by the inaugural class of candidates pursuing their Masters of Fine Arts in Dance.

Dance Alabama!

November 2020

A candid and courageous collection of choreographic works, Dance Alabama! comes to your screens with a captivating combination of styles ranging from contemporary to jazz by our talented student choreographers.

Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre

April 2021

Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre is back with graceful performances choreographed by our nationally-acclaimed dance faculty and guest artists. Join us on an eclectic and lively journey through motion.

Dance Alabama! Film Festival

April 2021

Created to promote collaboration between cinematography, music, and dance, this screendance festival is a collection of short dance films created by students from the Dance Program, School of Music, and Department of Journalism and Creative Media.



Alumni Spotlight

Tommy Walker and Jessica Walker

Bachelor of Arts in Theatre (Musical Theatre Concentration) '13



How did UA Theatre and Dance help you with your career?

Jessica:

UA gave me the support network that carried me to NYC. Raphe Crystal, the former Head of the Musical Theatre program encouraged me to take the leap, reminding me, “no one ever has enough money to move to New York.” My voice teacher, Emily, helped me prepare for several big auditions, even after I graduated. My classmates essentially all moved with me. Having people who support you in a new city is so important. We audition together, work

together, and still watch Alabama games on Saturdays.

Tommy:

I went to UA with the intention of being a theatre teacher, so I double majored in Musical Theatre and English Education. The acting training I went through not only made me a better performer, it also introduced me to many of the exercises and techniques which I now apply to the training of my own students. I am also grateful for my extensive dance training, since I often find myself choreographing many of the shows I direct. Most of all, I will always remember the individual guidance from so many teachers and graduate assistants who took the extra time to ensure that our classes were serving my individual needs and ambitions. The myriad staff members show that the concept of the individual student is not lost at UA, which is what I believe made my time there all the more beneficial.

What has your journey since graduation been like?

Jessica:

I moved to NYC the summer after graduation, and have been here ever since. I spent the Fall doing regional shows and booked my first tour in May of the next year. I joined a few tours after that, dipped my toes into commercial work, and auditioned in between. After four years, I took a break to focus on my small business. A year and a half later, I am now a full-time entrepreneur. I created Better + Co. to encourage and empower the cancer community. I wanted to create resources and connections that I wish we had access to when we first started this journey. I design greeting cards, gifts, and organizational tools to help cancer fighters stay organized, connected, and encouraged during treatment, recovery, and survivorship. Being an actor is very much like being an entrepreneur. You have to push yourself, set your own goals, and hold yourself accountable to make any progress happen. I learned how to be self-sufficient as an actor which is necessary as a solo entrepreneur. Being able to speak on stage and



on podcasts and interviews comfortably has been incredibly helpful. I still live in NYC, and enjoy theatre in other areas of my life!

Tommy:

After graduating I performed and taught with several regional theatre companies. I have since settled down in New York City with my wife Jessie (who I met in college- another reason to be thankful for the department!). In NYC, I perform as often as my schedule allows, recently making my Off-Broadway debut in the new musical *Truffles*. Mostly though, I am a resident

teaching artist during the school year with a few different theatre companies such as Queens Theatre and Unity Stage Company. With those companies, I direct children's musicals and teach classes to students of all ages. My favorite job since graduating has been serving as the Director of Performing Arts at Camp Barney Medintz for the past 7 summers. At CBM, I oversee all of our fine arts programming for over 1300 kids, train a staff of other teaching artists, and direct/choreograph musicals which often feature over 100 kids in the cast!

What advice do you have for current students?

Jessica:

I would recommend starting an audition journal. Include what it was for, who was in the room, what you performed, what you wore, the feedback you received, etc. There are only so many casting directors, and you will audition for them over and over, so it's nice to go into the room with some context. The mindset I always put myself in before an audition was "try very hard, but care very little". Do what you came there to do to the best of your ability, but leave it in the room. I always ended each audition this way, rather than spending hours, days, weeks wondering how it went, or if I would be cast. Also, always bring all of your shoes- you never know what you'll need at a dance callback!

Tommy:

Be kind to the people you work with; all of them. The old saying of "It's not what you know it's who you know," rings so true in the theatre community. Your connections can arguably get you further than your audition itself, and your reputation will start to follow you. There are talented people everywhere and what ultimately makes you stick out is YOU. So leave a good impression everywhere you go, and be kind to everyone you meet. You never know who will end up on the other side of that audition table!



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Department of Theatre and Dance

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Back Cover - *The Servant of Two Masters*, Spring 2020, Porfirio Solorzano