Dancing and Texting

By Laura Rico, University Communications

Dance Assistant Professor Sheron Wray finds inspiration in African dance, the improvisational nature of jazz music, and cell phone technology. So it’s not surprising that her stage work combines all three. Wray has developed a performance format call Texterritory that incorporates text messaging from the audience. “Fewer people are coming to see live shows. It takes innovation to draw larger crowds to the theater,” she says. “We’re taking down a wall that exists between the stage and the audience and allowing people to have a role in how the performance is carried out.”

Wray demonstrated Texterritory recently at the UCI BodyTech Symposium, which brought together technology researchers and performers to consider mediated physical environments for dance, drama, music and visual arts. Wray also discussed the process of integrating technology and choreography as part of the Center for Computer Games & Virtual Worlds seminar series held in conjunction with the symposium.

Wray describes her interactive productions as “dance for the next generation of audiences.” In response to on-stage prompts, attendees text-message answers to open-ended or multiple-choice questions such as “What should the dancer wear on a first date?” and “Why are you here?” The replies affect the show’s music, dance, lighting and narrative.

“Cell phones are such a large part of a modern audience’s identity. By allowing people to participate, we make them feel secure about disrupting the theater,” she says, laughing.

Trained at the London Contemporary Dance School, she traces her love of dance and music to her childhood in Leicester, 100 miles north of England’s capital.

“I come from a family of great untrained dancers,” she explains. “I recall the rug being rolled back during parties and everyone dancing.”

Tap lessons soon followed, but the music and dance of the African diaspora are what most influence Wray’s work. “Jazz is perhaps the most well-known form of music to emerge from the African diaspora,” says Wray. “I try to bring back the historical relationship between jazz and dance through my stage productions.

Wray has choreographed contemporary performances in collaboration with jazz greats like trumpeter and composer Winton Marsalis. She also is a co-founder of the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora, which supports the practice and appreciation of that dance form.

The Wild Party Will Be Wild!

If you love the sites and sounds of the rollicking Roaring ‘20s, you won’t want to miss Drama’s last show of the season – The Wild Party, which runs from May 28 through June 5 in the Claire Trevor Theatre. This risqué musical is the “party to end all parties,” where power, control, consumption, sexuality and violence all collide.

Costumes are an integral part of any theatrical performance – and, you’re sure to love the costumes in The Wild Party, designed by talented students in our Costume Design Program and our staff of experienced professionals in the Costume Shop.

Did you know that the CTSA Costume Design Program is the only university drama curriculum in the U.S. to have its own digital textile printer? Featured recently in an episode of Project Runway, the printer allows our designers to produced their own fabrics or re-create the historical patterns from days gone by.

Fundraiser on May 29

To keep our Costume Design Program in the forefront requires financial support. That’s why the Saturday, May 29 evening performance of The Wild Party is being planned as a fundraising event. And thanks to individual and corporate underwriting of the cocktail reception and post-performance soiree of dessert and champagne in an outdoor Speakeasy, all the proceeds from the event will directly benefit CTSA’s Costume Design Program.

Tickets for the fundraiser are $100 per person and are available through the Dean’s Office at (949) 824-8792. Tickets for all other performances can be purchased through the Arts Box Office at (949) 824-2787 or Ticketmaster.com.

Don’t miss it. It’s going to be wild!!!

www.arts.uci.edu
From the Dean’s Desk

Dear friends and colleagues,

My first exchanges with students and faculty have reaffirmed my enthusiasm and excitement about accepting the position of Dean. What a fantastic, vibrant and robust school and creative community! I see tremendous opportunities as we move ahead.

It’s an exciting time for the Claire Trevor School of the Arts. Our students are creating, performing, and exhibiting at an amazingly high level. Our alumni and faculty are regularly seen and heard on stage, in touring companies, on television, in concert halls and on recordings, and in museums and galleries throughout the U.S. and around the world. They are also contributing “new knowledge” as their research spreads into every corner of their respective fields.

UC Irvine’s alumni in Dance, Drama, Music and Studio Art are having an impact on the world every day, from Broadway star Allison Case ‘05 to two-time Grammy winner Ted Kryczko ’78, from comedian Jon Lovitz ’79 to choreographer and dancer Carrie Ann Inaba ’89. The list goes on and on, as our alumni reshape art in America.

Here on campus we have a wonderful new building coming on line during the 2010/2011 academic year; opera is returning to the annual performance season; and, because of my personal interest, the School will be expanding its interactions with alumni, its involvement with the local community, its international programs and its focus on student scholarship.

This is both an exciting year and a challenging one as our students grapple with a tough economy, increasing fees and extra stress on family finances. Despite that, the artistic aspirations of our students continue to inspire all of us, as does the commitment of our donors and friends who so actively support the arts at UC Irvine.

Regards,

Joseph S. Lewis III
Dean

On The Job: Robert Plogman, Associate Director UAG

Q: What are your job responsibilities at the University Art Gallery?
A: I’ve been Associate Director of the gallery for almost five years. My areas of responsibilities are varied and include: Curatorial/Exhibition Design; Financial/Operations Management; Marketing/Design; Tierney University House aka the Chancellor’s residence (curate the annual exhibition in the Chancellor’s residence, which includes student art and works from the University’s art collection); and Art Collections Manager.

Q: What is your previous work/academic experience that qualify you for this position?
A: I earned my MFA (Studio Art emphasis in photography) at University of Washington, and I have worked at Taft Museum of Art, Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, and Bellevue Art Museum in Washington state. In addition to managing 17,000 sq. ft. of exhibitions space, I’ve worked with curators, artists, architects and fabricators on exhibition design, lighting and the implementation thereof.

Q: What is the strategic vision for the galleries and how does the work of the outside artists figure into that vision?
A: Our galleries are committed to promoting an inter-generational dialogue between 60s/70s neo-avant-garde art and contemporary visual culture. Our curatorial mission is to keep an eye on our modernist past while promoting the most innovative aesthetic and political debates of our post-modern present. We publish scholarly texts in catalogue/book form in order to disseminate research-based information into the community and provide a venue for the promotion of innovative discourse surrounding mixed-media production today.

Q: Who selects the artists to be featured and what are the criteria?
A: Juli Carson, the Gallery Director, with my input. We usually have one outside-curated exhibition every year. Our Major Works of Art Series commissions original projects by canonical artists working today, while the Emerging Artist Series features solo projects by a set of younger artists informed by the legacies showcased in the Major Works series. We also produce larger thematic group exhibitions alternatingly showcasing historical and contemporary art and film projects.

Q: How far in advance of an exhibit do you start working on the presentation plans and what elements does that involve?
A: For a professional exhibition I usually start to work one year prior to installation. This process moves from research and the selection of the artwork(s) to discussing the piece with the artist(s) to organizing the logistics of the exhibition. I then move into designing the layout of the exhibition in the gallery space, while Juli Carson writes an essay on the work and the artist. Concurrently, we begin the graphic design of the brochures, PR of the show, and purchasing exhibition equipment. The last step is installation of the artworks.

Q: Which part of your job do you enjoy the most?
A: I like the variety of my job and that I work with different artists every quarter, which keeps it fresh and interesting.

Q: Don’t you teach a photography class here on campus?
A: I often teach Introduction to Photography in the summer sessions.
Dance
Assistant Professor Jodie Gates is staging one of three William Forsythe’s works that will debut this fall at La Scala Ballet in Milan. She’ll spend three weeks there this summer getting the dancers in all three works better prepared for the opening.

This spring her own work Pinky Push had its World Premiere at the Juilliard School. She created the playful number specifically for two talented Juilliard students.

Jeff Russell, Assistant Professor (dance/science), served as a dance injury expert for the American Orthopaedic Society for Sport Medicine. The collateral piece produced by the association serves as a patient education resource, offering an overview of dance injuries, what types of injuries can occur, how the conditions can be prevented, etc.

Drama
Drama Vice Chair and Head of Stage Management Don Hill has been co-producing a series of live seminars, Conversations On Craft, at the Stella Adler Theatre in Los Angeles. Funds raised from ticket sales benefited the charity of the speaker’s choice. Each seminar series features interviews with some of the greatest actors, directors, writers and producers of our time. The seminars can occur, how the conditions can be prevented, etc.

Students/Alumni

Music
Professor Haroutune Bedeliana and Lecturer Lorna Griffitt have been invited to perform at the Sound Waves Festival in Oregon in June, the Schlem International Music Festival in Italy in July (which several UCI music students will be attending), and the Rio International Festival in Brazil in August, which will include a performance at the British Embassy in the capital, Brasilia. They have also been invited to perform a violin-piano recital at the Presidential Palace in Nicosia, Cyprus, in September.

Music
Grace Liu, third year piano major in the Music Department and student of Lorna Griffitt, won the UCI Symphony Concerto Competition and performed the Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 7 with the UCI Symphony Orchestra this past March.


Current Music students Celeste Markey, Grace Liu, Esther Chang, Julia Damron, David Daniels, James Dolas, Tim Nguyen, Matt Otto, Antonia Palanciuc, Aaron Tam, Anne-Marie Alexander, Alex Rosales, Andrew McGee were selected to perform with classical pianist Christopher O’Riley at his April concert in the Irvine Barclay Theatre.

Studio Art
Brett Dears’ (MFA ACE ’09) first gig out of school was building a two-story warehouse-sized Rube Goldberg machine, complete with falling piano, runaway barrels and sledge-hammer-smashed TVs, for the new video for the band OK Go. The YouTube video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qybUFnY7Y8w had seven million hits during its first two weeks.
First-Hand: Digital Arts Exhibition Class

By Chris Morales (Studio Art ’10)

I jumped at the chance to enroll in the inaugural Digital Arts Exhibition class because it would allow me to exhibit my own work at the Beall Center for Art + Technology. Taught by Beall Artistic Director David Familian, the class has quickly become one of my favorites — ever!

Digital X, as it is known to students, focuses on the concept of new-media art and, so far, we have received a history on kinetic and optical art and learned about important figures such as Marcel Duchamp, John Cage, and Nam June Paik. We are learning that all art is in dialogue with each other and that it is crucial to not only know what is happening contemporarily, but have an appreciation for what came before. The class already has given me a greater understanding of the implications involved when using technological elements in my art practice.

The class is broken down into two parts: The first is research-based and, thanks to a rich library of books provided by David Familian, we’ve gotten a greater comprehension of all the contemporary philosophical questions that current artists are investigating. We are learning the importance of maintaining a balance between understanding your materials and allowing yourself the freedom to experiment and play. The second portion of the course will allow us to use the Beall Center as our very own studio as we construct and install our own works for an exhibition at the end of the quarter. This experience will prepare us for dealing with deadlines and teach us how to install technological pieces of art for exhibition.

I am in my final year at UCI and I am from the city of Norwalk, Calif. I hope to continue my studies by going to graduate school and earning my MFA. My interest in Digital Arts comes from my awareness that the consciousness of our society gets altered with each new major technological introduction. Because of this class, I now believe there’s a professional future for me.

An Expanding Focus For Arts Outreach

By Ana Halland, Director of Outreach Programs

In 2007, Outreach at Claire Trevor School of the Arts began expanding its role in the community by introducing new programs and targeting a wider audience.

Through corporate and private sponsorships, we launched Reach-Ins, bringing students of all ages to the UC Irvine campus for events, performances, tours, and classroom observations. Our classroom arts experiences — previously solely for elementary school children — began including middle- and high-school students and added projects in digital arts and animation. Creative Connections, as the programs in Arts Outreach are known collectively, reaches more under-served communities in Orange County than ever before.

This past year, Creative Connections launched a highly successful mentorship program that partnered qualified CTSA seniors with high school students interested in pursuing university degrees in the arts. This program provided college application support with a specific focus on requirements for art majors in all disciplines. Each CTSA scholar mentored up to four students, bringing them to campus to audit courses and attend lectures and performances. In addition, the scholar worked with the younger students on creating portfolios of their work to accompany their college application to arts programs.

Finally, our scholars shared their experiences as university arts majors and served as role models.

One recent project involved Dana Hills High School students interested in studying dance at four-year universities. Ching Ching Wong (Dance ’10) assisted four high school students through the application process, helping them create their audition videos and, sometimes, even driving the young women to live auditions. Ching Ching, an honor student and Creative Connections scholar for all four of her years at CTSA, used some of her Outreach stipend to buy them tickets to events at Orange County Performing Arts Center, Laguna Dance, and some Los Angeles venues. She created application schedules for each of the girl’s college preferences and required weekly accountability exercises. All four young women have been accepted into four-year institutions. In fact, one will be part of CTSA’s incoming freshman class!

This year, UC Irvine launched a new minor in Civic and Community Engagement. The Claire Trevor School of the Arts has cross-listed Arts 189, Independent Study in Arts Outreach, as an elective open to students enrolled in this minor. While in the past this course was open only to CTSA students in Outreach projects, we now welcome students who are interested in arts advocacy, public works, and community engagement and education. This enriches our own School with the resources of community-minded majors across campus and builds partnerships with the rest of the UCI campus.

Many of our faculty are involved in outreach projects, both on- and off-campus. Drama Dept. Vice Chair Don Hill, for example, and his stage management graduate students have been teaching stage management fundamentals in high schools throughout Orange County. And, Dance Assistant Professor Sheron Wray founded Insight, an undergraduate dance troupe that takes dance to under-served youths both locally and abroad. This summer Insight will travel to Ghana for an interdisciplinary cultural exchange hosted by the University of Ghana, Accra.

In the past three years, CTSA Outreach has greatly expanded its definition and reach. We are excited about pursuing our passion for the Arts and exposing a wider audience to the arts experience. We hope the faculty, staff and students of CTSA will support our new endeavors!
Drama’s Four New 15-Minute Musicals

Hundreds of students, faculty and staff from throughout the UCI campus enjoyed the culminating performances of a unique partnership between a university drama training program and an Off-Broadway theatre – the annual collaboration between The York Theatre Company and CTSA’s New York Satellite Program in Musical Theatre.

Directed by Brian Blythe, with music direction by Tammy Holder and presented in a style similar to the York’s Musicals in Mufti series, the event featured four original mini-musicals – each just 15 minutes long – that were commissioned by the writers specifically for the UC Irvine Drama students in each piece.

The new musicals included:

Four-Letter Words: What happens when the guy of Allie’s dreams won’t say the four-letter word every woman wants to hear? A bunch of other four-letter words come out in a... in a furniture store. Featured Drama students Katherine Brady, Peter Gallagher, Kelly Hinkle, Kim Issue, Ian Parmenter, Yael Wartens, Kaitrin Walker and Sarah Weiss. Music by Brian Feinstein, Book & Lyrics by Amanda Yesnowitz.

2 to Wakefield: On the uptown 2 train to Wakefield, a desperate clown takes grave measures to make an unaffected woman smile. Underneath the blur of the fastest moving city in the world, two people slow down just enough to see each other for who they really are. Featured Drama students Camille Beaumont, Jordan Neil Dragatsky, Melissa Dunham, Sean Garner, Ashley Nordland, Hayley Palmer, Natalie Thornton and Annelise Threlkeild. Book: Music & Lyrics by Timothy Huang.

On Teeth and Longing: A man decays from the inside. A woman is unable to smile. Empathy is possible, but first they’d have to meet. Featured Drama students Mi Aboul-Zelait, Garrett Dragon, Katherine Gutierrez, Nancy Lam, Hallie Mayer, Kari Yancy and Anaiz Zuniga. Words by Sophia Chapadjiqv, Music by Allison Leyton-Brown.

Assisted Living: Seniors behaving badly! The residents of the Beth Shalom Assisted Living Home could use a little action to spice up their daily routines...and think they found just the thing when a captivating crooner blows into town. Featured Drama students Hannah Balagot, Sydney Dever, Erin Goldman, Zach Guzik, Maggie Howell, Lauren T. Mack, Isaak Olson, Claire Perry and Kat Uyeda. Book by Russ Kaplan & Sara Wordsworth, Music by Russ Kaplan, Lyrics by Sara Wordsworth. The audience showed its appreciation and delight with a standing ovation and hearty cheers.

Renaissance of the Russian Guitar

By Cathy Lawhon, University Communications

Between Pietro Pettolotti and Pete Seeger lie a continent and a century or so. CTSA faculty member John Schneiderman’s childhood interest and subsequent career in music span it all.

The musician, a renowned virtuoso on plucked instruments and director of the Music Department’s Guitar and Lute Performance Program, got his musical introduction at age 6 when his mother taught him the ukulele. His American folk roots took hold at Pete Seeger concerts he attended with his parents. His interest in the classical guitar was sparked by an Andrés Segovia concert he attended with his parents. "I find the music comes to life more convincingly on the instrument the composer had in mind," he explains. "This requires the performer to also adapt to the playing technique of these period instruments, which is often quite different from that of modern instruments."

Schneiderman points out that the Russian guitar, which is its country’s national instrument, much like the five-string banjo is America’s, is making a comeback. So much so that one of his students in the Guitar and Lute Performance Program is switching from Spanish to Russian guitar because of the potential opportunities in the future.
To save a few thousand trees, and several thousand dollars in printing and postage, the Claire Trevor School of the Arts wants to convert this quarterly newsletter into an electronic format. To do that, we need your email address.

If you would like to continue receiving news from us, please go to the home page of our web site (www.arts.uci.edu) and click on the bright red envelope near the top of the page. You will be forwarded to a page to register your email address, ensuring that you continue to receive news about our Dance, Drama and Music performances, as well as the exhibits at our Galleries and the Beall Center.

Don’t delay – register today! Help us go paperless.

UCI’s Claire Trevor School of the Arts Awards
Honors in Stage Management

The Drama Department of UC Irvine’s Claire Trevor School of the Arts has awarded Honors in Stage Management to Skyler Gray and Elizabeth (Libby) Mackenzie, third-year undergraduate Drama students, and graduating senior Rachel Gross. The award is the School’s highest undergraduate achievement in stage management, according to Don Hill, Drama Department Vice Chair and Head of the Stage Management Program.

Skyler Gray, a resident of Fresno, Calif., plans on attending graduate school and hopes to become an Artistic Director. “Ensemble theater, children’s theater and new work is what I have planned for my future, and I cannot wait to start!”

Elizabeth Mackenzie is from Lafayette, Calif., and hopes to eventually transition into owning her own casting or production company in New York. “Stage managing is an art that requires diplomacy, leadership and several other traits needed to run a company. It’s the best foundation I could have gotten for my future plans.”

Laguna Niguel, Calif., resident Rachel Gross wants to obtain experience in other aspects of management, such as theatrical management, with the hope of ultimately “running theater companies that are dedicated to supporting communities in need.”

“Admission to the Honors in Stage Management Program is highly competitive,” Hill explains. “Only truly exceptional students, less than 20 percent of those eligible, are admitted. The work and achievements of Skyler, Libby and Rachel personify the exemplary results of our program.”

Honor students study basic and advanced stage management techniques, work as assistant stage managers on graduate student-directed and faculty-directed productions, and stage manage a UCI student- or faculty-directed production.

In the MFA program, students pursue the art and science of stage management via a theme for each quarter. These include Entertainment Law, Directing for Stage Managers, The Science and Art of Cue Calling, About Equity, Self Marketing, Psychology for Stage Managers, Production Management, Special Event Management, and Music and Dance Production. Training is provided in the specialized area of stage management and also in dramatic literature, the development of theatre, concepts and collaboration, and script analysis. These courses help stage management students to communicate effectively with all members of the production team on a professional level.

Drama Vice Chair Don Hill (second from left) congratulates Elizabeth MacKenzie, Rachel Gross and Skyler Gray for their Stage Management Honors.

New-Media Arts Building Heading Toward Completion

Construction on CTSA’s New-Media Arts Building is progressing rapidly, as evidenced by these recent photos. Various parts of the building are still available for naming opportunities. Interested donors should contact Dean Joe Lewis at (949) 824-8792 for more information.

HELP US GO PAPERLESS! REGISTER YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS!

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