

“Looking Back”

There were so many things that went into making my senior concert (the first in UALR’s new BFA program) special. I was determined to make it professional, organized and fun for the company. Every dancer and choreographer dreams of sharing the stage with some of her very best friends, of creating moments only imagined, and of having the artistic freedom to match her desires. My dream came true.

The preparation throughout the process was certainly a full-time job but also a fantastic learning experience, and it has prepared me for projects I hope to pursue in the future. When I wasn’t choreographing or dancing, I was cutting music, tiling the pieces, making schedules, posting rehearsal videos, recoding a curtain speech, designing the pre-show music, finding costumes, painting scenery, and designing the program and the poster. It was a crazy ride. I encourage all future dance majors to “get ready”. It’s worthwhile but not an easy undertaking.

As I watch the slide show video my cast gave me a surprise, and I think back on all the memories, I realize how happy I am to

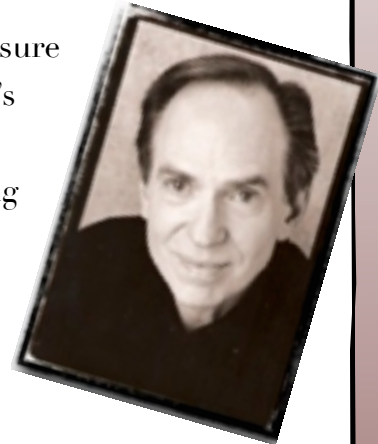


have shared the experience with this particular group of people. They volunteered their time, worked extra hard, and wanted the show to succeed. I know that one day, I am going to say, “They danced in my senior concert, can you believe that?” I feel privileged to have been a part of their journey as dancers, and truly blessed that they were a part of mine.

-Marisa Kirby

It’s The Straight Goods

It is particularly fun for me to read this issue because so much of what is being reported supports the student centered nature of our program, and continues to offer evidence that UALR truly provides a realistic education. This university prepares its graduates culturally and intellectually to go anywhere and do anything! The pleasure of discovering one’s reach, and the reward for pursuing a dream with discipline and courage is exemplified by the palpable joy in each of these articles.



Ms. Kirby will be the first dancer to graduate from our fledgling program. Her senior capstone concert was a credit to her talent and affords us a degree of pride in terms of the training we are trying to provide. This also happens to be the week that one of our graduates, Ryan Bona, will be presenting his MFA lighting design thesis project in Los Angeles as he completes his course of study at the California Institute of the Arts. We applaud his accomplishment!

Editor in Chief
Penn Ross Jackson, Jr.

A Herring in the Big Apple

As my plane flew over Little Rock on January 15th, an odd sensation overcame me. I was excited to see the friends and family that I had left for nearly a month, and mentally, I knew I was home. Yet it didn't feel like the same home I had left two days after Christmas. As I answered my mom's question, "How was your trip?" I began to realize that it wasn't Little Rock that had changed; it was me.

It may sound a little melodramatic to say that my trip to New York City for the three-week winter intensive at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance was a life-changing. But the truth is that it was! I honestly don't think I could have had a better experience. I learned so much in New York, not only about dance, but also about myself. I also learned just how much I should appreciate my UALR dance education and how well it prepared me for the classes I took.

The last week in New York was certainly the most challenging, but by pushing through the challenges, it was also the time during which I grew the most. For the first two weeks of the intensive, I was in the company of my friend and UALR classmate, Olivia Perry. By the time she left, we had gotten into such a groove that we felt as though we were roommates living in the city. The classes at the Graham school were hard from the beginning, but, as one would guess, the last week was certainly the hardest. The technique teacher for that week, Tadej Brdnik, challenged me not only physically, but mentally! In addition, the composition and repertory classes were preparing us for the showing at the end of the week. After two days of hearing counts and cues yelled at me over and over again in close conjunction with the phrase "Contract more!," I was starting to feel the affects of mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion, magnified by my feelings of loneliness. Though I tried not to, I started to question the many good feelings I had

had about my trip thus far. Frustrated by falling victim to negative feelings, I came to class early Wednesday ready to fix all of the things on which I had been critiqued. A repertory video was playing in the lobby area of the school, and as I watched the members of the Martha Graham Company perform, I was in awe of how huge and fearlessly they were dancing! I realized that the fear of doing



*Ali at the Martha Graham School
Photo Provided by: Sonia Herring*

something incorrectly was what had been holding me back. After that epiphany, the last three days of the intensive, and especially the showing, proved to be the best ones of the entire trip! I received much more positive feedback about my dancing from faculty and fellow dancers alike; one of my classmates even told me in the middle of class that she could “feel my energy.” As a dancer and as a person, I haven’t been the same since that Wednesday. It really is true that what doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger.

- *Ali Herring*



Winter in New York
Photo Provided by: Ali Herring

Olivia and the Great Unknown

“You have a thirst for knowledge that can’t be ignored, and never completely hydrated.” And so reads the wonderful colored sign suspended over Broadway. I came to New York in December with this feeling and my experience only heightened the thirst. I studied at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance. The preparation I have received at UALR put me in complete synch with the program and illustrated the realistic and excellent value of what I am learning here in class. Travelling the streets of New York, I learned that I can handle myself in a big city and that I can survive in “unknown territory.”

Growing my technique at the Graham School, seeing the Ailey Company perform *Revelations*, visiting the exhibits in Lincoln Center, walking down Broadway these fabulous opportunities enhanced my desire for a professional career and my need to gain more knowledge, in general. It was a treat to have conversations with people who actually knew what Martha Graham had accomplished. A lecture given by Mary Anthony opened my eyes to the idea that just being able to dance doesn’t allow you to create. You have to learn and experience all the art forms. She also said repeatedly, “...our generation of dancers has to bring back the soul to dance.” Indeed, I have heard my professors at UALR say the same thing!

It was exciting to see how much dance there is in New York and how possible it is with dedication to be a part of the community. The speed of the city has filled my muscle memory and it is still with me. It is clear in my stride and in the way I continue to “pick up” momentum. I continue to feel the movement and the pace of the life in that city, as well as a sensory understanding of the moments in which we live. This wonderful trip has left me saying, **KEEP THE THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE COMING!**

- *Olivia Perry*



Ali and Olivia
 Photo Provided by: Ali Herring

From the Editor's Corner

Three years ago, I came to the theatre department with the intention of becoming an actor. In the intervening time I have received excellent training and the kind of support that has allowed me to discover a different path. My Sophomore year marked the beginning of a transition to stage management and producing. With this "change" came a desire seek additional experiences outside of the department and to establish a visibility in the growing Little Rock art community.

Last summer, an interview for a lighting internship at [the Arkansas Repertory Theatre](#) actually led to an offer for a running crew position for *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, was followed by job in the Box Office, and ultimately, I was given an opportunity to serve as an Assistant Stage Manger for *Gridiron: A View From the Bar*.

While working on *Gridiron*, I met Jana Hendrix, Company Manager of Ballet Arkansas. Thanks to the experience I gained stage managing dance concerts at UALR, and the training I received from Rebecca Stalcup Miller the Artistic Director while stage managing her production of *Peter Pan*, I was able to talk shop and landed a wonderful gig managing Ballet Arkansas' *Arts in Concert* and their annual production of *The Nutcracker*.

On an almost daily basis, someone comments "I don't know how you do it" or "You need to be careful not to burn yourself out." I love what I am doing and I am nowhere near the ceiling yet! I am carrying 18 hours and stage managing *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* at UALR, continuing my job at the Rep and , with the aid of my compatriots, Elizabeth Bennett, TJ Medel, Crystal Mercer, and Silver Thompson, I have launched the Unified Artists Movement (TUAM) which will be featured along with seven other arts organizations in this year's Lantern's Festival at Wildwood Park for the Performing Arts. [You can see us in this week's Sync Weekly on page 11](#). We are hopeful TUAM will become a full fledged theatre company in the very near future!

I have three semesters left at UALR...and I can't wait to see what lies ahead....

Penn Ross Jackson, Jr. is the Senior Editor of the TAD Newsletter.