

# NEWSLETTER

## RYAN BONA IN GOTHAM CITY

From February 5 through February 17, I spent my days and nights in New York City and New Haven, Connecticut. I'd gone north to do my interviews for graduate school lighting design programs (NYU Tisch School of the Arts, California Institute of the Arts, and Yale). The interviews also gave me the excuse and the opportunity to see nine shows, visit three museums offering fabulous design related exhibitions, and get lost in the jungle of NYC! If I'd only done the interviews it would still have been a life changing experience. It took months of preparation and the cost of preparing my portfolio and the travel was a challenge but the process ultimately affirmed my desire to go to graduate school and reinforced my desire to head out toward the horizon.



All training is at least as much about the people as the programs and the folks I met proved this to be true. The first stop was NYU. Four floors up from the Village streets, I toured the facility and then sat down with M.L. Geiger (Lighting-*The Constant Wife*) and Susan Hilferty (Costumes-*Wicked*). The interview was very casual and they created a positive energy which put me at my ease. They started by wanting to know about me as an artist and later proceeded to a discussion my work on a particular project. The following Monday, I returned and had an opportunity to watch classes.

The Cal Arts interview was held in the private studio of Don Holder (Chair of Lighting Design-*The Lion King*) in Chelsea. It was one on one and amazingly lasted for close to two hours. We went through each item in my portfolio. He offered response and criticism and I affirmed some of my decisions and discussed changes I might have subsequently made. He also talked about the program at Cal Arts and the nature of the students and the learning environment. I was sold.

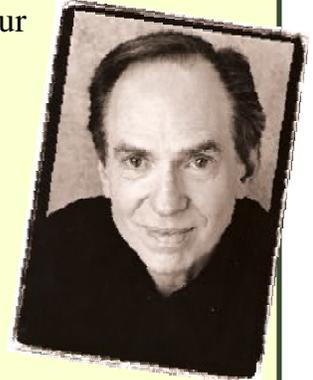
Yale was the last stop. I took a two hour train ride from Manhattan to New Haven one morning and sat in on classes. Later, I interviewed with Jennifer Tipton (four time Tony award winner) and Steven Strawbridge (Pilobolus, New York Public Theatre). Meeting and talking with Ms. Tipton was worth the trip! This interview was technically oriented-instrument positions, paperwork, a defense of my choices for two projects, etc. The interview ended with a discussion of their goals for the program and the construction of the curriculum. When it was over-the last of my three, I felt that a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders.



I am anxiously anticipating word from the schools after March 1. In many ways, my journey was its own reward.

## Its the Straight Goods

“As a department, we are fond of telling our students that the faculty is responsible for providing the opportunity and the environment in which to learn but that each individual is the engine. No drive, no journey. No ambition, no Accomplishment. Nothing ventured, ...etc.



Dr. JAY RAPHAEL  
Department Chair

The articles in this edition of the newsletter are examples of what is possible when the formula is realized. Indeed, the nature of these experiences and the joy associated with them lend credence to the principle! This “stuff” is a fun read!”

UALR Theatre Arts and Dance  
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## Reflections on tour with *One Ninth* by Crystal C. Mercer



Crystal C. Mercer and Minnijean Brown-Trickey

December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 was my first day of rehearsal at The Arkansas Repertory Theatre. The journey covered three weeks of rehearsals, five weeks on the road, 32 performances, and over 150 workshops on diversity and theatre. For two months I was a busy woman, but I never felt so good about theatre and what it can do for people. The play, *One Ninth* by Spirit Trickey-Rowan, provided my first professional audition, my first lead role, my first tour around the state of Arkansas. I had a blast on tour. We performed for over 15,000 people and we worked with some amazing students. Moreover the experience confirmed my beliefs about the relationship of the arts to social justice.

Most rewarding was our last performance at the historic Little Rock Central High School. The story ended where it began... at a place where I received my education thanks to the sacrifices of Minnijean and countless others.

I sincerely want to thank the Arkansas Repertory Theatre for the opportunity and I want to thank the UALR Department of Theatre and Dance for all of the support and love I received while I was on the road!

For more information about the *One Ninth* tour, just ask me! Or check out these links:

<http://www.therep.org/detail.asp?secID=63>

<http://www.therep.org/story.asp?secID=117>

<http://www.arktimes.com/Articles/ArticleViewer.aspx?ArticleID=d17753cb-15fe-4a6a-b1d3-5771e4571f03>

## Dance Corner

### Rachel Boyajian Visits UALR TAD

The Spring Dance Concert will soon be upon us. It will feature pieces choreographed by Stephanie Thibeault, Rhythm McCarthy, and our talented guest artist, Rachel Boyajian. Ms. Boyajian spent a week here at UALR preparing her piece "*The Day A Gorilla Gives Me A Banana...*" This piece, along with four others, will be featured April 16-19 in University Theatre. Tickets will go on sale the week before the show. Be sure not to miss your chance to see these amazing, faculty-choreographed, and student-performed dances. In the meanwhile, here is a little information about our guest artist, Rachel Boyajian.



Rachel Boyajian, a native of Kansas, received her BFA in dance from Wichita State University. She has taught at many dance academies in the Wichita area as well as WSU. She is currently working toward her MFA in dance at Mills College in California. Her work has been featured in two American College Dance Festivals, the DanceIS Festival, and the Wichita Contemporary Dance Theatre's tour to Taiwan.



Rachel has worked with such notable dance artists as Andrew Palermo, Taye Diggs, Shelley Senter, Molissa Fenley, and Robert Battle.