Compiled Newsletter Weeks 1-7

DEPARTMENT NEWS

Head of Directing Gábor Tompa’s direction of Born for Never at the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj, Romania, was chosen by theater critic Pascal Bély as the best performance of the Avignon Festival Off in 2009. Born for Never subsequently was staged at the International Theatre Festival in Pilsen, the Czech Republic.

Adjunct Design Faculty Jim Ingalls designed Peter Sellars' Othello in New York and Giselle for Cynthia Harvey at Den Norske Opera and Ballet in Oslo.

Arts Librarian Lia Friedman, who serves as an expert resource for research and teaching in Music, Theatre and Dance, Visual Arts, and Literature, has been named a “2009 Mover & Shaker” by Library Journal for her advocacy of "causes both artful and activist," and for "fighting injustice all the way down to the details." Friedman was one of only fifty-one librarians in the U.S. recognized for their achievements in transforming libraries across the nation. Our congratulations go out to Lia!

Donald Mackay (MFA ’90 and Guest Instructor) guest starred in an episode of N.C.I.S. on CBS TV that aired November 3rd at 8:00pm. Donald appears as “Navy Commander Kerry Killmartin” in Outlaws and In-Laws.

There was a free public reading of Playwriting Professor Allan Havis’s play A Word of Secrecy at the La Jolla Playhouse on November 9th, with legendary comic Shelley Berman, UCSD’s Emeritus Professor Arthur Wagner, and Acting Instructor Julia Fulton in the cast. “Someone’s gone absolutely rogue at Shapiro Senior Center and the freakin’ FBI is at the door!”

The Patricia Rincon Dance Collective, founded by Dance faculty Patricia Rincon, recently presented the sixth annual Emerge Festival, showcasing San Diego’s emerging contemporary dance artists. UCSD choreographers featured were alums Carrie Prince (’07) and Natalia Valerdi (’06), as well as current graduate student Rebecca Salzer. Fellow students Kyle Sorensen and Leslie Armstrong, and alums Sarah Larson (’08), and Minaqua McPherson (’07) performed.
The world premiere of Marianne McDonald’s play, *Fires from Heaven: For Those Who Believe In Miracles*, was staged at The Theatre, Inc., recently. Sound Design faculty Shahrokh Yadegari co-wrote the score. Read a [review](#) here.

**Dr. Floyd Gaffney Playwriting Competition** - The Department of Theatre and Dance seeks from all enrolled undergraduate students submissions of previously unproduced, unpublished scripts highlighting the African-American experience in contemporary or historical terms. (Adaptations from books and other forms not allowed.) Prizes: a one-thousand dollar honorarium and a reading of the winning entry during the 2010 Baldwin New Play Festival, typically viewed by several national theatre professionals, including artistic directors, literary managers, agents, and playwrights.

Dr. Gaffney was one of the founding members of the Department of Theatre and Dance in 1971 and over the next two-dozen years gained a reputation as a director with a keen eye for talent. He was also active in community theatre, directing more than eighty productions for the Southeast Community Theatre (now Common Ground Theatre), San Diego’s oldest African-American troupe. Among these were *Fences*, by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson; the AIDS drama *Before It Hits Home*; Langston Hughes’s *Black Nativity*, featuring a 15-piece gospel choir; and, *Josephine Baker Tonight*. He was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006 as part of the KPBS Patté Awards for Theatre Excellence and was cited for “35 inspirational years of galvanizing the community with socially relevant theatre” and “for bringing new voices to San Diego stages.” Gaffney passed away on July 19, 2007. The Department subsequently instituted the Floyd Gaffney Playwriting Competition in his memory and honor.

Professor John Rouse participated in a panel discussion with Brigitte Maria Mayer and Peter Sellars after the screening of Mayer’s film *Anatomie Titus Fall of Rome* at Redcat on October 27th. The film is based on plays by Heiner Müller and Shakespeare. The event was sponsored by the Villa Aurora and the Goethe Institute Los Angeles.


**ALUM UPDATES**

**Johnny Wu** (MFA ‘09) is guest starring on CBS’s *Cold Case* this season. His episode airs November 15th. He writes: “I have all the info and pics from set on my blog. Also, I did a two-episode recurring guest star on FOX’s *24* but that won't air until next year.”

**Owiso Odera** (MFA ‘05) sent this news to us recently: “I wanted to let you know about this new TV show that I will recur on starting this Sunday. A new medical drama from CBS that centers around the best organ transplant hospital in the country, *Three Rivers*. Series premiere this Sunday Oct. 4 at 9pm on CBS. I guest star as a former Sudanese lost boy who travels across the country in search of a heart transplant. Will he get it? Tune in for episodes: 1 (Oct. 4), 3 (Oct. 18), 6 (Nov. 8) and 7 (Nov. 15) to find out. The show is still in production so future episodes will be posted as I know them.” [The show’s website has previews, lots of cast photos, and episodes.]
MFA Directing Alum Cynthia Stokes (’95) is directing Madama Butterfly at the Opera Company of Philadelphia. You can see an interview with Cynthia at the Philly.com website.

The Nominations for Los Angeles’ Stage Alliance's peer-judged Ovation Awards are in, and Chalk Rep's production of Family Planning, by Julia Edwards (MFA ‘01), is among this year's most celebrated shows (they received six nominations in all). Among the nominations are our David Ari (MFA ’04) for Featured Actor in a Play and Larissa Kokernot (MFA ’05) for Director. The awards will be announced in a ceremony on January 11th at the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center. [Family Planning is a play about a late-thirties couple trying so hard to have a baby that they are veering toward divorce.] Larissa is now directing a production of Stray, by Ruth McKee (MFA ‘06) for the Black Dahlia and Chalk Repertory Theatres through November 22nd at the Black Dahlia Theatre in Los Angeles.

Scott L. Nielsen (BA ’07) is a MFA candidate in Sound Design at Yale. He let us know he’s in his last year of the MFA program and was recently mentioned in a New York Times review.

Monique Gaffney (BA ‘93) is currently in Cygnet Production's Man from Nebraska at the Old Town Theater in San Diego. She is playing the role of “Tamyra.”

Monique Fleming (BA ’02) performed with The Hinges improve troupe at 8Teen in Northpark (San Diego) on October 10th as a fundraiser to support House of Hope, a program that helps homeless teens get back on their feet.

Kirsten Brandt (BA ‘94) directed the West Coast premiere of Groundswell, by Ian Bruce, at the San Jose Repertory Theatre. Kirsten is a past Artistic Director of San Diego’s alternative theatre, Sledgehammer, and now serves as the Associate Artistic Director of Vox Nova Theatre Company and as a lecturer at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Larry Herron (MFA ’08) checked in: “Hey gang! If you've heard any news recently, you'll know that your fellow UCSD comrades are kicking butt and taking names. I've been in many audition rooms that know the caliber of UCSD actors. With that said, set the dvr and sprinkle some tapatio on yo popcorn...its gonna be a long fall... :). I’ll send … specific dates later, but I will be on the following shows this fall: Numb3rs, Lie to Me, Cold Case, and Medium...... Love, peace and hair grease..... PS Gerhardt still haunts my dreams ;)”

Kristi Togochi (BA Dance ’05) went to Cairo to perform at Abracadabra, Cairo's 1st International Magic Show, last April. Kristi has several videos of her performances, including one in Las Vegas, on YouTube.

Matthew Patrick Davis (BA ‘01) let us know to watch for him in a recurring role on Greek on the ABC Family TV network. His first episode, entitled “The Dork Knight,” airs this Monday, October 12th, at 9:00pm. He writes: “I've got four scenes in the last half of the episode. I would love very much if you would watch my face and my shmacting. Enjoy.” Matthew has also appeared in Veronica Mars and several episodes of Days of Our Lives.

Suzanne Agins (MFA ’03) will be directing Lerner and Loewe’s My Fair Lady at the McCarter Theatre Center at Princeton in November.
Jennifer Barclay (MFA ’09) won the first honorable mention for her work, *Prank*, in the 2009 Samuel Goldwyn Writing Awards. Jennifer [center, in the black dress] appears with other honorees, below. This year's winners were chosen from among than 150-plus scripts submitted by students from eight University of California campuses. The judges included film producer Colin Callender, Academy Award-winning actress and producer Hilary Swank, and Catherine Tarr, a story editor at Creative Artists Agency.

This year's winners were chosen from among than 150-plus scripts submitted by students from eight University of California campuses. The judges included film producer Colin Callender, Academy Award-winning actress and producer Hilary Swank, and Catherine Tarr, a story editor at Creative Artists Agency.

Makela Spielman (MFA ‘04) played the title role in *Antigone* with SITI Company. It's a new adaptation by Jocelyn Clarke and directed by Anne Bogart.

Romy Mabanta (BA ‘04) earned his MFA in Acting from the Professional Theatre Training Program after graduating from UCSD. Romy has trained with members of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Roy Hart Theatre of France, Deutsches Theater Berlin, Cyprus Centre, and Etienne Decroux Mime. He now performs, teaches, and coaches around the US and abroad. Currently he’s at Chungdam Institute in Korea. Romy is a proud member of Actors’ Equity.

Frank Condon (MFA ’76) is directed Sam Shepard’s *A Lie of the Mind* at the River Stage Theatre at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento. River Stage is entering their 15th Anniversary Season. Frank is their artistic director.

Rebecca Bryant (BA Dance ’96) is currently an Assistant Professor on the dance faculty at Purdue University and teaches modern/postmodern technique, dance fundamentals and solo, ensemble and contact improvisation. Her recent projects include collaborations with visual artists, poets, actors and musicians as well as solo works that combine text, technology and dance. Rebecca’s research includes investigations in both contact improvisation and ensemble improvisation; she is interested in improvising as a training method, a performance practice and a model of collective action and consensus-building. She also researches the applications of Alexander Technique in dance training and dance making. She is a member of the Lower Left Performance Collective (dance/performance art) and co-founder of the Past Modern Performance Duo (music/dance/theater).
Chane’t Johnson (MFA ‘01) wrote to let us know that “Right now I'm recurring Guest Star on the new FOX show *Brothers*. I play “Candy”, the chef of the restaurant. Also I spent this summer Exec Producing my own webseries called *Nurses Who Kill*...” [You can view episodes of *Brothers* on their website.]

Ryan McCarthy (MFA ‘06) writes: “I'm currently understudying Jonny Lee Miller as 'John' in The Roundabout Theatre Company's production of Patrick Marber's *After Miss Julie*, directed by Mark Brokaw. Much to my delight my co-understudy is Lisa Velten Smith (MFA '05) covering both Sienna Miller and Marin Ireland. With the exception of the mutual horror we feel when we have to kiss each other in rehearsal, we're having a great time.”

Guillermo Aviles-Rodriguez (MFA ‘02) writes “Being one of the only Neo-Chicano (think ambivalent Mexican American under 40) Artistic Directors in Los Angeles theater is a mixed blessing…” in an article that appeared on the LA Stage website in October.

*Rift*, a new play by Caridad Svich (MFA ‘88), directed by Seret Scott, will be staged December 2nd - 6th at the Shubert Theatre on Broadway. *Rift* is an epic story about human sex trafficking and globalization. This play was commissioned by Mark Wing-Davey, Chair, and the NYU Graduate Acting Program. More here.

Actor Makela Spielman (MFA ‘04) was mentioned in a New York Times write-up of Anne Bogart’s production of *Antigone* at the Dance Theatre Workshop recently.

Alex Cranmer (MFA ‘04) appears as “Bob Tanner” on an upcoming episode of *CSI: NY* on CBS TV, scheduled to air on November 18th at 10:00pm Pacific time. [You can see episodes on the *CSI* website: Alex is in Season 6, Episode 8; episode title: *Cuckoo’s Nest*.]

Melody Butiu (MFA ‘99) was the lead in the San Diego Repertory Theatre production of *Long Story Short* that just ended its run. KUSI TV has a clip of Melody singing one of her songs.
**ONSTAGE**


Topdog/Underdog is the 2002 Pulitzer Prize winning play about two African American brothers, named Lincoln and Booth as a “joke” by their father, coping with women, work, poverty, gambling, racism, and their troubled upbringings. Using Three-card Monte as a metaphor, this play is ultimately about the Great American Con. Our production furthers UC San Diego’s conversation during the yearlong Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Celebrations. Previews on Monday night; Opens Tuesday. All performances are at 8:00pm. Click for Ticket Information.

**Sexual Selection: Darwin and Shakespeare Ponder Love.** Conceived, Directed, and Choreographed by Kim Rubinstein and Yolande Snaith. In the Mandell Weiss FORUM Theatre, November 16th - 21st.

Director Kim Rubinstein and Choreographer Yolande Snaith collaborate in this original dance theatre melding of William Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and Charles Darwin’s *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. Don’t miss this celebration of the mating rituals of the human species seen through the lens of our greatest playwright and evolutionist!

Click for Ticket Information.

**The House of Bernarda Alba**, by Federico García Lorca, adapted by Chay Yew, directed by Jeffrey Wienckowski, in the Theodore and Adele Shank Theatre, November 19th - 29th.

Federico García Lorca, Spanish poet, dramatist, musician, artist, and theatrical director, is the most well known modern poet in Spain and certainly the country’s greatest dramatist since the Golden Age. Lorca was one of the 4000 members of the intelligentsia murdered by the Nationalists at the outset of the Spanish Civil War. His remains are presumed to lie with those of fellow victims in a shallow trench among the grove of olive trees adjacent to the Fuente Grande spring.