



Newsletter Week 1

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January 4, 2016

Department News

Anne Gehman & Dina Apple in the San Diego Tribune

This year, San Diego's dance community introduced new trends, collaborated with renowned choreographers and linked different movement vocabularies to stage intriguing performances. Current MFA Dance students, **Anne Gehman's** choreography and **Dina Apple's** dancing was listed in the San Diego Union-Tribunes five most memorable moments in dance this past year.

"Trolley Dances"

The annual, site-specific performances that tells stories through dance along the San Diego Trolley line was staged for the first time in Balboa Park to celebrate the centennial of the Panama-California Exposition. Founded in 1999 by Jean Isaacs, artistic director of San Diego Dance Theater, "Trolley Dances" has grown exponentially, with presentations in three California cities. **Anne Gehman's** choreography was featured as a part of this performance this past year.



"This Land is Your Land"

Blythe Barton, John Diaz and **Dina Apple** were among a dozen local dancers who skipped, strutted and sauntered in Mark Haim's "This Land is Your Land," presented by youTurn producers Erica Buchner and **Anne Gehman**. Inspired by Woody Guthrie's iconic folk song, the dance explored themes of consumerism, body image and environmental issues.



Warm Welcome to the Nadine George-Graces as the New Chair of Theatre & Dance



Dr. Nadine George-Graves is Professor of Theater and Dance at the University of California, San Diego and president of the Congress on Research in Dance (CORD). Her work is situated at the intersections of African American studies, gender studies, performance studies, theatre history, and dance history. She is the author of *The Royalty of Negro Vaudeville: The Whitman Sisters and the Negotiation of Race, Gender, and Class in African American Theater, 1900-1940* and *Urban Bush Women: Twenty Years of Dance Theater, Community Engagement and Working It Out* as well as numerous articles on African

American theater and dance. She is the editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theater*. She has also written on primitivity, ragtime dance, tap dance legend Jeni LeGon, identity politics and performance, early African American theater and the future of field. She has given talks, led community engagement projects, and has served on boards and committees in the field.

She is also an adapter and director. Her recent creative projects include *Architectura*, a dance theater piece about the ways we build our lives, Suzan-Lori Parks' *Fucking A* and *Topdog/Underdog*; and an original adaptation of Anansi stories using college students, professionals, and 4th graders.

Alumni News

Maria Dizzia in American Theatre

In *American Theatre*'s article "An Actor Prepares: 6 Performers Detail Their Processes" Carrie Coon, Crystal Dickinson, **'01 MFA Acting Alum Maria Dizzia**, Daniel Duque-Estrada, Stephen McKinley Henderson, and Jon Norman Schneider talk training, acting process, and the mind/body connection.

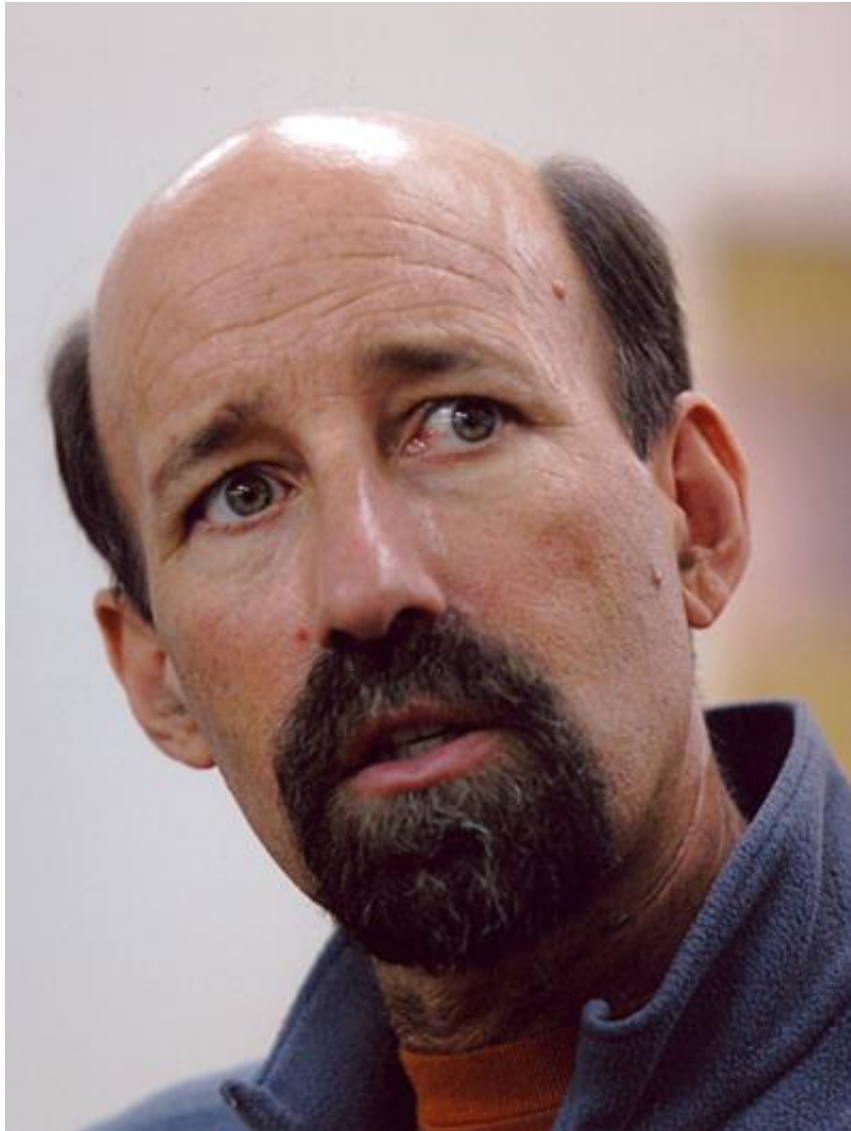


Charlie Oates in American Theatre

In the last decade, more American theatre companies are following the lead of Europeans who've implemented permanent training programs into their yearly repertoire.

Long-term working relationships and the routine practice of holistic ensemble training can make for stronger artistic partners and more truthful performances.

Meanwhile, universities and education programs are likewise emphasizing the importance of both somatic and cerebral training. There is no one method or pedagogy to make an actor's toolkit complete, but a conglomeration of psychophysical methodologies from around the world, from masks to rasaboxes, biomechanics to Laban movement, have found their way into mainstream American theatre training. **Movement teacher, Charlie Oates**, and UCSD's MFA Acting Program is listed in the Top Ten.



An excerpt from the article:

The MFA acting program at the University of California-San Diego offers students training in voice, movement, speech, and singing as a mode to free the physical body. First-year courses focus on imagination and emotion, following up with vocal and physical training aimed at classical works the second year, rounded out with individualized classes to prepare students for the professional world in the final year. Students also participate in at least one residency with the nearby La Jolla Playhouse during the course of their studies. "It is our aim to make sure that our graduating actors are ready for any physical challenge that comes their way in the professional world," says acting professor Charlie Oates. "I also spend a good deal of time in rehearsal working with actors to connect what they're doing in any particular play with what we're learning in class. Perhaps most important, it is our constant goal to support and connect to the work being done in class by my acting, voice, and speech colleagues. We are

all after the same thing: simplicity, honesty, passion, openness. A dynamic physicality should include all of these attributes."

San Diego Critics Circle Nominations

The San Diego Theatre Critics Circle has announced the nominees for its 14th annual Craig Noel Awards, which will be held Feb. 8, 2016, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, in La Jolla.

The following UCSD Alum and Staff were nominated:

Outstanding Lead Performance in a Musical, Female
'15 MFA Acting Alum Hannah Corrigan - "Violet," San Diego Repertory Theatre

Outstanding Scenic Design
'01 MFA Scene Design Alum Jerry Sonnenberg - "The (curious case of the) Watson Intelligence," Moxie Theatre

Outstanding Sound Design
'14 MFA Sound Design Melanie Chen - "Betrayal," North Coast Repertory Theatre

Outstanding Costume Design
'12 MFA Costume Design Alum Elisa Benzoni - "The Fox on the Fairway," North Coast Repertory Theatre

Outstanding Lighting Design
'02 MFA Lighting Design Alum Jennifer Setlow - "The Oldest Boy," San Diego Repertory Theatre

Projection Design
Faculty member & MFA scene design alum Victoria Petrovich - "Steal Heaven," San Diego Repertory Theatre

Staff sound supervisor **Joe Tek Huppert** - "The Oldest Boy," San Diego Repertory Theatre

Adele Edling Shank California Plays Published

THE CALIFORNIA PLAYS gathers for the first time the six plays that comprise playwright and educator Adele Edling Shank's major body of work: WINTERPLAY, SUNSET/SUNRISE, STUCK, SAND CASTLES, THE GRASS HOUSE, and TUMBLEWEED. With an introduction by director and scholar Theodore Shank, this posthumous collection is testament to the eminent playwright's enduring legacy. Sad-tender, funny, and heartbreaking, THE CALIFORNIA PLAYS are a magnificent achievement.

Sad News about Sean Whitesell

The California Plays

Adele Edling Shank



MFA Acting Alum Sean David Gerard Whitesell, a noted television writer and producer who also acted during his career, died in Los Angeles on December 28 following a battle with Glioblastoma Multiforme. He was 52.



He began his career acting with notable roles including a recurring character on *Oz* and appearances on *Homicide: Life On The Street*, as well as a role in *And The Band Played On*.

Later in his career he turned to writing and production, serving as producer and co-executive producer on shows including *Oz*, *Cold Case*, *The Black Donnellys*, *Perception*, and *The Killing*. He was nominated for an Edgar Award in 2015 for his work on *The Killing*. He also wrote and directed several short films, most recently *Eddie and The Aviator* (2015), which he completed despite battling the aggressive

disease he was diagnosed with in June, 2014.

Mary Catherine Garrison in Roundabout Theatre Gala

'99 MFA acting alum Mary Catherine Garrison had a swell time at the Roundabout Theatre Gala on December 7th, 2015 where they had a reading of their production of *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.

Roundabout Theatre Company presented their 50th Anniversary Season Reunion Benefit Reading of Kaufman and Hart's *The Man Who Came to Dinner* starring Nathan Lane, Jean Smart, Harriet Harris and members of the original 2000 Broadway Revival Cast. *The Man Who Came to Dinner* was the inaugural production at The American Airlines Theatre.



(Mary Catherine is pictured wearing the golden top hat, lower right)

The Civilians at Joe's Pub

Director **Suzanne Agins ('03 MFA Directing Alum)** describes the process of collaborating with director Benjamin Kamine on curating "Let Me Ascertain You: War on Christmas," the first cabaret performance of the Civilians' 2015-16 season (**founded by '99 MFA Directing Alum Steven Cosson.**)

The show explores non-Christian perspectives on the commercialization of Christmas.



Whitney Anne Adams Designs for Sundance

'03 UG Alum **Whitney Anne Adams** designed for a film that was recently accepted in the 2016 Sundance Film Festival:



"The Eyes of My Mother"

The Borderline Films collective has regularly left an impression at Sundance in recent years with "Martha Marcy May Marlene," "Simon Killer" and "James White" all delivering memorably tense, focused character studies. The group's biggest title at the festival this year comes from "Simon Killer" director Antonio Campos' "Christine," but the Borderline trio of Campos, Josh Mond and Sean Durkin also

helped to produce the NEXT entry "The Eyes of My Mother," from first-time director Nicolas Pesce. The director of several shorts and music videos, Pesce makes his feature debut here with the story of a young provincial girl who raises herself in complete isolation after family is taken from her. It's just the kind of peculiar premise - with a cast of unknowns, no less - readymade to be a genuine Sundance discovery. - EK

Acting Studio in Katie Grant Shalin's Name

The lettering for the newly-named **Katie Grant Shalin** Acting Studio ('98 MFA Acting Alum) at Pebblebrook was installed last month. Thanks to the Performing Arts Patrons Association and the Cobb County School District for making it happen.



The Christians in Isherwood's Top 10 & TIME Magazine

'The Christians,' directed by **Emeritus Faculty Member Les Waters** and featured **'03 MFA acting alum Emily Donahoe** made Times top 10 plays of 2015 of TIME magazine.

The play was similarly recognized by the New York Times top 10 of 2015, Charles Isherwood's list.

The minister of a thriving mega-church, in an unnamed American city, announces a spiritual revelation from the pulpit and prompts a crisis in the congregation. Lucas Hnath's knotty, thought-provoking play, directed by Les Waters at off-Broadway's Playwrights Horizons, dramatizes the aftermath in a stylized, presentational manner - even intimate dialogue is spoken into hand mikes - as it explores issues ranging from church politics to the very nature of Christian faith.



Lisa Porter's Essay "(Dis)connected"

An excerpt from **Lisa Porter's (Stage Management Faculty)** beautiful essay, "(Dis)connected", featured in The Manifest-Station:

My husband and I took a trip to Berlin when Daisy was about five. Until then, I had never fully understood that during the Holocaust, those with disabilities were killed first and without delay. The Nazis dismissed them as worthless and unsalvageable. I remember that realization as a moment of deep clarity about the intensity of the struggle ahead. This was a time to transform into a warrior who could advocate for my daughter, leading us into the battle.



Lisa Porter Helps Make The Grinch Sensory Friendly

Old Globe's production of the Grinch had it's sensory friendly production last weekend. KPBS's Angela Carone interviews our **stage management faculty member Lisa Porter** who helped the Globe start this annual program.

An excerpt from the interview:

"So the first thing I did with the folks at Grinch is we just took the audio level on the actors and orchestra and turned it down," Porter said.

"For a lot of kids on the spectrum it's the aural sense, what they hear and how it sounds," Porter said.

They got rid of sounds in certain frequencies. And they made other changes.

"We slowed things down and don't do anything in a black out," Porter said. They keep lights up during transition between scenes so the audience can see what's happening and it won't be a surprise. For kids on the spectrum, surprises can produce a lot of anxiety.



Anne Kauffman Directs Marjorie Prime

Jordan Harrison's Marjorie Prime directed by '99 MFA directing alum **Anne Kauffman**, opened last month at Playwrights Horizons.

Here is an excerpt from the excellent review in the New York Times:

"Impeccably directed by Anne Kauffman, with acting to match by a

cast of four that includes the wonderful Lois Smith, this production keeps developing in your head, like a photographic negative, long after you've seen it."



Ubuntu in Howlround

Here is a nice write up about Ensemble Theatre. This article features countless UCSD alumni who perform with and founded Ubuntu Theatre Projects.

Here is an excerpt from the article:

"When I saw Lefty and Dance of the Holy Ghosts by Marcus Gardley, another Ubuntu production, I knew I was experiencing "ensemble theatre." But like so much that's deeply valuable, the term is notoriously hard to pin down. NET has wisely avoided using restrictive definitions of exactly what ensemble theatre is. Some ensembles have close ties to a specific community, others don't. Some create original, devised theatre, while others only produce extant plays. Some have a clearly defined leadership, but others don't.

*I asked **Heather Ramey ('15 PhD Alum)**, one of Ubuntu's two associate artistic directors how she understood ensemble. "It means all hands on deck all the time. No one is undervalued." Later, she described ensemble as a "strong belief in each other and a willingness to differ with each other...We have enough confidence [in each other] to be willing to be uncomfortable."*

William Hodgson ('15 MFA Acting Alum), Ubuntu's co-artistic director, told me that the culture of ensemble-the trust and full communication that Heather spoke about-is the foundation of Ubuntu's theatremaking and its administrative work. "If we didn't have the relationships we have in the office," he said, "we wouldn't have the work that we see on stage."



[To read the full article, click here](#)

Danny Burstein Performance Recognized by NBC

'90 MFA acting alum Danny Burstein recognized for one of the 10 Standout Theatre performances in New York in 2015.

When the new Broadway revival of "Fiddler on the Roof" was announced, many complained that it was too soon to revisit the Jerry

Bock/Sheldon Harnick-classic, seeing how the last revival closed only 10 years ago. But once the naysayers see Danny Burstein take the stage as Tevye, they'll forget their worries. The five-time (!!) Tony nominee gives an exquisite, layered performance as the poor milkman whose traditional convictions are tested by his three oldest daughters. Not only does he provide the emotional, impassioned rawness and vitality the character demands, but he's also not afraid to show Tevye as a tender, lovable, joyous father, husband and friend. It's a performance that will have you toasting: "L'chaim."



Teri Reeves in Once Upon a Time

'06 MFA acting alum Teri Reeves will be on Once Upon a Time as Dorothy Gale "brave warrior of good" this spring.

Reeves, who starred in Chicago Fire, has signed on to appear in multiple episodes of the fairy tale drama as the all-grown-up Dorothy Gale, ABC confirmed on Friday.

The younger Dorothy was played by Matreya Scarrwener in a season 3 episode. In the Dec. 6 winter finale, Regina (Lana Parrilla) sent Zelena the Wicked Witch of the West (Rebecca Mader) back to Oz, where she is likely to match wits with Dorothy 2.0.

Reeves - whose other TV credits include Grey's Anatomy, Scandal, and NCIS - is slated to make her first appearance as Dorothy in April. OUAT will return to the schedule on March 6.



Daniel K. Isaac in Billions on Showtime

Daniel K. Isaac (UG Alum) is playing "Ben Kim" on Showtime's BILLIONS starring Damien Lewis & Paul Giamatti. Ben Kim is the newest employee of "Axe Capital," a hedge fund powerhouse run by Damien Lewis' brilliant character "Bobby Axelrod."

The show premieres on January 17th!



Have news to share? Send it to us at TandDNews@ucsd.edu and we'll pass it along for you. Photos are encouraged. Please be sure to let us know what year you graduated, if you're an alum. If you've changed your name, be sure to tell us what it was when you attended UC. Miss a back edition? Visit the [Newsletter Archives](#).

Winter Newsletter: Week 1

Sincerely,

[UCSD Department of Theatre and Dance](#)