It has been a truly exciting semester for Brockport’s Department of Dance! Both our students and faculty have well represented the department presenting their choreographic projects near and far, as Graduate student Matthew Frazier-Smith writes about his experience touring work in Chicago, IL. Undergraduate students also discuss the opportunity of watching Brockport faculty and students show what makes our department so great at the Rochester Fringe Festival, as well as The Duets Project, held this past September. In regards to faculty, we were lucky to welcome a new member to our family, Stevie Oakes! The Student Dance Organization (SDO) held an improvisation jam this semester that was well attended by dancers and musicians, and created an opportunity for students to refresh their minds and bodies with one another in a fun environment. Our annual New Dancer’s Showcase was held this November as we welcomed a group of talented young dancers to our department. Dance scholarship was also flourishing this semester, as a group of graduate student and faculty traveled to Colchester, Vermont to present at the Northeast Popular Culture Conference. To kick it all off, you’ll read about the preparations that are ongoing for the 2014 Northeast American College Dance Festival, which will be held at Brockport March 12th-16th. Enjoy, and as always we hope you continue viewing, supporting and dancing!

Visit us online at friendsofbrockportdance.org

The College at Brockport’s Department of Dance is excited to be hosting the 2014 American College Dance Festival Association’s Northeast Region Conference, March 12-16, in Brockport, NY. Karl Rogers is coordinating the festival, along with members of the faculty and professional staff including Benoit Beauchamp, Maura Keefe, Kevin Warner (chair), and graduate assistants Angie Muzzy and Julia Zdrojewski. Together they have planned an exciting agenda, including four days of master classes, lectures, research presentations and faculty and student concerts from colleges and universities all over the Northeast.

The American College Dance Festival Conference is an opportunity for students and faculty members from a variety of colleges and universities to gather together and share in their love of dance. The conference provides the time and space for participants to step outside of their traditional school settings and experience the diversity present in the collegiate dance scene. The exchange of information that occurs at this conference is a great learning opportunity for all involved, and The College at Brockport’s Department of Dance could not be more thrilled to be hosting the Northeast’s ACDFA this spring!
I recently returned from Chicago, Ill. where undergraduate student, Maya Gonzalez, and I presented a new duet entitled Different Cut, Same Cloth. This work was presented as part of Bonesbare? an annual dance festival hosted by Core Project Chicago. During the three performances, we made so many mistakes and, as a result, made so many discoveries. Our piece changed along with the energy shift, which occurs when witnesses arrive for the first time. I find this (seemingly) inevitable shift can offer a host of possibilities and support to a developing new work. Overall, our Chicago venture turned out to be exactly what the work needed: an audience.

This notion also indirectly provided an answer I had been seeking for a few months. The question: What’s the point of presenting at festivals? So much effort and resources are put into traveling, finding housing, etc. that it almost begins to feel like running in circles.

Bonesbare had a different flavor to it. Backstage, I talked with other choreographers, dancers and musicians. After the show, we mingled with audience members, asked about their lives, and watched hilarious Youtube videos of crazy cats. I found my answer in these moments. The festivals are all about building community and connecting with others. Simply showing a new piece of choreography is to miss the point. Watching a variety of art from a diverse group of voices and allowing art to help bring people together to discuss ideas, possibilities, and cat videos on Youtube: there’s the value I was looking for.

Photo by Jim Kirkhoff

**Meet New Faculty Member: Stevie Oakes!** BY ALLISON BOHMAN

This year the department of dance has had the honor of working with a new faculty member, Stevie Oakes. Growing up in a military family, she had the opportunity to travel and dance in a variety of places, beginning her dance lessons in the Netherlands as part of the children’s division of Netherlands Dance Theater. She even had dual citizenship in Japan until age 18! Eventually, her family settled in Virginia where she began to study dance more seriously and realized her love for dancing was something quite serious. A hobby that she started as a young child because of her mother’s interest in the art form was turning into a life-long career possibility.

In addition to her talent and ambition for dance, Ms. Oakes chose to go to college to get her degree in chemistry and kinesiology. This academically bound dancer, had ambitions of attending medical school and nothing could get in her way! She continued dancing all the way through her college career, and upon graduation decided that she should take a shot at being a professional dancer. Stevie moved to New York City to pursue her MFA in dance at New York University.

As a professional dancer, Ms. Oakes’ favorite credits included combing the ideals of ballet and modern with a contemporary ballet company, Eidolon in NYC. Dancing with Kinetic Architecture was one of her professional highlights. Ms. Oakes even had the honor of touring Germany with Gina Gibney’s dance company. This all-female troupe presented at an International Dance Festival.

Here at Brockport, Stevie is adored by students. Her smiling face and positive energy brings life to dance studios and classrooms in Hartwell Hall. When asked about how teaching came into the picture for her, Stevie replied, “I’ve always been a teacher. I began teaching at a local dance studio when I was fifteen years old. I always knew it was for me, it was just a matter of time before I got there.” While dancing with Gina’s company, she had the opportunity to teach master classes at New York University’s Tisch School of the arts. Stevie describes the “high” she gets off of teaching as being greater than performing.

Having taught in various residencies across the nation, Brockport is lucky to have such an outstanding educator sharing her love for dance and knowledge of kinesiology with students. When asked about what stands out the most about working with students in Brockport, Stevie explained the feeling as being a “beautiful suspension of disbelief.” She feels that she could ask students to do anything, and there is an inquisitive openness to do it. She states that “there is a thoughtful approach to learning and a sense of willingness to entertain the ideals that exist at Brockport.” She describes Brockport as a supportive learning community, and she hopes that students hold onto this sense as they move into the larger dance world.

In addition to Stevie’s teaching and dancing experiences, she also is highly involved with The Harkness Center for Dance Injury in New York City, where she started off with an internship when she first moved to NYC and eventually gave summer workshops about injury prevention.

As a dance artist, educator and injury specialist, Stevie Oakes has a plethora of experiences to share with students at Brockport. When asked if she had any advice for students’ aspiring career paths in areas of her expertise, she replied, “Make sure you check in with yourself often. Be open to any path that becomes possible. Take opportunities but then check in with yourself and make sure that it is what you want. Don’t stay with something that doesn’t feel right.”
For each of their dance history courses, professors Maura Keefe and Karl Rogers asked their students to attend an event at The Rochester Fringe Festival and write a blog post about what they saw. All of the students handed in work that contained a unique style or voice, and was full of detailed dance writing explaining what they experienced.

Four undergraduate students had their work chosen to share on our blog. Check out their excerpts below:

On September 21st I saw Juxtapose presents: Bag of Tricks. It was an incredible show that was entertaining for all audiences. Each piece not only had cool props, but also incredible, gorgeous dancers. The first piece was a trio with funky costumes, balloons that covered the floor, and captivating movement qualities. I found it surprising and entertaining when the balloons would pop while the dancers were moving through the space. Next, were two fierce solos. The first soloist had impeccable technique and extensions that could go on for days. The antique lamp was pretty cool too.

-Beylee Simpson, on Bag of Tricks

Sometimes you forget how talented your friends are. On the first Saturday of the second annual Rochester Fringe Festival, I had the privilege of scoring a free ticket for Articulated Vulnerability as the photographer/videographer. I couldn’t be more excited to be able to have a small role in the night that premiered the works of two of the best dance dudes in my life, Brett Cox and Zach Frazee.

The word of the night was proud. I was proud each time I saw a faculty member enter the RAPA theatre to support their students. I was proud the second the two smartly dressed choreographers took the stage to introduce the evening, my heart swelling all too sentimentally. I was proud with each step the dancers took, with each embodied complex rhythm, with each execution of a smart choreographic choice. I was proud every time I had to fix the levels on my video camera, just to compensate for the sheer volume of the audience’s supportive roars. I felt proud to know the people who were on the stage as well as backstage, so ridiculously proud to be part of a community of dancers who not only loved what they did, but cared about other people who shared that love, too.

–Florianne Jalac, on Articulate Vulnerability

The entire performance was extraordinary and I don’t just mean the performers movements. As everyone stared up at this building a mood was created that felt like we were all watching the gods interact. We looked up at these mortals and admired them, speechless like we were something less than human. I’m not sure if it was because I was constantly looking up at them, or what they were doing was incredible that made me see them as something godly, but whatever it was, I enjoyed being lost in the moment watching these people challenge physics with dance and dance alone.

–Grant Pastori, on BANDALOOP

The first performance entitled We Too Cling was the first ever modern dance I had ever seen and I’m glad it was. Keopke and Rogers took the roles of two twentieth century artists in a way I never would’ve expected. The conversation between the two was shown through movement and evolution. When they spun to fast, classical music at the start I was impressed by the accuracy of their unity and their ability to complete partner lifts in an effortless manner. I know I couldn’t have done so in such a way. They played with the shadows and even props that were a surprise to the audience. Their strength and congeniality shined when posing on the chairs, (sometimes even upside down might I add)! Also, who would’ve thought cardboard shapes strapped to the dancers’ arms could make for such a great ending. The mood instantly lightened as they pounded their feet to the music and smiled as they danced. They shifted their weight back and forth with extreme balance and skill. Keopke and Rogers ritually repeated movements in unison while enjoying dancing to a classic rock song. I was smiling wide and I never expected to be so entertained after the first dance.

–Madison Hornug, on The Goldilocks Score & Other Dances
The Dance Department at The College at Brockport was well represented October 25th-26th at the Northeast Popular Culture Association Conference held at Saint Michael’s College in Colchester, Vermont.

I had the privilege of attending the Popular Culture Conference with fellow graduate student, Allison Bohman, as well as dance faculty members Nicole Kaplan, Karl Rogers and Dr. Maura Keefe. NEPCA was first founded in 1974 and its intentions include advancing research and promoting dialogues around popular and/or American culture.

Our first day in Vermont was devoted to the conference—finding Saint Michaels College, registering and reading our papers over one last time before reading them aloud to graduate students, independent scholars and faculty members from a variety of schools around the country. I read my paper during the first dance panel of the day, along with a scholar from Boston College. Afterwards, Dr. Maura Keefe, who also acted as the moderator for the dance panels, led a discussion about our research independently, as well as how they were connected. Listening to other papers was an interesting and insightful experience, and I enjoyed meeting, connecting and networking with individuals from around the country who are invested in their research about dance just as much as I am.

In addition to sharing my own writing, I was also able to listen to the work of my peers. Allison Bohman spoke of the geopolitics and gestures present in Nazi Germany, while Nicole Kaplan read a paper about her experience choreographing for Brockport’s chapter of One Billion Rising. In addition, Nicole was able to share media from the event, so that those who were present for her panel could physically see the event that she was describing in detail. This panel also featured Dr. Barbara LeSavoy, from the Women and Gender Studies Department at Brockport. Dr. LeSavoy read a paper about her experience with One Billion Rising as well, which took place on February 14th of this past year to raise awareness about domestic violence.

During the weekend, my peers and I were able to share the research that we have worked hard on, hear papers from other dance researchers from around the country, and talk with scholars about one another’s work. While the weekend went quickly, it felt full of experiences that I am grateful for as a graduate student representing the Dance Department at The College at Brockport.
On Wednesday, November 6, the Student Dance Organization had their first annual improvisation jam for the fall semester. An improvisation jam is a time when artists come together and design, create, play, and explore the world of dance together.

Our improvisation jam was well attended by about forty dancers, five musicians, and many people entering and exiting the space throughout the night. The jam was held in Strasser Studio located in Hartwell Hall. The atmosphere that was created in Strasser that night was unbelievable. The musicians Khalid Saleem and fellow drummers, Greg Ketchum, and Matthew Frazier-Smith helped to create the inspiring and creative environment and mood in Strasser. The musicians improvised together based off of the movement the dancers were creating in the space, and together the musicians and dancers explored a new world of their own.

Now you may ask, “What if I have never attended an improvisation jam before?” “How will I know exactly what it will be like?” The answer is each improvisation jam will be different and a different experience will be created each time a jam happens. Chloe Leibrick, a junior, majoring in Dance and Spanish attended the improvisation jam for the first time Wednesday night. Chloe stated, “I left the improvisation jam feeling artistically fulfilled and incredibly blessed to be able to dance with such beautiful, talented, and fun people. Attending this event allowed me to completely de-stress during an incredibly hectic week.” She further stated that she thought the improvisation jam helped bring people together and revived everyone for the upcoming weeks ahead that will be filled with final exams, end of the year projects, and performances.

The experience that everyone had at SDO’s improvisation jam Wednesday night was an experience that each individual at the improvisation jam will not forget. The atmosphere was inspiring, creative minds were flowing, and everyone in Strasser left feeling refreshed and ready to take on a new day.

Photo by Angie Muzzy

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**The Duets Project**

By Allison Bohman

This past September, The College at Brockport had the amazing opportunity of hosting The Duets Project, an exploration of the duet form. Each of the five pieces was danced by at least one faculty member from the Brockport dance department and a partner of their choice. This show featured the talent and artistry of six Brockport faculty members in all.

Opening the performance was a duet choreographed by Stephen Koster and danced beautifully by Karl Rogers and Meghan Durham Wall. “The Surrogate Dance” (2012) featured these vigorous dancers as they explored space, each other, and what it means to be a dancer in a youthful body. They moved to oral text recorded by Koster himself. Rogers, a faculty member here at Brockport, and Durham Wall, had incredible chemistry on stage. Later in the evening’s program, this duo also performed together in Lisa Race’s “Thaw” (2010, revised 2012). This work exemplified movement that featured the athleticism, and an honest relationship between Rogers and Durham Wall.

The second piece in the program, “Danzon A La Playa” (2013), showcased the outstanding rhythmic and performative qualities of faculty members, Bill Evans and Cheryl Johnson. As they soft-shoe tap danced in sand boxes filled with black and red sand on stage, the audience was pulled in to the intriguing rhythmic patterns and changing sound qualities of dancing on top of sand. The music offered a Spanish mood to the piece and Richard DeLaney brilliantly played the piano live, exemplifying the connection between dance and music collaboration. Later in the evening, Bill Evans appeared once again with Brockport faculty member, Don Halquist, both looking sharp in full dress suits. This work, choreographed by Claire Porter and Sabatino Verlezza entitled, “See You Around” (2008) was definitely a crowd pleaser. Evans and Halquist were not only dynamic as a duet, but the subtle moments of humor found within their movement and dialogue also invited the audience to see how dance, can in fact be highly theatrical.

Concluding the program was “Love Flight Of A Pink Candy Heart: Study #1” (2013), which featured Irene Hultman, in movement dialogue with Brockport faculty member, Mariah Maloney. These women eloquently moved through space, interacted with each other and explored how their bodies moved. The attention to detail in this piece was especially striking—while one dancer focused on just the intricacies of the hand, the other was utilizing a much larger exploration of space as a whole, until they came together and allowed their bodies to dance with each other.

While watching dance in the duet form, it is difficult not to automatically search for some sort of relationship between the two bodies on stage. Even if the choreographer did not establish a specific relationship, it is the job of the audience member to bring their own experiences and perspectives to the table. The Duets Project at Brockport was truly a unique opportunity for audiences to see the dynamics of dance in duet form—man and woman, man and man, woman and woman. The pieces in the program offered strong examples of the diversity in relationships that dance could explore.
Over the past 40 years, The Department of Dance has grown to become one of the leading programs in the country, and has been recognized as a “Program of Distinction” at the College at Brockport. Our faculty, students, and programs are recognized for artistic excellence and physical/intellectual rigor. Many students require the financial assistance afforded by scholarship programs like the ones offered through the Friends of Brockport Dance (FOBD) to support their education. Scholarships and other financial awards assist the College at Brockport dancers as they lay the foundation to become leaders in the field of dance as choreographers, performers, educators, scholars and administrators, in the Rochester area, nationally and abroad.

The Friends of Brockport Dance functions as:

- Engaged, informed, active members of the Greater Rochester arts community who recognize the significance of arts and education.
- An organization dedicated to supporting the Brockport Department of Dance as a world-class higher education dance community.

**VISIT US AT:**

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Photo by Julia Zdrojewski
Dear Brockport Dance Alum,

We want to re-connect with you, find out where you are and what you have been up to! Please help us update our records and keep us in the loop by completing the brief questionnaire below.

Responses can be emailed to dance@brockport.edu. OR, just tear off this page and mail it to:

Department of Dance
SUNY College at Brockport
350 New Campus Drive
Brockport NY 14420

Name _____________________________________ Email____________________________________________

(This information with will not be shared with a third party.)

Mailing Address_____________________________________________________________________________

Brockport Degree(s)/Year of Graduation_________________________________________________________

Other Degrees/Certifications since Graduation/Name of Institution

________________________________________________________________________________________________

Current Occupation__________________________________________________________________________

Last three jobs/positions you’ve held

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________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________

We would love to know more… How did your time at Brockport help to prepare you for your current position?

☐ If we may use your quote in promotional materials

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________________________________________________________________________________________________

Thanks to each of you!

dance@brockport.edu; www.brockport.edu/dance
Please help us stay in contact.
See page 7.