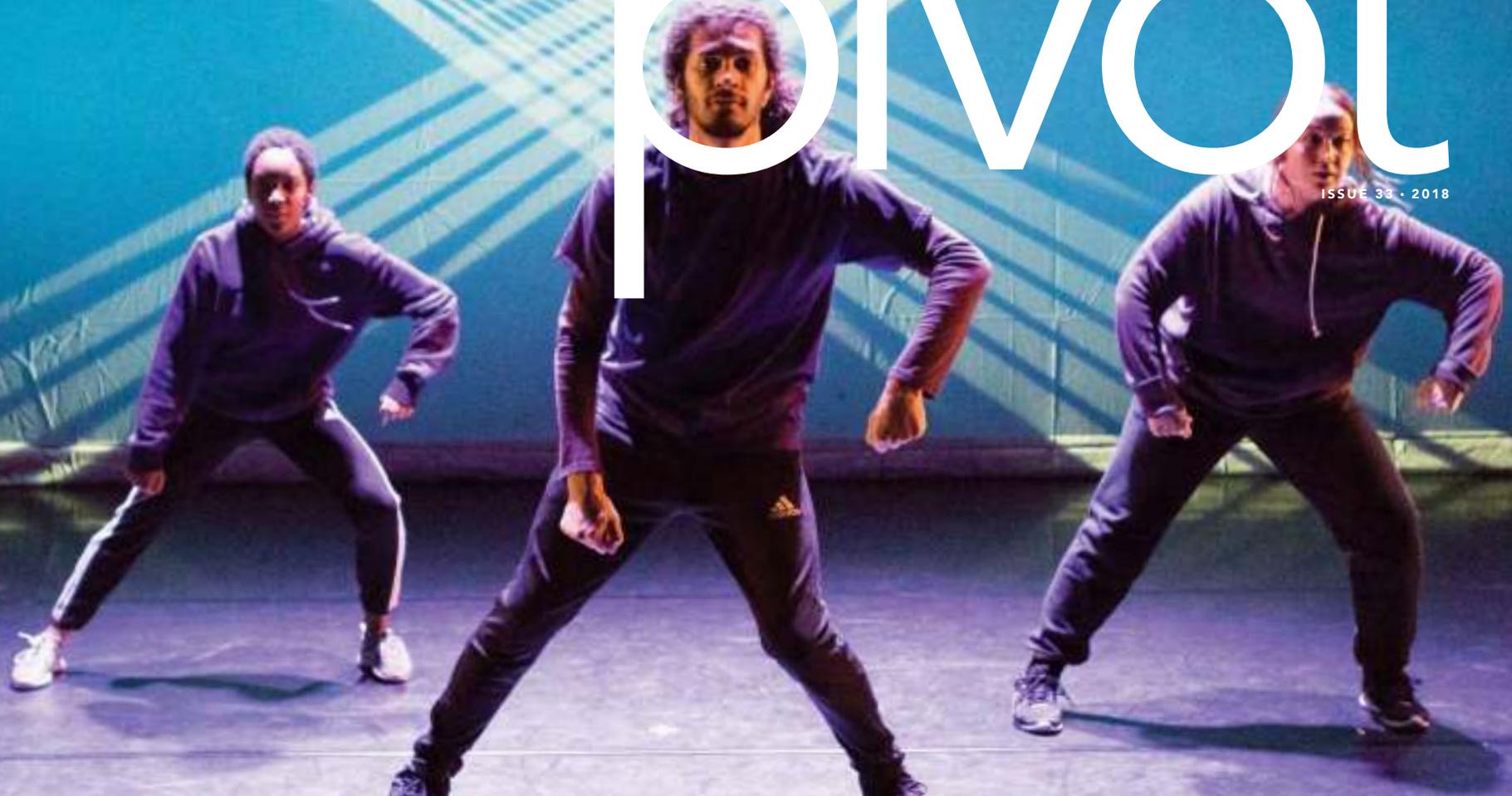


# I dance at illinois

# pivot

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# margaret erlanger: a radical visionary

BY JAN ERKERT



Margaret Erlanger at the University of Wisconsin, circa 1935

## shapers of our topography

### LEADERS OF DANCE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

**Ione Johnson**, 1929, Founder of Orchesis, a student performance group, first person to teach “modern” dance. **Margaret Erlanger**, 1948–1969, Director of the Dance Program. Implemented a BS in Physical Education with a Dance specialization (1949), and an MA, an interdisciplinary degree in Dance (1959).

### HEADS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DANCE IN THE COLLEGE OF FINE AND APPLIED ARTS

**Jan Stockman Simonds** 1968–1971

**Oliver Kostock** 1971–1976

**Patricia Knowles** 1976–2001

**Rebecca Nettle-Fiol** (Interim) 2001–2005

**Sara Hook** (Interim) 2005–2006

**Jan Erkert** 2006–present

A legacy is a gift of *something* transmitted from an ancestor. What if that *something* was intangible, not quite an object, but a form of energy that sculpted the landscape—a craggy, unclimbable mountain, a gushing river, a prairie baked in the sun? Like the *Dreamings* of the Australian Aboriginal people, this landscape was not constructed just for that time, but rather, for all times. Each community that navigates the land shapes the paths for the next generation.

As we celebrate our 50th birthday of becoming an autonomous department within the College of Fine and Applied Arts (FAA) and moving into the extraordinary Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (KCPA), it is critical to take this moment to honor Margaret Erlanger. Erlanger ironically stepped down from her role as director of the Dance Program in Physical Education 50 years ago, a position she began in 1948.

The daughter of Nobel Prize winning physiologist, Joseph Erlanger, Margaret was a protégé of dance pioneer and fellow scientist Margaret H'Doubler. Erlanger embraced H'Doubler's philosophy of *dancing to learn*, which meant that the experience of moving was a way of expanding knowledge about the world. Erlanger's interest in science, culture, and the humanities began forming our curricular roots grounded in scientific principles and cross-cultural and interdisciplinary experiences.

But her vision went further: Erlanger began to blaze a second trail, which was training the professional dancer or *learning to dance*. Erlanger was insistent that dance was an art form and as such needed to be taught by professional artists. Rather than seeing these two views as a binary choice, Erlanger's brilliance was understanding that these paths could intertwine and become mutually supportive.

Erlanger began building a core faculty of artists and scholars augmented by artists-in-residence. Her choices were deliberate, strategic, and radical for that time. In 1959, she invited the avant-garde artist Merce Cunningham for a

four-month residency, the first choreographer-in-residence in a university dance program. Her first faculty hires further defined our trajectory: Willis Ward, a former dancer with Anna Halprin who was a major innovator in the field of improvisation and community engagement; Jan Stockman, a stunning, professional dancer with José Limón and Company; and Joan Skinner, a dancer with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, and a future visionary of new somatic approaches to dance training.

As she molded our landscape, she intuited the importance of moving Dance out of Physical Education and into FAA and the newly constructed KCPA. As the story goes, she fought so hard that she upset a few too many upper administrators. Her dream would become a reality only if she would step down. She made the courageous choice.

Her actions and beliefs catapulted us into the present moment. Current faculty and student projects cross domains daily, synthesizing dance not only with science and anatomy but also with cultural studies, sustainability, technology, and social justice. As we work to dismantle systemic racism and intentionally move African diasporic theories and forms into the core curriculum, we imagine her nodding her head in approval. The current faculty, like Erlanger's earliest faculty, remain at the forefront of the field as choreographers, performers, and scholars, collectively garnering eight Bessie New York Dance & Performance Awards (considered the Oscars of Dance). Impressive credentials unrivaled in the field. The *New York Times* calls Illinois a "... hotbed of choreographic innovation." A *hotbed*, or perhaps a *lava field* dreamed up by a radical visionary named Margaret Erlanger.

*Pivot 2018* focuses on our present faculty, alumni, and students, who are carving new trajectories at the forefront of the field, but I'm certain that *Pivot 2068* will be still talking about Margaret.



Dance at Illinois students (Orchesis members), circa 1952

## leaders in somatic practices

**Joan Skinner, an early faculty member at Illinois, founded Skinner Releasing Technique, a radical, new approach to dance training utilizing anatomical references and poetic imagery.**

*"Skinner Releasing completely transformed my understanding of technique and improvisation. Working from imagery and with a dynamic, integrated psychokinetic approach to alignment helped me to imagine dance in new ways. I feel Skinner's presence recharging my roots here as I dance with students and we continue to reimagine dance for new generations."*

**Professor Jennifer Monson, Professor and Artistic Director of iLAND.**

Marsha Paludan and Nancy Topf, colleagues of Skinner's who were both hired in the 1960s, and students John Rolland and Mary Fulkerson were instrumental in the further development of this work primarily through the somatic practice of Ideokinesis. Urbana-Champaign has become a mecca for practitioners of numerous somatic forms. Joan and Alex Murray, master teachers of the Alexander Technique, have had a major influence on its development through their training program where numerous faculty and students have studied. Master Tai Chi artist Chungliang Ai Huang resides in our town, drawing an international crowd to his workshops. Today, four Dance faculty are certified in the Alexander Technique, two in Yoga, and one in Laban Movement Analysis. Dance at Illinois faculty have written four books about dance education and practice from a somatic point of view. Rebecca Nettle-Fiol is the author of two books: *Dance and the Alexander Technique, Exploring the Missing Link* with Luc Vanier ('01) and *The Body Eclectic, Evolving Practices in Dance Training* with Melanie Bales ('83). Jan Erkert is the author of *Harnessing the Wind, the Art of Teaching Modern Dance* ('03), and Jennifer Monson's book *A Field Guide to iLANDing, Scores for Researching Urban Ecologies* was published in 2017.

# leaders of choreographic innovation

MAJOR DANCE PIONEERS WITH HONORARY DEGREES FROM ILLINOIS: **Merce Cunningham, Katherine Dunham, Alwin Nikolais**

Current faculty reflect on the influences of and departures from these celebrated artists.



Merce Cunningham, 1972 (nominated by Margaret Erlan)



Katherine Dunham, 1994 (nominated by John Perpener)



Alwin Nikolais, 1985 (nominated by Beverly Blossom)

**Merce Cunningham was a leader of the American avant-garde, expanding the frontiers of dance, music and visual arts.**

*As a young choreographer, I was fortunate enough to witness the work of Merce Cunningham. I came to know it in detail living as I did in New York during the period when his work flourished. Although unaware that I was searching for it, I was happily plunged into the tonic waters of his abstraction, introduced to a choreographic aesthetic that lived far from representation and unapologetically eschewed any trace of narrative. Foregrounding the most unstable elements of the form like time, change, and multiplicity, he created an alternative purpose for dance, leading those who were onboard outside standardized logic towards a fuller consciousness. He is my bellwether to this day, and I am truly grateful."*

**Professor Tere O'Connor**  
Artistic Director of Tere O'Connor Dance

**Katherine Dunham was a major pioneer in bringing the movement of the African diaspora to the theatrical stage. As an artist and scholar she both wrote and performed from the lens of a dancer, anthropologist, and social activist.**

*I see my roots as rhizomatic with regard to contemporary dance. I stand on the shoulders of Katherine Dunham in the valuing and practice of Afro-Caribbean forms as rigorous and conceptual frames for my work, as well as my interest and pursuit of scholarship that both feeds and is fed by my dance practice. But I am also a product of German Expressionism (dance theatre & ballet with my mentor Atti van den Berg of Kurt Joos' company) and vernacular forms (club dancing). I'm an eclectic mix!*

**Professor Cynthia Oliver**  
Artistic Director of CoCo Dance Theater

**Alwin Nikolais pioneered multimedia and dance with innovative use of light, sound, sets, props, and costumes. He utilized a highly conceptual approach to dance training and making.**

*The movement material, aesthetics, and content are differently oriented in my work and very much determined by my strong feminist perspective, but I find much of his theoretical influence lingers. I am grateful for his insistence on being a sentient, thinking dancer. He always cautioned us not to be overly or unconsciously physical without engaging the imagination and the intellect and admonished us to be absolutely fully present at every moment and in every detail.*

**Professor Sara Hook**  
former dancer with Nikolais Dance Theatre

## dancing 50: moving forward/looking back

Hosting the American College Dance Association's 2018 Central Conference was a highlight of our year, as 500 dancing bodies stretched, twisted, and twerked throughout our studios, theaters, hallways, lawns, sidewalks, and cafes.

- Latvian artists Olga Zitluhina and Inta Balode were in residence for two weeks as part of our partnership with *Global Practice Sharing (GPS)*, a consortium of artists, schools, and presenters from Eastern Europe and the U.S.
- Our Beverly Blossom Carey Erickson Alumni Awardee Grace Courvoisier (BFA '11) created a new piece, *Honey Dew Honey Spring*, which was performed in February Dance.
- DAI showed up at the Bessie Awards this year! Assistant Professor Abby Zbikowski received a Juried Bessie for her "...rigorous and utterly unique development of an authentic movement vocabulary, employed in complex and demanding structures to create dances of great energy, intensity, surprise, and danger." Professor Jennifer Monson received a Bessie for Outstanding Revived Work for her participation in *Variations on Themes from Lost and Found: Scenes from a Life and Other Works* by John Bernd. Illinois alumna Angie Pittman (MFA '15) received a Bessie for Outstanding Performer as part of the ensemble of *the skeleton architecture, or the future of our worlds*.

## dancing 50: moving forward/looking back

In this milestone birthday year, we are shining a light on the extraordinary accomplishments of our alumni—artists who cultivated a passion for dance in the prairies of Illinois and then took their unique contributions across the globe. *Dancing 50: Moving Forward/Looking Back* is an ambitious series of projects designed to bring alumni home to Illinois to share their dance research, teaching, and life's travels. It includes:

- **Alumni Weekend:** A four-day festival surrounding November Dance 2018, connecting alumni with Illinois faculty, sharing research/teaching/choreography, taking classes, and dancing with other alumni and current students.
- **MashUP:** Collaborative projects between faculty and alumni to create new dances for November Dance, February Dance, and Studio I.
- **Marquee Performances at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (KCPA):** Our 50th marks the first time Dance at Illinois faculty companies will be presented on the prestigious Marquee series at KCPA. Cynthia Oliver will bring her stunning work *Virago-Man Dem* to Krannert stages in 2018-19, and Tere O'Connor Dance will present *Long Run* during the 2019-20 season.

# dancing 50: moving forward/looking back

# mashup:

collaborative partnerships between faculty and alumni

## november dance

This year's November Dance provides a unique historical perspective as all four choreographers have a rich history with Dance at Illinois. Faculty members Professor Rebecca Nettle-Fiol (BFA '75), Linda Lehovec (MFA '96), and Professor Emeritus Renée Wadleigh (MFA '91) are all graduates of the program, and Jan Erkert, head of the department, was a frequent guest artist at Illinois from 1980–89. Professor Nettle-Fiol will co-create a piece for Dance students with alumna Melanie Bales (MFA '83). Jan Erkert will reconstruct a solo titled *Antigamente*, originally built for Juli Hallihan-Campbell (BFA '84, MFA '92), a member of Erkert's company for over 10 years. Professor Lehovec will present work created in partnership with Paige Cunningham (MFA '07), a former dancer with Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Finally, Professor Renée Wadleigh has invited Nico Brown Jessie Young (MFA '16) to collaborate with her in creating her 50th work on DAI students.

## february dance

Professor C. Kemal Nance will collaborate with three alumni—James Washington (BFA '18), Grant Hill (BFA '18), and Aaron-Raheim White (BFA '11)—to create a men's dance titled *The Adventures of Antoine in Wonderland*, performed to music by Stevie Wonder. Professor Cynthia Oliver will explore Afrofuturism with three alumni—Leslie Cuyjet (BFA '04), Jessica Pretty (MFA '16), and Angie Pittman (MFA '15)—in collaboration with undergraduate and graduate students. Professor Endalyn Taylor's rich movement language will be performed by alum Aaron-Raheim White (BFA '11) along with current students. Professor John Toenjes will work in virtual spaces with alumna Renata Sheppard (MFA '07), creating a technologically complex work for the Krannert stage.

## studiodance I

**Program A** will feature Master of Fine Arts candidate Charlie Maybee and his contemporary explorations of the genre of tap dance. The program will include Dance alumni Isiah Asplund (BFA '17), Lauren Mendelson (BFA '18), Randi Townsend (BFA '17), and Illinois alumnus Jon Faw (BA LAS '17).

**Program B** will feature small works created by Dance faculty in conjunction with alumni. Professor Sara Hook will bring back alumnae Betsy Brandt (MFA '13), Elizabeth Johnson (MFA '03), Randi Townsend (BFA '17), and Kendra Portier (MFA '18) to the Studio Theatre stage. Professor Tere O'Connor will set the duet *Double Flower Possibility* on two alumni, and graduate Momar Ndiaye (MFA '17) will create a physically demanding solo for Professor Abigail Zbikowski. Guest Artist Nia Love will premiere a new solo.

## site-specific

Three concerts will celebrate our roots of site-specific explorations.

Studiodance I Extended MFA candidates Mauriah Kraker and Leah Wilks will premiere their MFA thesis works in the stunning, newly renovated Bluestem Hall, located in the Barnhart Prairie Nature Preserve.

Internationally renowned improvisation artist Professor Kirstie Simson will perform with alumna Jessica Cornish (BFA '12) and other collaborators from dance and music in a site-specific concert.

Bessie Award-winning Professor Jennifer Monson will be collaborating with Puerto Rican alumna Nibia Pastrana Santiago (MFA '12) on *Choreographies of Disaster* which will be performed in Puerto Rico. Monson and Pastrana Santiago will perform excerpts of this work in Champaign in April.



Professor Cynthia Oliver's *Virago-Man Dem* featuring Ni'Ja Whitson, Jonathan Gonzalez, and Dance at Illinois alumni Duane Cyrus (MFA '05) and Niall Noel Jones (MFA '14), photo by Julieta Cervantes

# professor cynthia oliver featured in krannert center's marquee series

In her newest work, *Virago-Man Dem*, Bessie Award-winning choreographer Cynthia Oliver breaks with her convention of excavating black women's worlds to explore the expressive cultures particular to Caribbean and African-American men and male-identified folk. The Bronx-born, Virgin Island-raised Oliver—who is a professor of dance and Associate Vice Chancellor for Research for the Humanities, Arts, and Related Fields at the University of Illinois—utilizes movement, spoken word, original music from composer Jason Finkelman, visual design by John Jennings and Stacey Robinson of Black Kirby, projections by John Boesche, costume design by Susan Becker, and lighting design by Amanda Ringger “to uproot stereotypes related to black male identity and conjure more nuanced, expansive alternatives” (*The New York Times*). The work, which premiered at the 2017 Brooklyn Academy of Music Next Wave Festival, was born out of Oliver's “desire to offer to the world another view of black masculinity that is more nuanced and flexible and stylish and funny and tender and rich than those we are persistently burdened with in the contemporary American landscape.” With performers Duane Cyrus (MFA '05), Jonathan Gonzalez, Ni'Ja Whitson, and Niall Noel Jones (MFA '14), Oliver traverses the spectrum of Caribbean and African-American masculinities and discovers, in her words: “more possibility, more understanding of the complexities of black life, more tenderness, humanity, love.”

# alumni weekend:

november 9–12, 2018

Dance at Illinois is celebrating its 50th birthday of becoming a department in the College of Fine and Applied Arts and moving into the extraordinary Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.

Come celebrate with us! Connect with your classmates and Illinois faculty, join in panels and workshops to share your research/teaching/choreography, take classes and dance with other alumni and current students, see November Dance performances in the Colwell Playhouse, and attend lively receptions. Major themes of the weekend will revolve around Physical Practice, Creative Process, Somatics, and Teaching.

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9

9:00–10:30 am	Masterclasses with Alumni
11:00 am–12:30 pm	Masterclasses with Alumni
1:00–3:00 pm	Looking Back: History and Stories
3:15–4:45 pm	Panels and Workshops

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10

9:15–10:30 am	Masterclasses with Current Faculty
10:45 am–12:00 pm	Masterclasses with Current Faculty
1:00–4:00 pm	Showing of Work and Sharing of Current Research
4:15–5:00 pm	Tour of Krannert Center Backstage
7:30 pm	November Dance Performance
9:30–11:00 pm	50th Anniversary Reception

## SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11

9:15–10:30 am	Masterclasses with Current Faculty
10:45am–12:00 pm	Masterclasses with Current Faculty
1:00–2:00 pm	Panel Discussion: Technology
2:15–3:15 pm	Panel Discussion: Choreographic Process
2:15–3:15 pm	Workshop: Mediated Body
3:30–4:30 pm	Panel Discussion: Training Next Generation of Dancers
3:30–4:30 pm	Workshop: Technology in Choreographic Process

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12

9:00–10:30 am	Masterclasses with Alumni
11:00 am–12:30 pm	Masterclasses with Alumni
1:00–2:30 pm	Choreographic Process
3:00–4:30 pm	Art Healing: Making, Doing, Being

\*schedule subject to change

## a new generation radicalizes their roots

BY KRystal LENIECE COLLINS

Congratulations to this department for its dedication to dance education that we, as students, professors, and alumni alike, have molded into dance history! I am honored to share with you all, in word, about the many ways I reflect on legacy and time.

My mind makes sense of the world by seeking conceptual ideas in nature. I look to root systems in plants, their vertical and horizontal growing patterns. I look to the weaving of spider webs and threading of silkworms. I look to these things to remind me how everlasting our traces can be—the beautiful and elaborate phenomena of time passing.

Participating in the Urban Bush Women Summer Leadership Institute as a Creative and Administrative Intern (2017) reminded me of the living, breathing legacy that grows inside the dancing body. The room was dripping in a kinesthetic history and interconnectedness. Witnessing the many precious moments of intergenerational sharing was the most visceral way of seeing how dance subsists.

I am inspired by the residual forces of dance, the body's ability to track and trace. This inspiration was ever-present in the making of *where we're going* (2017). The process began with going backwards, a yearning to connect with lineage, and a longing to create a breathing archive of Black girlhood. A desire to honor a microcosm of the Black dancing body, specifically Black women choreographers who stood on their seats, knocked the table over and professed their presence as movers and large scale dance theorists and practitioners. In performance, we call on the wide smiles of our mothers and the pursed lips of our grandmothers, or the slicked side ponytails of the neighborhood girls to inform our movement. The work continues to expand and shift forms much like the auric bodies of those we honor.

Plant roots will continue to grow, so long as they have the proper nourishment, time, and ample space. Let us continue to uplift and pour into artists at every stage of their career so that they begin to establish a root system. And so, I honor the exactitude of nature's rhythms. I honor those whose contributions to this world have made me think, made me uncomfortable, and made me laugh and cry in the same breath. I honor that the connective tissues of dance are the legacies of pioneering bodies that live on in the research of the present. A true change-maker traces their roots and recognizes the sacred dancing grounds upon which they move and sweat and retrace on. We are a walking, dancing, breathing legacy.

### where we're going

*where we're going*, a piece by undergraduate student Krystal Collins (BFA '18), was one of two selected from 44 pieces at the Central Region to be performed at the National College Dance Festival at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., June 6–9, 2018. Her all African-American women cast of Star Milam (BFA '19), Faith Stanton (BFA '21), Tyjah Kelly, Tia Pruitt (BFA '19), and Kadesha Ellison (BFA '18) brought down the house at the regional conference we hosted at the Krannert Center in March, 2018. Collins founded FAABlack, empowering African American students in our college.



The adjudicators for the regional festival (Charles O. Anderson, Head of Dance, University of Texas/Austin; Siobhan Burke, *New York Times* and *Dance Magazine* Critic; and Leah Cox, Dean of the American Dance Festival) said about this piece: "*where we're going* unapologetically

celebrates Black women's power, beauty, and strength. In the spirit of Black female artists such as Urban Bush Women and Camille A. Brown, this work creates an uninhibited space that draws from Africanist aesthetics from the traditional to the contemporary."

## counterpoint project

BY ENDALYN TAYLOR

Over the past year, I have had the pleasure of collaborating with visual artist Patrick Hammie, and an intergenerational cast of five Black ballerinas to produce an evening of multimedia and live solo dance performances followed by a forum that reframes the conversation regarding Black ballerinas' contributions to dance and visual culture. This culminating work is called the Counterpoint Project. At its core, Counterpoint represents a legacy of achievement by an underrepresented population of artists. The project celebrates some of my former students, Ashley Murphy, Michaela DePrince, Ingrid Silva,

them throughout their respective careers. Counterpoint honors them by continuing their legacy, creating contemporary choreographies that employ the classical medium in narratively rich ways.

Rather than backing away from our diverse histories, we grounded our voices in a raw artistic expression, inviting the world into our personal "truths" without apology. The ultimate celebration of our collective beauty will be manifested in Hammie's art. He will render a visual representation of each dancer's identity through a series of portrait paintings and figurative works that push against political, social, and cultural expectation.

Hammie's and my disciplines, art and dance respectively, hold histories rooted in European elitism and have symbiotically influenced each other for decades. Through Counterpoint, we have had the opportunity to subvert this trend by inspiring young Black dancers to be seen for who they are and to see themselves participating in activities beyond what a racist society has allotted for them. Historically, ballet performance has required its Black practitioners to make up their faces by "thinning out" their features, lightening their skin, and straightening their hair. The power of Counterpoint, as a platform, is that it creates conversations around visibility, invisibility, viability, and accessibility of dance and visual art forms to the African American community.



Counterpoint Project collaborators Associate Professor of Art + Design Patrick Hammie and Assistant Professor of Dance Endalyn Taylor

and Cira Robinson. These young women are championing a new generation of ballerinas who show the world that they, too, can not only diversify the art form but also enrich it. In tandem, Counterpoint pays a gallant reverence to tenacious ballet pioneers like Janet Collins, Lauren Anderson, and Delores Brown who achieved groundbreaking milestones in the field despite the racial bias pitted against

## tap dance at illinois

BY CHARLIE MAYBEE

I'm overjoyed to share that Dance at Illinois will be having a year-long tap dance extravaganza in its 2018–19 season, featuring some of the most cutting-edge artists in tap today!

We'll be starting with the striking charisma of The Hot Sardines, a jazz band that features a tap dance rhythm section. They'll be making their second appearance at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (KCPA) in September.

Savion Glover, known by many as "the greatest tap virtuoso of our time, perhaps of all time" (*Variety*), will be returning to KCPA with his captivating rhythms alongside acclaimed jazz musician Marcus Gilmore in January. Exploring the inherent connection between jazz music and tap dance, this will be a must-see performance between two royal members of the jazz family tree.

Michelle Dorrance, 2015 MacArthur Fellow, will be bringing her company Dorrance Dance to the Krannert Center for the first time in March. They'll be performing their Bessie Award-winning work *ETM: Double Down* that features innovative trigger-pad technology made by Dorrance and her collaborator Nicholas Van Young—technology that transports tap dance to a futuristic, digital sound space.

As a fellow tap dancer, I'm excited to be presenting my thesis work *The Promise of Stormy Weather* this coming March, which will explore a more experimental approach to tap dance technique and composition. Inspired heavily by both

Dorrance and Glover, I hope to continue building on their technological and choreographic innovations as my dancers and I merge tap dance with punk aesthetics, avant-garde performance, and futurism.

Finally, Lyric Theatre @ Illinois will be presenting the Gershwin romantic comedy musical *Crazy For You* in April, which features a plethora of tap dance numbers—most notably, the classic showtune "I've Got Rhythm." *Crazy For You* is a classic story of



Randi Townsend (BFA '17), Lindsey Jennings (BFA '20), Charlie Maybee (MFA '19), and Lauren Mendelson (BFA '18) in Maybee's (S) (C) (H) (I) (S) (M) performed at Link's Hall in Chicago, photo by Tuli Bera

a down-on-his-luck actor who moves from New York to Nevada disguised as a famous Broadway producer proposing to save the town's local theater from being foreclosed, all to win the heart of the woman of his dreams.

We're looking forward to sharing a year of tap dance with you all as Dance at Illinois shim sham shimmies into its 50th anniversary!

In addition to choreographing *Crazy for You* and his MFA Dance thesis in 2018–19, Maybee is also a Diversifying Faculty in Illinois (DFI) Fellow. He is the first Dance graduate student to receive this Illinois Board of Higher Education Fellowship.

# dance at illinois



Mauriah Kraker (MFA '19) and Charlie Maybee (MFA '19)  
in Kraker's *As Such, or Not*



Natalie Stehly (BFA '19), Kaitlin Fox (MFA '20), Alexis Miller (BFA '18),  
Mary Kate Ford (BFA '20), and Lindsey Jennings (BFA '20) in *Burnish*,  
choreographed by Kendra Portier (MFA '18)



*Fuse*, choreographed and performed by Jeremy Taylor (BFA '21) and Kaleigh Dent (BFA '21)



MFA Class of 2018: Kendra Portier, Charli Brissey, Chloe Nagle

## graduate news

BY CYNTHIA OLIVER

This year's graduating MFAs have graced us with a diversity of thought, approaches, and practices. They have enlivened our world for the past three years, and we will miss them as they move on to now do the same for our ever-expanding communities.

**Charli Brissey** spent their time here cultivating interdisciplinarity, as they explored human and non-human relations, ethics, expansive coexistence, and interspecies ecologies with technologies of bodies, cameras, objects, and ecosystems. Charli shared an interest in these complexities with peers, choreographing beautiful, funky works: their thesis *miraging*; a duet with Jen Lu *3027*; the solo *it's been a long time* for senior Phoebe Ballard; and group work *therapoda*, an invited work for February Dance on the Krannert Center stage. They were granted a Moe Family Award for unique contributions to the field and a Patricia Knowles Graduate Travel award for their research in the summer of 2016. They have taught video techniques, studied with experts across the discipline, and enriched their (and our) explorations. They will now take these deepening interests to the University of Michigan where they will begin a tenure track position in New Media and continue writing a deeply personal and creatively theoretical text that they will turn into a book, all while continuing to dance, dance, dance.

**Chloe Nagle** came to us fresh out of undergrad studies at the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee. Her captivating and brilliant dancing, keen eye for movement, and ability to watch and deliver nuanced and clear perceptions of what the movement conveys has enriched our community. Chloe has taught our non-majors improvisation and introduction to contemporary dance. She has performed in the works of Sara Hook, Ping Chong, Elise Frost, and Charli Brissey as well as the rich and imaginative worlds created for her own choreographic work *Chicken Bark and Horse Witness*. She has nurtured an interest in subjectivities, feminist, gender, affect theory, and consciousness studies. Chloe will spend the summer writing reviews for *Smile Politely*, our local online cultural resource, and will leave the area in the fall for the dance rich community of Minneapolis to forge a new life in dance performance.

**Kendra Portier** is a highly accomplished and beloved dance artist, as well as a featured performer thrilling audiences around the globe with renowned David Dorfman Dance. While with us, Kendra engaged with colleagues in Art + Design and introduced us to her painting skills and interest in color theory as she deftly incorporated these with deep investigative approaches to dance making in her thesis work *Burnish*, which was awarded the Wanda M. Nettl Prize for Student Choreography this year. She continued to create on her company (works like *Glorious Discoloration*, *East of the Sun: West of the Moon*, *Horse*, and others) while engaged in her studies here. She has taught dance majors classes, was granted a Mary Elizabeth Hamstrom Award in 2016, contributed significantly to a community of collectivity and support for graduates and undergraduates, and will move on to a two-year artist-in-residence position at the University of Maryland. She will continue teaching in NYC Gibney Dance Center, perform in a revival of a Lisa Race work with Jennifer Nugent, and participate in an artist residency for her own work at Emory University.

## undergraduate news



BFA Class of 2018: Grant Hill, Krystal Collins, Oksana Kuzma, James Washington, Shatara Mathis, Phoebe Ballard, Sarah Stearn, Beth Winegardner, Lauren Mendelson, Alexis Miller, Kadesha Ellison, Julianna Boylan

BY KIRSTIE SIMSON

This year there were 12 graduating seniors from the undergraduate program, comprised of a multi-talented group of individuals who have been a force in the Department of Dance, and who will be sorely missed. All are interested in pursuing dance in some form or another, and being savvy to the insecurity of endeavoring to enter life as artists, they have a broad selection of things lined up after graduation from teaching to performing, interning to managing and coaching.

The world will be a richer place with all the talent and vital energy these young graduates are demonstrating as they move forward in their lives. As well as their divergent interests, captivating performance, and choreographic work, this group will be remembered for the community they fostered together, their hard work, and their laughter.

We wish the class of 2018 all the very best in their future adventures. Stay in touch, and *give it everything you've got!*



Dance at Illinois Faculty: Endalyn Taylor, Tere O'Connor, Rebecca A. Ferrell, Linda Lehovec, Rebecca Nettl-Fiol, Jennifer Monson, Kirstie Simson, Cynthia Oliver, Jan Erkert, Kemal Nance, Abby Zbikowski, Sara Hook, Phillip Johnston, not pictured: John Toenjes

# 2018–19 guest artist: nia love



Photo by Valerie Oliveira

## transitions

- Professor **Cynthia Oliver** has been named Associate Vice Chancellor for Research in the Humanities, Arts, and Related Fields. It is so exciting that Cynthia will be representing the arts and humanities at the campus level. We know she will be a tireless advocate, support faculty and interdisciplinary work, and bring wisdom, ideas, and energy to this position.
- We are excited to welcome back Dance at Illinois alumna **Laura Chiaramonte** (MFA' 09)! Laura is currently the Media Coordinator and dance documentation lecturer for the Department of Dance.
- **Matt Vaeseen**, our beloved Production Coordinator and DRK Manager has moved to sunny San Diego. You will be missed, Matt!



Photo by Cecile Freelove

## no debt for dancers

The *No Debt for Dancers* campaign strives to eliminate college debt and eradicate the notion of the “starving artist” by raising funds for alumni projects, summer study, and tuition scholarships. *No Debt for Dancers* supports our mission to “...cultivate imaginative, innovative, and sustainable artistic lives.”

The four years spent in a dance program ignites a dancer’s career. Students are given studio time, mentorship, professional connections, experience in the field, technical training, and the ability to sharpen their craft. Studies in higher education both further a theoretical understanding of the field and the knowledge to sustain a highly physical practice over a lifetime. Graduates become dancers, choreographers, curators, dance critics/writers, scholars, educators, arts administrators, program coordinators, teachers, somatic practitioners, etc. These knowledgeable, experienced, and versatile dance artists expand the field both artistically and academically, and our communities are enhanced by the embodied experiences they bring to our lives. *No Debt for Dancers* is a dynamic way to realize the full potential of dance as an art form.



Danielle Mastricola (BFA '19), Natalie Stehly (BFA '19), and Emily Schwartz (BFA '20) in *Vestigial*, choreographed by Leah Wilks (MFA '19)

## awards and scholarships

These scholarships support dance research and/or study for undergraduate and graduate students seeking to further their creative, performance, and/or scholarly work. Students are selected based on a diverse range of aesthetics within projects that demonstrate rigorous inquiry, individual voice, and curiosity.

Vannie L. Sheiry Memorial Scholarship (Est. 1994)

**Kaitlin Fox (MFA '20)**  
Awarded in recognition of outstanding performance.

Moe Family Dance Award (Est. 1996)  
**Charli Brissey (MFA '18)**  
Awarded to a dance major with potential for unique contributions to the dance field.

Wanda M. Netti Prize for Student Choreography (Est. 2002)  
**Kendra Portier (MFA '18)**  
Awarded in recognition of outstanding performance.

Patricia Knowles Graduate Travel Award (Est. 2006)  
**Kaitlin Fox (MFA '20)**  
Award designated for an outstanding MFA candidate to be used for travel and study that deepens their artistic life.

Beverly Blossom and Carey Erickson Alumni Award (Est. 2007)  
**Grace Courvoisier (BFA '11)**  
Enables an alumnus to return to campus to teach, perform, choreograph, and otherwise enhance Dance at Illinois.

Lisa Carducci Memorial Scholarship  
**Oksana Kuzma (BFA '18)**  
**Lauren Mendelson (BFA '18)**  
Award designated for an outstanding student.

Mary Elizabeth Hamstrom Award  
**Mauriah Kraker (MFA '19)**  
Awarded to a graduate student’s study.

Senior Magnolia Award  
**Beth Winegardner (BFA '18)**  
Awarded to a graduating senior who has shown the most growth and development throughout their four years.

Outstanding Undergraduate Performance Award  
**Mary Kate Ford (BFA '20)**  
**James Washington (BFA '18)**

Undergraduate Travel Award  
**Faith Brown (BFA '21)**  
**Natalie Stehly (BFA '19)**

Leadership Award  
**Phoebe Ballard (BFA '18)**

Issa Scholarship  
**Kennedy Crown (BFA '22)**  
**Jeremy Taylor (BFA '21)**

Larry Scholarship  
**Mary Kate Ford (BFA '20)**  
**Emmaline Rapier (BFA '19)**

William McClellan Memorial Scholarship (Est. 2017)  
**Krystal Collins (BFA '18)**  
Summer study scholarship for students who show exceptional talent in performance and/or choreography.

Courtney B. Kellogg Memorial Scholarship (Est. 2015)  
**Symone Sanz (BFA '20)**  
Established in memory of Courtney B. Kellogg Wojcik, a 2000 BFA graduate, this award will be given to an outstanding undergraduate dance student.

Aaron R. White Scholarship (Est. 2017)  
**Alexandria Kinard (BFA '22)**  
The Aaron R. White Scholarship is named in honor of alumnus Aaron Raheim White (BFA '11), who has cultivated an imaginative, innovative, and sustainable artistic life. This is a merit-based award for an underrepresented/minority first-year student.

## leaders in collaborative partnerships between music and dance

Dance at Illinois has been forward-thinking in integrating music into its dance curriculum since Margaret Erlanger hired Alan Thomas as our first Music Director in 1962. Other universities are doing away with live music, but Dance at Illinois’ commitment to live music for dance continues with an unbroken succession of faculty Music Directors and staff musicians, collaborations with School of Music composers, and guest artists such as Cage/Cunningham. Today Professor John Toenjes is the first tenured faculty Music Director and is continuing the tradition of innovation at Illinois by inventing interactive computer applications in sound and movement for theater.

**Music Directors:** Alan Thomas, Barry Brosch, Ted Kalmon, Lucinda Lawrence, David Swaim, Tom Bourcier, Christian Cherry, John Toenjes

**School of Music composers and guest artists:** Among them Ben Johnston, Sal Martirano, Scott Wyatt, Toby Twining, Eric Lund, and John Cage, who was frequently in residence on campus.



Student Meg Harper, faculty member Willis Ward, and composer Ben Johnston in Freer Gym dance studio, circa 1962

Illinois Dance Theatre performing Paul Taylor’s *Espanade*, restaged by Susan McGuire, 2000. William McClellan (BFA '00), Molly Wilson (BFA '00), Darren Wright (BFA '02), Denise Zdenek (BFA '01), Luc Vanier (MFA '01)



Patricia Knowles was the Head of the Dance Department from 1978–2001. An Alma Hawkins Awardee for Excellence in Dance Education, Knowles was insistent that students must dance in the works of the masters. During her tenure, she brought reconstructions of works by Nijinsky, Martha Graham, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, Susan Marshall, Alwin Nikolais, José Limón, and Talley Beatty to Illinois, inspiring generations of students.

# dance partners

We take this opportunity to recognize and thank all Dance Partners, contributors to the vibrancy of Dance at Illinois. Your gifts are reflected in all of our performances, and we are profoundly grateful for your support. Listed below are the donors from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

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 Albert Wong and How-Ching Chan  
 William Worn and Diane Baker\*  
 Elizabeth and Sheldon Wymore  
 Jin-Wen Yu

\*Gifts for Dance at Illinois' 50th Anniversary

Ibrahim Sabbi (BFA '21) and Mya McClellan (BFA '21) in Assistant Professor Endalyn Taylor's *In the Fullness Thereof*

# be a pivotal force —donate now

Donors play a pivotal role in the realization of the department's ambitions to become a national center for the development of dance artists and leaders. The collaborative work generated in our program has been spreading across campus and out into the world, and we can do even more to share what dance can contribute to our society. Dance Partners—our generous donors—provide the core strength for our students, our creative work, and our vision for advancing the art of dance.

We hope you will join us in our mission to cultivate imaginative, innovative, and sustainable artistic lives.

To make a gift, please designate the desired fund on your check, made payable to the University of Illinois Foundation/ Department of Dance, and mail to UIF, P.O. Box 3429, Champaign, IL, 61826-3429.

For information on how to donate online:  
[www.giving.illinois.edu](http://www.giving.illinois.edu).

## dance partner advancement committee

We are mentors and bridge-builders between the Dance Department and the community. We promote, support, celebrate and engage the public, students, and faculty/ staff by making connections, forging opportunities, and diversifying audiences.

Fran Ansel	Michael Lambert	Tim Temple	Ralph Trimble
Diane Baker	Dirk Mol	Carolyn Cassady	Ella Van Wyk
Jerry Carden	Mark Rhodes	Trimble	Jerry Wray
Tim Hutchison			



Say Less, choreographed and performed by Annabeth Cowsert (BFA '21), Faith Brown (BFA '21), and Faith Stanton (BFA '21)



## audition dates

### Undergraduate Program

October 8, December 1\*, February 9, March 4  
 (\*Chicago audition at Hubbard Street Dance Center)

### Graduate Program

February 13–14

# 2018–19 performance calendar

### Flatlands Dance Film Festival

August 31–September 1

### November Dance

November 8–10

### Alumni Weekend

November 9–12

### Cynthia Oliver's *Virago-Man Dem*

November 15

### February Dance

February 7–9

### StudioDance I

February 28–March 1

### StudioDance I Extended

March 8–9

### StudioDance II

April 18–20

### Senior Concerts

December 7–8 and April 26–27

*The Forgotten*, choreographed and performed by Eddie Shellman III (BA '19)

# 2017–18 faculty/staff list and magazine credits

### Dance Faculty

Denis Chiaramonte, Instructor  
 Laura Chiaramonte, Lecturer  
 Jan Erkert, Department Head and Professor  
 Rebecca A. Ferrell, Lecturer  
 Sara Hook, Professor  
 Philip Johnston, Lecturer  
 Patricia Knowles, Professor Emerita  
 Linda Lehovec, Associate Professor  
 Jennifer Monson, Professor  
 C. Kemal Nance, Assistant Professor  
 Rebecca Netti-Fiol, Professor and Undergraduate Co-Director  
 Tere O'Connor, Professor  
 Cynthia Oliver, Professor and Graduate Program Director  
 Kirstie Simson, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Co-Director  
 Endalyn Taylor, Assistant Professor  
 John Toenjes, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Co-Director  
 Abby Zbikowski, Assistant Professor

### Staff

Ken Beck, Specialist in Music  
 Laura Chiaramonte, Media Coordinator  
 Rebecca A. Ferrell, Assistant to the Head  
 Natalie Fiol, Photographer  
 Kimberly Hardin, Physical Therapist  
 Cindy Masko, Office Manager  
 Matt Vaessen, Space Coordinator/DRK Manager

### Interns

Phoebe Ballard  
 Michelle Burns  
 Lindsey Jennings  
 Danielle Masticola  
 Madeline Mellinger  
 Lauren Mendelson  
 Daisy Rueda  
 Sarah Stearn

### Guest Artists

Inta Balode  
 Grace Courvoisier  
 Olga Žitluhina

### Teaching Assistants

Evvie Allison  
 Charli Brissey  
 Elliot Emadian  
 William Ervin  
 Kaitlin Fox  
 Mauriah Kraker  
 Charlie Maybee  
 Chloe Nagle  
 Kendra Portier  
 Leah Wilks

### Accompanists

Sarah Chang  
 Jeeson Eun  
 Beverly Hillmer  
 Cody Jensen  
 Charlie Maybee  
 Aaron Wilson



### Magazine Credits

Editor: Rebecca A. Ferrell  
 Photography: Natalie Fiol, unless otherwise noted  
 Design: Communications and Marketing at the College of Fine + Applied Arts  
 Cover Image: Mya McClellan (BFA '21), Ibrahim Sabbi (BFA '21), and Jessica Ingalsbe (BFA '20) in Sabbi's *I Know*.

### Special Thanks to the 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee

Deb Bolgla  
 Patricia Knowles  
 Linda Lehovec  
 Rebecca Netti-Fiol

Mya McClellan (BFA '21) and Jessica Ingalsbe (BFA '20) in *Dart*, choreographed by Jessica Ziegler (BFA '21)



**I ILLINOIS**

Dance

**COLLEGE OF FINE & APPLIED ARTS**

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*No Wider War*, choreographed and performed by Symone Sanz (BFA '20)