

Theatre and Dance Annual Report 2008-2009  
Submitted by Thomas Hird, Chair

FACULTY AND STAFF – We continue to meet our goals for retreats and regular meetings. The Peer Review Committee is visiting more classes.

The new dance faculty and ensemble system continue to attract more students. Dance and Musical Theatre programs toured the Bay Area. Professor Kupers' success with our Fall Quarter, 2008 production of *Tongues*, which was invited to perform at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, has sparked growing cooperation with his Inclusive Dance (Dance For All Bodies and Abilities) plans. We hope to begin cooperative training agreements as early as next year with a program proposal to follow, probably in the form of a Theatre Arts option. We continue to invite master teachers and guest artists/lecturers. Our practice of sharing costs with departments has expanded to include ASI.

Professor Jones directed a professional production in Sacramento this year. Professor Jacobs' new musical is scheduled to premiere in Phoenix next year. Professors Haft and Kupers lead professional companies that continue to perform both locally and nationally. Professor Fajilan has established ties to Stagebridge, a professional company in Oakland. Lecturers Alcalá, Guthrie, Hillman, and Olmsted expanded their professional credits with companies like the San Francisco Opera, Dandelion Dancetheatre, Impact Theatre, and Aurora Theatre. Laura Ellis continues to co-direct the renowned Black Choreographers Festival.

Our most significant, continuing strain remains the lack of tenure-track production and design faculty and full-time theatre staff. We have attempted to keep up by squeezing operating budgets for more student assistants and part-time technicians to aid the lecturers in charge of the theatre and shops. We continue to share a sound and light technician and bookkeeper/ box office manager with Music. These two shared positions are examples of creative solutions we have implemented to sustain our campus mission related contributions at reduced cost to the college. We cannot sustain more reductions in production faculty or staff and maintain even the reduced program, but what we need is permanent production faculty and one to two staff positions.

PROGRAM – While budget cuts have hurt and the situation looks even bleaker for next year, we have implemented successful strategies to sustain us in difficult times. The tenure-track faculty is committed to teaching cluster or service courses in the coming year. Annually we teach seven cluster courses in five clusters, two PACE courses, two Liberal Studies courses, and three courses for Concord. In addition, we remodeled the Dance for Children to meet the same state mandates for KPE as the Dance Experience class. This allows us to eliminate Dance Experience and offer the Dance for Children on a more regular basis to serve both KPE and Liberal Studies, as well as Dance Option students who are interested in teaching.

Besides a 07-08 bookkeeping error that reduced our 08-09 S&S, we were further cut an additional 30% and plan to return funds to meet cuts in other areas. This put a severe strain on both classroom service and our production budget. This year we met the challenge by planning a season that allowed for reduced production expenses. Whether we can continue such creative adjustments remains to be seen. For example, we have scheduled the musical *Oklahoma!* next winter, a large show. To stay in budget will require supreme creativity in scenery and costumes.

Even with budget strains and cuts, we managed to tour a show to Edinburgh last summer. *Anna Bella Eema* was directed by a former student who is now working on her MFA in directing at the University of Connecticut, Amherst. As mentioned above, we also received an invitation to tour *Tongues* to the Kennedy Center where we were honored as one of four from over four hundred national college entries.

FACILITIES – We continue to maintain the University Theatre, not only for our own use, but also for the campus and community. Our technical students successfully operate most theatre events for a range of users that book speakers and performances. This provides them with ideal practical experience that makes them all the more employable.

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We met our increasing need for studio classroom space by converting the Studio Theatre to a classroom studio. Everyone misses the intimate performance space that the Studio Theatre provided, but the conversion relieved the majority of our immediate academic and rehearsal problems. To accommodate projected acting, dance, and musical theatre offerings, we will need at least two more studio classrooms within five years.

**INITIATIVES** – As mentioned previously, Eric Kupers continues to develop an Integrated Dance program. Tom Hird is about to begin offering an online Arts Management Career Development Certificate in CIE. Both initiatives have the potential to become option or degree programs. We are also responding to the GE call for more C1/C3 courses including both Theatre and Dance courses. This year we have toured modest Musical Theatre and Dance performances in the local area, plus a number of small groups. One group performed on the radio in an appearance related to our production of *Sophisticated Ladies*. Recruiting continues to be difficult issue for an already busy faculty. From reading this report, one can see that our days, nights, and weekends are filled with more than coursework, including campus production, guest artist invitations, national/ international tours, and guest appearances. The trick will be to see whether we can build a meaningful, successful culture of recruiting into our regular work instead of adding to our burden.

**ASSESSMENT** – This year we found results consistent with last year. The most significant recent finding remains that acting students, especially those in musical theatre, are not prepared to report their progress in any meaningful way. We have dealt with this issue as explained under Curriculum, below, but we have also decided to revise our methodology.

While our assessment plan has identified a few aspects of the major that could be improved, the plan is cumbersome for students and faculty alike, plus it is difficult to evaluate. We currently use a portfolio arrangement. Students who follow the plan submit once at the beginning of the third year and again in the middle of the fourth. The problems with our process have been as follows: 1) a significant number of students avoid submitting the third year portfolio on time, often for good reasons; 2) most students don't complete their culmination assignment until the end of the fourth year, so important artifacts are not considered; 3) our Outcomes are too complicated, so it is not always clear what artifacts should be included; 4) our approach is not good at tracking student progress; 5) portfolios have not helped us to distinguish weaknesses in the program vs. differences in level of accomplishment. We have agreed to begin modifying our practice next year. The revised plan is to keep an Assessment Grid in each student's advising file. As students meet with their advisors, they will be asked to provide continuing evidence of success and progress with outcomes. They will discuss their level of accomplishment with the advisor and be told to keep appropriate evidence. Where improvement is needed, further evidence will be required. By surveying a representative group of grids annually, we will see student level and progress on the vertical scale and empty columns will indicate missing experiences. The work of this plan can be shared among all of the advising faculty, plus the usual annual review committee.

**CURRICULUM** – Besides input we have from reviewing assessment portfolios, the newer faculty now have a better understanding of the curriculum handed down to them. As a result, new ideas are coming forward to respond to shortcomings. Dance students are demonstrating ability to follow paths in dancing, choreography, and teaching. To respond we are revising both the Option and Minor to provide more entry and intermediate courses and to strengthen advanced technique. Musical Theatre program revisions are needed to improve the music aspect of the program and clarify a full four-year sequence. In the Option revision, Musical Theatre History will be required, but overall, units will be reduced. Portfolios demonstrate the scattered nature of our Acting Option. We plan to clarify the Acting Option by naming professionally recognized techniques in course descriptions, implementing a prerequisite course for continuation in a better defined Upper Division sequence, and requiring courses in audition skills and period techniques.