

# Mise en Scène

## Winter Edition

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## Inclusive Dance Troupe takes on the Origins of Creation

*In the Beginning, God Created Difference* is an experimental, inclusive dance/theater/music performance ceremony, culminating over 3 years of in-depth creative exploration with the CSU East Bay Inclusive Interdisciplinary Ensemble and other guest artists. Director Eric Kupers has woven together a non-linear journey through creation from multiple perspectives at once, examining who we are as human beings, why we are alive and how we connect to our ancestors, each other and future generations. The production is based on creation myths from diverse cultures, along with personal creation stories, vocal compositions by Ysaye Maria Barnwell and dance and music created collaboratively by all the artists involved in the production. The work of the Inclusive Interdisciplinary Ensemble (IIE) brings together CSUEB students, alumni, community members and professional performing artists to experiment with rigorous methods for embracing diversity through the performing arts. This year IIE has added two components to this particular production, the first being *DanceSing Drum Company*; which gathers the IIE participants with significant performance experience to engage in more intricate and fast-moving creative inquiry. Second is *Creativity Lab*, which gathers IIE participants on the autism spectrum and their allies that are not drawn to performing and instead want to focus on visual arts, writing and behind-the-scenes technical skills.

*In the Beginning...* brings together all components of IIE, along with guest artists Masashiro Fukuizumi (Taiko Drumming composer and instructor), Caitlin Tabancay-Austin (vocal teacher and choral director) and Corissa "Reese" Johnson (guest choreographer and alum).

# Upcoming Productions

## In the Beginning, God Created Difference

Produced by Eric Kupers

April 29-30 &  
May 6-7 @ 8 PM  
May 8 @ 2 PM

University Theatre

## Performance Fusion

A Senior Showcase

May 27 & 28 @ 8 PM  
May 29 @ 2 PM

University Theatre

## Checking In



Alumna, occasional CSUEB lecturer and guest director, **Dawn Monique Williams** ('03), is in the final months of a two year residency at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival as Artistic Associate. This residency in the Artistic Office and with Artistic Director, Bill Rauch, is funded through an award from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and administered by the Theatre Communications Group. During her tenure at OSF she has been the Associate Director on *Pericles*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and this season's *Richard II*. Her work has included producing, casting, season selection and a variety of education and public events. They love her so much that she has been hired back to direct *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in their 2017 season on the flagship outdoor Elizabethan stage. The best part of the gig is that she and CSUEB Faculty Member Ulises Alcala will be collaborating once again, as he is designing costumes for the production. The show will run in Ashland from June 6 - October 13, 2017. #MerryWivesOSF

# Our Students



For **Adriana Ramos**, graduating this summer with a B.A. in Dance, dancing has been a lifelong passion. Starting with ballet classes at the age of seven, she began a serious course of study under Angela Demmel at Moreau Catholic High School. “Mom worked at East Bay, so I was always on and off campus. I started participating in CSU East Bay musical productions as a freshman in high school during the summers.” Once matriculated as an East Bay student, majoring in Dance was a no-brainer. She went on to participate in multiple East Bay dance productions, most notably the re-staging of *Tongues/Gather* in Spring 2014. The beauty of dance is what drew Adriana to the art, but what kept her hooked was when she began dancing modern, which “blew [her] mind.” “I was taught and encouraged to dance in a way

that challenged the standard of what beautiful movement is supposed to look like. Ballet gave me the foundation and appreciation, modern gave me the freedom to create and celebrate my own movement.” Wanting to deepen and further her relationship with dance, Adriana founded an on-campus dance company named Kindred Dance. Comprised of members of her 2015 senior project performance, Kindred looks to replicate the powerful experience of creating and teaching with fellow performers.

Once she graduates from East Bay, Adriana knows she will keep dancing. “I don't think there will ever be a time when I will stop dancing. It's a physical need for me, brings me too much joy. Even if my career after I graduate has nothing to do with theater or dance, I'll always have that itch to create and tell stories through movement.” She credits her experience at East Bay with her deep appreciation for the art: “The wonderful thing about East Bay's Theater and Dance department is that its professors are not just interested in making their students better performers, but better humans. The Arts are powerful, they can enlighten, inspire and heal. My professors have taught me how to use my art to better understand myself and people around me. I will keep dancing because we are all Kindred.”

# Featured Faculty



**Baz Wenger** is the Scene Shop Supervisor and Technical Director for the Theatre and Dance Department at CSU East Bay. He was raised in Kent, Ohio and attended Kent State University where he graduated with a BA in Theatre Studies and a certificate in Stage Scenery. After a spring at the Great Lakes Theatre Festival in Cleveland, he moved to Santa Maria, California to become a Carpenter intern with the Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts. (Now the Pacific Conservatory Theatre.) He spent a year and half there before becoming the Properties Fellow with the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. Immediately following ACT, he was hired as the Staff Carpenter at the California Shakespeare Theatre. He worked for Cal Shakes for three years, while over-hiring in both carpentry and props with Berkeley Repertory Theatre

TheatreWorks, and ACT's conservatory program. Ultimately, Baz held the position of Interim Technical Director with Cal Shakes before seeing a tremendous opportunity to come work for CSU East Bay. Since working for CSU East Bay he has designed properties for two shows with ACT's Conservatory program, a show with the Nueva School in Hillsborough, multiple shows with the San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band, as well as coordinating the properties for the first show in ACT's new Strand Theatre, *Love and Information*. As the Technical Director, Baz is in charge of ensuring that the set is constructed and installed for each show. The designer comes up with drawings and a model for what they want and Baz's job is to figure out how to build the designs using a variety of techniques and materials. He leads students and staff through the building process, teaching tool and technique use, then installs the completed set pieces in the theatre. Once the show is over, he leads the deconstruction or "strike" of the set. When between shows Baz, as the Scene Shop Supervisor, supervises the organization, upkeep and maintenance of the Scene Shop, material storage and property storage areas.

Baz was assigned female at birth and raised female. He never felt that was right, since around 3 years old he had thought of himself in male terms. Before puberty it didn't entirely matter to him, though, as long as his mother never tried to put him in a dress. The struggles began once puberty hit. He decided to try on femininity, as it led to less bullying. He went through college in a ball of confusion but took a Gay and Lesbian Theatre class where he learned about Queer Theory. This was the start of his self-realization and a couple years later fully came out as a Transman (Transgender Man). Since then he has legally changed his name and gender in California and has been taking hormone therapy since 2012. At the end of 2015 he had a double mastectomy or "top surgery" as it's known in the Transmasculine community. Sharing this aspect of his life is very important to him. He is committed to outreach and education in order to make the world a better place. He strongly believes that communication and understanding is the way to finding equitable solutions in all aspects of life. To this end, he has been volunteering with the Diversity Center on CSU East Bay's campus.

Outside of work and volunteering, Baz is a musician who plays French horn with the West County Winds and sings with the Vajayna Men's Choir, a choir specifically for Transmen to find their voices. He also enjoys playing co-operative computer games with his friends and watching the Food Network with his two cats, Drake and Bailey.

# Special Event

Actor, radio personality, writer and Bay Area native Brian Copeland is coming to California State University, East Bay for a free performance of his one-man show “The Waiting Period.” Copeland will perform in the University Theatre on Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, at 2 pm.

“The Waiting Period” refers to the mandatory ten-day wait before purchasing a gun. Struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts after a series of devastating life events, Copeland had purchased a gun. The following ten days were one of the darkest and most transformative periods of his life. “The Waiting Period” is a humorous, introspective look at the struggles of depression and suicidal thoughts that ultimately finds laughter in the darkness. Copeland revived “The Waiting Period” following the death of comedian Robin Williams, who was mourned by millions of people worldwide. His aim in performing a funny but unflinching piece on depression has always been to destigmatize and raise the volume on conversations surrounding mental health. Prior performances have been dedicated to victims of



suicide and their survivors. With William’s death, the need to perform “The Waiting Period” grew more urgent. Speaking from the heart in an interview with Newsweek, Copeland urges his audiences to understand that it’s ok to be depressed and it’s ok to ask for help. Copeland says, “You should be no more ashamed of depression than you should if you had Lou Gehrig’s disease or cancer. As I say [in the show], if I can stand up here for 70 minutes and spill my guts to strangers, you can tell somebody that you are having thoughts that are not in your best interest.”

Theatre and Dance Professor Ann Fajilan and Diversity Officer Dianne Woods were instrumental in bringing Copeland to CSUEB, as his message is one that college students in particular might find very relevant. Having seen “The Waiting Period,” Fajilan was impressed and enlightened by the multitude of struggles that college students in particular are facing and knew this show was needed on campus. “Brian brilliantly uses his theatre and performance skill set to single handedly effect social change and bring us to an empathetic awareness of depression, isolation, anxiety and struggle.” Her hope is that Copeland’s performance will make the campus community aware that they are not alone and help us all understand that with knowledge and resources it is possible to reframe our experiences and seek alternative outcomes.

This performance of “The Waiting Period” is brought to California State University East Bay and is generously co-sponsored by the Department of Theatre and Dance, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services, the Office of Diversity, Student Health and Counseling Services, the General Education Program and the Office of Accessibility Services. Admission is free and attendees are encouraged to come early. There will be a brief Q&A in the theater with Brian Copeland post-performance, followed by a panel on mental health and suicide prevention hosted by Student Health and Counseling Services.

# Department Information

**Special Thanks to these creative organizations and artists who collaborate with our department in multiple, invaluable ways**

African and African American Performing Arts Coalition

AXIS Dance Company

Dandelion Dancetheater

Friends of the Arts

Impact Theatre

Nina Haft and Company

Shawl-Anderson Dance Center

The Lorraine Hansberry Theatre

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Attention Alumni  
Please fill out our catch up survey on our Theatre and Dance Alumni Page

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