

Mise en Scène

Winter Edition

VOLUME 6

ISSUE 3

Inside this Issue

Upcoming Shows	2
Our Students	3
Checking In	4
Guest Artists	5
Featured Faculty	7
Information	9

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CSUEB Spellers take the stage in "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee"

Director, Marc Jacobs, shares his thoughts on this musical comedy

My first encounter with "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" was with the Post Street Theatre in San Francisco, 10 years ago. This was the first production after the original Broadway cast, and I had several friends in the show, which was cast locally. One of the cast members was James Monroe Iglehart (CSUEB Graduate) who had been in previous musicals I had directed in San Jose. James has since gone on to win the Tony Award as the Genie in Disney's Broadway production of "Aladdin." James was playing 'Comfort Counselor' Mitch Mahoney in "Spelling Bee," and his performance was so perfect that the producers decided to model every subsequent 'Mitch' on James' performance. Another friend in the show was Aaron Albano, who had started out as one of the teenagers in my production of The Music Man that I directed in San Jose, and has since gone on to appear on Broadway in The Wiz, Newsies, and currently in Allegiance. The San Francisco company of "Spelling Bee" was so successful, that the producers ultimately used those actors to replace the Broadway company once the original actors were ready to leave the show. One of those original actors, Sarah Salzburg – the original "Schwarzzy" in 'Spelling Bee' – was the daughter of a good friend of mine. So, yes, Theatre is a very small world indeed, and my associations with this show are many! I loved the show the first time I saw it. Since then, I have seen good productions and bad ones. Now that I'm directing it, it has forced me to ask myself why that first production was both hysterically funny, but also very disturbing. I believe it is because 'Spelling Bee' examines what is the most difficult period of life – adolescence. It does this with great humor but also deep understanding and that's what I want our CSUEB production to be about. Do you remember what adolescence was like? You were no longer a child, but you were not yet a teenager either. You were experiencing the first impulses of puberty, but you didn't even know who you were yet, or who you will become.

(cont on pg 2)

Thoughts on "The Bee" continued

It's a very scary time as you try to negotiate the insecurity of other kids in the same boat (who can be very cruel) in order to become a more mature version of yourself. There are no roadmaps or guidance, and it can be a very lonely time! The 12-year old participants in 'Spelling Bee are all nerds, so they are outcasts from the popular set in their schools. They aren't popular or athletic. They can do one thing well – spell! And that's probably from hours alone while their more popular classmates are hanging out together. We also see that the kids in this show have been damaged by their parents. The abuse can range from complete neglect (Olive), to demands that a child excel in every scholastic area (Marcy), to parents who look at their child more as a project than as a human being (Schwarzzy). I think most people can relate to one of those scenarios. But something amazing happens in the show: the kids find out who they are and what their own values are. So they set themselves on the road to maturity without the help of their parents, and that makes them all winners. If you've never seen this show you are in for some real surprises. 'Spelling Bee is unique in that it includes 4 audience members as contestants in the "Bee." This forces the cast to improvise around the non-actors and it makes every performance completely different. It's scary – just like adolescence! – but the rewards, both in laughs and in forcing us to realize that anyone on that stage could be us, is so worth the journey!

Upcoming Productions

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

Music and Lyrics by William Finn | Book by Rachel Sheinkin

Direction by Marc Jacobs | Musical Direction by Sierra Dee | Choreography by Laura Elaine Ellis

March 4-5 & 11-12 @ 8 PM | March 13 @ 2 PM
University Theatre

In the Beginning, God Created Difference

Original Dance Concert

Produced by Eric Kupers

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

Performance Fusion

Annual Senior Showcase

Produced by Marc Jacobs and Nina Haft

May 27-28 & June 3-4 @ 8 PM | June 5 @ 2 PM
University Theatre

Our Students



Phillip Davis' journey in the CSUEB Theatre/Dance Department has been challenging and yet very rewarding. He started his studies at East Bay in 2013 as a transfer student from Cal State Northridge. He was very shy and doubting his abilities in the arts, until his talents and capabilities were pushed by his professors. Recently he was blessed with the opportunity to be a nominee for the Irene Ryan scholarship for his past performance at CSUEB in one of his favorite musicals "In The Heights!" which addresses many concerns relatable to our community today. He played Benny and was directed by the wonderfully talented Professor Darryl V. Jones. His next show with the University, he will be playing Mitch Mahoney in the musical "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee;" he couldn't ask for a better show to be a part of as his undergraduate academic career concludes. Additionally, Professor Nina Haft asked him to be a part of the CSUEB Holiday Greeting video for President Morishita, which he felt was a huge honor, as having been able to share the stage with other talented dancers and close friends he knows school would not be as enjoyable without them. Other show's he's been a part of this year alone include West Side Story ("Juano") at Broadway By The Bay, Dreamgirls ("CC") at Stage 1 Theatre and was a Follow Spot Operator for Kiss Me Kate at Broadway By The Bay. His plan for the future after graduating in spring 2016 is to take his knowledge and experience and go after his passion and love for theatre and the entertainment industry, whether it leads to stage, film, camera, or tech. Knowing that what he does on stage changes just one life makes him happy and leaves him feeling as though he's found his purpose. They say do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life; this is the motto he chooses to live by. WE PIONEER!

Checking In



Joseph Castillo-Midyett ('04) is currently living, working and auditioning in New York City for TV and Film projects. Joseph's most recent project was an HBO new comedy series, "Divorce". He is currently shooting a comedy film called "Nick and Nicky". He recently wrapped up and has appeared in the Showtime series, "Homeland", The Fox series, "The Following", and the films, "C Street" and "No One Asked Me". He is gearing-up and excited as he nears his goal of being a series regular on a new television show.

Checking In



Darryl V. Jones, Melanie Sutrathada, Laura Ellis, Lauren Herman, Marc Jacobs

Melanie Sutrathada has been working up a storm in New York! In between fashion blogging at LACB(laceandcombatboots.com) and writing for brands like Crossroads Trading Co. and Verizon's go90. Melanie can be seen on screen in the upcoming feature film, Kill It, and the hilarious short film, Match.Comedy. She recently finished wrapping the sequel to the short, On Command, which was a huge success on the festival circuit. The original will be featured next at Miami's Widescreen & Music Video Festival in April. In 2016, Melanie will be focusing on creating new work and is looking to launch her own web series with a brand new production company.

Lauren Herman graduated from CSUEB in 2010 with a BA in Theatre Arts (musical theater emphasis). After completing her MFA in Vocal Performance, Lauren moved to Southern California when she taught private music lessons and worked at Disneyland. Lauren returned to the Bay Area in 2014 and continues to teach private piano, voice, guitar, and cello lessons. She enjoys working both on and off stage. Combining her her passion of working with children with musical theater, she has musically directed productions with Bay Area Educational Theater Company and Hillbarn Theatre's Conservatory program. As a musician, Lauren also had the pleasure of being the cellist for the West Coast Premier of Big Fish with Palo Alto Players. On stage, Lauren most recently appeared in Broadway by the Bay's 60th Anniversary Season productions of Les Miserables, My Fair Lady, and Kiss Me Kate. Lauren can next be seen playing Susan in "Company" with Costal Repertory Theatre in Half Moon Bay, which runs February 5th-28th.

Guest Artists Visit CSUEB



David McCauley is a dancer, choreographer, and theatre artist based out of Berkeley. For the past 15 years, McCauley has served as the Director of the prestigious Alvin Ailey Summer Camp, offering professional-level instruction to middle-school aged children, ages 11-14. AileyCamp instills “Self-esteem, self discipline, creative expression and critical thinking skills,” targeting students at risk of dropping out of school. Through dance, the program provides mentorship, role models, and a creative outlet for children who face such challenges. McCauley also teaches locally, leading the Music of Revelations workshop alongside Melanie DeMore. This workshop for Bay Area dance teachers explores Alvin Ailey’s masterwork “Revelations”; participants explore the spirituals and stories that inspired Ailey and devise choreography from these rich traditions.

Christine Dougherty is an Oakland-based costume designer and artist, specializing in watercolors. Dougherty received her MFA in Theatre at the University of California, San Diego, and is a longtime member of United Scenic Artists Local 829 (Costume Design). Well-known in Bay Area theatre circles, Dougherty’s costume designs enthrall and enrapture audiences. Her work has been seen onstage in *Body Awareness* at Aurora Theatre Company (Berkeley), *Voices in the Dark* at A Contemporary Theatre Company (Seattle), and *The Pillowman* at Denver Center Theater. Her artwork has been displayed in New York, Oregon and California, most recently at Illahe Studios and Gallery (Ashland, OR), and solo shows at Rick and Ann’s (Berkeley) and Solas Brigid Studios (Oakland).



Guest Artists visit CSUEB

Kent Dorsey is both a Scenic and Lighting Designer who has been designing for Theatre and Opera for almost 40 years. Mr. Dorsey has designed over 95 productions at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre. He has also designed at many regional theatres across the United States including; the Kennedy Center, The Ahmanson, Playwrights Horizons, Manhattan Theatre Club, American Conservatory Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Geffen Playhouse, Seattle Repertory Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theater Company, Missouri Repertory Theater, Cleveland Play House, Philadelphia Drama Guild, Alliance Theatre Company, Denver Center Theatre Company and the Los Angeles Theatre Center. Mr. Dorsey has worked as both scenic and/or lighting designer for such notable directors as Jerry Zaks, Jack O'Brien, Ellis Rabb, Adrian Hall, John Hirsch, John Tillinger, Brian Bedford, Edward Payson Call, John Rando, Luis Valdez, Tony Taccone, Richard E.T. White, David Ira Goldstein, Timothy Near and Sharon Ott. Mr. Dorsey has also taught Scenic Design at the University of California, Berkeley and is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829.



Patrick Dooley, the Artistic Director and founder of the Shotgun Players, proudly hails from Pungo, Virginia. He received a BA in English from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia where he was also a founding member of The Shenandoah Shakespeare Express (now American Shakespeare Center). He launched the Shotgun Players in July, 1992 on a whim in the basement of the La Val's Pizzeria in North Berkeley with a production of David Mamet's *Edmond*. Since then he has directed over forty award-winning plays including: *Iphigenia in Aulis*, an original adaptation of Brecht's *Baal*, *The Bacchae*, *Dr. Faustus*, *The Birthday Party*, *Henry V*, and Caryl Churchill's *Skriker & Owners*, the critically praised *Mother Courage and King Lear*. Next up is an original SongPlay by Jason Craig and Dave Malloy entitled *Beardo* chronicling the life of Rasputin as part of a 20th anniversary season of five commissions. Under his direction Shotgun has received critical recognition for many of its works including The Bay Area Critic's Circle for Best Overall Production in 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2008 and the prestigious Glickman Award for the best new play to premiere in the Bay Area in 2004 and 2008. He also received the Barbara Bladen Porter award for bringing innovation and enthusiasm to new works and classics in 2002. In Summer of 2007 Shotgun concluded a successful capital campaign to become the nation's first 100% solar-powered theatre. He is happily married to Kimberly Dooley and is blessed with three beautiful daughters Penelope, Josephine and Lila Rose.

Guest Artists Visit CSUEB



Velina Brown is an award winning actress, singer/songwriter, and director whose artistic home for the past 20 years has been with the Tony and Obie award winning San Francisco Mime Troupe. You may also have seen her at the American Conservatory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Center Rep, The Magic Theatre, Theatre Rhino, TheatreWorks, Shotgun Players, Central Works, SF Playhouse, and The Denver Theatre Center among many others. You may have also seen her on television shows such as Final Witness, Party of Five, Nash Bridges and Trauma and in films such as Bee Season, Maladaptive, Playing it Cool and Milk.

Velina's specialty is collaborating on new work and work with a social consciousness that informs and inspires as well as entertains. Velina is also a career coach for actors. In addition to occasional feature articles for Theatre Bay Area Magazine she also writes a monthly advice column called The Business of Show Biz named after her coaching practice. And she is a proud member of the founding faculty for TBA's ATLAS Program and a contributing author to the new ATLAS Manual: Charting an Artist's Career Map <https://theatrebayarea.site-ym.com/store/ViewProduct.aspx> For more info. please visit www.velinabrown.com

Ms. Brown will be facilitating a workshop, "The Business of Show Biz", where she will share her skills and expertise on how to market your self as a working Theatre Artist.

Amy Potozkin is an Artistic Associate and has been Casting Director at Berkeley Repertory Theatre for over 25 years. Ms. Potozkin has also lent her casting skills to other theatres such as ACT (Seattle), Arizona Theatre Company, Aurora Theatre Company, Sacramento's B Street Theatre, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Dallas Theater Center, Marin Theatre Company, The Marsh S.F., San Jose Rep, Social Impact Productions Inc., Traveling Jewish Theatre. Additionally, she has served as casting consultant for the film Conceiving Ada, starring Tilda Swinton, two Josh Kornbluth films including Haiku Tunnel and Love and Taxes and San Francisco casting for the feature film Beyond Redemption by Britta Sjogren. Ms. Potozkin is also a Performance Coach to hundreds of actors and business people. She has taught acting at Mills College and workshops at Berkeley Rep's School of Theatre, as well as various other venues in the Bay Area. Amy received her MFA from Brandeis University, where she was also an artist-in-residence. Ms. Potozkin is a member of the Casting Society of America and a recent Artios Award nominee for Outstanding Achievement in Casting.



Guest Artists Visit CSUEB



Director, producer, actor, and instructor **M. Graham Smith** is involved in multiple platforms here in the Bay Area, teaching at the American Conservatory Theater's (A.C.T.), actor training programs in San Francisco and at Waterfront Playhouse and Conservatory in Berkeley. He has been a guest instructor at San Francisco State University, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Berkeley Playhouse and CSSSA at Cal Arts. Smith has also taught internationally, having lectured at Assumption University in Bangkok, and is the current Director of Movement and Voice in Barcelona's premier Meisner Program. In addition to his teaching, Smith is the producer of Aurora Theatre's Global Age Project, and works with PlayGround in San Francisco. Smith's training in diverse international physical disciplines and traditions has lent him a unique perspective on the needs of a dynamic, articulate, and physical actor. His credentials include training from the Dell'arte School of Physical Theatre, Trinity University Dublin's Leqoc program, and tutelage in Bali, Indonesia with master teachers of the Balinese Mask Form. Bay Area residents may have seen Smith's directorial work recently with Shotgun Players' production of Aphra Behn's *The Rover*. Other notable works include the West Coast Premiere of Jerry Springer: *The Opera* in San Francisco, *Sidewinders* for Cutting Ball Theater, *The Liar* (adapted by David Ives) for Occidental College (as an Edgerton Foundation director-in-residence), and Truffaldino Says No for Shotgun Players.

Off Campus

Professor Darryl V. Jones will be the Equity Guest in the Theatre Rhinoceros production West Coast Premiere of *The Call* by Tanya Barfield. He will be performing the role of Alemu, an immigrant from Ethiopia. Alemu left his country as people all around him were dying from "the slim" AIDS; he still carries the guilt and pain of not being able to help.

The Call

By Tanya Barfield | Directed by Jon Wai-keung Lowe

When Annie and Peter decide to adopt, they come to set their sights on a child from Africa. But when the reality of this choice sinks in, it opens a well of uncertainty that speaks to their very identity as White Americans. Politically-charged and tack-sharp, *The Call* is a startling portrait of cultural divide, casting global issues into the heart of an American home. Should they conceive or should they adopt? And what do their lesbian friends think? And the strange man from Africa, what's his advice?

Eureka Theatre

215 Jackson Street, SF, 94111

February 20 - March 12

Featured Faculty



Laura Elaine Ellis

BREATHE, RELAX, and HAVE FUN! It is the message I share with students, repeatedly, during the first few days of classes. I encourage them to embrace what is taking place in the moment: to notice what comes easy, what is challenging, and to find joy in the experience. Well – breathe, relax, have fun...this became my personal mantra for most of 2015 – it was a whirlwind year and one filled with many new experiences – all of which had moments of challenge, scared me...just a bit...but ultimately brought me joy and made the year memorable! It is February, 2015 and I'm geared up to present the 11th Annual Black Choreographers Festival. Following an ultra successful ten year anniversary season, the pressure to deliver something strong and worthy of beginning the next decade was upon me, so I decided to take some chances!

Now I had to deliver...right?...BREATHE!!!

For the first time in the eleven years of curating I really opened up the space for new works, and new voices – unique, provocative and all works were Bay Area premieres! Robert Moses showing first peeks of his dynamic work *SILT*, Gregory Dawson revealing the first of his triptych *Drop, Dent, Bend*, Crystal Brown, from New York, dazzling the audience with her brilliant wit and powerful dancing, emerging artist Nafi Watson with her edgy piece about sexual assault, and the soulful Antoine Hunter presenting a stunning solo that he created with collaborator Ellen Sebastian Chang. But what was most exciting was the way in which I was able to involve our CSUEB Alum and current students. In BCF 2015 – on stage: Brontez Purnell, Noah James, Shawn Hawkins, Phylicia Stroud – who was featured in SF Chronicle's 96 hours, and Christopher Scarver, who received a mention from critic Allan Ullrich -

a brilliant solo by Christopher Scarver, who dances on pointe in running shoes." And behind the scenes, making the production flow with grace and ease were CSUEB's own Caitlin Greene – stage manager, Shawn Hawkins – production crew, and Jalila and Janeesha Johnson -production managers It all came together beautifully – inspiring Denise Pate-Pearson, Cultural Funding Program Coordinator with the City of Oakland, to write:

I attended the February 28, 2015 performance of Black Choreographers' Festival, and was thoroughly impressed with the curation, production quality, and high level-artistry of the concert. You all did a fine job of bringing some of the best and the brightest Black choreographers to present this year. The dancing was so good that sometimes I wanted to shout (or snap my fingers!), because those performers and choreographers were truly giving us their best. The BCF has really matured and I'm so pleased that you have been able to continue to give choreographers and performers a venue for their work. Bravo!

RELAX – well perhaps, if it weren't for the fact that while I was producing BCF, I was also working with Professor Darryl Jones on the musical production, *In the Heights* – one of the most challenging musicals we have worked on together since *Sophisticated Ladies*.

(cont. on next page)

Featured Faculty Continued

It was a thrill co-choreographing with Jones and Cat Delos Santos, and it was an absolute blast for me to work on this production. *In the Heights* is one of my all-time favorite musicals. I saw the Broadway and touring productions in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles, respectively, totaling six performances. Got to know the cast members and my son Jordon once jammed with Lin-Manuel Miranda backstage on *96,000* – Jordon rappin' and cast members grooving the backgrounds...it was AWESOME. Also awesome were our students performing brilliantly in our CSUEB production in March. I'm so happy about what we were able to accomplish.

HAVE FUN...Yes indeed! Because the rest of the year came with unexpected pleasures, in the right timing, making all of it a sheer JOY! Here are just a few of the highlights:

April

Robert Moses' commissioned work for Alvin Ailey American Dance Company has its Bay area premiere. (I serve as a RMK board member.)

May

BCF's Artists Mentoring Program (AMP) kicks off for 2015-16. Sponsored Artists: Joslynn Mathis-Reed, Erik Lee w/Justin Sharlman, and Dazaun Soleyn. Mentors: Deborah Brooks Vaughan, Gregory Dawson, Joanna Haigood, w/adjunct mentors Raissa Simpson and Robert Moses. (Co-director of AMP)

June

We the People as a work-in-progress is collaboratively created and performed by a dynamic group of CSUEB students from the Theater & Dance Department. This work, which intersects social justice and artistic practice and is in response to violence against brown and black bodies, is slated to premiere at CSUEB in April 2016! (I serve as mentor, director, and co-creator/collaborator)

Surprise, Surprise – I'm attending the dedication ceremony for a mural project in Oakland – right across the street from the Malonga Casquelourd Center and see that my image is part of the mural! What??? Wow!

July/August

BCF receives a substantial Zellerbach Grant to present BCF: Oakland Summer Series featuring premieres by Raissa Simpson, Gregory Dawson, Robert Moses, and Antoine Hunter. It garnered raved reviews. (I served as grant writer, curator, and artistic director.)

CounterPULSE Theater has an event to show the progress of their new theater space at 80 Turk. And though construction on the new theater has caused a delay in the theater opening, which has been really challenging, being a part of this project has been an unbelievable journey of learning. (Chair of the CP Board)

September

Douglass Morrison Theater hires me to choreograph the zany production of *Love's Labour's Lost, the musical*. A Bay Area debut of this brand new musical. Fun, fun, fun!!!!

BCF partners with West Wave Dance Festival and curates a BCF Evening featuring BCF AMP artists: Erik Lee w/ Justin Sharlman, Joslynn Mathis-Reed, Dazaun Soleyn. Antoine Hunter, Phylicia Stroud, and Gregory Dawson also present works. Nearly sold –out house and folks LOVED this concert at Z-Space in San Francisco. (I was curator and artistic director for the evening.)

October

Dimensions Dance Theater premieres *The Town on Notice* and CSUEB was well represented: Dorcas Sims Mba, Justin Sharlman, Phylicia Stroud, Mari Hester, many of our current students, alum, and faculty attended and I had an amazing time collaborating with the other Dimensions' company members on the choreography for this work.

November

In Dance invites me to write an article for their *SPEAK* series to be featured in the Jan/Feb issue. I write a piece called *In the Spirit of Sankofa* about the history, present, and future of the Black Choreographers Festival. In *Dance* - <http://dancersgroup.org/2016/01/speak-black-choreographers-festival-spirit-sanfoka/>

December

Stance On Dance's editor/writer Emmaly Wiederholt sends a final draft of the chapter she wrote about me: *Standing on Shoulders*, for me to proof and to approve as this chapter will be included in her, *Dancing Over 50 Project*, which features an impressive list of West Coast dance artists, including CSUEB colleague, Nina Haft, still kicking up their heels at 50+

Stance on Dance: Website link: <http://stanceondance.com/dancing-over-50/>

From the *Dancing Over 50 Project: Standing on Shoulders*

What advice would you give to a younger generation of dancers?

Being fearless is not an overstatement. You have to go for what scares you. At times, I've failed miserably, and other times I've crossed the threshold and had a brilliant experience. Both are important, but risk-taking is integral to get anywhere.

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

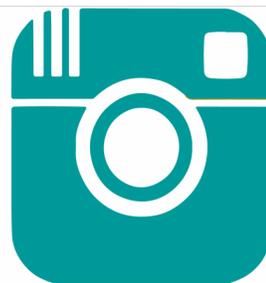
Impact Theatre

Nina Haft and Company

Shawl-Anderson Dance Center

The Lorraine Hansberry Theatre

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We are always seeking volunteer ushers for shows. If you are interested please call the Theatre and Dance office at 510.885.3118

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

BOX OFFICE INFO

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Online Ticket Purchase: www.csueastbaytickets.com

On Campus Ticket Purchase: Hayward Campus Pioneer Bookstore