

Boston University Dance Theatre Group Alumni Newsletter



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a Note From Micki

Hello DTGers,

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I hope this finds you well. This fall has me thinking backwards and forwards. It was delightfully overwhelming to hear from and see alumni here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of DTG's founding. There was a lot of laughter in the Saturday all-are-welcome class I taught with ages spanning from 3 months to the undisclosed age of a couple of faculty. At brunch on Sunday, the conversation with alum from the 1990's took a deep-dive into giving and receiving feedback at the showings. I was grateful for the opportunity to learn what folks are up to as well as hear their DTG memories. I've announced that I'll be retiring in the summer of 2025 though my plan is to keep teaching the dance theory classes through College of Fine Arts (CFA). That will be 40 years, folks, and a good time to refocus.

We've had some news that will bring big changes to Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. The University will announce sometime soon the policy change that all PDP classes will no longer be offered for credit, effective Fall 2024. Our existing PDP programming will be divided into two formats: progressive courses (most of our classes) and those designed for drop-in, for no additional cost. Through the expanded options, the University ultimately hopes to serve more students. This will impact our PDP DA classes, likely some of our noncredit classes, and the dance minor. Our PERD department and CFA have been asked to determine how to make this work so students benefit from this change. More to come on this subject.

One change I've been discussing with colleagues and alumni is the dip in enrollment for upper-level technique classes. Some students have told me that to effectively manage their time, they are making a choice between taking technique class and being in a student company; often the performance opportunity wins the debate. You might think – don't you have to be in technique class in order to improve as a performer? A colleague from Arizona State University blamed it on TikTok. Hmmm. It will be interesting to see how the new no credit policy impacts enrollment and participation in technique classes where we can say there is an attendance policy, but there are no grades; dance minors will still be expected to come to class regularly!

I hope your memories of DTG conjure up fond recollections of being in the studio together and of the friendships that resulted. For those who are able to support Friends of DTG, many thanks!

Dance on!

Micki

Dance Theatre Group Happenings

Sophie Bush ('24)

DTG is back in the swing of things after a successful 50th Anniversary Celebration and a much-needed summer break. We have had quite a few changes in EBoard since three of our previous EBoard members graduated and one is studying abroad! We miss them all dearly, but know we will see them soon. This is my first semester as President and my Vice President is Erin Mahoney. Taylor Coester is back on EBoard as our Public Relations Chair and Lavinia Kosher continues her role as Concert Coordinator. We are all in our fourth semester on EBoard (having started our sophomore year), so it is surreal to be almost at our fifth and final semester! Nina McCarthy is also continuing her position as Stage Manager and we also have three new faces on EBoard! Colleen Fetherston joins us as our Treasurer, Sadie Lozano-Mieles as our

Secretary, and Gina Dacey as our Social Media Coordinator.

We began the semester with our first general meeting (we had a 70+ person turn out!) followed by a wonderful Modern masterclass from Micki Taylor-Pinney. Our second masterclass was Improv and Composition taught by Liz Roncka which, as always, was a favorite class for many and extremely helpful to choreographers. We then delved into a peaceful Pilates session with Amane Takaishi, followed by a lively Hip-Hop class with Izaiah Lawton which had everyone sweating and smiling. We then held a lighting workshop with Lynda Rieman and DeAnna Pellecchia, and our next class was structured improv with Erin McNulty which was performed at Motion Art in 808 Gallery shortly after!

Motion Art was an excellent display of the artistic talent of the Boston area. It featured many skilled performers and mediums, and was followed by a unique Halloween bonding event: Trick-or-Treating at DTGers apartments! But you can hear all about that later in the newsletter in Erin's article. Our final masterclass will be on November 9th, where we will brush up on our ballet technique just in time for Origins with a ballet masterclass taught by Olga Marchenko.

Sadly, no ACDA conferences are taking place near us this year, so instead we are helping the dance program bring LaTasha Barnes to BU for an artist residency in the spring! We are so excited to hopefully see some of you at Origins in a couple weeks, and as always the entire cast is pumped for cast party ;)

<u>Motion Art</u>

Erin Mahoney ('24)

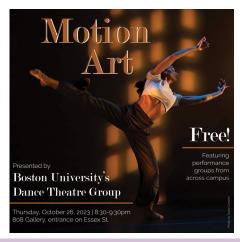
Motion Art is back again! This year, Motion Art returned to the 808 Art Gallery October 26th from 8:30-9:30pm. After the success of last semester, we're grateful the 808 Art Gallery offered to host us once again. From October 10th to December 9th, the 808 Gallery will display the Boston Printmakers 2023 North American Print Biennial. We're so excited be able to dance and interact with this incredible space.

The night began with a piece directed by faculty member, Erin McNulty. Every year in the hour leading up to Motion Art, DTG members structure an improvisation piece to be performed immediately after, as part of the performance. We invited performance groups from across campus to come and collaborate with us, and they did a fantastic job! We'll heard the tunes from Suno, BU's premiere South Asian/Western Fusion acapella group and The Dear Abbeys, BU's premiere all-male acapella group. The

<u>Why We Need Your Support</u>

Dear Abbey's set finished with a with beatbox solo by their member Alan Hu. Alan's beatboxing skills were jaw dropping and really amped up the crowd. Many BU dance groups made an appearance as well! Afrithms, BU's premiere African dance troupe, performed a high energy and entertaining school-themed piece. Bulletproof Funk, BU's premiere breaking and street dance group, used a cypher to show of the impressive skills of their members. Annie Lin performed a graceful Chinese Traditional Dance solo. We were even able to bring back an excerpt of a crowd favorite from Visions 2023, titled "Pirates of the Charles" choreographed by BU student Anya Melnyk. DTG President Sophie Bush ended the evening by teaching the audiences a line dance to Big & Rich's "Save a Horse Ride a Cowboy." The audience had a blast and it was a great way to end the night. During the performance, MassArt student Elise Carlin created a work based on her perception of the the structured improv.

After the event, DTG went trick or treating! DTG's Vice President Erin Mahoney guided members on a trick or treat scavenger hunt. Many DTG members kindly volunteered their apartments as stops on the tour around campus. It was a night full of riddles, candy, and Halloween fun!



Sadie Lozano-Mieles ('24)

As our golden anniversary draws to a close, Dance Theatre Group continues to transcend the expectations of the dance community. As a means through which students can immerse themselves into an array of opportunities, Dance Theatre Group enables dancers to learn alongside one another. In order to continue fulfilling our mission to the best of our abilities, we graciously ask for your assistance.

Per one of our many traditions, we proudly provide masterclasses with a guest artist that all BU students are welcome to attend. It is through these classes that our members connect with and learn from exceptional professionals, each representative of a different dance genre. Not only do these classes serve their educational purpose and welcome all levels and backgrounds, they also designate a time for student bonding. Your \$500 donation can help us sustain this tradition. Our excitement builds as we approach the

end-of-the-semester show, Origins 2023! After a semester of auditions, rehearsals, and showings with our mentors, Micki Taylor-Pinney, Liz Roncka, and Ann Brown Allen, we look forward to November 17th and 18th more than anything! It is truly remarkable to see student choreographer's creative processes come life in their own original pieces through each of their dancer's interpretations. We are pleased to announce that we will be holding three performances in total. Because of this, a higher rental price for the dance theatre is required. Your donation can help alleviate the cost.

Dance Theatre Group is thrilled to announce that we will be hosting a multi-day artist residency in March with LaTasha Barnes. Residencies provide dancers with opportunities to work alongside seasoned choreographers outside of their typical classroom setting. LaTasha Barnes, a prominent choreographer known for her work and research on vernacular jazz, will be facilitating a structured improvisation for our members, as well as visiting various classes, from within the classroom to inside the studio, and so much more! It is with your support that creative endeavors like this can continue. Your donation will help cover the \$5,000 expense needed to make this possible.

We want to express our gratitude in advance, for any contribution in support of the future of our dance community at BU. It is your continued support, as alumni and donors, that allows Dance Theatre Group to take the very same passion that interconnects all of us, and foster the next generation of dancers. In its outstanding half-a-century run, our community has thrived in its mission. It is because of you that Dance Theatre Group is able to connect individuals who wish to continue their dance journey beyond college. With your help, all our shared ambitions and endeavors can become a reality.

CONTRIBUTE TODAY!

Visit www.bu.edu/fitrec/dance/ donate, select Terrier Pride Giving, and designate your gift to Friends of BU Dance Theatre Group (4021-3)

Mail your donation to BU Dance Program,

attn. Friends of BU Dance Theatre Group, 915 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215



Photo by Erin Mahoney

<u>Origins 2023</u>

Nina McCarthy ('26)

We are back with our Origins 2023 production! Get ready for an exciting and dynamic weekend of performances stacked with many new and returning DTG will once again be choreographers. holding three shows: one on Friday, November 17 at 8pm and two on Saturday November 18th at 4 and 8pm. Our 16 student choreographers will be exhibiting pieces in ballet, modern, contemporary, jazz, and jazz From large, bold group pieces to funk. intimate but captivating small group pieces, Origins 2023 will dazzle you with stunning technique, deep artistry, profound emotion, and astonishing creativity.

One of our first time choreographers, Marjorie's Vasquez, has created a contemporary/modern piece with the theme of longing. She has elegantly constructed a duality between desire and frustration, experimenting with interesting shapes to evoke emotions of yearning. For the lovers of ballet, Zoë Kashin, a second year grad student will brighten the stage with her birdlike ballet set to light, happy music and with sharp, quick movement. Returning choreographer and VP of DTG Erin Mahoney will have the audience unable to resist tapping their feet along to her high energy jazz piece. Watch as her dancers use patterns, musicality, and contrast between smooth extended movement and moments of playful humor. Contrarily, Portia Lee will be tapping into raw emotion with their contemporary piece based on bipolar disorder. She includes a mix of duets, solos, and intricate group sections that reflect inner turmoil.

One of our highly revered choreographers, known for her incredible storytelling and staging, Anya Melnyk, will once again create a jaw-dropping contemporary piece set to mysterious and eerie music with complex lifts and fierce acting, based on a Ukrainian story about a man who is lured and cursed by a group of "Mavka" spirits for his crimes.

We will deeply miss our senior choreographers and dancers as we pay homage to them in these final performances here at BU. All but one of our choreographers are in their last year, and they have spent their past four years training and refining their choreographic skills. Do not miss the expertise of these choreographers, their amazing dancer technique, and creative passion within DTG this semester.

There is incredible versatility and talent at this concert. Each piece pushes the limits of its style, so there is something for everyone. You will be on the edge of your seat. Origins 2023 has it all.



Poster by **Taylor Coester ('24)**, photo by Lilia Akina-Magnussen (@image.by.lia)

Aurora Borealis and the Return of Aerial Dance!

Gina Dacey ('24)



Photo by Olivia Moon Photography (@halfasianlens)

This year marks the 21st annual "Aurora Borealis: A Festival of Light and Dance," presented by BU's College of Fine Arts and the Physical Department of Education, Recreation, and Dance. Aurora Borealis includes performances from both credit and non-credit dance courses by students and faculty. The performances highlight the importance of the relationship between light and movement with two graduate students in the School of Theatre Lighting Design Program as the lighting designers. DTG's own Micki Taylor-Pinney is an artistic co-director, along with Yo-EL Cassell. One-hour shows will take place on Monday, December 4 at 7pm and 9pm in the BU Dance Theater. They are free to the public, and no tickets are required. You won't want to miss it... aerial choreography is back this year for the first time since COVID!

The return of aerial choreography to Aurora Borealis isn't the only major aerial comeback of the year: Youth Aerial Dance is back as well! The program returned with new instructor Molly Rainis on October 14th and will continue to run through November 18th. Molly is an award-winning Silks Aerialist having trained, choreographed, and taught at Florida Aerial Dance and Circus Arts, and BU Dance is so excited to have her. If you live in the Boston area and have kids aged 7-10, keep your eyes peeled for announcements of a new session!

As a reminder, if you are interested in aerial dance, we run Aerial Dance and other related non-credit classes each semester. They are open to for anyone to sign up for, so give one a try in the spring!

Calendar of Events

Dance Theatre Group Origins 2023 — November 17 at 8pm, November 18 at 4pm & 8pm

Aurora Borealis — December 4, 7pm and 9pm

See bu.edu/fitrec/dance for more details

Directed to Fly: Excerpt from the BU Dance Blog

Sadie Lozano-Mieles ('24)

Four years into my college career, I stand face -to-face with a challenge unlike any I have encountered before. And no, it's not one of the assignments pertaining to the myriad of pre-medical courses that I've resigned my fate to nor an hour-long presentation on a scientific paper written in such neuro-specific jargon that lead me to question if that's even my major.

As part of just the second assignment for my directed study in choreography course, I am to pick a site in FitRec – any space that I can conjure up confined only by the walls of the building – and choreograph a piece rooted in the exploration of that given space. To an individual who has never composed a dance piece before, the task seems difficult, if not insurmountable – at least at first.

Its premise was incredibly intriguing, to essentially choreograph a piece, with a distinct beginning, middle, and end, that interacts in the given space in a way that it cannot be replicated elsewhere in the building. As I work my way through the assignment, I find that the hardest part is choosing the space I am to perform alongside.

After mulling over the various ideas for locations I immediately envision, I narrow it

down to a space that should not be all too inconvenient to the people of FitRec, and land on the space on the lowest level, surrounded by the squash courts, staircase, and water fountain. It is a space that I choose because of the two benches perched on either side of a trash bin, an odd choice to say the least.

Surprisingly, the part that I discovered to be the easiest was the story that seemed to fall organically into place once I established that I would be exploring my environment through my interaction with the benches. The process of creating is a grueling one, one that definitely left me open to a vulnerability that I have never experienced before. I start lying on my back on the bench and somehow find my way where I find myself most comfortable: the floor. The outstretching of an arm and the deepening of a plié later, and slowly it becomes apparent that the next challenge is going to be composing in the deafening silence.

Written somewhere in the assigned pages of Doris Humphrey's The Art of Making Dances, she likens asking a dancer to choreograph for the first time to taking away all the comforts the dancer has and suddenly directing them to fly. I can now confidently say I thoroughly agree.

As I present my site-specific piece to my Instructor and classmate, we run through various alternatives to my ending that add terminating punctuation to the interaction between the bench and myself. Two passersby watch on as I, in my stressed state, struggle to remember the choreography that I designed, but I push through the initial discomfort. As the assignment draws to a close, I learn that something as seemingly minor as a tilt of the head or a change in focus could completely sway the intention of the entire piece. I have so much to learn on my journey to composing my first piece, but I am thrilled to embrace the uncomfortable and grow from the confrontation.



Photo taken by Haley Abram at Motion Art 2016 of a collaboration between The Dear Abbeys and DTG

Spotlight On: Liz Roncka, Assistant Coordinator of Dance!

Colleen Fetherston ('24)



Liz Roncka with the DTG Spring 2023 EBoard, taken by Maximal Image

Dance Theatre Group alum, Liz Roncka, has been supporting dancers at BU as both a mentor for DTG and as a teacher and founder of a unique non-credit class. Liz started

New email? Make sure to let us know!

Contact BU Dance at 617-353-1597 or budance@bu.edu with the update teaching Pole Dance Circuit at BU in the spring of 2018 after unexpectedly discovering a love for the style. About ten years ago she was involved in an improv piece with a friend who showed her a dance by Janine Butterfly which inspired her to find a local pole studio and try it for herself because, as Liz mentioned, she "could bring all [her] dancing skills but then add this aerial element" which added a new depth to her dancing. Since then, she has developed both love and incredible skill in the technique and she recently competed in her first pole competition just last year after discovering how supportive the pole community is. Liz explained that there are both national and international competitions and conventions in which dancers are able to showcase their skill across a variety of styles and techniques. Coming up in November is the Northeast Pole Sport Organization competition but rather than competing as she did last year, Liz is instead interested in showcasing a piece of choreography she has been working on at the International Pole Convention in June. She will be sending in a

video of her work for consideration to perform at PoleCon for members of the pole community from all over the world. Liz's passion for pole, and dance as a whole, reflects in her commitment to her classes as well as her valuable support and encouragement as a mentor. It is always exciting to see DTG alum pursuing their continued interests in dance, especially when it is one of our very own mentors!



Liz Roncka demonstrating a trick to her Pole non-credit class; Photo taken by Olivia Moon Photography (@halfasianlens)

Faculty Updates

Ramelle Adams spent much of her summer managing tennis classes on the outdoor courts during track and tennis court reconstruction, which turned out to be quite eventful! She dodged thunderstorms and retrieved tennis balls through the perimeter fence at a rate of 40 per night. Ramelle even brought clippers to help cut back trees on the north perimeter so herself and other employees could get to the balls. One of her more creative feats was rigging up a tennis net out of kids nets when the adult net fell on the court after the first week. She looks forward to house managing again for Origins 2023 and seeing what DTG has been up to this semester. Her son Jesse performed at Brighton Music Hall with Rick Berlin and the Nickle and Dime Band, and has even started a new band of his own! Kaitlyn. her daughter, has enjoyed her first year at Abrams Capital and is looking forward to a trip to Portugal this fall.

Ann Brown Allen is happy to teach 5 Pilates mat classes and 2 apparatus classes. Her students are great and her colleagues are generous. She is honored to mentor Dance Theater Group this semester. Ann serves on the board of Mass Movement which supports the Reach program and several residencies in several school systems. She is also a board member of Rehearsal for Life which supports Urban Improv and The Freelance Players. The latter is 50 years old. As a board member of The Dance Complex, she's helping to introduce the dance community to A Year of Illuminating Dance. Ann is performing again with Peter DiMuro's Public Displays of Motion and just completed a 6 month project on the Rose Kennedy Greenway. There's more to come over the X-mas holiday. Ann is looking forward to the rest of the semester.



Ann Brown Allen and Judth Chaffee at the Boston Dance Alliance awards ceremony , where Ann was awarded the Dance Champion Award

Margot Parsons spent eight weeks in the summer teaching for the Adult Dance Program at Boston Ballet in both the downtown and Newton studios. She also subbed for adult and teen classes at Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre in Cambridge and taught for the children's camp at BU. Four dancers met regularly for several months to learn a new piece of choreography that was supposed to be presented in Dance for World Community. When that event was canceled due to rain the piece was presented, thank you to Lynda Rieman, at the BU Dance Theater with dancers Lavinia Kosher, Christine McDowell, Elizabeth Rookey, and Amane Takaishi. The book Margot is coauthoring is still in progress as is her learning to play the piano. She continues to take class and choreograph, to sub for classes in the Boston dance community, and best of all to teach the energetic, skilled, and thoughtful dancers who are in the MWF class at BU.

Lynda Rieman has had a very busy year managing all the bookings at the Dance Theater and assisting with PERD Credit Programming. It was so busy that she actually shut down in June and was forced to spend time in the hospital. She is grateful for all the work that Micki, Stephanie, Erin, Ambria, Bill, Ramelle and Jasmine did to manage the theater in her absence. Happily we have created a new part time position for the dance theater and have just recently hired Cole Ellsworth to fill it. He starts this week as our new part time Technical Director/Facility Manager.



Aiko Ruch (SAR '05,'07), Gabrielle Orcha (CFA '06), and Aiko's daughter visited Micki at FitRec last May!

It's another busy fall for Liz Roncka with the ever-expanding non-credit dance program. Liz was thrilled to welcome both a new Pole Dance Circuit instructor and two new instructors to the Aerial program. The Pilates Apparatus classes are overflowing with interest. She is especially excited to see the return of the Aerial Choreo class which will generate several performance pieces for Aurora Borealis in December. She continues to enjoy mentoring DTG along with Micki and Ann. Outside of work, Liz continues to feed her curiosity about the human body and is currently enrolled in a 10-week course with the Circus Doc, Emily Sherb, DPT which focuses on the prevention, assessment, and treatment of injuries in circus artists. She continues to explore her passion for pole dance and is currently working on a new piece which she hopes to perform at the International Pole Convention next spring. And when the day is done, she is always happy to return home to her four felines: two elder cats and two eight-monthold kittens.



Micki Taylor-Pinney and Charles Howes (CAS '09) reunited in Maine

Micki Taylor-Pinney enjoyed her two New England vacations this summer. Much time was spent nature bathing with her husband, reading, and finding patios/docks for her yoga practice. She was pleased to be able to see two alumni in Maine in August: Claire Enterline, her husband and son, and Charles Howes and his husband. She was proud of the summer outreach program company. Reach. and the work they did at urban camps and community centers. She loved working with the super talented group of professionals, teen apprentices, and college interns, including two BU college students. Her fall schedule is in full swing; working with the beginning modern students is delightful. The aesthetics class includes half with dance experience and half without, some of whom have never been to a dance concert. This is delightful in a different way! The reports she gets from the teachers she places in residencies through her nonprofit, Mass Movement, Inc. is a reminder of how valuable dance education is for kids. She's in planning mode for how the Reach Pedagogy Intensive can be developed to provide support for dance educators.

<u>Alumni Updates</u>

After the DTG reunion, **Susanne** (Losquadro) Budofsky ('92) wrote..."Had a very fun weekend in Boston celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the BU Dance Theatre Group. Got to hang with my dance friends who I haven't seen in 30 years and my dance teachers who had such a huge influence on me. We laughed a lot, saw the current DTG performance, and even took a Micki Taylor-Pinney dance class together. Yes I'm sore and can barely walk today but it was worth it."

Meredith Butulis (SAR '01, '03) misses everyone in Boston! Meredith and her research team just published their second original research study in the Journal of Dance Medicine & Science. The full article is available for free online:

Butulis MN, Fedor BJ, McGaver RS. Adolescent Dance Team Fitness: Initial Quantitative Normative Values. Journal of Dance Medicine & Science. 2023;27(2):66 -73. doi:10.1177/1089313X231177159

Steph Creary (SAR '98, '00) married Hugo De La O (a painter-sculptor) on October 6, 2023 (also Stephanie's birthday!). They had a beautiful wedding in Las Vegas (Steph's hometown). There was A LOT of dancing accompanied by a string quartet, band, and a DJ. In preparation for their first dance ("Make You Feel My Love" by Adele), Steph and Hugo took ballroom dance lessons which Steph hadn't tried since DTG class in 2000. Steph and Hugo

are temporarily living in Boston while Steph is a fellow at the Harvard Business School Institute for the Study of Business in Global Society. They will be returning to Philly in July 2024 where Steph is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. Steph and Hugo are also co -founders of The Creary De La O Family Foundation, which funds innovative artistic and scientific programs to help solve challenges facing Black/African and Hispanic/Latino American communities.



Photo taken at Steph's wedding by Elizabeth Le Photography

https://www.crearydelao.org/

Zeina Fayad (SAR '20) graduated from MGH Institute of Health Professions with a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy. "My thesis focused on refugee caregivers living in Jordan, and their perception of using mindfulness as a coping strategy with their children - I will be presenting this in March at the AOTA National Conference. I now work at the Lab School of Washington in DC as a Middle and Upper School OT. I teach dance here at the Lab School, as well as at Bethesda Conservatory of Dance."

Meghan Riling (CAS '09, SED '20) is now in her second year of working as an Assistant Professor of the Practice in math education at Vanderbuilt University. She has gotten to know a lot of the student dancers and started advising the undergraduate tap dance club and teaching a dance pedagogy class, where she has been able to enjoy sharing so much of what she learned in DTG with her students. "My son Cashel just turned 3 and loves to dance, and is quite certain he's amazing at ballet and pirouettes - but I think he's more of a modern dance guy."



Photo of Meghan's son Cashel in excellent modern form

50th Anniversary Photos: Thank you for attending!



BU Friends of Dance Donation History 1996-2023

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Thank you all for your never-ending support!