

Boston University Dance Theatre Group

Alumni Newsletter



Vol. 60 Fall 2024

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a Note From Micki

Hello DTGers

I hope this finds you healthy and well. This summer, I had the pleasure of welcoming 30 educators, experienced and new to teaching, presenters and participants, to our one-week Pedagogy Intensive. The teachers' workshop is an evolution and refocusing of the Summer Outreach/Teen Apprentice Dance Program model that Reach had for over 30 years. One of my take aways was how I could do better at creating a culture where those with different learning styles and backgrounds can feel safe and ready to learn. We were introduced to lots of ideas and resources. It had me questioning - how open am I to adjusting or upending the way I teach?

A common thread from the Summer Reach Pedagogy Intensive, my teaching this fall, and mentoring for DTG is how we create an environment that is conducive to learning.

As BU removed credits from our PDP classes, I've been watching and listening to instructors and students to decipher what keeps students coming to class. How are instructors adapting their teaching styles now that we've moved from an academic to recreational model? What information should we collect to help us?

At the DTG reunion last year, some alum got into a lively debate about how the feedback sessions. There were some recollections of things said by mentors, remembered word for word years later! I was touched hearing how many felt the showings were an experience that positively impacted their personal and professional lives, specifically how they give and receive criticism. I appreciate the responsibility I bear as a mentor to frame and offer feedback and the opportunities I have for learning, too.

As I approach retirement from full time work this summer, what it is I want to be learning? In the meantime, I fully intend to revel in being a part of this community of learning.

Thank you for being a part of the DTG community and staying in touch.

With love and best wishes,

Dance Theatre Group Happenings

Kimberly Andrade ('23)

After a much-needed summer break, DTG is back and ready for a great semester! This semester we have an entire new slate on EBoard since so many of the previous years' EBoard graduated. We miss the class of 2024 already but know we will see them soon! This is my first semester as President, and my Vice President is Destiny Cruz. Kassidy Coon is back on EBoard in a new role working alongside Belén Degener as Co-Concert Coordinators, and Tori Lyn Hoke is back as DEI Chair & Social Media Assistant. We also have five new faces joining us on EBoard this semester! Gigi Nardo joins us as Treasurer, Ilana Weil as our Secretary,

Sofia Harris as our Social Media Coordinator, Nora Sleiman as Show Manager, and Georgia Doherty as our Public Relations Chair.

We began the semester as we always do, with our first general meeting followed by a Modern Master class with the amazing Micki Taylor-Pinney! Our second masterclass was Improv and Composition taught by the phenomenal Liz Roncka which was just as fun and eye-opening as it always is. We then had a ballet class with the lovely Olga Marchenko, and a Lighting Workshop with the wonderful Lynda Rieman and Erin Mahoney, DTG's former Vice President - she just missed us too

much! Our next class was structured improv with Juliana Willey-Thomas, which was performed in Motion Art in 808 Gallery shortly after! Motion Art showcased the incredible artistic talent across various mediums here at BU, followed by our second annual Trick or Treating bonding event, which you can read more about in Gigi's article.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled for our final two masterclasses: Pilates with Amane Takaishi and Breaking with Alan Kuang! DTG is also eager to attend the ACDA conference hosted by Rhode Island College this year. Above all, we hope to see some of you at Origins in a couple of weeks!

Motion Art

Destiny Cruz ('27)

To the satisfaction of many, Motion Art returned to the 808 Art Gallery October 17th from 8:30-9:30 p.m. (shoutout to the gallery for hosting us yet again in such a gorgeous and unique space)! We're so grateful for the opportunity to express our artistry among the tangible art pieces of so many talented CFA graduate students.

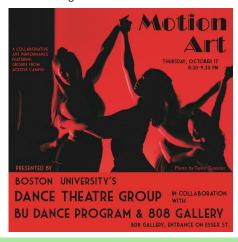
The night started off strong with a performance by Bulletproof Funk, which included impressive head spinning and fire breakdancing. After Bulletproof Funk's super hype performance, the audience was guided to the Dear Abbeys, who serenaded us with the Abbey anthem and an entrancing rendition of "Gimme Love" by Joji. Their performance reinforced my motto of "Live, Love, Dear Abbeys".

From the Abbeys, the crowd was led to a structured improv performance by yours

truly, Dance Theatre Group. Each year, DTG has a teacher direct a structured improv class, which entails different movement prompts and music cues that ultimately bring together a piece within one hour. This year, we had the amazing Juliana Willey-Thomas as a guest teacher. We were so lucky to have her and everyone really enjoyed the work she created! After the improvisation piece, BU on Tap put on a lively and energetic performance using wooden tap boards provided by the Dance Office. The audience was then led to a riveting Kung Fu sequence which involved hard-hitting movements with an elongated, featherlike quality—nothing like I've ever seen before! BU's Fashion and Retail Club presented a runway show consisting of four models wearing stunning pieces, all fabricated from denim. Finally, we wrapped up the show with an excerpt from Visions '24, "Fraying", choreographed by undergraduate Sofia Harris. The piece is representative of our power as a

collective group of women to break through barriers and empower each other to be our authentic selves.

After the event, DTG embarked on a journey from West to Central for a trick or treating bonding event. Safe to say we had a successful night!



Why We Need Your Support

Ilana Weill ('26)

Dance Theatre Group flourishes when it comes to offering unique dance experiences for Boston University students and the community. We are the largest dance organization on campus, as well as the oldest, and are therefore a community that students cherish being a member of. Our end-of-semester show is upon us, and we need YOU to help us make it come alive. Origins 2024 will take place on Friday, November 22nd in the evening, as well as Saturday, the 23rd, with a matinée and another evening show. A new project is finishing digitalizing every concert recording from 1985 and uploading to a platform for you all to enjoy and download! Your contribution would definitely help in minimizing the cost, as we have other dance opportunities to make possible.

We are attending the New England

Regional American College Dance
Association (ACDA) in March, where Dance
Theatre Group will be performing 2
student-choreographed pieces. The
conference is in Providence, Rhode Island,
so we will need to pay for transportation,
as well as multiple hotel rooms to
accommodate our dancers, so we are
kindly asking for \$1000 in donations for our
trip to ACDA.

Some special events that have been made possible was our Hip Hop Mini-Fest, on September 27th, which coincided with the Inauguration of BU's 11th president. Dr. Melissa Gilliam is an arts lover and our three workshops were a fitting tribute. The three hip hop artists have all participated in Reach, including BU alum, Alan Kuang. Just last week, October 17th, we had Juliana Willey-Thomas lead us through a structured improvisation that we performed at Motion Art, "A collaborative art performance featuring groups from

across campus" that DTG and the BU Dance Program hosted in the 808 Gallery. Motion Art typically costs \$500 to make happen, paying for our tech crew, and additional expenses. It was such a magical night, and we want to keep the tradition alive in the years to come. Your support also covers the Aurora Borealis, December 9th, showcasing a vibrant exploration of the relationship between light and movement. The performance is free and will feature dance and movement pieces by faculty and students. We all look forward to keeping these traditions alive, which is why your donation would be greatly appreciated.

Your continued support and donations as alumni are what help us live out our dreams as dancers. It is because of you that we have been such a strong and impactful community for 51 years! We thank you for donations of any amount... they ALL make a difference.

CONTRIBUTE TODAY!

1

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

2

Mail your donation to BU Dance
Program,
attn. Friends of BU Dance Theatre Group,
915 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215



Photo by Belén Degener

Origins 2024

Nora Sleiman ('26)

coming soon! With three shows this year,
Origins 2024 hosted by the Dance Theatre
Group will take place on November 22nd and
23rd. Get ready for exciting performances
orchestrated by our seventeen
choreographers, including a Ballet repertory
piece by Margot Parsons, each bringing their
own narrative and style to the stage. The
performances will showcase a diverse range
of styles, transitioning from the emotional
and poignant depths of contemporary dance
to the dynamic energy of hip-hop, passing

Our most anticipated event of the semester is

Two of our amazing dancers, Catherine Lou and Annie Lin, decided to team up to create a

through glamorous jazz pieces.

Save the Date: April 25-27 2025

It's the Dance Theatre Group's reunion and concert weekend!
Save the dates of April 25-27, 2024 to attend Micki's last reunion!

theatrical and fun piece that merges movements from Hip Hop and Contemporary. With a different approach, Panav Mehta, built his emotional routine on the feelings of heartbreak and pain, including amazing work in duets and small groups.

Maddie Keefer illustrates her love for dance through a beautiful lyrical piece inspired by the *Bridgerton* series and incorporating fluid and elegant movements. Transported by your emotions, senior choreographer Tori Lyn Hoke will mesmerize the audience with a contemporary and ballet fusion. She showcases the delicate border between love and hate with great technical moves, driven by powerful music.

With a more playful approach, another one of our senior choreographers, Luc Ljoka, captures the essence of Old Hollywood and glamour style. His cast brightens the stage with elegant flowing movements accompanied by amazing partner work.

Known for her incredible energy and dynamism, our Treasurer Gigi Nardo, will

create a unique contemporary piece inspired by a children's story called *The Girl with the Red Ribbon,* using creative floorwork and a unique narrative.

This semester's lineup is incredibly diverse and will create an exceptional and memorable experience for the audience.



Poster by **Georgia Doherty ('27)**, photo by Lilia Akina-Magnussen (@image.by.lia)

DTG Trivia Crossword

Kassidy Coon ('26)

Would you like to test your knowledge of Dance Theatre Group past and present? Scan this QR code to try your hand at a Dance Theatre Group trivia crossword! While some of the solutions should come easily, others will require a bit of digging. Happy puzzling!

Puzzle created by Kassidy Coon ('26)

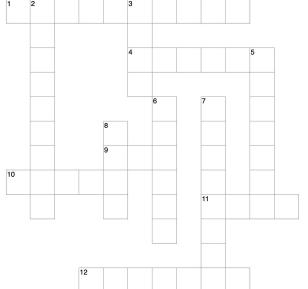
DTG Trivia Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 The R in P.E.R.D. stands for this
- 4 Songs for DTG show pieces can have anything except these
- 9 This DTG mentor studied law and took the LSAT
- 10 The structures that side lights are attached to
- 11 The fabric that is used to create wings
- 12 Where Liz Roncka's outdoor dance showcase piece was performed

DOWN

- 2 The three core values of Fitrec are Community, Quality, and
- 3 The first name of the pianist that does accompaniment for the dance program's ballet classes
- 5 What Clarence could be heard doing as he cleaned studios
- 6 The nontraditional apparatus that Lynda Reiman & Colleen Roddy used in a piece together
- 7 Our program director's favorite way to say, "I enjoyed that"
- 8 The building that DTG danced in before moving to Fitrec





Scan to fill out the puzzle!

Calendar of Events

Dance Theatre Group Origins 2024— November 22 at 8pm, November 23 at 3:30pm & 8pm

Aurora Borealis — December 9, 7pm and 9pm

DTG Bonding Events

Gigi Nardo ('23)

Bonding events create these wonderful spaces for DTG members to connect on a deeper level. While our passion for dance brings us together, these shared experiences help us see each other as more than just fellow dancers.

To kickstart our series of events, we all gathered in good ole Amory park and had the bestest time making friendship



Photo taken by Sofia Harris ('26)

bracelets and having a merch photoshoot. We soaked up our remaining time with beautiful Boston weather. After that we went to J.P. Licks, where we each got a scoop of delicious ice cream.

One of the bonding events that has become a tradition is trick-or-treating after Motion Art! All of us gather together dressed in various costumes and walk around to the different apartments of DTG members. This year we chatted and ate candy throughout the whole night; what could be better than that!

Bonding events bring such an enriching experience that allow us to create cherished memories that deepen our friendships. These experiences teach us that while dance is a beautiful form of expression, it's the connections we



Photo taken by Sofia Harris ('26)

nurture that truly enhance our artistry. Each moment spent together—whether making bracelets or exploring the neighborhood—fills our hearts and fuels our passion for dance, reminding us that we are stronger together, both on and off the stage.

Spotlight On: Margot Parsons

Belén Degener ('26)

This semester, we thought it fitting to highlight Boston University's part-time ballet instructor, Margot Parsons, for her admirable dedication and thoughtful approach to teaching. Margot also teaches ballet at Boston College, taught at The Dance Complex for 27 years and at Harvard University for 13 years, and is a substitute at Boston Ballet and Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre. Renowned in the dance world, she's celebrated for her remarkable work as creative director of Dance Visions, Inc., now entering its 38th year.

Originally from Chicago, Margot attended the University of Wisconsin, moved to New York to study fine arts, went to grad school in Utah, and eventually settled in Boston. Her first introduction to Boston was during a year at Bradford College, where she developed a dance program. Nine years later, she returned and began teaching at Boston University.

New email? Make sure to let us know!

Contact BU Dance at 617-353-1597 or budance@bu.edu with the update

Margot has always known she wanted to dance and, more specifically, to choreograph. Dance became a sort of sanctuary for her, balancing repetition with the freedom to grow. Margot emphasized that, while both the medium and one's own body change daily and, most certainly, yearly, a dancer can never truly master it all. She also mentioned her friendship and professional relationship with Maggie Black at the Harkness School of Ballet, whose trust in her teaching ability provided essential validation for her to become the dancer and teacher she is today. Margot credits much of her success and versatility to her early training with live accompaniment, which taught her to truly hear and feel the music, not just follow steps. Now, in her own teaching, she makes sure to instill a similar love for and relationship to live music within each dancer.

Dancing in the 1950s and 1960s, she was surrounded by much criticism and disrespect in the dance world—a reality that, she notes, persists to some extent today. This experience has led her to prioritize respect and trust in her students, welcoming people from all dance backgrounds and focusing on supporting, **not pushing them**. By meeting students where they are and allowing them to "find those lightbulb moments themselves" Margot uplifts dancers' love for the artform. On the same note, her focus on teaching ballet from an anatomical

standpoint allows her work to be accessible for dancers coming from backgrounds in varying ballet styles. This focus on the body allows students to fully know their instrument; by going back to the basics they are then able to then improve that which is more difficult.

Margot's love for dance, teaching, and her students is evident. She admires the self-discipline ballet instills, often saying, "If you want a job done, hire a dancer." Margot views ballet as a humbling art form, with a dancer's vulnerability before an audience and the impact of critics' words shaping their resilience. She highlights that, while self-criticism and self-improvement are essential, dancers must also trust in their own authenticity. For her, the journey of learning and growth is never complete—it's about a love for and commitment to the art form that transcends external validation.



Faculty Updates

Ann Brown Allen is enjoying teaching 10 Pilates mat classes and 3 apparatus classes. Students are energetic and eager. Ann is on the board of Mass Movement which supports the Reach Pedagogy Intensive. She is on the board of Rehearsal for Life which supports the Freelance Players and Urban Improv. She is also on the board of The Dance Complex. Ann performs with Peter DiMuro's Public Displays of Motion. She loved Motion Art and looks forward to the DTG concert this Fall.

Margot Parsons spent the summer teaching in the Adult Program at Boston Ballet. In June, she presented new quartet, "The Eternal Feminine," for Dance for World Community. Dancers included McDowell Christine and DTG graduate, Lavinia Kosher. She is delighted to be back this fall teaching the wonderful students at BU and is grateful to Micki for her work in providing information on navigating the new system for dance at BU. In spite of the fact that grades are not given, classes continue to be full. It shows how important dance is for everyone. In November, as a guest in Janelle Gilchrist's Company, Margot presented a new solo, "Footsteps," for Amane Takaishi. For the Ballet Rep class, she created a new work, "Carnival," that will be presented as part of the DTG show November. She continues to work on writing a book with two other dancers and is happy to be part of a movie by Dance Currents, Inc., "to Feel the Earth and Touch the Sky," that will be aired on PBS.

Lynda Rieman is looking forward to another busy year in the dance theater. For some reason the rental seasons are shifting, and we had no shows in September, but we added shows in August and January. Last weekend we opened with a show produced by Boston Moving Arts that included amazing dance companies from Germany, Ireland and Canada. We have added a few new companies to our line up in the Spring -SychroniCity and United Dance. Urbanity is back and so is Cirque US. Lynda has been working with each client to secure discount tickets for BU Students, so she hopes they'll take advantage of this opportunity throughout the semester. Check out the new dance theater web page https://www.bu.edu/fitrec/what-weoffer/dance/dance-theater/

Liz Roncka continues to enjoy teaching Dance Improvisation, Pole Dance Circuit, and private Pilates clients. She had a wonderful time offering a Composition and Improvisation class to DTG members in September. In October, she had the pleasure of performing at the Boston



DTG students watch each other's structured improv pieces from Liz's Masterclass



Conservatory with her long-time improv collaborator, Olivier Besson. Liz continues her passion for pole dance and completed her third pole instructor certification course this summer. Liz is excited to mentor and support the BU Dance students and instructors in bringing their original dance work to the stage this fall in Origins and Aurora Borealis.

Micki Taylor-Pinney satisfied her lust for travel by taking a trip to Italy with her dear friend from her college dance days. The visit to the Venice Biennale and walks on the Lake Como Greenway were the highlights. The Reach Pedagogy Intensive was intensely satisfying, both personally and professionally, as there were educators Micki has known for 40 plus years as well as those she's met recently, all exchanging ideas and experiences. The two weeks in Maine with her husband were especially restful as Markus is recovering from rotator cuff surgery; lots of reading and time walking along the shore and through museums. This fall, she's been able to apply some of the ideas from the Reach intensive to teaching her beginning modern and Aesthetics classes, as well as, thinking about how the residency work for the nonprofit she directs, Mass Movement, Inc. has changed over time. She is immensely grateful to the dance faculty, her colleagues, and students for making her job rewarding and meaningful.



Micki in Italy

Alumni Updates

Abigail Ripin (CAS '20) is very proud to have produced and choreographed her first show this past August at Culture House's Gilman Square Pop Up Venue. Her project <u>Unkempt</u> includes a dance performance and an interactive workshop that explores the history and current social context of body hair removal. Abigail is excited to continue researching this topic and developing the project further.



Photo taken of Abigail's piece by Anne Lai

Kristin Wagner (SHA '12) participated in an Artist-in-Residence this fall with her partner Tony, together as "Decent Dance". The duo worked with the Dance Theatre of Greenville Performance Company to create a new work for the Equinox Showcase, led an artist panel discussion about careers in dance, taught open master classes, and more throughout the festival!

Rachel Kay Brookmire (CAS '98) is the founder and director of Sahara Dance. DC Center for Middle Eastern Dance. The program is still going strong and they are fully operational again in (and online) after person pandemic! They will be having their 20th anniversary gala show, "Under a Desert Moon," on April 27th, 2025. Last October was a big time for them as they represented Middle Eastern Dance at the World Culture Festival on the national Mall. They had nearly 100 dancers and drummers perform an 8minute choreography by belly dance artist, Jillina. "It was wonderful to be part of such a high energy and uplifting event, with so many dancers of all styles from around the world." Rachel is now married and a mother to two small children, Jeffrey (10 months) and Stella (2 years). The days are joyous and active. She couldn't be more grateful for her dancer lifestyle and all the blessings that have come her way. Life is good!

Sigrid Neptune (CAS '20) is the Institutional Support Manager at Jacob's Pillow. On October 19th, Sigrid helped coordinate Jacob's Pillow's College Partner Convening where college students, faculty, and staff gathered together on the Jacob's Pillow campus or virtually on Zoom. Students were able to engage with colleagues and share ideas, challenges, and community. The event was a full day containing a Movement Workshop. Artist Demonstration. Talks. and Presentations from various Pillow Lab Artists!

Zeina Fayad (SAR '20), wearing her DTG shirt, visited Lebanon this summer!



Karesia Batan (COM '06) is the Founding Executive Director of the Queensboro Dance Festival in New York City. They just completed their 11th season touring 25 dance companies throughout Queens, NY, which happened to include some DTG alumni! Karesia dances for choreographer Craig Zarah, but also performs Filipino dances at events including for the Borough President and Google. This year Karesia was awarded a Citation of Honor and named in the 2024 City & State's Power 100 in Arts & Culture for her work and advocacy in artist funding equity. She is a mom of a 1 year old boy and 2.5 year old girl who both love dancing!

Katie Logan (CAS '15) continues to dance in Boston. She recently became

the Associate Director for Evolve abilities Dynamicz, а mixed contemporary company that focuses on improvisation. She's also enjoying being back at BU to learn aerial silks, and will be performing at the BU Theater in December with Nozama Dance Collective. This is Katie's 8th year with Nozama, a modern company founded by BU alumni Gracie Baruzzi and Natalie Schiera.



Photo of Katie by Olivia Moon Photography

Charlene Williams (CAS '15, SSW '18) is getting married to Jacob Lyons on November 22, 2024. In preparation for her first dance ("Hold Me" by Teddy Swims), Charlene is attempting to recall the ballroom classes she took at BU/DTG to teach Jacob a thing or two. Former DTG/BU alum, Natalie Schiera, is one of her bridesmaids! Charlene is a school counselor/ social worker at a charter school in Roxbury, MA and is also an artistic director of Embrace, an adult jazz/ contemporary sub-company of Mosaic Dance Inc:

https://www.mosaicdanceinc.org/

(which alum Abi Hertz is also a member of)! She is also back to teaching dance at Onstage in Hyde Park, which keeps her sore but inspired everyday.

Erin Mahoney (CAS '24) is still living in Boston and continues to work at BU. She splits her time between developmental biology research on sea urchins and working in the Dance Theater with Lynda. She is excited to dance with other DTG alums as she choreographs for a CFA lighting design thesis.

BU Friends of Dance Donation History 1996-2024

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Danielle Brandman
Christine Bystrov
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Stephanie Creary
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Mary Buletza
Erin L. Bush
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Richard Book
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Emily Boylan Gorsline
Katherine Brand
Meredith Nicole Butulis
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Kristin N. D'Errico
Heather Eng
Dawn Estabrooks
Miguel Estefan Jr.

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Angelina Hannum
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Thank you all for your never-ending support!