AMERICAN COLLEGE DANCE ASSOCIATION

During the beautiful spring week of March 16-19, Slippery Rock University hosted the American College Dance Association Mid-Atlantic North (ACDAman) conference. After two years without an in-person gathering in our region, we celebrated dance by welcoming 14 schools and 200 dancers from the region and beyond to fill our spaces with creative energy! The conference theme was “Coming to Our Senses” and centered on the power of sensorial experience to assist artists in navigating a shifting pandemic landscape.

The conference offered a wide array of aesthetics through our visiting faculty and our invited guests such as Kizuna Dance (Nagare Technique), Mark Taylor (somatics), Attack Theatre (professional company from Pittsburgh), Teena Marie Custer (professional street dance artist), Jaya Mani (Bharatanatyam), and African drum musician Ketan Bakrana. 65 classes were offered in all, plus an ADF audition class.

The Conference featured seven concerts in just three days: the opening concert, three adjudication concerts, one gala concert, one shared faculty/screendance concert, and one informal concert. 40 Slippery Rock University student volunteers worked beautifully and tirelessly to bring these concerts to fruition. Slippery Rock University’s piece, “Ichigo Ichie,” choreographed by Teena Marie Custer, was selected for the Gala Concert.

Gracing the stage for the Opening Concert was Kizuna Dance, with nine members from New York City. The program featured Kizuna’s distinct floor work and was inspired by the Japanese idea of “ichigo icchie, a Japanese concept denoting the uniqueness of every interpersonal encounter.” The artistic director of the company, Cameron McKinney, also performed his signature solo, “E.X.P.L.O.D.E.” The concert was made possible by generous sponsorship by the SRU Frederick Douglass Institute which prioritizes programming by diverse artists and scholars.

Let’s not forget our closing pizza party, including Soul Line Dancing by our very own Ursula Payne, that was a release of positive energy!

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF DANCE

The SRU Department of Dance has its 10-year accreditation visit as part of the National Association of Schools of Dance accreditation cycle. Founded in 1981, the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) is an organization of schools, conservatories, colleges, and universities with approximately 83 accredited institutional members. It establishes national standards for undergraduate and graduate degrees and other credentials for dance and dance-related disciplines and provides assistance to institutions and individuals engaged in artistic, scholarly, educational, and other dance-related endeavors (https://nasd.arts-accredit.org). Slippery Rock University has been an accredited member of NASD since 2000.

FORGE SUMMER DANCE INTENSIVE

This past summer, SRU’s FORGE Summer Dance Intensive, directed by Professor Lindsay Viatori, was re-launched after a two-year hiatus due to Covid-19. Faculty from across the country taught for the two-week intensive which was held July 9-22nd. Five SRU Dance majors participated as interns assisting Viatori in areas such as production, social media, student liaisons, guest teachers’ assistants, demonstrators, and others.

SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY DANCE THEATRE (SRUDT)

Adjudicated dance pieces involving over sixty dancers were featured at the Fresh Moves Concert and the Emerging Choreographers Concert in the 2021-2022 season. Concerts took place in our newly renovated Miller Theater and Stoner West Studio Theater.

PALLENCHE: COLOMBIAN DANCE ENSEMBLE

The Department of Dance’s residential company, Palenque had a busy year performing for on and off-campus events that included performances at Youngstown State University, Passavant Senior Living Center, Center, and Slippery Rock Village Fest. Additionally, Palenque was invited to perform at the Diversity and Inclusion Conference at Clarion University of PA, was featured at the August Wilson Center for African American Culture’s Community Day, and presented an educational lecture-concert for SRU’s concert for SRU’s FORGE Summer Dance Intensive. In the spring of 2022, Palenque members visited the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington DC where they examined the strong presence of the African element in the development of Art and Society in the Americas including Latin America. Professor Melissa Teodoro has been artistic director of Palenque since 2012 and continues to research, reconstruct, create, write, and present her ongoing investigation of dances of Colombia. Palenque auditions will be held in the spring of 2023.
The Department of Dance was thrilled to commission a new work by **Teena Marie Custer** for incoming and transfer students. Teena Marie shared her signature aesthetic in the creation of The Shade which was performed throughout the year in the SRU Dance Performance Season, as well as an adjudicated piece at ACDA Mid-Atlantic North conference where it had the honor of being selected for the Gala Concert. In the public comment section, adjudicator Leah Cox shared that “This is what an inclusive space looks like” and adjudicator Chad Hall praised it as “solidarity and individuality celebrated together.”

Artistic Director **Cameron McKinney** of Kizuna Dance challenged students with his artistry and movement vocabulary in the creation of his innovative “Furrowed,” a piece that showcased complex floor work inspired by release work, contemporary technique, house, breaking, and capoeira. “Furrowed” was performed throughout the year and represented the department in the ACDAman Informal Concert. We were thrilled to welcome back SRU alumna Malena Maust (SRU 2018 and Kizuna Dance company member), who participated in the residency as McKinney’s assistant. This residency was co-sponsored by the Frederick Douglass Institute and its collaborative work with academic departments to infuse Diversity, Equity and Inclusion activities into the curriculum.

Dance alumna, **Lashonda Johnson** was commissioned to create a dance for the BFA senior concert. Her piece, *Return to Sender*, was a highly physical dance that showcased the exceptional technical and performance abilities of the BFA dancers. “I wanted to create a dance that helped to lead us out of the isolation of the pandemic and restore a sense of community and caring for one another (Johnson).” This residency was co-sponsored by the Frederick Douglass Institute.

**David Skeele**, Professor of Theatre, conducted master classes for dance majors in Foundation Training, which is a series of body-weight exercises that activates the posterior muscle chain, anchors the hips, decompresses the spine, and takes the burden of supporting the body out of the joints. The dance majors enjoyed this unique way of exercising and retraining the body.

Alumni **Samantha Baker, Jennifer Blankenship, Sarah DiFrischia, Jenna Hanlon, Ryan McMullen, Carrie Languth, and Darrin Mosley** shared their career paths and experiences with Senior Capstone dance majors.
**STUDENT SPOTLIGHT**

**INTERNSHIPS**

**Tyler Anderson**: School of American Ballet through Americans for the Arts’ selective Diversity in Arts Leadership (DIAL) internship program (NY)

**Taylor Andrekanic**: Palenque: Colombian Dance Ensemble (PA)

**Jordan Allen**: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)

**Anna DeRubeis**: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)

**Cassandra Dietrich**: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)

**Erin Brod**: Walt Disney World Resort (FL)

**Kelvin Rodriguez**: Palenque: Colombian Dance Ensemble (PA)

**Natalia Siles**: The Quechee Club, Recreation/Dance Internship (VT)

**Kaylee Smith**: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)

**Hayden Summers**: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)

**LUCY ISACCO SACK SCHOLARSHIPS**

Academic Year Scholarship: Natalia Siles, Gabrielle Dunn, Alicesa Chludzinski

Freshman/Transfer Scholarship: Samantha Oliver

Diversity Scholarship: Tyler Anderson

Intensive Program Scholarship: Gianna Henriquez, Samantha Oliver

**2022 SENIOR AWARDS**

Outstanding BFA: Skylar Smith

Outstanding BA: Elena Turner

Outstanding Minor: Ella Hickey

Outstanding Choreographer: Olivia Shirley

Outstanding Performer: Isabel Farr

Outstanding Teacher: Vanessa Adams

Outstanding Researcher: Anna DeRubeis

Outstanding Service: Kelvin Rodriguez

Outstanding Technology: Ashlin Broody-Walega

Thom and Christine Cobb Award: Kaitlin Yankovich

**OTHER SCHOLARSHIPS**

**SRU Incoming Freshman Scholarship: Aleah Bednarz**

**Graduates of the Late 60’s Scholarship: Gianna Henriquez**

**Rising Sophomore Scholarship (NHSDA): Skylar Ankrom**

Student Employee of the Year Award was given to Alicesa Chludzinski in the spring of 2022. This award was sponsored by the Office of Student Engagement and Leadership and presented to Alicea in its annual Rising Star Student Involvement Awards.

The Norton Undergraduate Research Scholarship was awarded to Natalia Siles and Andrés Ortiz who are developing a research based on the historic Bolivian dance, Huayño Cochabambino under the mentorship of Professor Melissa Teodoro.

The prestigious, Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation Scholarship (PMAHCCF) was awarded to Natalia Siles.

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE on UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH (NCUR)**

Research papers from the following senior students were presented at the NCUR 2022 conference.

Resistance Training: An Effective Means for Injury Prevention in Dance

By Jade Daniels (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

The Examination of Cultural Insensitivity in the Nutcracker’s “Chinese Tea.”

By Anna DeRubeis (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

Gaga: Finding an Authentic Language from Within

By Isabel Farr* (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

Pina Bausch: A Visceral Approach to Creating Narrative in Dance

By Faythe Lewis (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

Creating a Safe Dance Environment that Honors Mental and Physical Health Through Ruth Zaporah’s “Action Theater” and Improvisation Practices

By Olivia Shirley* (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

*Olivia Shirley and Isabel Farr also presented their research papers at the SRU Research Symposium.
SRU RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM
Research papers from the following senior students were accepted to be presented at the 2022 SRU Research Symposium.

- Cultural Inclusivity and Anatomical Safety in the Horton Technique
  By Taylor Andrekanic (mentor, Lindsay Viatori)

- Finding an Alternate Approach to Narrative and a New Aesthetics in the Creation of Dance for the Screen
  By Ashlin Broody-Walega
  (mentor, Melissa Tedodoro)

- From Ballet Barres to Barbells: Strengthening Training for Dancers.
  By Kaitlin Falee (mentor, Lindsay Viatori)

- Ritual, Symbolism and an Archaic Depiction of Marriage in Nijinska’s Les Noces
  By Skylar Smith (mentor, Melissa Tedodoro)

- Embracing the Conflict and the Aesthetic of the Cool While Promoting Jazz Dance as a Foundational Technique in Dance Education
  By Kaitlin Yankovich (mentor, Melissa Tedodoro)

The Utilization of Improvisation in Dance Choreography
By: Olivia Shirley and Kaitlin Yankovich
(mentor, Jennifer Keller)

OLYMPUS DIGITAL CAMERA

OFF-CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS
Taylor Andrekanic, Kelvin Rodriguez and Skylar Smith traveled with professor, Melissa Tedodoro to assist her in a residency at St. Olaf College (MN) in the fall of 2021.

Autumn B-C and Zsuzsanna Smith performed two Bharatanatyam dances - Narita and Alarippu - at the Sri Venkateswara Temple under the mentorship of professor Jaya Mani.

Kaitlin Yankovich, ’22

Autum B-C and Zsuzsanna Smith presented their choreographic works at the Koresh Artist Showcase in Philadelphia in the spring of 2022. Performers included Olivia Blankenship, Autumn Carrington, Anna DeRubeis, Gabbie Dunn, Kaitlin Falee, Austin Shaffer, Skylar Smith and Will VanSlander.

Gianna Hernandez and Natalia Siles attended Critical Mass: Clock50 at Oberlin College (OH). Jennifer Keller, and alumni Rosie Trump (class of 2003) and Kari Hoglund (class of 2021) were also in attendance.

Kaylee Smith attended a 4-week intensive program at the Gibney (NY)

The Frederick Douglass Institute and the Department of Dance co-sponsored a field trip to Pittsburgh’s Byham Theatre for dance majors to attend the Kyle Abraham dance concert.

Alumnna, Luvenia Kaiia’s film was accepted into the national ACDA Screendance Gala.

Oliveira Barner, B.F.A., M.S., graduated from SRU in 2018 with a B.F.A in dance and in 2019 with a M.S. in Adapted Physical Activity. Currently, Cassidy is the Founder and Program Director of ICANdance, an adaptive dance program that provides classes to the local special needs community, provides mentoring to upcoming professionals in the field, researches, and writes about the growing field of adaptive dance. She also works at her hometown studio teaching dance and works as a barre instructor.

Felice Rose graduated from SRU amidst the pandemic in 2020 with her B.F.A in Dance: Performance and Choreography concentration. After graduating, Felice moved to New Hampshire for the summer to perform for RWS Entertainment at Storyland. Shortly after her time there, Felice was then hired as a Resident Artist at English Musicals Korea where she spent over a year living in South Korea, creating and performing musicals for schools all over the country. She has recently returned from South Korea and is preparing for her next performance journey in NYC.

Michelle Sliavik graduated in 2018 from Slippery Rock University with a B.F.A. in Dance with concentrations in Performance & Choreography and Business Administration. Michelle is currently a Philadelphia based dance artist performing with choreographer Hilary Pearson in the 2022 premiere of HAIR in Philadelphia’s Cannonball Festival. Michelle has also danced for Megan Bridge’s Fidget, Keila Gordova’s dance company, J-Pony Show, as well as Kaila Kingsford Smith’s ‘S py apart of the 2019 Philadelphia Fringe Festival. Michelle has presented her own work at Leah Semi Dance Company’s Studio Works, SpringUp Dance Festival, Small Plates Dance Festival, Kun, Yang Lim/Dancer’s InHale Series and Korea Dance Company’s Artist Showcase.

Michelle Slavik
B.F.A., M.S., graduated from SRU in 2018 in conjunction with Attack Theatre Dance Company. He was then hired full time as a teaching artist with Attack Theatre Dance in November 2018. Recently, Cassidy was nominated and won silver Telly award for Best Remote Production (A Very Covid Christmas 2021). Currently, he is enrolled in the Graduate Theater Program at the University of Louisville as a Graduate Teaching Assistant and student.
Andy Hasenpflug continues to serve as Music Director for the American Dance Festival (ADF). This past year he collaborated with varied artist such as Jesse Factor on the ongoing series, “Show Queen;” Helanius Wilkins on his Conversation Series performances; and Ursula Payne whose repertory artistic creation was featured by WSRU-TV. Andy additionally performed with choreographers and performers Kate Jewett, Adam Crawley, Matt Dixon, Khalid Saleem, Jesse Young, and West Oxking.

Nora Ambrosio spent the summer writing the 9th edition of her book Learning about Dance: Dance as an Art Form and Entertainment, published by Kendall Hunt Publishing Company. Learning about Dance is used in courses nationwide and in Canada and has sold over 400,000 copies. She recently choreographed three dances for the 2022 Faculty and Guest Artists Dance Concert. The dances, titled Going, Going, Gone, Follow the Sun, and Don’t let it get you down, were created as part of a repertory class in spring 2022. Nora is a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASDA) and continues to serve as a site visitor for NASDA and as a Presidential Appointee for the Commission on Accreditation.

As of 2022, Jaya Mani has conducted a total of 126 Arangetram which are a culmination of over ten years of training in the Bharata Natyam classical Indian dance genre. Arangetram are solo concerts where Mani intensively works with individual students in preparation for this very important event. She has prepared students for Arangetram in the Pittsburgh area for the past 40 years. Under her guidance, Mani’s talented students performed in various events this past year such as Sanksrit Day, Dhirana (intercollege Bharata Natyam dance competition), Mother’s Day Celebration, University of Pittsburgh, among others.

Jennifer Keller had the honor of returning to Oberlin College in July 2022, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Contact Improvisation, approximately 25 years after her first visit in 1997 during CI20. As part of the festivities, Jennifer, along with three other co-curators, including Rosie Trump (SRU class of 2003), curated an evening of contemporary films that considered CI in diverse and expansive cinematic ways. Keller also re-visited her improvisation roots in the creation of “Double Bubble Tumbleweed,” a duet choreographed through improvisational processes for senior BFA students Olivia Shirley and Kaitlin Yankeyovich. Keller continues to work on a teaching certification in Ensemble Thinking with Nina Martin and Lower Left. Her quartet titled Second Thoughts was invited to perform at the Cleveland Dance Festival in the fall of 2021 and her film titled Sweet Sense was accepted into the national ACDA Scrandence Gala. In March, Jennifer was humbled to be recognized with a Women and Ally of Distinction Award presented by colleague Lindsay Viatori and the President’s Commission for Women.

Melissa Teodoro was in residency at St. Olaf College (MN) in the fall of 2021 where she lectured, taught master classes, and set a Colombian dance piece on the college’s Yaseica Dance Company. In the spring of 2022, she presented a research paper at the International Conference on Global Diversity in Higher Education atClarion University of PA. Teodoro closely monitored senior students who presented their research papers at the National Council for Undergraduate Research (NCUR), SRU’s Research Symposium, and Dance on Paper. In March of 2021, she traveled with 12 students to Washington DC to visit the Museum of African American History and Culture where they examined the strong influence of African cultures in the development of life, society and art in the Americas. In the summer of 2022, Teodoro and her makers were invited to perform at the August Wilson Center for African American Culture where they presented 5 dance pieces from the Palenque repertoire. In the summer of 2022, she traveled to Colombia to research the Bambuco Santafereño. There, she worked with archivists at the Bartolome Calvo Library, dance faculty at the Universidad de Cartagena, and a historic costume designer. She set the newly reconstructed Bambuco Santafereño on 9 dancers in August of 2022. This new piece will be a part of the 2022-23 Palenque repertoire and will be performed in various venues throughout the academic year.

Ursula Payne has moved into a new role for the academic year. She is located in Old Main and is the Associate Provost for Academic Finance, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives. Though she misses her Dance Academy in Pittsburgh. Since Payne considers herself a lifelong learner, she will sit for her qualifying exams in January 2023. The PhD qualifying exam is an important benchmark in the marathon towards obtaining candidacy as a doctoral student.

NEW FACULTY 2022-23

We are thrilled to have Andrew Blight, Teena Marie Custer, Gretchen Hurd and Ryan McMullen (shown below) as temporary faculty for the 2022-23 academic year. Students and faculty welcome them to our department and are eager to work side by side with them.
DEPARTMENT OF DANCE AUDITIONS

Bachelor of Arts
Bachelor of Fine Arts
Minor in Dance

AUDITION DATES:

IN-PERSON AUDITION
2 P.M. • OCT. 22

IN-PERSON AUDITION
2 P.M. • NOV. 12

VIRTUAL AUDITION
2 P.M. • NOV. 12

IN-PERSON AUDITION
12 P.M. • FEB. 4, 2023

IN-PERSON AUDITION
9 A.M. • MARCH 4, 2023

VIRTUAL AUDITION
2 P.M. • MARCH 4, 2023

Students wishing to be considered for a dance major scholarship are encouraged to attend an in person, fall audition.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
jennifer.keller@sru.edu
www.sru.edu/dance

Slippery Rock University is an accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Dance

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NEWSLETTER CREDITS
Faculty Supervisor & Editor: Melissa Teodoro
Student Designer & Editor: Tyler Anderson
Student Designer, Communication and Public Affairs: Mason Bell
Photos:
Ben Viatori, Gretchen Hurd, Ashlin Broody-Walega, Cassie Dietrich

CONTACT INFO
Jennifer.Keller@sru.edu
Phone: 724.738.2036
Address: Stoner Instructional Complex
105 Campus Drive
Slippery Rock, PA 16057
Website:
https://www.sru.edu/academics/colleges-and-departments/cla/departments/dance
Instagram: @SlipperyRockDance