

2021-2022

# WKU Dance

CREATING | THINKING | ARTISTS



## DANCE ON THE HILL

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We were so excited to welcome our students back to the Hill for two incredible semesters full of amazing dancing! Although we began the school year under a mask mandate, by our *Evening of Dance* performances at the end of April, we were able to offer our dancers the opportunity to perform for a live audience without masks for the first time in over two years! Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are so proud of the hard work and growth demonstrated by our dancers this year in both their technique and theory courses, and we cannot wait to see what next year brings! Congratulations to all our graduating seniors; it's been a pleasure to watch your evolution as dancers over the past years, and we know you're going to do great things!

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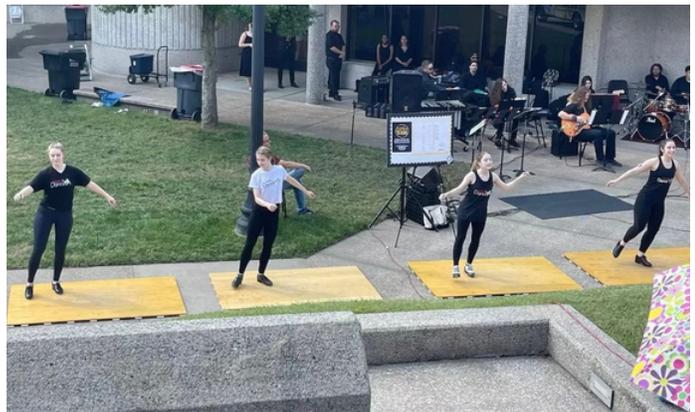
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*Photo credits go to Jeff Smith, Gabi Broekema, and Lindy Fischer.*



## PCAL Collaborations

Our dancers had the amazing opportunity to perform with the **WKU Jazz Band** for an upbeat jazz concert! Held on the FAC lawn, the jazz band performed various famous jazz pieces, including music by Joe Garland and W.C. Handy. The dancers performed a tap dance to a rendition of "Begin the Beguine" and closed the concert with a large, energetic jazz number to "A String of Pearls." This concert put a swing in everyone's step and provided students across campus a music and dance experience!



To help celebrate Halloween, the WKU Dance Company collaborated with the **WKU Symphony** and **Opera Theater Ensemble** for a rendition of Kurt Weill's **Seven Deadly Sins**. This event, which guest-starred Dr. Liza Kelly, Jeremy Kelly, Zachary Bush, and Paul Hondorp, and featured choreography by Professor Amanda Clark, Assistant Professor Anna Patsfall, and Adjunct Professor Amanda Poitras, gave dancers the opportunity to experience performing with a live orchestra and was a fun learning experience!



## Guest Speakers

Students enrolled in our Dance in Culture class were given the wonderful opportunity to learn from guest lecturer **Jill Flanders Crosby**, a professor at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. Flanders Crosby was one of the first dance minors preceding the dance major here at WKU. She shared with us her incredible research on the history and current forms of Cook Island dance. We were so lucky to have her visit, and we were excited to show her the growth of the program since her time here!



Our Dance in Culture class and the WKU Dance Company had an incredible Zoom guest lecture with **Naila Ansari** during the Fall semester. She shared her continued research and essential perspectives through discussion of Africana Studies and race in Black performance. We are fortunate to have had Naila share her knowledge and viewpoints!



Students in our Dance in Culture class, as well as members of the WKU Dance Company, were given the opportunity to learn about the classical Indian dance form Bharatanatyam from our guest lecturer, **Shyama Iyer**. Iyer is a recent graduate of WKU's Musical Theatre Program and is now a graduate student at Ohio State University, where she is enjoying exploring the storytelling abilities of Bharatanatyam.





## Guest Artists

The week before Spring Break, we welcomed back **Nathan Fister**, a graduate of WKU's Dance Program, for a four-day guest artist residency. During this time, he taught several jazz/musical theatre classes for both the dance program and the musical theatre program, and he also set a Fosse-inspired jazz piece on the WKU Dance Company for performance in *Evening of Dance*. After graduating from WKU with a B.A. in Dance, Fister went on to dance with Nashville Ballet's Second Company before leaving the concert dance world for the musical theatre world. His most notable credits include *West Side Story*, performed in Tokyo, Japan, and the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular* featuring the Radio City Rockettes.



This year's guest artists were funded in part by the **Mahurin Honors College** and the **Potter College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Grant**.

The week following Spring Break, **Cheri Stokes** came to set original choreography on the WKU Dance Company to be performed in April's *Evening of Dance* concert. The audition for her piece served as a masterclass for our company dancers and students enrolled in modern dance courses, where they had the opportunity to experience Stokes' unique blend of modern dance and hip-hop. Stokes earned her M.F.A. in Choreography and Performance from Florida State University at the same time as Associate Professor Anna Patsfall, and the two worked closely throughout their time in school together.



# Mainstage Productions

## WinterDance

Throughout the fall semester, we worked on our winter production, **WinterDance: Candyland adventures**. In this faculty-choreographed, family-friendly show, dancers took the audience on a trip through the landscape of the beloved board game, ending their adventure with a celebration at King Candy's castle. Although masked due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we were thrilled to once again have the opportunity to perform in front of a live audience!



## Evening of Dance

The WKU Dance Company spent its Spring semester creating this year's **Evening of Dance**, a collection of concert dance pieces ranging in genre from jazz to pointe to tap! This *Evening of Dance* featured **Sing, Sing, Sing**, a jazz piece choreographed by guest artist Nathan Fister, and **Fused**, a fusion of hip-hop and modern dance choreographed by guest artist Cheri Stokes. This was the first time our dancers have performed without masks in over two years, and we were so excited to see their smiling faces once more!





# Student Works

## Dance Project



Just a few weeks into the second semester, we held our annual **Dance Project**, a showcase of student-choreographed works that have undergone a thorough adjudication process. For this production, our student choreographers are responsible for every aspect of their pieces, from selecting dancers to arranging rehearsals to providing costumes. This year, we had an incredibly diverse body of work, including several different dance genres and featuring a variety of well thought-out concepts. We are proud of our student choreographers and of all the dancers who participated in this year's *Dance Project*!



## Last Chance to Dance

**Last Chance to Dance** is an informal, student-choreographed showcase occurring at the end of each semester. At the end of the Fall semester, *Last Chance to Dance* primarily features works that dancers enrolled in our Choreography II class have choreographed on their peers. At the end of the Spring semester, *Last Chance to Dance* primarily features works that dancers enrolled in our Choreography I class have choreographed on themselves. In both cases, students are entirely responsible for the music, costumes, and lighting--and, of course, the choreography! We always look forward to seeing the growth of our program through the evolution of innovative student works!



# Masterclasses

Our first masterclass of the year took place the very first week of school and was taught by **Ashley "Robi" Robicheaux**, who taught the dance portion, and **Isaac Middleton**, who played live music and worked with our dancers on using their voices to more effectively breathe while they dance. Middleton is an alumnus of WKU's Interdisciplinary Studies program, where he had a concentration in the arts, which allowed him to study music, theatre, and dance. Robicheaux graduated with a B.F.A. in Dance from New York University and has since choreographed and performed for artists such as Billie Eilish, MUSE, and Avril Lavigne.



We had the privilege of welcoming **Norbe Risco**, the artistic director of Kentucky Ballet Theatre, to teach a ballet masterclass, as well as one of Ballet III/IV's Friday classes. The masterclass was open to both ballet and pointe dancers. Risco gave a short center class before working with the dancers on two variations: Diana and Acteon and Gamzatti. Working with Risco was a valuable experience for our dancers because they were able to be seen and corrected by an instructor with whom they do not normally work!



We were thrilled to have alumna **Kaylee Lane** back on campus to teach a special masterclass sponsored by NDEO! After graduating from the program in the 2021, Lane joined Found Movement Group, a contemporary dance company in Nashville. Her class featured a comprehensive warmup followed by a groovy combination that allowed our dancers to let loose and let go of the stress of the week. We always love seeing the growth of our incredible alumni, and we are thankful Kaylee was able to teach our dancers some of what she has learned in the professional world!





## NDEO

The National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) WKU Student Chapter executive board was led by President McKinley Stovall and Vice President Chelby Woods.

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Throughout the year, officer Sydney Bosway and the rest of the marketing committee organized several successful fundraisers, including **Tie-Dye night**, the second annual **March Madness collaboration** with Western's chapter of Alpha Psi Omega, **flower sales** during *WinterDance* and *Evening of Dance*, and partnerships with surrounding businesses, such as **Chipotle, Stakz Frozen Yogurt, and Freddy's Frozen Custard and Steakburgers**. The money raised helps provide guest artists and residencies to enrich our dancers' educations, as well as pay for the Spring Banquet hosted at the end of the second semester to celebrate the Department of Theatre and Dance!



In order to achieve our goal of spreading our love of dance across campus, NDEO participates in several festivals throughout the year that cater to both current and prospective students of all interests, such as **Potter College of Arts and Letters' Fall Fest** and **Spring Forward Fest, Discover Fest, and Idea Fest!** Additionally, we hosted our semesterly *Kick the Clocks*, which were a huge success! ***Kick the Clock*** is a twenty-four hour dance festival in which random groupings of dancers and choreographers are assigned a random song and tasked to create a dance to be performed in just twenty-four hours. *Kick the Clock* is open to students of all majors and levels of dance experience, and we were so excited to welcome students from an array of departments to share in the love of dance!

Additional NDEO member events included

- a **Yoga Craze** taught by senior dance major Allie McDaniel, who is finishing up her yoga teacher training
- a **hairstyle workshop with Assistant Professor Anna Patsfall** who taught members how to achieve different performance hairstyles
- a **modern class with Associate Professor Meghen McKinley** during her spring maternity-leave

