

WKU Dance

CREATING | THINKING | ARTISTS

DANCING ON THE HILL

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The WKU Dance Program made many adjustments this academic school year to follow COVID-19 protocol and social distancing. This experience was an incredible learning opportunity that opened new windows of communication and exploration. To allow for social distancing, students were spaced out in studios, and some courses were moved to the Preston Activity Center on campus. Masks were required among all dancers and faculty for both classes and performances. Virtual learning and master classes offered new opportunities and connections between dancers, faculty, and guest artists. The WKU Dance Company members participated in both live and virtual performance opportunities in the fall and spring.

Inquiries about the WKU Dance Program can be directed to Amanda Clark, Dance Program Coordinator, at amanda.clark@wku.edu; 270-745-5845.



SDI 2021

The WKU Summer Dance Intensive is designed for high school dancers as a unique opportunity to explore college level dance and the WKU experience. The event embraces the Dance Program's mission of "creating thinking artists" and provides students with a variety of classes to enhance their technical and artistic skills. Students engage in dance technique and movement theory classes and have the opportunity to learn WKU Dance Company repertoire. The week-long intensive culminates in a performance featuring university faculty and guest artist choreography. Unique to summer '21, all participating dancers are required to reside in the dorms, thus gaining a complete college experience as faculty work to keep everyone healthy. Selected WKU dance majors serve as RA's and accompany dancers throughout the intensive.

Our summer dance intensive has become a sought-after experience. SDI '21 reached enrollment capacity in less than a week of open registration, with additional dancers being placed on a waiting list to attend. We are proud to say that many dancers that attend SDI return to the hill as Hilltoppers earning a BA in Dance.

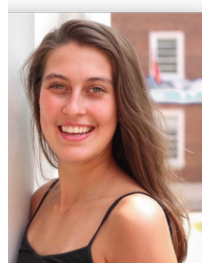


Student Highlight



Senior Dance and Exercise Science double major, **Taylor Boulter**, completed her Capstone Research Experience in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor's of Science in Exercise Science. Her project discusses the physiological and cognitive benefits of implementing dance therapy in exercise programs for older adults and provides a basic demonstration of repertoire and movements that can be utilized within these programs. Taylor has been accepted to the Bellarmine University Doctor of Physical Therapy Program and plans to continue her education in dance while studying to become a Doctor of Physical Therapy.

Junior Dance and Communication Studies double major, **Evelyn Lackney**, was recently awarded the Undergraduate Research and Creative Project Award for her persuasive campaign on the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) through the Department of Communications. Her campaign was an exploration of how NDEO functions as an organization; Evelyn crafted ways in which NDEO can adapt to using more efficient persuasive techniques. She will be presented this award at the annual Department of Communications Award Banquet at the end of the semester.



Senior Dance and Elementary Education double major, **Emily Caldwell**, completed her Honors College thesis this semester by interviewing several dance companies in New York City about their arts-in-education programs. The paper was a compilation and synthesis of this research that studied how to most effectively create and implement children's outreach programs in contemporary modern concert dance companies. The purpose of this research was to study how professional dance companies give back to their communities through engagement with children via classes, performances, workshops, etc. and to determine the most effective methods to create, advertise and execute these various programs.

NDEO-WKU STUDENT CHAPTER

The National Dance Education Organization-WKU Student Chapter is a student led organization. Their mission is to strategically raise awareness of the importance of dance throughout the community. They strive to provide education of and support for dance through a network of resources. Joining NDEO grants membership into the National Honor Society of Dance Arts, which recognizes outstanding members, provides further scholarship opportunities, and enables members to graduate with dance honors.

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media!

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The National Dance Education Organization- WKU Student Chapter has remained busy this past year despite the circumstances. The student chapter organized two yoga *Dance Crazes* led by alumna Alex Lamm and Cherokee Bennett, a TikTok *Dance Craze* by dance majors Sydney Bosway and Evelyn Lackney, a pilates *Gotta Dance Friday* hosted by The Spot, and two of our annual 24-hour *Kick the Clock* events. The chapter also had a resumé/Q&A informational session to discuss the professional performer's day-to-day life with WKU alumni Matthew Dant. These events were all held virtually.



Faculty Highlight

NAN GIORDANO CERTIFICATION PROGRAM® VIRTUAL TRAINING



Dance Program Coordinator and Professor, **Amanda Clark**, recently collaborated with WKU Dance Alumna, Sara Pecina, to publish *Dance Appreciation* (Routledge, 2021). *Dance Appreciation* separates itself from other books in its depth of information, equal attention to tap, jazz, hip-hop, ballet, and modern dance, and a chapter on dance media and technology. The companion website provides readers a large collection of supporting video links for each chapter as well as devised movement videos for selected chapters.

Part-Time Instructor, **Kylene Stephens**, accomplished her Nan Giordano Certification Training Program in March 2021. Stephens participated virtually in online classes led by Nan Giordano to receive her Intermediate Level certification that enhances the learning and mastery of this codified technique.

Cover image for *Dance Appreciation* features alumna Cherokee Bennett performing Roberto Sifontes' choreography, *Inside Out*, from WKU's *Evening of Dance 2019*.

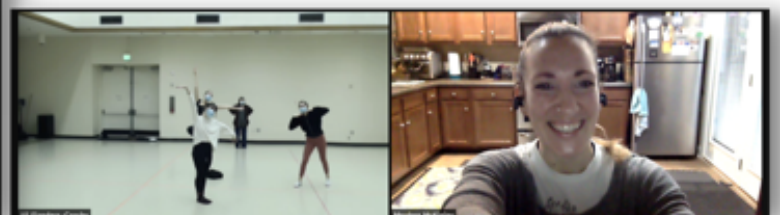
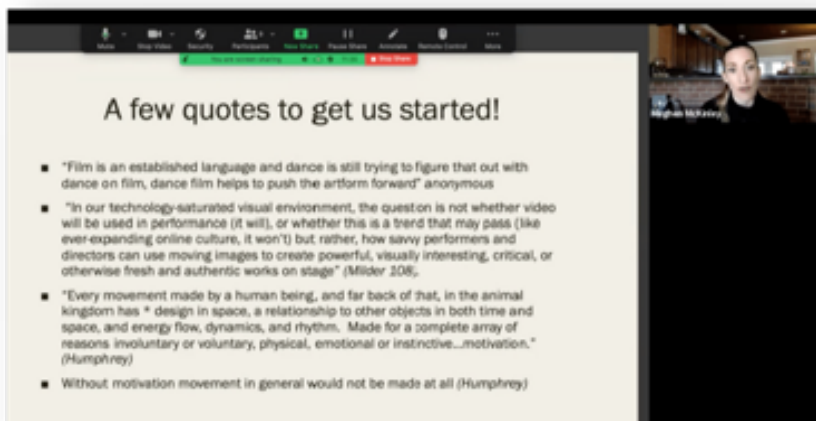
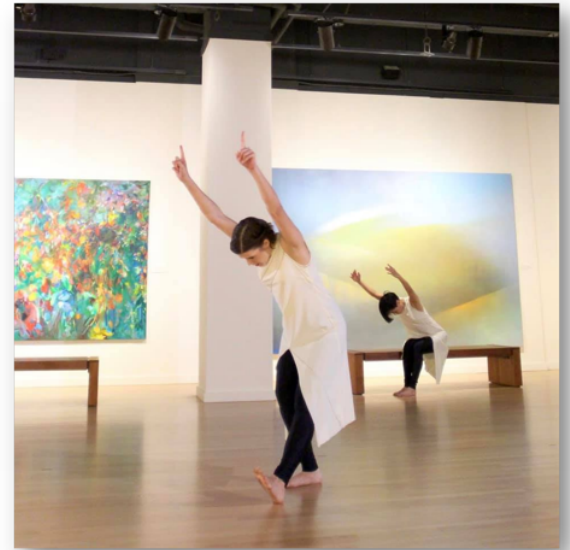




Faculty Highlight

Assistant Professor **Meghen McKinley** created collaborative work on Honolulu-based dance company Convergence Dance Theatre (CDT). This work was set via Zoom and involved dancers and choreographers from three different states. "Join Hands and Step Forward" was a part of CDT's "Transcendence" Digital Concert performed at the Honolulu State Art Museum, funded by a state grant. This piece was simultaneously performed by WKU dancers in this year's *WinterDance: A Digital Concert*.

Meghen was also a multi-month Zoom Artist in Residence at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. She worked closely with UAA Faculty and WKU Alumna Jill Crosby-Flanders to create "Shades of Blue." Through guest lectures with UAA students and community dancers, Meghen gave lectures on Visual Media for Dance as well as set movement work on the dancers. This grant supported project included collaborations with choreographers, videographers, and musicians for UAA's Digital Concert that aired in April.





Guest Artists on the Hill

The Laroche Approach



In the spring semester, WKU dance students enjoyed a special guest lecture via Zoom with dancer and choreographer **Jenny Laroche**. "The Laroche Approach" seminar brought a diverse perspective and years of professional experience to the dancers at WKU. Within her

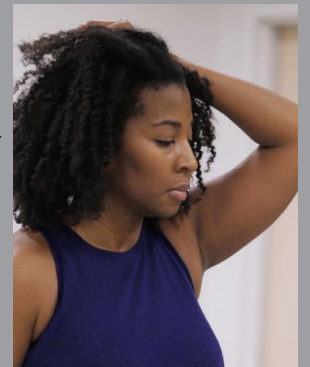
lecture series, Laroche compiled educational and professional advice from concert dance, Broadway, and commercial work experience geared towards student success. "The Laroche Approach" prepared students for professional life experiences and career search after college. This experience was funded by a Potter College Diversity Equity and Inclusion Grant.

Guest Artist Residency

Students of the WKU Dance Company worked with **Melanie George**,

professional dance educator and choreographer, through Zoom rehearsals to restage her work ...*from down here*, which is rooted in jazz dance and vernacular vocabulary. George had

originally created this work during her Spring 2020 guest residency; however, students were unable to perform the piece live that semester due to the Covid-19 pandemic. WKU Dance Company members presented the choreography in *Evening of Dance* 2021, produced by the Department of Theatre and Dance. Dancers also engaged in a Q&A session in which George highlighted her experience participating in the contemporary jazz dance documentary *Uprooted* as well as discussed topics such as racism within the history of jazz dance. This experience was funded by a Potter College Diversity Equity and Inclusion Grant.



Giordano Dance Chicago

Dance Company and Jazz Technique students had the honor of **Nan Giordano** and **Cesar Salinas** of **Giordano Dance Chicago** gracing our studio spaces for a virtual master class. This experience was historical, technical, and professional. The impact it has had on the students will continue to help them in future classes at WKU as well as professional endeavors.

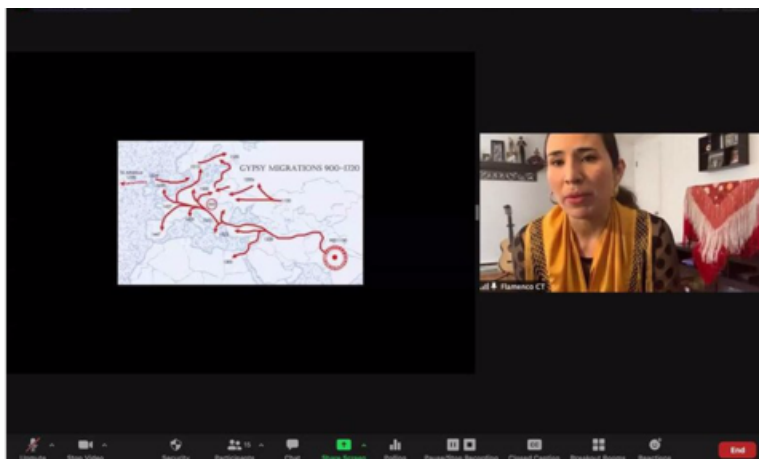
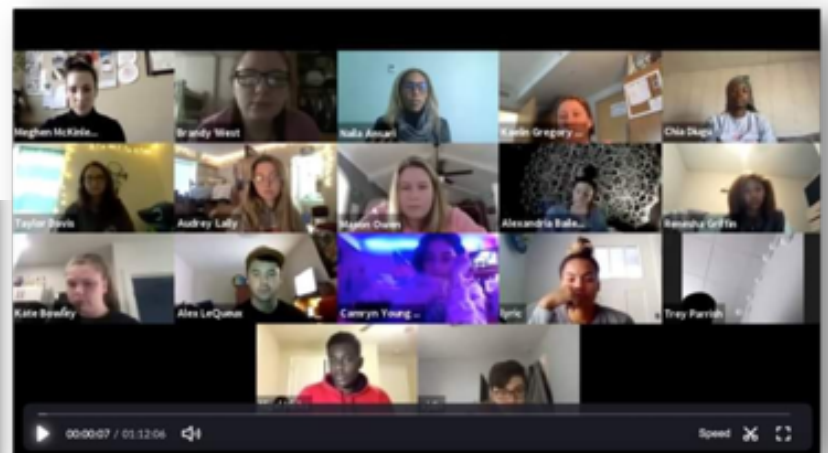




Guest Artists on the Hill



The Dance in Culture Course (DANC 360) was awarded funding through the Mahurin Honors College to support engaging Zoom guest artist lectures during Fall 2020. Departmental alumna **Shyama Iyer** shared her incredible knowledge about Bharatanatyam and Classical Indian Dance, WKU Alumna **Jill Crosby-Flanders'** lecture explored movement demonstrations and development of Cook Islanders, **Naila Ansari** discussed her continued research in "Politics of Black Dance in America," and **Yohanna Escamilla** closed the semester with movement and the historical significance of Flamenco.



Collaborating on the Hill

WKU dancers, both current and graduated, had the amazing opportunity to work with Folk, World, and Rock Musical duo - HuDost. HuDost and choreographer, **Rebecca Steinberg** of New Dialect Nashville, collaborated with the dancers to create a music video for their new song, "Beat the Drum."



NDEO-WKU Student Chapter collaborated with the WKU music fraternity, **Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia**, for an upbeat jazz concert. Held in the DSU Auditorium, dancers Sydney Bosway, Kaylee Lane, and Jaclyn Scheiss reset their choreographic works that premiered earlier this semester in *The Dance Project*. Scheiss, along with Kaetlyn Jeffries, choreographed and then performed a tap duet to a rendition of "Sing, Sing, Sing" by Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. The concert, titled ***Rhythm and Moves***, closed with improvisation by both the dancers and musical accompaniment.





Performances on the Hill

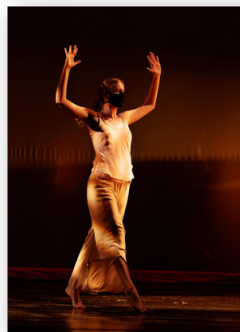


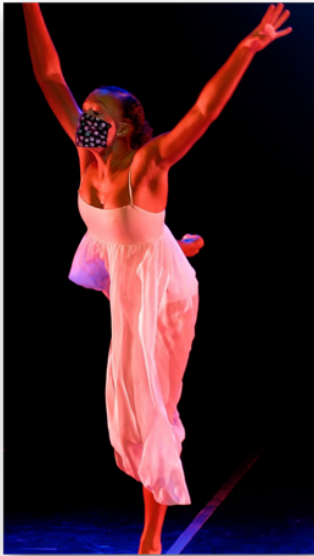
WinterDance

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During the fall semester, the WKU Dance Department was not able to perform live. Therefore, the Dance Program introduced the alternative viewing option, a virtual concert, for *WinterDance*. During the performance, viewers enjoyed a variety of dance genres ranging from ballet, modern, jazz, and tap. This performance featured choreography from the WKU dance faculty. Ensemble dancers were split into three socially distanced groups amongst faculty members to learn various works of repertoire. From these works, students were selected for casting in specific pieces that were then debuted in the virtual concert, which was filmed on Van Meter's beautiful stage.

Evening of Dance

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Spring semester brought the department's first live performance since the start of COVID-19. *Evening of Dance* offered two in-person shows in Van Meter Auditorium, as well as four virtual performances. Dancers enjoyed the opportunity to perform again before a live audience. This production featured a variety of music styles and dance genres. A highlight of the production was the premiere of guest artist Melanie George's work entitled *...from down here*.





Dance Project

The Dance Project is an adjudicated student choreographed concert produced by the Department of Theatre & Dance. For this particular concert, students usually create their work during the fall semester; however, due to COVID-19, students were unable to start the creative process until the beginning of the spring semester. Over the span of about six weeks, choreographers created and rehearsed the dances selected for Inclusion In this year's concert. *The Dance Project* was filmed in the Gordon Wilson Lab Theatre and then presented virtually.



Last Chance to Dance

Last Chance to Dance, the department's end of the semester student showcases, premiered virtually. Fall semester featured works created by Choreography II students, while the spring semester included final projects from the Choreography I and Visual Media in Dance courses, along with other student works. WKU Dance Program students worked the entirety of the semester and developed these works while receiving feedback from peers and faculty mentors.

