

ENCORES

*Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
Alumni Newsletter*



January 2010

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Alumni,

It is an honor to write this letter on behalf the Greater Hartford Academy of the (Performing) Arts. I would like to begin by mentioning how delighted I am to serve as the sixth Director of the Academy. As the Academy prepares to celebrate 25 years of excellence in arts education, we embrace alumni as vital stakeholders in commemorating our history and continuing to advance the mission of our program.

Though many changes have occurred over the past 25 years, the spirit of our creative community remains constant. Since the Academy's founding as a public magnet arts high school in 1985, we have been a pioneer in bringing together people of diverse cultural heritage with the purpose of instilling the knowledge, skills, and attitude for students to reach their fullest artistic potential, live productive lives, and contribute to society as creative and engaged citizens. Our school continues to be comprised of engaged and accomplished professional artists, students and alumni who set high standards for each other in their respective art forms.

This spirit of the Academy is reflected in you, our most precious asset. Whether you went onto a career in the arts or your journey took you elsewhere, there is a common thread all alumni share with each other -- a passion for the arts. Therefore, it is with great pleasure that I invite you to participate in several upcoming alumni events this year, being held to not only commemorate our 25th anniversary, but also to pay tribute to you and the journey you have taken with us over the years. Reconnect with the Academy and with each other on January 7, 2010 for Alumni Day, as well as during the Academy's 25th Anniversary Celebration which will take place June 10 through June 12, 2010 (please see page 5 for details).

This is a very special edition of Encores where past directors and alumni have shared what the Academy has meant to them. As you read each person's story I hope that you will reflect on what the Academy has meant to you over the years, and I encourage you to share your thoughts with us.

Please stop by to say "hello", contact a faculty member who you have not been in touch with, or speak to our Alumni Relations Coordinator, Erica Callahan at ecallahan@crec.org or (860)757-6322.

The Academy welcomes you warmly; you are our family. I look forward to having you celebrate our rich history with us this year as we look back on a quarter century of excellence in arts education.

Sincerely,
Eric Bernstein

WHAT THE ACADEMY HAS MEANT TO ME Reflections from Past Directors

JANET BROWN—FOUNDING DIRECTOR

When I was hired as director of planning for the Academy, it represented a huge challenge to me on every level. To begin with, although the Hartford Board of Education and 13 other school districts initially supported the idea of the academy, we needed to persuade many more to sign on to the idea. This meant driving around, enthusiastically describing a program that didn't exist yet, sometimes alone, sometimes with John Allison who was then the director of CREC. I remember, that first December, when the CREC staff awarded us the "Fred and Ginger" award for doing our song and dance about the Academy before so many potential funders and supporters!

Then there was the little matter of the curriculum. Although I felt I knew a lot about theater arts and secondary education, I certainly didn't know enough about music, for example, to decide whether we should teach jazz as well as classical music, or whether all the dance students should be required to take both ballet and modern dance. And what about jazz dance, African dance, tap? My solution, eventually, was to hire good people who did know those answers: department heads who would also become our first teachers. We met often, talked endlessly, and then they talked to their friends, who sometimes joined the faculty too, or suggested others. In the same way, I sought out information by phone or in the literature, about other magnet schools and other programs for gifted and talented students. We sched-

uled the first auditions, and then had to decide: how would we identify the students who were “exceptionally talented” but had no training? How to judge them by comparison with students who had studied the arts for years? And didn’t we need both? How to be inclusive and yet create a special environment, different and maybe better than what their home schools offered?

The funeral home on Wethersfield Avenue had been purchased before I arrived, but it was completely unrenovated, so the department heads and I became involved in how to convert the funeral-home spaces to new uses. The “chapels” became studios, and we installed showers in what had been the embalming room, because there were already drains in the floor! We held auditions in September, and when it became clear that the building would not be ready by January, we went begging for space all over the city. Amazingly, Trinity College, the city library, Bulkeley High School, and a couple of churches all agreed to house Academy classes. So, we started holding classes, although taking attendance that semester required a car!

Despite the hardships, from the beginning, there was a great sweetness to the undertaking. We had a special group creating the Academy. The faculty, the Governing Council, John Allison and the other CREC staff, all seemed to believe that what we were doing was out of the ordinary, a stroke of idealism, a school on another plane of reality, almost. High school can be a cruel place, and we were all determined that the Academy would be different, a safe place where art could thrive. Kids who felt like misfits at their home schools found friends there who shared their interests. Parents complained to me (not too seriously), about their long distance bills, because their kids spent all their time talking to new friends in different area codes.

The Academy felt like my baby, but when we had an opportunity to adopt a real baby, I took a year’s leave that later became my resignation. I had told the Academy students the plan, but I don’t think it really sank in until, suddenly, it was my last day. I remember that a group of the vocal majors came to my office door, and sang, “I Want to Live Forever” from Fame, acapella. I’ve been back to visit only a couple of times since then. Each time, although the Academy is so much bigger and better now, I’ve been struck by how it remains a place that’s remarkable for its sense of kindness and community, as much as for its dedication to the arts.

MITZI YATES- (WATERHOUSE) LIZÁRRAGA

The Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts was my professional launching pad that fulfilled my burning desire to work with young people who were struggling to find their own place in society. The Academy allowed me to work with young artistically talented people in an urban environment to help them find their spark to dream and soar, to discover their authentic voice, and to contribute to a chang-

ing world. Little did I know during my childhood meal times that I would have a career in service to young adolescents. I think about the abundance of my childhood experiences and I remain deeply committed to helping today’s young aspiring artists, especially those students who may not have the resources and family support to pursue their dreams.

I remain indebted to the Academy for giving me the opportunity to make a small difference in the lives of young people. I remain honored and humbled by the opportunity to be one of several Academy leaders who helped to create an environment for young people to connect with the lives of literary artists, musicians, dancers, actors, photographers, and painters and to voice their hopes for our country. The Academy nurtures the artist and scholar in each of us. The Academy is home to me.

HERB SHEPPARD

I had the pleasure of being the Academy’s fourth director (2000 to 2008) following Mitzi Yates, Carolyn Dixon and Janet Brown (the founding director). From 1996 to 2000 I served as the first Managing Director and loved every minute of those years in the “funeral home”. It was there that I became very aware of the accepting environment that was the standard at the Academy – so different from the traditional public schools in which I had worked. The color of one’s skin, the clothes one wore or the house one lived in took a “back seat” to the talent and expertise the person brought to the class or project. The Academy was then and still is a family – a place where artist/instructors work side by side with aspiring artists to hone their talent/craft! As Janet Brown wrote, “high school can be a cruel place”. In 1984, the founders were determined that the Academy would be different, a safe place where art could thrive.

They succeeded and we continue to carry on that tradition. The Academy has brought me full cycle in my professional career. I began as a music teacher, moved through administrative ranks in public schools, ran my own business for 20 years and then came to the Academy. Being here pumped a breath of fresh air into my life. My wife, Sue, and I have enjoyed watching talented students grow and mature in their art form. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your journey.

When I think about the Academy and what it has meant to me for the past 13 years, many words come to mind: great kids, outstanding performances, growth, success, achievement, fun, college preparation, love and family. At what other school will you hear the phrase “I love you” resounding through the halls. It’s a special place that has affected the lives of everyone lucky enough to be here for a month, a year or a decade.



WHAT THE ACADEMY HAS MEANT TO ME

Reflections from Alumni

An experience that changed me for the better. Friends I will have forever. Teachers I will never forget. And the Introduction to the rest of my life.

-Karina Lopez, Visual Arts Department, Class of 2008

The academy helped me discover my artistic voice and gave me the confidence to follow my passion.

-Courtney Lindberg, Acting Major, Class of 1996

There is so much I discovered about myself as a dancer and as a person during the past four years at the Academy. Without a doubt, GHAA prepared me artistically and academically for dance at the college level. More importantly, however, I learned how versatility and an open-mind are two of the most important factors of becoming a successful dancer. Thanks to the Academy, I learned to relax, embody the movement more fully and challenge my creativity, as the passion behind it projects louder than the technique itself. Technique can be always be taught, but passion is something that comes from within the dancer. Thank you GHAA!

-Amanda Fredette, Dance Major, Class of 2009

Eight years later, the one year I spent at the Academy still has a major impact on what I'm doing. I'm pursuing a M.F.A in poetry and preparing to teach college. How and what I want to teach continues to be influenced by my Academy experience. The Academy is more than just an incredible space that fosters professionalism; it is a space where I've found family and friends.

-Sarah Rizzuto, Creative Writing Department, Class of 2001

A lifetime of memories and friendships, life lessons learned and taught. Still to this day if I bump into someone from the Academy it's always smiles and happiness, even with those whom were not so respectable; and I am sure some can say the same for me.

-Stephan Figueroa, Music Department, Class of 1996

Academy is my second home. It is where I was raised, met teachers and mentors who changed my view of the performing arts, matured into a young woman, went far past my potential as a dancer and as a performer, made great friends who will always be in my heart, and had an experience like no other. The Academy isn't simply an arts school; it is a strong community of love, art, and life.

-Emma MacDonald, Dance Department, Class of 2009

Academy was the jumping off point for the life I wanted to live both artistically and personally.

-Julia B. Rosenblatt, Class of 1992

Academy is an amazing place! It was a cherished opportunity that turned into an unforgettable experience. Where I was nurtured and given strong developmental skills for the talent of a young artist. A place where I began to define myself, and met wonderful people who I call family to this day.

-Stephanie McAllister, Music (Vocal) Department,

Class of 2007

The Academy was a place where I learned to harness my creativity, a place where work was fun, and a place where I made friends I will never forget.

-Jason Karadimas, Drama Department, Class of 1991 (back when the music department was in the basement, where the dead bodies were previously stored)

The Academy to me has been an experience that has opened my eyes to the world of art and culture. It created passion and appreciation for music, theater, dance, and prose, in a professional environment where teachers were not only my mentors but also guides in the dream.

-Eva Bermudez, Musical Theater Department, Class of 2004

The Academy was a place where I began cultivating my whole Self and Soul, and to begin to understand the journey of what that even means.

-Danielle Kelly, Creative Writing, Class of 2006

This school has changed my life immeasurably for the better. Had it not been for my attendance to this school, I would never have pursued art as a career, nor found my talent in what I really love to do. In addition, this school has helped me discover who I am as a person, helping me to step outside my safety zone in more ways than one. In this incredibly safe environment, I was able to become the strong, confident person I am today.

-Emily Jingst, Visual Arts Department, Class of 2009

The Academy was always a place where I felt like I could do something for myself and for others. It was always an escape for me, and I loved the time I spent there and the people I spent four years of my life with. Everyone there that I interacted with was so special, and I feel like I will always have that, thanks to what was, for me, an absolutely amazing place.

-Ashley Lee, Theater Department, Class of 2008

Academy has been the place where I've become exposed to so much in every form of art. Academy also taught me the importance of focus and dedication, and prepared me for the hard work that college requires.

-Kelly Canyock, Dance/Theater Department, Class of 2009

The Academy to me wasn't just a school for the arts, it was a home for my voice to be heard and strengthened. I was challenged, worked, managed, and always throughout it all encouraged to go even further. It wasn't really school for me either. It was more like a home away from home because there, I was with people who shared the same passion for the Arts as I did.

-Liz Garvin, Music (Vocal) Department, Class of 2005

There are a precious few milestone experiences in our lives that continue to resonate for us for years to come. I without reservation count my time at the Academy as such an experience, an experience which forever altered the way I create and experience art. I made long lasting friendships with students and teaching staff, which I have the privilege

to hold to this day.

-Matthew Pittsinger, Music Department, Class of 1998

The Academy is a place I am so proud to have been apart of. A community where we all came from such diverse backgrounds & found a common thread; our passion for the arts. It is a place that embraced love, determination, ambition and growth.

-Jennifer LaPlaca, Drama Department, Class of 2001

The Academy was a very real, very close-knit family that I shared everything with, including my trials and tribulations, my joys and my sorrows. Through the four years I spent there, I was impacted by each and every teacher, student, and friend who I came into contact with. Everyone in the school rejoiced at both my successes and failures, helping me to grow and become the person who I am today. Without this incredible family, I would never have realized my dreams and actively sought to make them a reality.

-Angela Rhea Piccoli, 3 Years in Music Department, 1 Year in Musical Theater Department, Class of 2007

Academy has and always will be one of my best memories and greatest experiences. It made me learn more about my crafts and of course, there came many friends that were so talented. I was proud to be a part of it and then and now as an alum.

-Tiffany Failla, Music Department (2001-2004), Theater Department (2004-2005), Class of 2005

The Academy exposed me to some of the most beautiful art I have ever seen or been a part of. It inspired me to feel the world and nothing can replace it.

-Swara Kantaria, Theater Department, Class of 2008

The Academy was, for me, a space where we were free to grow into artists and adults by exploring the meanings of identity and community. It was a place where we took creative risks along with the risks of being different -- racially, ethnically, economically, and sexually -- and we made art, friends, and ourselves in the process.

-Carly Smith, Drama Department, Class of 1999

The Academy means the world to me. It has open doors for me and has allowed me to experience so many things. I was able to share my gift with others and also gained a humungous family. The Academy was truly my home and every day I walked into the school, I felt peace and like I was meant to be there. I miss everyone and I love all of my teachers, Sarah, Diane, Ken, Alex, David and all of my other teachers. I have moved on from the Academy doing great things, but my heart truly remains there.

- Jessica Rodriguez, Music (Vocal) Department, Class of 2009

The academy confirmed my desire to dance. It gave me the tools I needed to continue my life as an artist in college and also in the professional world. My teachers encouraged me in ways that have kept me moving and creating ever since.

- Rebecca Mehan, Dance Department, Class of 1993

Academy meant everything to me. If not for the Academy, I would not have made it through High School. Words cannot express what it feels like to be surrounded by people who truly share your passion for the arts. Academy was my place to fit in when regular High School wasn't. I am truly grateful for the time I spent there, the experiences I had and the lifelong friends I made.

-Korann Bivans, Music (Vocal) Department, Class of 1996

My experience at the academy has been a place of strength in my life. I was challenged appropriately and given the opportunity to realize my highest potential. I reflect on my time at the academy with wonder and gratitude.

-Linalynn Schmelzer, Dance Department, Class of 1999

The Academy, so far, has been the only place in my life that has nurtured my mind, soul and heart. The lessons I've learned and the friendships I've forged have proven to be lasting, and it is with the utmost fondness that I recall even my "angstiest" moments. As with all precious gifts, what the Academy means to us cannot be truly realized until after we've departed from that courtyard, or those window-side benches, or even that corner for the final time.

-Anna Gallo, Creative Writing Department, Class of 2007

JOIN US FOR OUR FOURTH ANNUAL ALUMNIDAY!

This year the Academy celebrates its 25th year of providing excellence in the arts to area high school students. Please join us in celebrating this achievement and reminiscing on the time you spent here as a student on **Alumni Day, which will be held on Thursday, January 7th.**

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

12:30pm-1:00pm Check In

1:00pm-3:20pm Alumni will meet with their departments*

3:20pm-4:15pm Alumni are free to socialize with other Alumni**

4:15pm until 5:00pm Alumni Reception with Faculty

*Visual artists are asked to bring their work, slides, or DVD of their work to share with students. At 1:00pm dancers are invited to join any level ballet class until 2:20pm, and then join students to share the experiences they have had since graduating from Academy.

**Musicians and vocalists are more than welcome to hold a jam session with the First Year Seminar students in the Recital Hall during this time, if preferred.

Please R.S.V.P. to Erica at ecallahan@crec.org or (860) 757-6322, if you will be joining us for the reception.

Since we are planning a very special 25th Year Anniversary Celebration for Alumni that will take place in June 2010, the format for this year's Alumni Day is different than in the past. Alumni will have the opportunity to perform in June. Thank you!



UPCOMING EVENTS

BIG LOVE

Directed by Joni Weisfeld

By Charles Mee

Based on The Suppliant Women by Aeschylus

January 22, 23, 29 & 30 at 7:30 P.M.

Black Box Theater: \$15 Adults, \$10 Students/Seniors

This ancient story of fifty brides who rebel against their arranged marriages becomes a theatrical free-for-all. This explosive material is a somber reflection on themes of justice and revenge and a wild celebration of the enduring power of love.

ART SCHOOLS NETWORK - INTERNATIONAL POSTCARD SHOW

Opening January 28, 5-7:00 P.M.

January 28-February 25

Lobby Gallery: Free Admission

This gallery exhibition will showcase postcards created by students from the International Art Schools Network.

DIALOGUE CYCLES

Directed by Deborah Goffe

February 11 at 7:30 P.M.

Black Box Theater: \$10 Adults, \$5 Students/Seniors

Dialogue Cycle is a performance piece that will be created by students from the Academy's Dance, Creative Writing and Visual Arts departments. The work will explore the intersection of movement, words, and images.

DANCE INTERMEZZO

February 25 at 6:30 P.M.

Main Stage Theater: Free Admission

ANON(YMOUS)

Directed by Brian Jennings

An Adaptation of Homer's The Odyssey by Naomi Iizuka

March 19, 20, 26 & 27 at 7:30 P.M.

Black Box Theater: \$10 Adults, \$5 Students/Seniors

Anon(ymous) is Naomi Iizuka's adaptation of Homer's The Odyssey. Iizuka's Odysseus, Anon, is separated from his family on his journey to America. He meets other wanderers who both help him on his way and threaten to end his life in a series of encounters modeled on the episodes of Homer's tale.

ENDOWMENT FUNDRAISER

March 25 at 8:00 P.M.

Main Stage Theater

A performance to benefit the Academy Endowment and future generations of aspiring artists.

THEATER INTERMEZZO

March 30 at 6:30 P.M.

Black Box Theater: Free Admission

MUSICAL THEATER INTERMEZZO

March 31 at 6:30 P.M.

Main Stage Theater: Free Admission

SPRING ART SHOW

Opening Reception-Thursdays, April 1, 5-7:00 P.M.

April 1 - May 18

Lobby Gallery: Free Admission

MUSIC INTERMEZZO

April 1 at 6:30 P.M.

Main Stage Theater: Free Admission

CREATIVE WRITING INTERMEZZO

April 29 at 6:30 P.M.

Recital Hall: Free Admission

PIANO RECITAL

April 30 at 7:00 P.M.

Recital Hall: Free Admission

URINETOWN

Directed by David McCamish

By Greg Kotis

Lyrics by Mark Hollman and Greg Kotis

Music by Mark Hollman

May 7, 8, 13, 14, 15 at 7:30 P.M.

Main Stage Theater / Group Rates Call 757-6172

Orchestra: \$25 Adults, \$15 Students/Seniors

Upper Tier: \$20 Adults, \$10 Students/Seniors

Urinetown is a humorously irreverent satire describing a terrible water shortage that has led to a government-enforced ban on private toilets. Ordinary people must pay to use public amenities regulated by a mega-corporation. One heroic citizen plans a revolt to lead the people to freedom! Urinetown won the 2002 Tony Awards for best director, book and score.

INTERARTS INTERMEZZO

May 12 at 6:30 P.M.

Recital Hall: Free Admission

DANCE AND MUSICAL THEATER SENIOR PERFORMANCE

May 21 at 6:30 P.M.

Black Box Theater: Free Admission

ACADEMY AWARDS

June 10 at 7:00 P.M.

Senior Art Opening Reception: 5:45-6:45 P.M.,

Lobby Gallery: Free Admission

Performance: 7:00 P.M.

Main Stage Theater: Free Admission

25TH ANNIVERSARY ALUMNI CELEBRATION June 10 through June 12

Come and join us as the Academy celebrates 25 years of excellence in arts education. Festivities will include the presentation of the first Academy Outstanding Alumni Award, an Alumni Concert, after party, master classes, bar-b-que picnic and so much more! Registration materials and other details to be posted soon at www.crec.org/academy. Alumni are welcome to join the 25th Anniversary Alumni Celebration planning committee. Next meeting at the Academy is Monday, January 11 at 4:30p.m. For more info contact Herb Sheppard at hsheppard@crec.org.

FACULTY NEWS

CREATIVE WRITING

Rafael Oses, was a featured reader at The Buttonwood Tree, performed Tres Canciones Espanolas at GHAA and at Central CT State University and had a writing residency at the Djerrasi Artist Colony in California.

Pamela Nomura, traveled to South Africa as part of a Teaching Artist Exchange and participated in numerous teaching and learning activities centering on the history of the Anti-apartheid movement, the cultural life of South Africa's townships, African spirituality and indigenous art forms, a writing fellowship and residency at Blue Mountain Center in New York.

Jeff McQuillan was selected to receive a SURDNA Teaching Artist Fellowship Grant; he traveled to West Africa to work with musicians and storytellers.

Anita Balkun exhibited her work titled Singed Focus at the Slipe Gallery at the University of Hartford.

Pit Pinegar, won an artist residency with the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation in New Mexico.

DANCE

Deborah Goffe, performed Bitter, Sweet and Saltwater Breath at Trinity College and performed in the premiere of the New England Choreographers' Showcase at Wesleyan University.

Sonia Plumb took a workshop with Liz Lerman resulting in an invitation to be part of the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange International Teen Institute in Takoma Park, Maryland this past summer with two students.

Kim Stroud, was named a member of The International Dance Council of the United Nations and won the 2009 Teacher of the Year Award from Arts Schools Network.

MUSIC

Sarah Hersh performed Tres Canciones Espanolas at GHAA and at Central CT State University and performed with Deborah Goffe in Bitter, Sweet and Saltwater Breath at Trinity College.

Paul Brown and **Alex Nakhimovsky**, completed a 2nd music tour of Japan.

THEATER

Brian Jennings traveled to South Africa as part of a Teaching Artist Exchange and participated in numerous teaching and learning activities centering on the history of the Anti-apartheid movement, the cultural life of South Africa's townships, African spirituality and indigenous art forms.

David Chandler was inducted into the USA Martial Arts Hall of Fame recognizing his lifetime of achievement.

VISUAL ARTS

Francine and **John Gintoff** exhibited their work in the Victory Tyler Sculpture Show.

Christine Breslin exhibited her work at the University of Connecticut's Alexey Von Schlippe Gallery .

NEWS FROM ALUMNI

1984

Sean Crawford graduated in 2008 from Colorado Tech where he majored in Criminal Justice. He has also served 8 years in the U.S. Army and has been a General Manager for two retail chains. He is currently employed by Hartford Parking Authority as an Enforcement Officer and is the father of two.

1986

Teresa (McCormick) Pelham graduated from CCSU where she majored in Communications/Journalism. She currently resides in Farmington and is a self-employed freelance writer.

1988

Alexa Melonopoulos graduated Hofstra, NYU in 1992 where she majored in Dance. She currently resides in Farmington where she is the Arts Chair and Dance Director for Miss Porter's School.

Daryl-Lynn Michaud received a Bachelor's degree from Suffolk University and her Master's from Gonzaga University. She currently is self-employed as a Search Consultant and resides in Manchester.

1990

Jack Terry graduated from NYU where he majored in Drama. He is currently a General Manager at Tisane and resides in Hartford.

1991

Frank Marci attended UCONN as a Music Education major and then CCSU for music. He is currently employed by South Windsor Public Schools at Timothy Edwards Middle School as the Director of Bands.

1992

Michelle Murray-Fiertek attended Arizona State University. She is presently employed at GHAA in the theater Department and at Naugatuck Valley Community College as a music instructor.

1993

Rebecca Mehan graduated from SUNY Purchase where she majored in Dance. She resides in Astoria, New York where she teaches movement and Yoga at Columbia Grammar and Prep School.

1994

Desiree Napoleon attended The University of Connecticut where she majored in English. She is currently employed

with The Hartford Job Corps Academy as an Assistant to the Director of Finance and Administration. Desiree is a proud mother of three and is still singing.

1995

Tracy Devine is the very proud owner of Manchester's Cosmic Omelet, a breakfast and lunch restaurant. Her restaurant has been voted best in Manchester in the Hartford Advocate for the second straight year. She received a mention in the Cambridge Who's Who, and though she never attended college she was invited to be the guest speaker in a business ethics class at ECSU.

Lisette Velasquez graduated from the University of Hartford where she majored in Arts Management. She is currently a journalist for The Herald and the Education Coordinator for a Boys & Girls Club.

David Polon is presently working for Dance Industry Professional.

1996

Stacy Lambert attended The Hartford Conservatory for Dance, Ailey School and MCC. She is currently a professional dj/electronic music producer (Miz-Eyesis), Co-Founder of Threshold Sound (A dj/artist collective based out of CT), and member of various dj/artist collectives based out of NYC & New England (Awake Productions, Team Ewok, DNBC, NERU, Konkrete Jungle Organization, Basscamp Recordings). She has had articles published in the Hartford Advocate, Hartford Courant, Exactly Magazine, and many more. She has had a consistent & busy dj schedule for the past 5 years all over the Eastern US circuit (Boston, NYC, Philadelphia, Miami, etc).

Seth Hodge attended Carroll College for Art and Clemson College for Higher Education Administration: Counseling. Currently he resides in Scotts Valley, California where he works for UC Santa Cruz as a College Programs Coordinator.

Nora Matthews graduated Trinity College where she majored in Theatre and Dance (minor Human Rights Studies) and Saint Joseph College majoring in Arts Education. She is presently self-employed as a Freelance Teaching Artist, Director, and Theatrical Technician. Her accomplishments include, Connecticut Teaching Certification with cross-endorsements in Elementary Education and Theatre Arts, 3 years as Education Director for Hartford Children's Theatre, 5 years as Drama Director for East Granby Middle and High School, 3 years as Co-Chair of Professional Theatre Network for American Alliance for Theatre and Education and she completed Trinity/LaMama Semester in New York City and LaMama Umbria Director's Symposium.

Maryl Ryan graduated from Bradford College where she majored in Drama. She currently resides in Burbank, California and works as an Artist Liaison for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Courtney Lindberg graduated from Florida State University with a BFA in Music Theatre. After college graduation she lived in NYC and performed for years at regional theatres and did a national tour. She is currently living in Los Angeles and working as a wedding and portrait photographer.

1997

Michael Moreau attended Florida Southern College and Westfield State College. He graduated in 2001 with a degree in Communications. He is currently employed by Six Flags New England as a Specialized Market Manager.

Jawana Litchfield-Msola attended Howard University. She currently resides in Maryland where she is a teacher.

Chevon Spears graduated from Virginia State University where she majored in Social Work and Liberal Arts and Education. She currently lives in Bloomfield where she is a Unit Leader for MetLife Disability.

Brenda Partello graduated from Emerson College. She currently resides in West Hollywood where she works as a TGMD Agency voiceover talent (with one commercial so far; for the army). She has also been Laura's double on "General Hospital" for 5 years, and is a member of SAG & AFTRA.

Amanda Stocker graduated from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia where she majored in Musical Theatre. She presently resides in New York.

1998

Molly Pearson received a BA from New School University and a BFA from Columbia University where she majored in Film. She currently resides in Brooklyn where she works for Table Ten Films & Partial Comfort Productions as a partner and Artistic Director respectively. She also is a co-founder and co-Artistic Director of Partial Comfort Productions (www.partialcomfort.org), a theater company that the New York Times has dubbed "the little company that could". She is partner and producer at Table Ten Films, a boutique independent film company based in NYC, shooting its first feature in Spring 2010. She was a finalist for Sundance Creative Producer Award, and winner of the Arthur Krim Memorial Award at Columbia University where she received her MFA in Film Producing.

Matthew Pittsinger graduated from Marymount Manhattan College where he majored in Psychology & Political Economy. He is living in New York and working as a Research Analyst for Mediamark. Some of his accomplishments are: Perry Research Scholar, Silver M Award, graduated Magna Cum Laude, Eastern Psychological Association presenter/author of a study on the Psychological Perception of Aesthetics in Art, composed/produced/recorded several original chamber operas and other numerous chamber works.

Jennifer Ely graduated Elmira College and currently is an Elementary School Teacher for Hampshire Country School.



Anna Masterson received a M.A. in Musicology from Tufts University. She is currently a Librarian for Needham Public Library. Some of her accomplishments include; Forthcoming book: "Maria Szymanowska (1789-1830): A Bibliography (MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009-10). She also completed a M.S. in Library and Information Science from Simmons College (2006-2008).

1999

Talmadge (Sarah) Nardi attended Evergreen State University and Lesley University. She currently resides in Massachusetts where she is an English Teacher for the Academy of the Pacific Rim.

Linalynn (Natter) Schmelzer graduated from Pratt Institute where she studied Dance and Movement Therapy. She is currently a dance teacher for inMotion. She wrote a thesis on Breath as it relates to dance/movement therapy and collaborated with musician, Frank Natter Jr. for future dance projects.

Emily Chenette graduated from Wesleyan University where she majored in Sociology and Dance. She resides in Hartford and is employed by the State of Connecticut as a Social Worker. She also graduated with a Master's Degree in Social Work from UCONN in May of 2009. She is currently dancing with Spectrum in Motion Dance Theater Ensemble in Hartford, CT.

Carly Smith graduated in 2003 from Marymount Manhattan College with a B.F.A. in Acting. She is currently a PhD student in Theatre (history and criticism) at CUNY Graduate Center. She is employed by Baruch College (CUNY) as an adjunct lecturer.

2001

Jeremy Osterling received a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education from the WCSU in 2005. He works in Elementary Music for Hartford Public Schools.

Jennifer LaPlaca graduated from The Fashion Institute of Technology in 2005 where she majored in Advertising and Marketing Communications. She received the SUNY Chancellor Award for Student Excellence Production for her work with MTV, NBC, ABC, and Telepictures. She has done voiceover work for the Cartoon Network and MTV promos. In addition, she has been involved as an actor with TriArts Sharon Playhouse-Chicago, Will Rogers Follies, and Kiss Me Kate. She currently resides in Los Angeles, California and is employed by The Doctors TV Show as a Associate Producer.

2002

Michelle Lockhart graduated from Boston University in 2008 where she majored in Legal Studies. She presently works for Jonathan Perkins Injury Lawyer as a Case Manager Paralegal. She recently opened her own photography studio specializing in family, maternity, infant and couples. www.michellejayphotography.com

2003

Andrea Caruso graduated Western Connecticut State University in 2008. She opened for Chick Corea at WCSU's 2006 Jazz Festival and has also performed at the Litchfield and Hartford Jazz Festivals. She has recorded with the Curtis Brothers and several GHAA alumni. Andrea has also performed at several venues in NYC including Sweet Rhythm. Both classically and jazz trained, she is a private teacher seeking a Master's in education.

2004

Katie R. Gamelli graduated college in 2008. Following graduation, she traveled abroad in Europe, exploring the rich and diverse cultures of England, France and Italy. Recently, Katie completed a run of a new play titled 'Deconstructing Berlin' at The Milagro Theatre in NYC with Saturn 5 Productions, as well as an Equity Staged Reading of 'The Madwoman of Chaillot,' with the Twelfth Night Club. She's been singing in various Cabaret Shows at 'Don't Tell Mama's,' and recently finished filming a bit part in the Independent Feature, "Happy Thank You More Please," with Josh Radnor Productions. However, to pay the bills, she works as a manager at a Yoga studio and bartends at the Lincoln Center Theater. Katie, however, has her sights set on obtaining her MFA in the near future. She says, "It's a tough world out here in good ol' NYC," but she loves every minute of it!

Rashida Graham graduated from Temple University in 2009 where she majored in Music Education and Jazz Studies. She currently resides in Philadelphia where she is employed by the School District of Philadelphia as a General Music Middle School Teacher.

Michael Barra attended SUNY Purchase as an Acting major. He has toured the country for 10 months as Sancho Panza in Man of La Mancha. He made his TV debut this year (2009) on Law & Order and continues to perform in the Off Broadway hit "The Awesome 80's Prom". He is currently filming the indie feature "Unscripted".

Ben Izzo graduated in 2008 from Wagner College where he majored in Theater. He has started his own small theatre company called BE Theatre Company, wrote and produced his first show (Sadie, Sadie) through the company in January 2009. The show was subsequently accepted into the NY International Fringe Festival and was scheduled to be performed August 2009.

Sarah Kronisch graduated from UCONN where she majored in Theater. She currently works for Emerson Theater Collaborative as a actor.

2005

Karen Encarnacion currently resides in Brooklyn where she works for Original Media as an AE.

Tiffany Failla graduated in 2009 from Central Connecticut State University where she majored in English. She was nominated for International Poet of the Year last July and went to Vegas for the convention. She won a trophy! She



plans to continue in 2010 for her Master's degree.

Courtney Fitzgerald graduated from NYU/Tisch School of the Arts in 2009 where she majored in Theater. She currently resides in Queens.

Nikole Doolittle currently attends Eastern Connecticut State University as a Communications major. She is employed by CT Nonprofits in Communications and Research. Her accomplishments at ECSU include: President of "Public Relations Student Society of America", Secretary of "Omicron Delta Kappa Honor Society", Secretary of "NAMI on Campus", member of "Psychology Club", committee member of "Lead to Succeed", Public Speaker, IMPACT, Secretary of "Nutmegs Resident Hall Association" and a Tour Guide. She was awarded ECSU Who's Who Among Colleges and Universities.

Elena Simon graduated Eugene Lang College with a BA in Media Studies this May. She has been taking graduate courses at The New School for General Studies and has been accepted into (and attending) the graduate program for fall 2009. She stars/produces a hit webseries called "The Newbie Show". She has also been performing stand-up comedy at comedy clubs all around New York City.

Carolyn Cumming graduated from the University of Connecticut where she majored in Theater Studies. She is currently involved at the Playhouse on Park, which is under new ownership, by performing in shows and helping the new owners renew the theater. She is teaching acting, dance and choreography at the Performing Arts Program's summer camp and is assistant directing West Hartford Summer Arts Festival's production of *Singin' in the Rain* this summer. She also just got a job working in the box office of Hartford Stage!

2006

Mary Tardif currently resides in Brooklyn where she is employed at Capoeira Luanda.

Erin Fitzpatrick currently attends Wagner College where she studies Theater Performance. She is also an Intern for The Public Theater.

Danielle Kelly presently attends Prescott College where she studies Expressive Art Therapy. She was the founder and president of Lesley University's first Dance Team when she attended the school for her freshman and sophomore years. After spending a brief but life-changing time in India, she transferred to Prescott College where she was recently an actor in their production of the *Vagina Monologues*. She is continuing to perform in dance and other artistic performances through Prescott College.

Sophie House currently attends New York University where she majors in Economics.

Amanda Kizilski attends Southern Connecticut State University as a Communication Disorders major.

2009

Christie Amrein attends the University of Southern California where she is working towards her B.A. in Theatre. She is presently employed at Abilail's Wine Bar and Grille as a hostess, busser and runner.

Katherine Argens is working on her B.A. in Theater Arts at Arcadia University.

Josh Bascarino attends the University of Hartford/ The Hartt School where he majors in Acting.

Kristen Brazauski is a Music Education major at the University of Hartford/ Hartt School.

Elizabeth Bushaw currently attends Savannah College of Art and Design.

Kelly Canyock attends Marymount Manhattan College where she is earning her B.F.A. in Acting.

Amanda Cvejanovich currently attends the University of North Carolina Greensboro as a Costume Design Major. She is employed at Old Navy in Sales.

Jennifer Hart is a Print Journalism major at Hofstra University.

Charvelle Holder attends Emerson College where she is studying Broadcast Journalism.

Samuel Howard currently attends Brigham Young University as an Acting Major.

Linnea Inno attends the University of Connecticut where she majors in Pre-Education studies.

Emily Jingst currently attends Pratt Institute where she is studying Arts Education.

Jillian Kaplan is writing major at Ithaca College.

Jimmy Macbride attends Julliard. He was invited to perform with the Steans Institute for Young Artists to perform at the Ravinia Festival in 2009. He was also chosen to participate in the 2009 Betty Carter Jazz Ahead Program at the Kennedy Center in DC. He has twice been selected to be a member of the Monterey Jazz Festival Next Generation Jazz Orchestra. This year the group will do a tour of the Midwest and will perform at the Monterey Jazz Festival with Wynton Marsalis. In addition, he was a part of the Music for All Festival, performing with the Jazz Band of America. He has attended the Vail Jazz Workshop and the Brubeck Summer Jazz Colony, and has been awarded several full scholarships to Berklee's 5-Week Performance Program. Other honors include several ASCAP Foundation Young Jazz Composers Awards for his original compositions. This year Jimmy received Honorable Mention from the NFAA as well as being awarded Honorable Mention from the Stamford Symphony Instrumental. He is the recipient of the 2009 SEIU Moe Foner Memorial Scholarship to

assist with his studies. Downbeat has honored Jimmy four times with its Student Music Awards and The Percussive Arts Society awarded him the Larrie Londin Memorial Scholarship as well as PASIC Scholarship. Some of Jimmy's recent performances include the Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz and the Killingworth Center for the Arts in CT, where he opened for Aaron Goldberg. Jimmy is attending the Juilliard School to further his musical education.

Carly Marholin is working towards her B.F.A. in Dance at Long Island University (Brooklyn Campus).

Emma McDonald attends Temple University where she majors in Dance.

Kim Miller attends Smith College.

Alaina Monts is a Musical Theatre major at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy.

Christine Newberg currently attends Castleton State College where she is studying Theater/Teaching.

Rebecca Puretz is a Dance major at SUNY Brockport.

Jessie Satler attends the University of Hartford/Hartford Art School.

Chanel Trabolta is studying Music Education at Chapman University.

Sydney Wilson is an Arts Education major at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is a Shows and Events Team Leader at Peoples Productions, Inc. She has participated in two exhibits at the Wadsworth Athenaeum and one at Artworks, both in Hartford, CT.

Kellie Wood currently attends SUNY Purchase for Dramatic Writing.

Kate Zulauf attends UCONN's School of Fine Arts where she is working towards her B.F.A. in Acting.

Aaron Greenberg ('01), Joel Texidor ('07), and Norman Campbell ('04), have joined our faculty!



**WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?
DO YOU KNOW HOW WE CAN CONTACT
OTHER ALUMNI?**

Send us your news and please help us reconnect with other alumni! Visit our Website at www.crec.org/academy or email Erica Callahan, Student Services Coordinator, at: ecallahan@crec.org

GET INVOLVED WITH OUR PARENT, FRIENDS, AND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION!

As the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts prepares to celebrate 25 years of excellence in arts education, we embrace alumni as vital stakeholders in commemorating our past as well as in advancing the mission of our school. Alumni are encouraged to participate in and support the programs, services and events of the Arts Academy, and to pursue leadership opportunities available in our Parent, Friends, and Alumni Association. It is through your ideas, input and feedback that we can continue to celebrate our achievements and provide high quality arts instruction to a diverse body of talented students.

For more information about how to become involved in our Parent, Friends, and Alumni Association, go to <http://www.academypfa.org/joomla15/> or contact **Co-President Lori Fernand at (860)904-8873.**



Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
15 Vernon Street
Hartford, CT 06106