

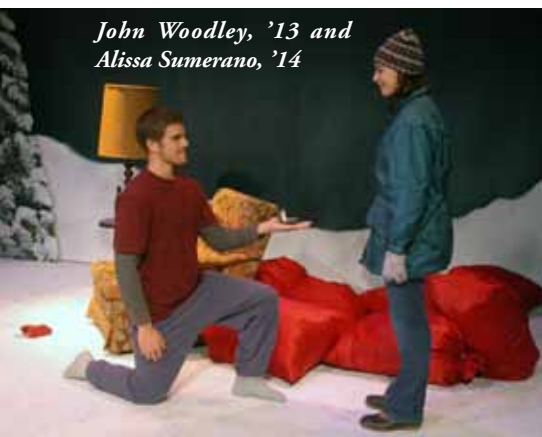
Niagara University Theatre

A newsletter for alumni and friends of the department of theatre and fine arts

Annie Celano, '12



*John Woodley, '13 and
Alissa Sumerano, '14*



New at NU

*By Gregory Fletcher,
director of NU Theatre*

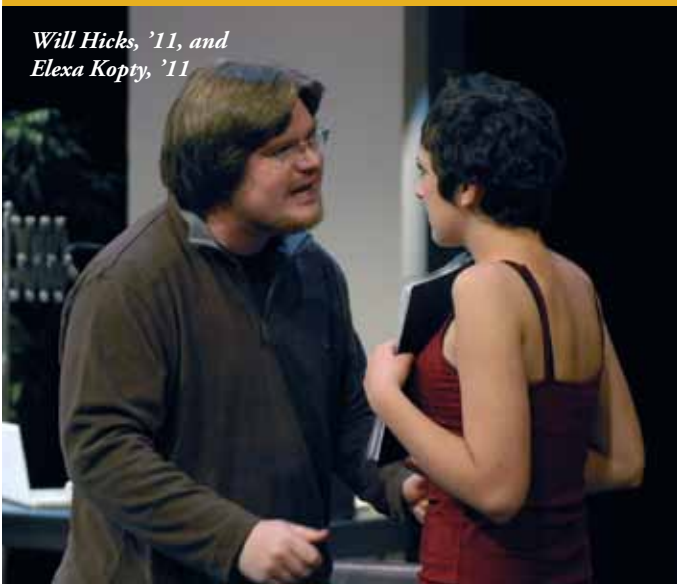
Still on a high from opening our new theatre space this past May, projects continued to develop throughout the summer with the addition of past production photos in the lobby, which were beautifully framed and mounted by Kurt Von Voetsch from the Castellani Art Museum. Also, the old box-office stand was refurbished into a new patron services booth, the unused part of the new audience lounge was turned into an acting studio with a matted floor, an exhibit was created of all of our students' headshots (photographed by Tim Marchinda of Selectus, Inc.), and a street sign was added to indicate the new Leary Theatre drop-off. Inside the theatre, we purchased



*In October, Gregory Fletcher, director of NU Theatre, directed John Cariani's *Almost, Maine*, a romantic comedy set in northern Maine. Above, Fletcher is pictured with the cast.*

cont. on page 2

*Will Hicks, '11, and
Elexa Kopty, '11*



*In November, NU Theatre presented *The Real Thing* by Tom Stoppard. Doug Zschiegner, associate director of Niagara University Theatre, directed the production and designed its set.*



*Maria Nicole Held, '11, and
Ross Donatelli, '11*

cont. from cover

and installed a new movie screen and projector, 12-foot wide black legs that shield the backstage area from audience view, and a new rear projection screen that hangs with our existing scrim and cyclorama.

In July and August, Wednesday afternoons became a popular event as young children and their parents attended children's theatre performances by N.U.R.T. in the newly air conditioned Leary Theatre. Given the enthusiasm for this event, I hope to expand on these performances next summer — more to come on that later.

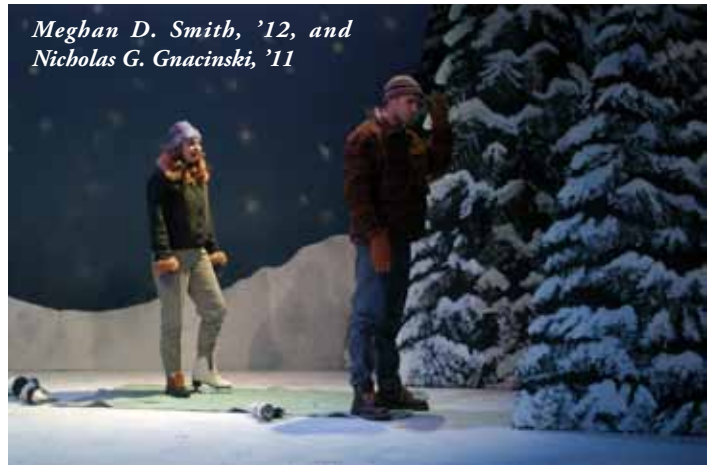
A big NU welcome goes to Adriano Gatto, '06, who is back in the hallways of Clet Hall, this time as an artist-in-residence, teaching stage combat, both in the classroom and in production. He is also working to recruit prospective students. Directly after graduating from NU, Adriano toured with the National Players from the Olney Theatre Center. He played Iago and Chasuble for 10 months, stopping in three different cities a week. "We were a company of 10 who were completely self-sustaining: acting, crewing, and management. As a result of my training here at NU, I was able to adapt easily to the constant changing lifestyle on the road with the various disciplines and work that we were expected to accomplish."

Shortly thereafter, Adriano was

awarded one of eight acting fellowships with Michael Kahn's Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C. In a year's time, the year of the opening of the new Harman Center for the Performing Arts, Adriano acted in five productions, taught youth theatre classes, assisted in the master classes for adults, and acted as fight captain for fight director Rick Sordelet. "It was a phenomenal opportunity to get to develop and grow while working with so many world renowned theatre artists."

Following his fellowship, Adriano remained in D.C., where he freelanced as either an actor and/or fight choreographer at such theatres as Folger Shakespeare Library, Round House Theatre, Source Theatre, The Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, Heartland Actors' Repertory Theatre, and Indiana Repertory Theatre.

*Meghan D. Smith, '12, and
Nicholas G. Gnacinski, '11*



*Rachel Macklin Olszewski, '12,
and Andrew Adolf, '13*



This fall, just as he was moving to Virginia to begin work with a new theatre, Brother Augustine telephoned him and asked of his immediate availability. Quickly, Adriano changed his plans and joined us as artist-in-residence. "Seeing the positive changes made throughout the department in the last few years is not only exciting but invigorating as both an alum and new faculty member."




*Pictured left, Renee Landrigan,
'13, in The Real Thing.*

*Pictured right, Elexa Kopty, '11,
and Alan Trinca, '13, in The
Real Thing.*



An additional NU welcome goes to Jason Bravo, who has joined the ranks of faculty to teach voice. Jason first worked with NU Theatre last season when he was hired as a guest musical director for our production of Jonathan Larson's *tick ... tick ... BOOM!* Both a performer and a musical director, Jason recently musically directed MusicalFare's production of *Shout* and Irish Classical Theatre Company's production of *The Dead*.

Born and raised in Kenmore, Jason is a high school graduate of St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, and a college graduate of Brandeis University where he earned a B.A. in music (cum laude with high honors). Jason has worked as a vocal director for Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines in Hollywood, Fla., and as an accompanist, coach and assistant music director at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City. He has performed with theatre companies throughout Buffalo, as well as Massachusetts and Connecticut. In liturgical music, Jason has been a cantor for churches in Yonkers and Tuckahoe, and he is currently the contemporary music director at First Presbyterian Church in Buffalo. Jason played keyboard and sang backup vocals for the national tour of *Jersey Boys* at Shea's Performing Arts Center, is a pop/rock songwriter and, recently, he released his first CD, *Between Head and Heart*. For further information, go to www.JasonBravo.com.

Lastly, *New at NU* would not be complete without reporting on the regrettably challenging health issues of Brother Augustine Towey, C.M. On Sept. 25, Bro was admitted to Sister's Hospital in Buffalo where it was determined that he had a stroke. After a few weeks of care, he was transferred to Our Lady of Peace, a nursing facility for rehabilitation in Lewiston, N.Y. In December, Bro was moved to St. Vincent's Seminary, 500 E. Cheltenham Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144. It is anticipated that he will be in residence until his physical therapy is completed. 



This November, 11 NU Theatre alumni participated in the cabaret benefit Songs I Wish I Were Cast to Sing. Back row from left: David Autovino, '03, Nick Cocchetto, '09, Peter Bennett, '03, Alison Nusbaum, '03, Paschal Frisina III, '00, and Adriano Gatto, '06. Front row from left, Michele Ragusa, '87, Kristen Nixon Frisina, '02, Stephanie Bax, '93, Carol Flanagan Propp, '87, and Donald Shrimpton, guest music director. Missing from the photo is Paul Todaro, '87.


Swashbuckling Gala Planned

By Ann Heuer, '78

The 26th annual Friends of Niagara University Theatre Gala will be held on Saturday, April 30, 2011. This business casual event begins with a 4 p.m. matinee of the comic opera *Pirates of Penzance* by Gilbert and Sullivan in the Leary Theatre within the Elizabeth Ann Clune Center for Theatre.

After the production, guests will proceed to the Niagara Falls Country Club for a cocktail hour, silent auction, dinner, and live auction. Auction items include travel packages, paintings, entertainment and sports memorabilia, gift baskets, gift certificates and much more.

Funds raised will benefit the theatre program and its students, from needed theatre equipment and supplies to workshops and mentoring by guest artists.

Tickets for the Gala are \$150 per person. Corporate tables are available. For tickets and information, or to donate gift baskets, certificates, paintings, antiques or collectibles valued at \$100 or more, please contact Peg Lacki at 716-286-8483. 

*From left, Gregory Fletcher, director of NU Theatre, thanks Candy and Tom Lytle for volunteering to be the co-chairs of the 2011 Friends of NU Theatre Gala. Longtime supporters of the Castellani Art Museum, the Lytles said they were trying to find a way to also help NU Theatre, and they're delighted this leadership opportunity materialized. They are the proud parents of adjunct theatre speech professor Amanda Lytle Sharpe, director of NU Theatre's gala musical, *The Pirates of Penzance*.*



From Mars No More

By Ann Heuer, '78

On Sunday, May 23, more than 700 students received diplomas at Niagara University's annual undergraduate commencement ceremony held at SUNY at Buffalo's Alumni Arena. During the ceremony, four individuals received doctorates bestowed by the university: CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer; Marv Levy, former head coach and general manager of the Buffalo Bills; The Most Reverend Anthony F. Tonnos, D.D., Bishop of Hamilton; and Gordon Weil, Ph.D., an author, economist, political observer and an extraordinary friend of Niagara University Theatre and Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., director emeritus.

Weil received a Doctor of Humane Letters degree at the commencement ceremony for his work in voluntarily developing a proposal for a theatre campaign which helped lead to the completion of the renovated William P. and Marie Leary Theatre and the new Elizabeth Ann Clune Center for Theatre this past April.

Weil, Dr. Hugh Babinski, and Dr. Richard Cheshire, all former classmates of Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., humorously called themselves "The Three Men from Mars" because they were strangers to the campus when they first became involved in creating the proposal several years ago.

Weil reflected on the value of NU's theatre program at a dinner honoring him and the other three honorees the evening before the commencement ceremony.

"Niagara University pursues and achieves excellence in a world where too often, even in academia, average is acceptable," he said. "Its theatre and the theatre program are among the best examples of its high achievement.

"My friends and I learned of Niagara Theatre through our high school classmate, Brother Augustine Towey. This theatre of national quality and reputation desperately needed a real home.

"The Elizabeth Ann Clune Center for Theatre and the new Leary Theatre are that home. What was done was not for Brother Augustine but because of him. These facilities are for Niagara University, its students and its community. There are many who did more than we did. We were glad to help.

"With my wife, Roberta, I am greatly honored to have come to know this amazing Niagara University family and, thanks to the degree I am to receive, deeply grateful for being accepted into it. Thank you."



From left, the Rev. Joseph L. Levesque, C.M., NU president, Gordon Weil, and Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., director emeritus of Niagara University Theatre.

Niagara University Theatre Newsletter

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Deadline for submissions

for the spring issue is

April 1, 2011.

Updates!

Coordinated by Ann Heuer, '78

Andrea Andolina, '07, starred in *Mookie Cranks a Tater!* by Joseph Palka for Buffalo's Alleyway Theatre this fall. In the spring, she starred in *(Not)* by Drew McCabe for Buffalo's New Alt Performance Group.

Alumni **Sara Ball, '10**, **Kurt Erb, '09**, and **Courtney Weather, '10** with theatre students **Annis Celano, '12**, **Nicholas G. Gnacinski, '11**, **Elexa Kopty, '11**, and **Ross Donatelli, '11**, participated in Buffalo's Infringement Festival this summer. They performed *More Than Only Words*, five one-act plays by former NU theatre adjunct professor Lawrence Smith for the ScottFree Theatre of Buffalo. In addition, Celano, Kopty and alumna **Candice Kogut, '08**, were instructors at the Artpark Theatre Camp in Lewiston, N.Y., this summer for grade-school students. Kogut was nominated for an Artie Award for "Best Actress in a Musical" for her work in *The Rocky Horror Show* for Buffalo's ALT Theatre last fall.



NU theatre studies alumni **Brianna Bailey, '07**, and **Bill Patti, '05**, were wed at Buffalo's Shea's Performing Arts Center on June 19, 2010. The two are educators at the same boarding school. Bill teaches drama and Brianna teaches dance at the Ruben Gap Nacoochee School in Georgia.

Rachel Baron, '10, is living in Virginia and this fall, she directed the stage combat in James Madison University's production of *True West* by Sam Sheppard.

Stephanie Bax, '93, was in the musical cabaret *Bring on the Men* for Buffalo's Theatre Plus at the Main Street Cabaret this fall.

Joey Bucheker, '09, starred in the musical *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* for Buffalo's O'Connell & Company in May.

Derek Campbell, acting adjunct professor, directed Edward Albee's *The Goat, Or Who is Sylvia?* for Buffalo's Road Less Traveled Theater in May. The production was nominated for an Artie Award, a prestigious Buffalo theater award, in the category of "Best Direction of a Play." The production won an Artie Award on June 7 for "Outstanding Production of a Play."

Annis Celano, '12, and **Rachel Soper, '14**, represented NU's department of theatre and fine arts at Old Fort Niagara's Haunted Fortress in October. Former NU theatre studies student **Nick Lama** worked as a costumed historical character at Youngstown, N.Y.'s Old Fort Niagara this summer, along with **Matt Kindley, '10**, **Leo DiBello, '11**, **Will Hicks, '11**, and Celano.

Nicholas Cocchetto, '09, returned this fall from a four month tour of Europe, Greece and North Africa. Highlights of his trip include riding a camel around the pyramids, climbing Mt. Olympus, running with the bulls in Spain, and expanding his knowledge of theatre. He traveled to the Theater of Dionysus in Greece, saw *The Threepenny Opera* in German at Berliner Ensemble, and experienced

the *Passionsspiele* in Oberammergau, Germany. Before leaving for his trip, he was the stand-in for Keanu Reeves' film, *Henry's Crime*, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival this fall. Cocchetto has also been involved as an actor and behind the scenes for the new film *Drawing with Chalk*, which has received some international praise.

Louis Colaiacovo, '99, and **Marc Sacco, '00**, were among the cast members of a 20th anniversary celebration for Buffalo's MusicalFare Theatre on June 5. Sacco was in *Zooma, Zooma* with alumna **Michele Marie Roberts (Benzin), '99**, in the spring. Sacco was also in the *Marc with a "C" Quel* cabaret for Buffalo's BUA Theater this fall. Both Colaiacovo and Sacco were nominated for Artie Awards in the category of "Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Musical" for their work in MusicalFare's production of *Falsettos* last winter. Colaiacovo received the Artie Award for this role at the awards ceremony at Buffalo's Town Ballroom on June 7. Colaiacovo was also in a staged reading of *Den of Thieves* for Buffalo's Road Less Traveled Productions' Emanuel Fried New Play Workshop in August with alumna **Sarielys Matos, '04**. Matos also starred in *Antony and Cleopatra* for Buffalo's Road Less Traveled Theater this fall.



Two NU alumna were in the cast of *SHOUT! The Mod Musical* at Buffalo's MusicalFare Theatre this fall. From left, **Michele Marie Roberts (Benzin), '99**, **Lyndsey Leigh Thuerck**, **Nancy Sam**, **Amy Jakiel**, and **Hannah L. Sharp, '10**. Photo by Chris Cavanagh for MusicalFare Theatre.

Marilyn Deighton, assistant professor of costume technology, and artist-in-residence/stage combat director **Adriano Gatto**, '06, will attend the New York Theatre Education Association's annual high school theatre conference on Jan. 7 – 9, 2011. Both will provide presentations. Deighton, **Maureen Stevens**, associate professor design/technology, and several other professors will accompany a group of approximately 30 NU theatre studies students on a trip to New York City this winter for several backstage Broadway tours, lectures and an alumni dinner. This is the second trip to New York City that Deighton and Stevens have coordinated for the students in the past few years.

Susan Drozd, '02, directed Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady* for Buffalo's MusicalFare Theatre this summer. Alumni **Sheila Connors**, '97, and **Kevin Craig**, '08, were cast members.

Terri Filips, associate professor and choreographer, directed Buffalo's Sacred Heart High School production of *Annie* this fall. Several theatre studies students were in the cast: **Alexei Carstensen**, '14 (Bert), **Alex Garcia**, '14 (Rooster), **Nathan Miller**, '14 (ensemble), and **John Staton**, '14 (Oliver Warbucks).

Kevin Ford, '79, presented an entertaining magic/hypnotism show for NU students this fall at the Leary Theatre.

Casey Rose Frank, '07, was in *One Night*, an independent film, last summer. She is living and working in New York City.

Paschal Frisina III, '00, starred in the Buffalo Philharmonic's presentation of *The Music Man in Concert* with alumna **Michele Ragusa**, '87, in May.

Cassie Gorniewicz, '08, played "Mag" in *Lovers* by Brian Friel at Buffalo's Irish Classical Theatre Co. in June. She was nominated for an Artie Award in the category of "Best Supporting Actress in a Play" for her work in *True Love Lies* at the Buffalo United Artists Theatre last winter.

Jared Hoyt, '09, and **Kelly Konecko**, '09, were wed in an ocean view ceremony in Maryland this summer. The two theatre studies graduates work for the Sight and Sound Theatre in Lancaster, Pa., with fellow alum **Preston Cuer**, '09.

Nancy Knechtel, adjunct art history professor, presented a lecture on the Metropolitan Art Museum's extensive collection for Niagara's Castellani Art Museum in May and received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to study architectural history in North Carolina in July. Knechtel is currently working as a photo and map researcher on a documentary on the 1814 Siege of Fort Erie for WNED-TV, Buffalo, and PBS.

Sara Kovacs, '06, starred in Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta, *The Gondoliers*. The production was presented by Opera-Lytes at Buffalo's Alleyway Theatre in June. **Jamie Nablo**, '12, appeared in the *Opera on Broadway Review* for Opera-Lytes this fall.

Kevin Kreczko, '05, is now head of the brand new drama department

at Northeast Lakeview College in Universal City, Texas. The sole faculty member, he is excited to grow the associate of arts program. He recently did the creative direction for the opening of the new terminal of the San Antonio Airport and he will be directing the NCAA Division 1 Final Four Tournament Salute.



Kevin Kreczko, '05 (kneeling), welcomed NU alumna Denise Payne, '99 (foreground), to Northeast Lakeview College for an audition workshop with students this fall. Payne and some of her cast mates visited the college during their national tour with Jersey Boys.

Lona Geiser LaChiusa, '93, starred in *Jake's Women* by Neil Simon for Buffalo's Kaleidoscope Theatre Productions in the summer and *Art of Murder* for Buffalo's Kaleidoscope Theatre Productions this fall. NU alumna **Elizabeth Oddy**, '03, was also in *Jake's Women*. Oddy was hired this fall as the coordinator for the City of Buffalo Border Community SERVICE Project at Niagara University. She said, "I'm thrilled to be able to do good work for Buffalo on behalf of the university that gave me so many gifts, and continues to do so to this day."

Mary Beth Lacki, '09, was one of the all-female cast members of *Macbeth* for Buffalo's Shakespeare in Delaware Park this summer. She is currently working in Auxerre, France, teaching English as a second language.

Former NU theatre studies student **Justine Swartz Laski** and her husband, **James Laski**, are thrilled to announce the July 31, 2010, birth of their daughter, Abigail.



Forever Plaid, a nostalgic tribute to a bygone era of music, was presented at Buffalo's Kavinoky Theatre this fall. From left, Paschal Frisina III, '00, former NU theatre studies student Nick Lama, Marc Sacco, '00, and actor Andy Herr. The production was directed by Dale Sandish, '83. Photo courtesy of Kavinoky Theatre.



Representing NU's department of theatre and fine arts on stage at Buffalo's Shakespeare in Delaware Park production of *Macbeth* this summer were, from left: Mary Boatman, '12 (Lennox); Josie DiVincenzo, adjunct acting lecturer and scenic painter (*Lady Macbeth*); and Mary Beth Lacki, '09 (*Young Siward and fight captain*). Will Vaughan, '11, was on the build crew and Christopher Ballard, '09, provided live sound.



a nomination for an Artie Award for "Best Production of a Play." Lewis was nominated for an Artie Award for "Best Supporting Actress in a Play" for her role in *Secret Order*.

Former NU theatre student **David Lundy**, a Friends of NU Theatre board member, earned an Artie Award nomination for "Best Supporting Actor in a Play" for his role in *The 39 Steps* for Buffalo's Kavinoky Theatre in December. The production earned an Artie Award on June 7 for "Outstanding Ensemble of a Play."

Gerard Miller III, '01, and actor Will Nunziata presented a new two-man show, *Dystopia Gardens*, in New York in April and May. Miller said the show was a "love letter to the dystopian films of the 70s through the 90s."

Left: Susan Laxton, '08, enjoyed playing "Dorothy" in Lewiston, N.Y.'s Theatre in the Mist's production of *The Wizard of Oz* this fall. From left, Bill Kennedy, Joe Castiglia, Laxton, and Jason Bek. Alumnus Joey Bucheker, '09, director of the production, is chairman of the board for Theatre in the Mist.

Melissa (Seifert) Leventhal, '01, was married on June 26 to Robert Leventhal. She completed her master's degree in library science this year and works at Roswell Park Cancer Institute as a project coordinator. She last performed on stage three years ago in an off-off-Broadway production of *Anna Karenina* as Countess Vronskaya and Dolly. She also worked as costume designer for the Niagara Fine Arts production of *Rent* this past August.

Adrienne Lewis, '09, was in *Cabaret* at MusicalFare Theatre this fall with fellow alum **Sheila Connors, '97**. Lewis was also in the cast of *Insidious* by Ibn Shabazz. Directed by **Doug Zschiegner**, associate director of Niagara University Theatre, this world premiere was presented by Buffalo's Road Less Traveled Theater in July. Zschiegner's springtime direction of the medical drama *Secret Order* for Buffalo's Kavinoky Theatre earned

Dino Petrera, '12, worked as the stage manager for Buffalo's Opera Sacra production of *Riders to the Sea* this fall. Several NU theatre studies students were in the cast: **Kaitlin Harvey, '14**, **Alissa Sumerano, '14**, and **Michael Wachowiak, '13**. Petrera coordinated NU Theatre's involvement in a community service day of reading Halloween stories to children at the Ransomville, N.Y., public library. Participants included **Andrew Adolf, '13**, **Annis Celano, '12**, **Celine Keefe, '13**, and **Aaron Moseley, '12**.

Gregory Prager, '04, dropped by NU this fall to visit and to see the renovated theatre. He has performed with such regional houses as Tibbits Opera House; Mill Mountain Theatre; the Renaissance Center; Theater at Monmouth; Springer Opera House; Prather Entertainment Group; Great Plains Theatre; and Sesame Street Live! He was also a resident company member and the fight choreographer of Playhouse on the Square. Some of

his favorite roles have been Malcolm MacGreggor in *The Full Monty*; The Cat in the Hat in *Seussical*; Scapin in *Scapin*; all roles in *Greater Tuna* and *A Tuna Christmas*; Pastor Oglethorpe in *Smoke on the Mountain*; John Smith in *Run For Your Wife*; and Woof in *HAIR*.

Patrick Riviere, '88, reports that this summer and fall, he played Uncle Alex in the world premiere of *Family Dinner* off-Broadway at The Beckett Theatre. He was assistant to the creative team on *Becoming Kinky* (about Kinky Friedman) at the MITF, and played Sancho in *Man of La Mancha* at the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse. His play, *The House of Nunzio*, had a staged reading directed by Jamibeth Margolis in New York City in November. He is continuing to voice two characters for the "Captain Stargood" series and will be working on several film projects with Steel Pigeon Productions.

Derek Roland, '00, looks forward to directing and choreographing NU Theatre's first annual alumni production this summer, *Kander and Ebb's The World Goes 'Round*, on stage at the Leary Theatre from July 21–31, 2011.



Alumnus Brian Mysliwy, '96, and former NU theatre studies student Tom Zindle were cast members of Buffalo's Irish Classical Theatre world premiere production of *The Cant* by Shay Linehan this fall. From left: Patrick Moltane, Zindle, and Mysliwy. Photo courtesy of Gene Witkowski.

Nicholas Santasier, '04, was involved in several productions this year as an actor and/or fight director for: *The Taming of the Shrew* for Wildbard!; *Sex and the Single Mom*

for Wide Eyed Productions; *Green: A Musical*, for Icky House Club and The Mistake; *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for the Planet Connections Festival; *Shoot the Playwright* for MITF; and *Curiosity* for The Players Theatre Loft. He also participated in three readings of Shakespearean dramas for The Naked Bard and reports that he is working on several script rewrites for various New York City venues.

Rebecca Spindler, '07, moved to New York City last July and has worked with the 13th Street Repertory Company in its production of *Christmas Carol* as an ensemble member/Belle's understudy. She also played the role of "iPod 1" with The Gallery Players on its new play festival, "i Love New York." She also booked a spot in an all-female Shakespeare repertory company called Shakespeare's Harem.

Jessica Stahr, '08, stage-managed *Bare* at Buffalo's Medaille College this fall.

JennaBeth Stockman, '09, is now a dance teacher at **Stacy Zawadzki-Janusz's** Performing Arts Center in West Seneca, N.Y. Zawadzki-Janusz is a senior lecturer of dance at NU and Stockman had been one of her theatre studies students at the university. Zawadzki-Janusz also reports that she and her dance company, Stacy Zawadzki's Performing Arts Center, participated in a closed audition for the television show *America's Got Talent* in New York City on Nov. 15. Theatre studies students who participated included: **Kelsey Anderson, '14**, **Kerisa Bonville, '13**, **Steven Foote, '13**, **Meghan Hinton, '13**, **Miranda Jaworski, '14**, **Brianna Lanoye, '13**, **Cynthia Edith Printup-Harms, '13**, and **Alan Trinca, '13**. Also, NU students **Jocelyn Hanson, '11**, and **Amanda Williamson, '13**, and theatre studies alumni **Stockman, '09**, and **Courtney Weather, '10**, auditioned. On Jan. 3, 2011, Stacy's ZPAC Company will perform alongside the Goo Goo Dolls at Fed-Ex's Miami Orange Bowl halftime performance.



*NU alumni and students who were part of the Niagara Fine Arts Program presentation of *Rent* directed by Maureen (Pusateri) Kuciewski, '00, this summer in Niagara Falls, N.Y., included, front row from left: Meagan Kurilovitch, '12, Callie Bush, '12, Kuciewski, former theatre studies student Nick Lama, Matt Kindley, '10, Courtney Weather, '10, and Jimmy Moses, '09. Atop the ladder, from left: Chelsey Zimmerman, '12, Jamie Lynn Nablo, '12, and Dino Petrera, '12. Casey Lynn Moyer, '11, was assistant stage manager for the production.*

Stockman, Jaworski and Anderson are among the NU dancers who will perform in that event. Also, Stockman was part of the cast of *Subversive Twilight Zones* this fall for Buffalo's Subversive Theatre Collective. She was joined by NU theatre studies student **Kathleen Denecke, '14**.

Former NU theatre studies student **Tim Stuff** was in *The Mother* for Buffalo's Subversive Theatre Collective this summer.

NU theatre studies alumni **Laura Zachary, '04**, and **Justin Dimieri, '03**, were married on June 19, 2010. Justin is an account executive with Lamar Outdoor Advertising and Laura is the general manager of the retail store BCBGMaxAzria.

As adviser of the NU Players, assistant professor Doug Zschiegner was pleased to announce "those students who will be dedicating their time to improving the life of NU Theatre this year." Officers include: **Devan Corcoran, '11**, and **Casey Lynn Moyer, '11**, co-presidents; **Mike Van**

Dyke, '12, treasurer; **Annise Celano, '12**, public service supervisor, and public service coordinators **Kerisa Bonville, '13**, **Leacel Hillenbrand, '14**, **Leanne Troutman, '12**, and **Mike Van Dyke, '12**; **Andrew Adolf, '13**, publicity supervisor, and publicity coordinators **Ashley DeMar, '14**, **Steven Foote, '13**, and **Stephanie Valliere, '14**; **Dino Petrera, '12**, NU Players Present artistic director and treasurer, **Andrea Gollhardt, '12**; NU Players Present technical director, **Emily Pedersen, '11**, and assistant technical director, **Tony Rajewski, '13**; **Celine Keefe, '13**, student banquet/events supervisor, and banquet/events coordinators **Keirsten Greifenstein, '13**, **Bobby Hall, '14**, and **Miranda Jaworski, '14**; and **Kelsey Wright, '11**, concessions supervisor, and concessions coordinator **Michael Wachowiak, '13**. Celano coordinated the NU Players' participation in NU's Relay for Life on Nov. 19 and 20. The NU Players set a goal of raising \$1,500 or more for this event to help fund cancer research. 

A special request for all NU Theatre alumni:

Please send us your most current bio for our website!

Visit <http://theatre.niagara.edu> and click on "community," then click "more" under the alumni heading, and then click on "theatre alumni bios" to read about your fellow alumni.

E-mail your bio to fletcher@niagara.edu or arb@niagara.edu so that the NU Theatre family of alumni, friends, and students can stay up-to-date with all your news. Everyone loves pictures, so feel free to send along photos as well for the website.

Many thanks!

NU Alum Featured on HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*

By Adriano Gatto, '06

Returning to the theatre wing of Clet Hall has been an exciting and invigorating experience to say the least. Coming home to the NU family has not only allowed me the great joy of teaching our current NUTS (NU Theatre students), but also the joy of reconnecting with many of our alumni. Recently, I had the great pleasure of meeting Kevin Henderson, '89, and his wonderful family.

After graduating, Henderson made the move to New York City, where he hit the ground running, auditioning for everything and anything. "I figured that auditioning was tough so I better get used to it." As many of the newer actors making headway in straight plays were coming from some of the top graduate programs in the country, he decided to apply after three years of living and working in New York. "I toiled for a while before realizing that grad school would be a good chance to improve my skills and a good career move," he said.

Only months later, he was selected

by the prestigious Yale School of Drama. "The training was intense and fantastic. When I graduated, more doors were open to me. I began performing in great theatres around the country and doing commercials and occasional guest spots on soaps and episodic television."

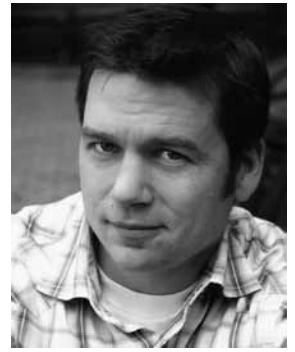
Most recently, Henderson was featured in a new HBO series. "*Boardwalk Empire* was a total surprise. I went in for a really small part in one episode. They brought me back the next episode. And then two more episodes after that. In each episode, my camera time got better. By my third episode, they invited me to the exclusive table reads where the script is read out loud for the director, writers and producers by a select group of the cast. They've really made me feel like an important piece of the fabric of the world."

When I inquired as to any particular challenges with this project, Henderson replied, "It's still the same task really as when you are performing

in a small theatre. Do your job. Be your part. Be real. Be honest."

In addition to this motto, one memory he carries with him frequently is a particular speech Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., would share before opening a new production. "Allow me to paraphrase: We'd gather in a circle and he'd tell us how we, 'were different than most other people; that what was important to us was creating something from nothing; what we were doing was mystical/magical and that we shouldn't feel like kooks but should be proud and revered for endeavoring to create art.' I think about it all the time. All the time."

You can watch Henderson in the recurring role of Dr. Carl Surran in *Boardwalk Empire* beginning with episode seven on the HBO cable television network. 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿



In October, physical theatre adjuncts Robin Patterson and Terri Judd and artist-in-residence/stage combat director Adriano Gatto took NU theatre studies students to Canada's Zacada Circus School. The school's instructors have performed with Cirque du Soleil and the Moscow Circus. Our students received instruction in the trapeze, single and runaway trampoline, tumbling, spinning hoop, tightrope, aerial silks, and poles. At left, Andy Adolf, '13, tried the spinning hoop. Above: Grace Turner, '13, strikes a pose on the pole. At right, Mary Boatman, '12, balances on the tightrope.



How interesting that NU Theatre recently produced the play *Almost, Maine* by John Cariani and that our alumnus Colleen Quinlan, '91, was the female understudy for *Almost, Maine* in its New York off-Broadway production.

At NU Theatre, 19 actors were cast to play the 19 characters, but, professionally speaking, this would be financially impossible for a producer to afford. Therefore, the play is normally cast with two women and two men who then play multiple roles. As insurance for sick actors and making sure "the show must go on," (because a cancelled performance translates to a loss of box-office revenue), understudies are hired to cover the roles in a performance. A producer usually hires as few understudies as possible because each additional salary affects the weekly budget. Because *Almost, Maine* is made up of mostly two person female/male vignettes, the New York City producer hired one female and one male to cover all the roles.



Quinlan Repertory Theatre

By Gregory Fletcher

This means Quinlan had to learn nine roles! Not an easy job, considering an understudy usually gets one rehearsal a week for review. Nevertheless, Quinlan not only learned the nine roles, she participated at each performance in helping to change the scenery — another unusual request for an understudy!

The job of the understudy is partly that of an unsung soldier. You work hard to keep everything fresh and current in your head, but you are never guaranteed a performance or, for that matter, any advanced notice of a performance. "It was a challenging time, but I loved the play and the people I was working with."

Unfortunately, Quinlan never received the nervous phone call from the stage-manager announcing that she was going on. "Both ladies I covered remained in excellent health; although, there was talk about me going on when one of them was going to LA to test for a sitcom, but then, thanks to a simultaneous snow blizzard and transit strike, ticket sales suddenly dropped away, and we closed prior to the trip and earlier than expected." The run altogether lasted a little longer than three months. "I told John that theatres nationwide would be producing his play and he didn't believe me at the time. Now, not only can I tell him 'I told you so,' but I can brag that my very own alma mater produced it!"

While at NU, Quinlan was cast in *Vincent in Heaven*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Playing for Time*, *The Servant of Two Masters*, *Toys in the Attic*, *Cinderella*, *The Boys Next Door*, *Playboy of the Western World*, *The Crucible*, and *Company*. What she loved the most was the group of people that Niagara attracted each year: students,

faculty, and staff. "Every single year, it was a very nurturing time, very caring. And because we were a smaller program, we had more stage opportunities than many of my friends who attended bigger schools."

After graduation, Quinlan returned and lived at home outside of New York City, and for three years she continued to take classes, study, and see as much theatre as possible. Thereafter, with the help of survivor jobs (waiting tables and bartending), she saved enough money to move into the city, and "continued studying, auditioning, and attending as much theatre as possible. It was a heavenly time." Quinlan worked on many plays off- and off-off-Broadway, including numerous readings and workshops of new plays, as well as regional theatre productions at Huntington Theatre in Boston, Hartford Theatre Works, the Globe Theatre in San Diego, and many others.


"Many of my friends left theatre for TV, film, and L.A., but I was always drawn to plays. For me, it wasn't about money or fame, it was about the work and working with people I admired. Ideally, I saw myself as a company member of a repertory theatre, working on one play after the next, but then I realized that I didn't live in Great Britain and such things didn't exist in the U.S."

Most recently, Quinlan has been workshopping a new play by John Cariani entitled *Last Gas*. "It was produced at Portland Stage Company with a local Maine cast, and if it moves to New York City, I hope to be a part of it." Quinlan seems to have that perfect mix of attitude for sustaining a career in theatre. She knows the importance of staying connected, networking, auditioning, seeing as much theatre as possible, keeping afloat, and because of it — remaining fulfilled and happy. She hasn't reached that point of "enough is enough" and I'm

At left, Colleen Quinlan, '91, A. J. Sullivan, '92, and David Granville, '92, in NU Theatre's 1990 production of *Playboy of the Western World*.

guessing she never will. As she has matured, so have her survivor jobs, which now consist of event planning, personal organizing, and interior design. She has also moved 30 minutes out of the city so the daily grind isn't quite as intense.

The biggest news to report is that, in February of 2010, Quinlan married Allan Styer, a former childhood friend who performed with her in a high school production of *Twelfth Night*. Oddly enough, a few years after graduating from Niagara University, they were both cast in the same play for an off-off-Broadway production on the Upper East Side. Then Styer moved to L.A. Eight years later, Quinlan heard her name called out on a train platform in Grand Central Station, and it was Styer. And six years later, they married.

Quinlan's heart is big and full and remains ever hopeful and passionate. Now that her husband is beginning a career in real estate, I'm hoping her dream of a repertory theatre company is right around the corner. With Quinlan's positive outlook, as well as her patience and perseverance, one never knows. 



The Niagara University Repertory Theatre performed this summer under the direction of professor Amanda Lytle Sharpe. Clockwise, from top: Grace Turner, '13, Andrea Gollhardt, '12, Kelsey Wright, '11, Maria Nicole Held, '11, Meagan Kurilovitch, '12, and Erica Miranda Diederich, '12.



Work That's Play

By Ann Heuer, '78

According to Doug Zschiegner, associate director of NU Theatre, the theatre studies students at Niagara learn how to launch their on-stage and/or behind-the-scenes theatrical careers not only through classroom lectures, but also through performance opportunities in the community, national auditions, and guest artist visits and workshops.

In September, alumnus Evan Edwards (aka Steven Hamilton, '87) dropped in to share some of his career experiences with the students.

He caught their attention immediately.

"One of the first times my mother saw me directly after a performance, she asked if I was high," he said. "My eyes were completely dilated and I was still feeling the adrenaline of performing. There's a reason they call it a play," he smiled. "The work is everything you do offstage. Performing is not work for me, it's who I am, it's like a drug for me."

"Wow, you guys are lucky!" Edwards continued while clearly admiring the redesigned Leary Theatre.

"I was a theatre studies student here like you. Today, I'm a teacher and performer, but basically, I still am like you. You never stop learning."


Throughout his career, Edwards has worked as an actor, singer, coach, choreographer, and director. He has collaborated with such notable people as Burton Lane, Charles Strouse, Martin Charnin, Norm Lewis, Linda Eder, LaChanze, David Loud, David Caddick, Montego Glover, and Jennifer Holiday, to name a few.

Edwards confessed, "I had no idea what I'd do after graduation, but I found work at Artpark (a revival of *West Side Story*), then drove to Boston for auditions and landed my first job outside of Western New York."

He eventually moved to New York City with a suitcase and \$200 to his name.

"I had a fear of being stuck in Western New York," he said. "Getting out as soon as possible was important for me."

Edwards shared a few more anecdotes and then outlined basic "tools" that theatre studies students need when they graduate to enhance their marketability and protect their professional reputations. He covered such subjects with invaluable information regarding headshots, résumés, agents, auditions, nonunion work, and social networking.

After a Q & A session, Edwards concluded his presentation by reminding the students that performers are "products." "It's not who you know, it's that people in the business know you. If a producer knows your work, he or she might keep you in mind if a role comes around." In other words, as Edwards reiterated throughout his talk, "audition, audition, audition." 



*Alumnus Evan Edwards (Steven Hamilton, '87), second from left, as "Chino" in a 1987 revival of *West Side Story* at Artpark in Lewiston, N.Y.*

NU Alumna's Star Is Shining

By Emilie Hagen, Courtesy of the Niagara Gazette

Big girls don't cry, and neither does Buffalo's own "Jersey girl," Denise Payne, who prides herself for not missing a single on-stage performance in the past 10 years.

"Sometimes you just got to take the Motrin and get through it," said Payne, a '99 Niagara University alumna and actress in the touring production of the Broadway hit, *Jersey Boys*.

With only a few hours before her curtain call at Shea's Performing Arts Center, she managed to fit in a quick visit to her alma mater to talk to NU theatre students in May about how her life has changed dramatically from her comfortable days in Buffalo to her up-and-down lifestyle as a young Broadway performer.

Fortunately for Payne, spreading herself thin is something she's used to.

After graduation, she didn't waste any time. That November she said farewell to her friends and family and set off to the musical theater mecca of the world, New York City. Like most young aspiring performers, she began waiting tables to pay the bills, keeping an open eye out for any auditions that could land her a foot in the door.

"When they say pound the pavement, it is no joke. You have to be driven. You have to love it that much because you'll be auditioned all day, have 20 layers of makeup on and a 900-pound bag and show up to work and be kicking a dance shoe into a locker at Blue Smoke," Payne said about

her experience at just one of the many restaurants she's worked at in the city.

"Once you get to New York, the options are endless," Payne said.

"I'll never forget my first audition. My lips quivered like Elvis for the entire song."

Luckily, it wasn't long before she received her first stint of good news. Only four months after relocating, she booked her first national Broadway tour.

"*Footloose*. I was in Vegas for three months ... at 21. Yikes!" Payne said looking to friend and mentor Brother Augustine Towe, C.M., for a reaction. She adds, "but I was really well-behaved ... comparatively."

Before her talk with students, the two caught up in the auditorium, Payne, charming Towe with some of her comical Manhattan encounters. Towe was happy to catch up with his old friend during her short-lived trip to Buffalo.

Balancing drive and destiny, Payne's post-graduate journey has been nomadic. Now 10 years later, she's finished four national Broadway tours, booked regional gigs around the country and still finds time to put it all into perspective.

"My *Jersey Boys* audition kind of came out of nowhere," she said.

Payne was on her way to do a summer production in Boston when she got the call back. Originally wanting to avoid "ruffling any feathers" with her Boston cast, she quickly "finagled" her way out of the summer

gig after receiving a little familial guidance.

"I talked to my mother who has a sixth sense about her. She told me 'I just know you have to get back for that. I just feel it.'"

Payne has certainly enjoyed her two-year run with the *Jersey Boys* cast, and credits the theatre program at NU for molding her into the bundle of 19 characters she currently plays.

"I swear NU is what prepared me for that," Payne said. "The theatre department here is unlike a lot of universities. It's just such a versatile program."

During college, Payne took advantage of all the classes NU offered. She believes the ones that made her feel the most uncomfortable, such as mime (now known as physical theatre) and combat, are what prepared her most for the spontaneity casting agents expect.

While many students assumed Payne's success stemmed from an exceptional talent, Payne admits she was never the best dancer or singer at NU. The "x" factor, commonly referred to in entertainment, is what made it happen.

"By far, I was never the best dancer in the world," Payne said. "Being a performer is what comes first. It's what I like to call the heart of a dancer."

She explains, "Anybody can kick their leg up high but there has to be a certain amount of love and passion that you can't teach somebody. If you do the hand motions wrong the audience might not even notice because they're watching the girl that's selling it. The 'something' in your heart is more important than anything technical you're doing."

Don't let her modesty fool you. NU professors and theatre directors still talk fondly of her as a student and remember her final "wow" performance as the lead in her senior production, Kander and Ebb's *Steel Pier*.



Denise Payne, '99, visited NU Theatre in May to share her performing experiences with Niagara's theatre studies students. From left, Gregory Fletcher, director of NU Theatre, Dr. Sharon Watkinson, chair, department of theatre and fine arts, Payne, and Brother Augustine Towe, C.M., director emeritus.

"Denise was slightly shy, and you know a lot of these young kids in theatre are, well ... ready to go," said Towey.

"And despite what she says, she sings well, she dances well. She's wonderful, an all-around performer," he said.

Chair of the department of theatre and fine arts at NU, Dr. Sharon Watkinson, also speaks highly of Payne, describing her as "a ball of fire, lots of energy, a great talent and a beautiful human being."

Payne, who only sees her family once every three months for a measly 24 hours, paints a realistic picture for students looking to get into the business. She warns that as glamorous as it can be, this career is not for everyone.

"In this profession, you don't fit the box. You never know where you're going to be in 10 years," Payne said.

"You really have to know yourself, and what your journey is, what your passion is ... and what makes you tick as a human being."

Like most people making the rounds in this industry, there came a time when Payne felt too burned out to go on and started looking for an alternative career to fall back on. As she heard more and more news of friends getting married, having children and buying houses, she wondered if she, too, should settle for the cookie cutter life.

"It gets harder when you're reaching 30," Payne said. "You start to second guess what your passion in life is. Should I be living in that house with a picket fence having babies?"

While settling for a safe career is satisfying for most people, Payne's restless nature and passion for performance quickly snapped her out of it.

"I spent a year looking up what else I'd want to do and by the end of it there was nothing I would rather do."

And for Payne, the show must go on.

"I haven't looked back since. I'm really happy with where I am now," she said. "I love being on stage every night. I think it's the best career in the world."



Michael Wachowiak, '12, during an acting exercise at the Vassar College and New York State and Film Powerhouse Theater Apprenticeship Training program last summer.

A Powerhouse Summer

By Michael Wachowiak, '12

On the Powerhouse Theater's website, the organization's entire program is summed up in three statements: "Challenge your point of view about theatre," "Create a community of like-minded artists," and "Discover your voice as an actor, designer, director or writer."

These would be the exact three statements I would use to describe my internship this past summer at Vassar College with the New York Stage and Film Powerhouse Theater Apprenticeship Training Program.

Every day, something new was introduced. I embraced the experience, and in doing so not only developed as an actor, but also as a person. A typical day would include four hours of classes starting at 9 a.m., rehearsal for six hours for the main-stage productions, followed by rehearsal for the student-directed productions, and somewhere in between, eating and sleeping.

I was with a group of over 40 actors, directors, playwrights and designers, and we became a family, as lame and cliché as it sounds. As a family in every way, there were the occasional fights or jealous moments, but isn't that truly a sign you're close with a group of people? We created the "like-minded" community which Powerhouse strives for, and the more I grew to know and trust the others as people, the more I trusted them on stage, which only helps your craft.

In addition to the productions that we were a part of, we also had the privilege of seeing almost every show that New York Stage and Film (the producing department of Powerhouse) put on this summer. I saw new works in every stage of development: table readings of new plays, staged readings of new plays and musicals, completely memorized workshops of plays, and two fully produced main-stage shows. These included new works by John Patrick Shanley, Eve Ensler, Keith Bunin, and Justin Levin and Alex Timbers (the minds behind *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*) and a reimagined *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* conceived/directed by Michael Mayer. These productions really did "challenge" my point of view about theatre and what is possible and made me appreciate the development process of a new work, and the fact that a fully produced piece is not always the best. You might find a deeper connection with a simple reading.

"Discovering your voice as an actor" is really what this program is all about. With classes in acting, voice, movement, and text analysis, among others, you leave this program far more developed than you were when you first arrived, six weeks earlier. I had the time of my life this summer, and would never take it back. NU alumnus Ed Cheetham, producing director, and the Friends of Niagara University Theatre provided me with this amazing opportunity and one more lucky student will be awarded this opportunity for the summer of 2011.

Gala Photo Correction

Two photo captions on page 17 of our spring 2010 issue inadvertently omitted alumni graduation years:
Michael Arena, '77, Patricia Orzetti, '63, and Kathleen Gormley, '63.



Above: NU's design/technology professors and students provided costumes and make-up for the university's annual St. Vincent de Paul look-alike contest in September. Here, design/technology major Brandi Bruggman, '11, left, applies make-up for "dead ringer" Bill Newton, assistant director of campus activities. Photo reprinted courtesy of the Buffalo News.



Clockwise from top left: Several NU theatre studies students distributed theatre calendars along Center Street during Lewiston, N.Y.'s Peach Festival parade in September. From left, Andrea Gollhardt, '12, Alicia Ann Burning, '12, Kelsey Wright, '11, Alexei Carstensen, '14, and Devan Corcoran, '11.

On Aug. 27, the Friends of NU Theatre hosted an open house for the parents of incoming theatre studies freshmen. From left, Friends board members John DeDeyn, Diane Keefe and Marge Turner. Keefe and Turner served as event chairs.



Each year, NU theatre studies students carol for the Village of Lewiston's Christmas Walk. Front row from left: Keirsten Greifenstein, Kerisa Bonville, Michael Wachowiak, Celine Keefe and Devan Corcoran. Back row from left, two student members of NU's WNIA radio station.

In October, NU theatre studies students demonstrated their stage combat skills at the admissions' department open house. Under the direction of Adriano Gatto, '06, artist-in-residence, from left in background were: Nick Lama and Nicholas G. Gnacinski, '11, and from left in foreground, Mary Boatman, '12, and Devan Corcoran, '11.



Above: David Autovino, '03, in the lobby of the Elizabeth Ann Clune Center for Theatre during the November Alumni Cabaret, indicating the first dollar given toward the renovation of the Leary Theatre. Autovino donated that dollar to Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., in the spring of 2003. The rest of the money followed over the next five years and construction began in May of 2009. The new center opened in April of 2010.



At left: A scene from *All Women in the Dance Theatre of Niagara*, choreographed by senior lecturer, dance, Stacy Zawadzki-Janusz. Clockwise from left: Kelsey M. Anderson, Meghan Hinton, Vanessa Cipolla, Stephanie Giersen, Molly Dillon, Jocelyn Hanson and Miranda Jaworski.

In the Spotlight:

Dance Theatre of Niagara

In December, NU Theatre presented the world premiere of *Dance Theatre of Niagara*, created and choreographed by the dance faculty of the department of theatre and fine arts: Peter Bennett, Terri Filips, Gary Marino, and Stacy Zawadzki-Janusz.



Clockwise from top: From Catch Me, choreographed by Terri Filips, associate professor, dance, and assistant choreographer, Jocelyn Hanson. From left: Brittany Gabryel, Steven Foote and Alicia Ann Burning.

A scene from Americans ... at home, July 28, 1943, choreographed by Terri Filips, associate professor, dance. From left: Erin Daley, Alicia Ann Burning, Michael Sheridan, Callie Bush, Jeffrey Matias, Chelsey M. Zimmerman, and Jocelyn Hanson.

A scene from Jasrano's, choreographed by Stacy Zawadzki-Janusz, senior lecturer, dance. Back row, from left: Lisa Andrews, Amanda Williamson, Molliann Zahm, Amy Domiano, Lindsay N. Zimmerman and Brittany Gabryel. Front row from left: Devan Corcoran, Meghan Hinton and Vanessa Cipolla.

From Gigot, choreographed by dance adjuncts Peter Bennett and Gary Marino. From left, Arriana Murphy and Leo DiBello.



In the Spotlight:

Wonder of the World

In November, NU Theatre presented David Lindsay-Abaire's comedy, *Wonder of the World*, directed by adjunct professor Amanda Lytle Sharpe.

At left (l-r): Kayla Kreis, '11, and Erica Miranda Diederich, '12.

Below (l-r): Erica Miranda Diederich, '12, Kayla Kreis, '11, and Andrea Gollhardt, '12.

