Jawole Willa Jo Zollar Awarded Guggenheim Fellowship

A 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship has been awarded to internationally renowned choreographer Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, the founder and artistic director of the Brooklyn-based, all-female dance troupe Urban Bush Women, and the distinguished Nancy Smith Fichter Professor of Dance at The Florida State University.

Guggenheim fellowships are bestowed annually on a select cadre of mid-career professionals with records of stellar achievement and great promise for more of the same in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and creative arts. This year, Zollar’s fellowship is one of just 180 awarded to U.S and Canadian artists, scientists and scholars — chosen after rigorous review from nearly 3,000 applicants — and one of only five awarded to choreographers.

“The Guggenheim Foundation recognizes a select few artists who have demonstrated extraordinary ability, and our honored alumna Jawole certainly fits that description,” said Sally McRorie, dean of Florida State’s College of Visual Arts, Theatre and Dance. “From her inspired choreography to her energetic mentoring of dancers and passionate engagement with building community through the arts, one would be hard pressed to find a better example of exceptional creative talent, professional dedication, and sheer love of life. Her story is one of the best to ever flower on this campus, and we feel fortunate to have that story as part of our own.”

“I am thrilled and most grateful to be recognized and awarded support from the Guggenheim Foundation,” Zollar said. “Every artist has profound doubts and questions about their own work, but such awards help us to continue to move forward.”

With her $35,000 Guggenheim fellowship, Zollar plans to complete research and development for a new work currently titled “visible/invisible” for which she’ll serve as the conceptual and choreographic director.

“The work will explore themes of the Great Migration of African Americans who left the South after the Civil War, as well as other documented and undocumented immigrants whose intersection in America’s urban centers birthed new cultural art forms,” Zollar said. “I’ll be posing questions such as, ‘Why did these immigrants leave their homes and what did they find? What new forms of expression developed in the urban centers to which they migrated? How did and does society view workers occupying America’s lower working classes?’”

Zollar points to Toni Morrison’s “Jazz,” Edward P. Jones’ “All Aunt Hagar’s Children,” and Jacob Lawrence’s “Migration Series” as her inspiration for the thematic and conceptual design of the emerging production.

“All of these works share stories and images of people who moved from the South to the North with high hopes, and express the mixed emotions of the struggle of creating new communities,” she said. “The resulting piece will be an abstract visual narrative that weaves these themes into the work. Collaborating with artists of various mediums, we will create a work that is rich and multilayered with elements of movement, sound and visual design.”

With the receipt of her Guggenheim award, the past academic year has become an especially winning one for Zollar, who divides her time between directing Urban Bush Women and teaching in the Department of Dance at Florida State. Last November, she was named a 2008 USA Wynn Fellow in dance by the philanthropic nonprofit organization United States Artists (USA). That prestigious honor included a $50,000 unrestricted grant in recognition of her exceptional contributions to her field. In addition, “Les écailles de la memoire” (The Scales of Memory), Zollar’s latest dance production with Senegal’s all-male Compagnie JANT-BI, completed a widely praised international tour.

Like much of the acclaimed body of work choreographed by Zollar and performed worldwide, “Les écailles de la memoire” was developed at FSU’s Maggie AlleeSee National Center for Choreography (MANCC, pronounced man-see), a dance and choreographic research center that is part of one of the premier facilities for dance in the United States. To learn more about MANCC and dance at Florida State University, visit the Web sites at http://dance.fsu.edu and http://www.mancc.org.

The 2009 Guggenheim competition is the 85th annual contest sponsored by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for U.S. and Canadian citizens and permanent residents (a second annual contest names Fellows in Latin America and the Caribbean). For additional information, go to http://www.gf.org.

-Libby Fairhurst
The Rolling Dance (Chair) Project

The Rolling Dance (Chair) Project began in 2006 with the goal of exploring motion and mobility in innovative ways through re-conceptualizing current wheelchair design for use in dance and other settings. The brainchild of Merry Lynn Morris (MFA 1998), the project combines the University of South Florida’s Department of Mechanical Engineering with the School of Theatre and Dance. Using similar technology to the Segway, the base of the chair acts as joystick, responding to body motion from the dancer. This allows the dancer to move his arms and back freely, allowing for more freedom of movement in dance.

More information on The Rolling Dance (Chair) Project can be found at http://rdc.arts.usf.edu/. A video covering the implementation of the chair can be found at http://tinyurl.com/crcckk.

Alumni Updates

Donna Addison Haseltine (BFA 1984) has been serving as the teacher/choreographer for the Gilstrap Dance Academy of the historic Ebeneezer Baptist Church at the ML King Center in Atlanta since 2003.

Carl Solomon (BFA 1986) is currently the Program Evaluator for the Monticello Central School District, in Sullivan County, NY. Solomon also was a tenured Assistant Principal for the Clarkstown Central School District in Rockland County, NY 2003-2006. He is currently pursuing a deep love for Irish/Celtic Music and is playing bodhran semi-professionally.

Kim Pattison Wild (MFA 1989) is at the St. John School of the Arts, St. John VI. The School just had its 1st Annual Dance-a-thon as an annual fundraiser. The success was measured in high energy from adult and children dancers, great music from 5 decades and plenty of smiles and laughter all around! SJSA also hosted a lecture demonstration from Dance Brazil, featuring athletic movements from the traditional capeira dance.

Dr. James Frazier (MFA 1994) is in his third year as Chair of the Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Dance and Choreography (VCU Dance). This year, James graduated from VCU’s Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute, was selected for mentorship by the International Council of Deans (ICFAD), and he was elected to the office of secretary of the Council of Dance Administrators (CODA). In early March he visited Chicago’s Columbia College, where he consulted with the dance faculty and shared a panel discussion with department chair and facilitator Bonnie Brooks and artist-in-residence David Rousseve. In addition, James remains active as studio teacher, lecturer and choreographer.

Wanda K. W. Ebright (MFA 1995) is a tenured Associate Prof. of Dance at Coker College, Artistic Director of The Wanda Project (http://www.thewandaproject.net), a contemporary dance company, and Executive Director of its umbrella organization, MPD Dance, a non-profit dance education organization serving children in SC. She is also pursuing a PhD in Dance at Texas Woman’s University.

Amy Taravella (MFA 1996) is in her second year of running her own black box theatre in Buffalo New York called The Alt Theatre. She is a featured performer this coming June in a Centennial Celebration of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and the creation of the International Joint Commission of Canada and the United States to be held in Niagara Falls, USA and Canada. She is a co-producer of The Four Mad Humours, a multi-disciplinary dance theatre production presented simultaneously and remotely connected in the four cities of Montreal, Toronto, Chicago and Buffalo. Her modern dance company, Buffalo Contemporary Dance just celebrated its 10th Anniversary Season.

Maria Caruso (BFA 2000) has been invited to present a new work at Pittsburgh NewMoves Contemporary Dance festival in May and is working on a new ballet for 2010. It is a ballet about the heart, its organic function and how it stimulates our emotional being. She is working to develop movement material with patient groups of women suffering from pulmonary arterial hypertension PAH, a fatal heart condition. She also is working closely with UPMC’s head of cardiology.
Dr. Dennis McNamara and will utilize the string sounds of Cellofourte.

Ashley Sherman (BFA 2002) is completing her 7th year teaching in the Dance Magnet Program at Dr. Phillips High School in Orlando, FL (www.dancemagnet.com). She just returned from the Regional High School Dance Festival with her students: of the 8 who auditioned for college programs and summer scholarships, 5 walked away with scholarship money totaling $32,000. Ashley serves on the board for The Orlando Repertory Theatre and Florida Dance Education Organization. She completed her Masters Degree in Higher Education in May of 2007.

Amy Knauff (BFA 2003), is currently living in London, England pursuing a graduate degree at the Laban Centre for Movement & Dance. Prior to leaving New York City in 2008, Amy participated in the Homebase Project, a site-specific art project devoted to the exploration of Home. She also became certified in Pilates Matwork.

Evalina “Wallis” Cain (BFA 2005) is currently living in Lambertville, New Jersey and is in her fourth season with Roxey Ballet. She is also teaching Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis.

NaTonia Monet Harrison (BFA 2005) is living in NYC freelancing as a dancer. She recently finished a show in January with VQ productions called Voodoo Queen performed at the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre. Harrison is going on Broadway auditions, starting to take acting lessons, as well as apprenticing with Obediah Wright’s Balance Dance Theatre.

Alyce-Cristina Vallejo Moran (BFA 2006) is continuing in her second year with Martha Connerton/KineticWorks Contemporary Dance Company in Charlotte, NC, as dancer, teaching artist, and rehearsal assistant. For their upcoming summer project Alyce will be a dancer and rehearsal assistant while the company teaches morning workshops and rehearsals in the afternoons. The five week project will conclude with performances in Matthews and Charlotte, performing works by Martha Connerton and a guest choreographer. Alyce has also been experimenting with photographer Steve Clarke to begin developing a performance piece involving image-making and movement.

Blythe Barton (MFA 2007) now studies at Dance Place, which houses the three biggest San Diego dance companies, Jean Isaacs San Diego Dance Theater (SDDT), Malashock Dance, and San Diego Ballet. SDDT and Malashock are both high level modern companies, both with a Limon background, but perform very differently. She is teaching one class a week for SDDT and is working with Jean Isaacs on grants and marketing. In September, Barton participated in Trolley Dances which is a site-specific dance tour through part of San Diego. She has danced in several studio showings for both Malashock and SDDT and presented her own choreography in November.

Mary Heller (MFA 2007) was awarded a $5000 grant for former FSU Professor Juliet McMains and her partner Saso Despotovski to teach Latin dance clinics to hundreds of middle school and high school students all over the Inland Northwest as well as internationally in The Lionel Hampton School of Music’s JazzFest. Heller’s work, “We Have This” was adjudicated at ACDFA this Spring. She performed in Bill T. Jones’s Continuous Replay as the lead, the clock, last Fall. She takes class when she can, but is quite busy teaching, advising, and overseeing teachers.

Carol L. McCoy (MFA 2007) is working in Toulouse, France with Companie James Carles. She is teaching in his school, dancing with the company and assisting with rehearsals for the dance project Danses et Continents Noirs. McCoy currently is a Gyrotone Apprentice (trained by Anjali Austin) and will take her certification exam in September in Germany. She has been living in France since July 2008.

Holly Matyas (MFA 2007) is still living in Genoa, Italy with husband pianist Giacomo Battarino and their 2 year old son Davide. In addition to teaching voice, ballet, modern dance and dance conditioning at schools in Genoa and Cecina and performing as classical singer in various music concerts, she is now dancing with Diabasis Ballet, a contemporary modern dance company directed by Maria Grazia Sulzpi zi. Her first performance with the company, “Orizzonti Freddi” or “Cold Horizons”, brought back warm memories of Lynda Davis’s classes in the FSU art museum. Surrounded by the paintings and sculptures of the Nervi Art Museum, members of Diabasis ballet performed in collaboration with a group of photographers whose photographs of northern landscapes were projected over the dancing.

Kristen Tucker Paladino (MFA 2007) recently joined the dance academy faculty at ACAC Fitness and Wellness Center in West Chester, PA as a ballet teacher, and will also be teaching Balletone group fitness classes. She is also planning on becoming a pioneering member of a new contemporary ballet company also based in West Chester.

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Latika Young (MA/ADS 2008) was awarded one of Columbia University's FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) Scholarship for her doctoral work at Columbia. In addition to her regular studies, Latika is continuing her language study of Serbian-Croatian, which is the extension of her Fulbright Award and work in teaching, filming, and researching this last year, during her stay in Serbia-Croatia.

Katy Byrne (MFA 2008) is in her first year as an Instructional Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University where she teaches ballet, pointe, ballroom, pilates and dance history. She received a Visual and Performance grant last Fall. With this grant the dance faculty and three students are going to Mexico to perform at the Performatica Festival in April. Byrne will perform a solo, “Celestial Navigation” by Gerri Houlihan and a trio, “Fish, Deer, Sheep” by Jane Weiner of Hope Stone Dance Company as well as teach a master class. She also was recently engaged and is getting married this summer.

Natalie Ellison (MAS 2008) is currently dancing with Cornerstone Dance Company based in Melbourne, FL. (www.cornerstonedance.org)

Michelle Fletcher (MFA 2008) just participated in her first show in San Francisco; the show was a mixed bill of new choreographers to the bay area. Fletcher choreographed and performed in a piece with her husband and presented a trio she choreographed while at FSU. The trio has since been invited to perform for three other shows.

Indira Goodwine (BFA 2008) was recently accepted to NYU to pursue a Masters in Performing Arts Administration. Currently, she is dancing with FSU alum Toni Renee’s Breath of Life Dance Experience (B.O.L.D.E.) as well as dancing with Camille Brown and Dancers.

Allegra Ortiz (BFA 2008) went to the American Dance Festival on a Stage Craft Apprentice scholarship, and worked in the costume shop making the costumes for the final concert. She is also studying with a company called Several Dancers Core in Atlanta GA.

Shannon Schwait (MFA 2008) will be traveling to Jordan, Israel, Ramallah, and Abu Dhabi on a 3 week tour to the Middle East as a videographer. 

MANCC Updates

As we approach the fifth anniversary of the Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography pilot programming, we seek your feedback as to the impact of MANCC. The survey request is for Alumni who were at FSU during the first years of MANCC programming. Free to Rep, Choreographic Fellowships and Living Legacy.

Submit your feedback here!
(external web link)

Faculty Updates

Anthony Morgan’s film, Chimera, was featured at The Tallahassee Film Festival as a special encore presentation during the awards ceremony for the film festival. Anthony has been teaching company class and rehearsing Dancers Dancing for Voices in Motion, Bodies that Sing at the Vancouver International Dance Festival, which included the performance of his choreography Idyll with music by Estonian Veljo Tormis performed live by the Vancouver Cantata Singers. Anthony has also reprised his Elements of Dance course for older adults and has been invited to repeat it again leading up to a group-created performance in May. His 2006 film Zoomorph has been selected for screening on Shaw Cable TV. He has started work on a new duet, tentatively titled Swing Thing, for hopeful performance in June.

Tricia Young and Sally Sommer have organized a Flamenco dance component for the first summer session of the FSU Valencia, Spain International Studies program 2009. They will be teaching History of Flamenco Dance and Culture, Flamenco in Spanish Film, and Spanish Cuisine of Valencia. They have also arranged for special Flamenco technique classes and workshops for the students.

Tricia Young and Jennifer Atkins will present papers on “Issues of Integration in European and Spanish Dance Curricula and in American Dance Curricula: Case Comparisons” at the 2009 Barcelona Conference on Learning, Barcelona, Spain in July. Their respective papers will discuss FSU Department of Dance curricular initiatives including FSU in NYC, The MA Program in American Studies, The MANCC Experience course, and the FSU in Valencia Flamenco program.

Tricia Young was appointed to the Editorial Board of the University Presses of Florida and also served on the national review panel for two awards offered by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS): Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship and Frederick Burkhardt Residential Fellowship.

Rick McCullough was invited to the National Choreographers Initiative in New York. Rick will also be attending
Perry-Mansfield in Steamboat Springs, CO, as guest choreographer where he will be sharing the program with choreographers Camille Brown, Robert Battle, Paul Taylor (set by Linda Kent), and others.

Anjali Austin was a South Central Regional ACDFA adjudicator at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, this past March. Also in March, Anjali participated in the Leg Extension Unit course in the Gyrotonic Expansion System in Miami, Florida. At the beginning of this year she took on the position of President of the Florida Dance Association.

Tim Glenn recently returned from a visit to Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis (IUPUI), where he met with faculty and staff members from the Music and Arts Technology Program and the Donald Travel Arts and Technology Center. This visit was the first step toward setting up future telematic collaborations, including a 2010 telematic festival and production design for a multi-site telematic opera. While at IUPUI, Glenn presented his research in Internet applications for dance, illustrated by documentation from a number of Internet2 sessions linking FSU with other university dance programs. Tim is currently developing movement vocabulary and video collages to visualize the choreographic components of the forthcoming production called Orga-Mecha. These edited sketches of movement vocabulary, performed by FSU dance majors and alumni, will be used to guide and inspire the dances, as well as communicate the production’s potential to prospective funders. In May, Glenn will once again serve as primary videographer for the Paul Taylor Dance Company’s Repertory Preservation Project (RPP). Taylor repertory to be documented this season includes: Changes, Scudorama, Beloved Renegade, The Sorcerer’s Sofa, Danbury Mix, and Last Look.

Gerri Houlihan adjudicated for the Northeast ACDFA regional conference at Penn State University this past March. Gerri also joined the ACDFA Board of Directors. Her duet, Morango was recently performed by the dancers at Virginia Commonwealth University, and by former graduates, Kim Jones and Andy Noble at the North Carolina Dance Festival in Charlotte, N.C.

J. R. Russell Sandifer, co-chair of the Department of Dance, has been recently promoted to full Professor. Russell designed lighting for Suzanne Farrell Ballet for their “Fall for Dance” and Kennedy Center seasons. His lighting design for Urban Bush Women and Jant-Bi’s The Scales of Memory was performed this fall at the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival.

Lynda Davis choreographed a solo, Spinner of Starlit Tales, for MFA candidate, Shannon Schweit as well as Fading Innocence, for MFA candidate, Jana Tripp. Along with choreographing, Lynda also mentored MFA concerts for Jacqueline Podence & Shannon Schweit and Kirstin Kapustik & Shauna Dever. Lynda’s archival and research projects focused on Gloria Newmann Dance Theatre, Theatre Dance Trio, Dance Repertory Theatre and The Cetamura Project. This summer Lynda will serve as faculty for the FSU Summer Intensive.

Student Updates

Diane Cahill (MFA 2009) choreographed work for the FSU Opera, A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The opera featured FSU dancers.

Stefan Zubal (MFA 2009) choreographed work for FSU School of Theatre’s production of Hair.

Denae Hannah (MFA 2010) has been awarded a Spring Dissertation Research Grant. Denae was also awarded the Wilson-Auzenne Graduate Assistantship for the second year. This assistantship carries with it a tuition waiver and stipend of $5000 for the academic year.

Hanaah Frechette (BFA 2011) received a FSU 2009 Mentored Research and Creative Endeavor Award.

Shoko Letton (MA/ADS 2009) has been selected as one of the recipients of the 2008-2009 Graduate Student Research and Creativity Awards for her thesis project on Eiko and Koma and her video editing and podcast work for MANCC.

Jessica Herzogenrath (MA/ADS 2009) has been accepted into the Ph.D. program in History at Texas A&M University.

Katy Boche (MA/ADS 2009) has been accepted into the Ph.D. program in History at FSU.