



MISSOURI
CONTEMPORARY
BALLET
2013-2014

PERFORMANCE

INFORMATION &
OPPORTUNITIES

Karen Mareck Grundy,
Artistic/Executive Director

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ABOUT MISSOURI CONTEMPORARY BALLET

Celebrating its eighth year, Missouri Contemporary Ballet (MCB) is a professional dance company committed to creating dance entertainment through the art of contemporary ballet. MCB creates exciting, edgy, hip entertainment to make the experience of live dance an artful and joyful event for all ages. Founded in July 2006 to fulfill the need for a professional dance company in Mid-Missouri, MCB is committed to broadening its performance and education base.

Missouri Contemporary Ballet focuses on providing opportunities for the talented dancers it employs and brings to Columbia. It maintains an even greater mission and responsibility to the surrounding communities by devoting efforts, education, and outreach programs to schools, both local and regional, retirement homes, and communities lacking arts programming. Furthermore, MCB allows new and emerging choreographers the opportunity to set original works on its company members in a professional atmosphere and see their vision come to life on stage.

Despite its infancy, MCB has solidified itself in the community by performing at events such as Artrageous Fridays, a quarterly gallery crawl, First Night, an alternative New Year's Eve Celebration, and lecture demonstrations in area schools and retirement homes. MCB has toured to Newport, RI as the Resident Company of Island Moving Company's Great Friends Dance Festival 2012. MCB has been on Jodi Kaplan & Associates' Boutique Roster for the 2012/13 and 2013/14 season and has performed at APAP NYC for the past three years. MCB has also just completed its first international tour, performing at the International Garden Exposition in Suncheon Bay, South Korea.

Additionally, MCB has successfully organized and produced "Dancing with Missouri Stars" (DWMS), its predominant fundraiser. DWMS pairs local celebrities with classically trained ballroom dance instructors providing for an evening of dance competition in Columbia, Missouri. This competition has swelled to over 1,000 attendees, raising over \$150,000 in 2012. Many of MCB's performances are re-broadcast on television, as well.



MISSOURI CONTEMPORARY BALLET

110 ORR STREET SUITE 102, COLUMBIA, MISSOURI 65201 | 573.219.7134 |
WWW.MISSOURICONTEMPORARYBALLET.COM



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Grow our audience attendance and awareness of contemporary ballet as an expressive art form through performances, workshops, and education.
- Expand touring schedule throughout Missouri, into the Midwest, and ultimately the nation.
- Grow the number of dancers we employ and train.
- Provide additional outreach opportunities for the youth in both our local community and surrounding rural communities in Missouri.
- Develop, initiate, and sustain the School of MCB to provide an appreciation and discipline for the art of dance through professional training of the youth of our community.
- Continue and expand our efforts to obtain notable choreographers from across the United States providing unique opportunities for challenge, personal discovery, and artistic development of our company members.





DIRECTORS

Karen Mareck Grundy, Artistic & Executive Director

As the Artistic/Executive Director of Missouri Contemporary Ballet, Karen Grundy states, "My goal is to give dancers a positive yet disciplined space to discover their center core and expand their hearts and minds, while also allowing them to explore the diverse aspects of dance."

Karen Mareck Grundy was born and raised in Las Vegas, NV, where her dance training began at the age of 3. At age 8, Karen began her training in modern dance with Ronnie Greenblatt who trained under Martha Graham. Her extensive classical ballet and jazz training was under the direction of Inez Mourning and Belinda DeBecker. Grundy's love of contemporary ballet was discovered in working side by side with L. J. Ballard as a dancer and as an assistant choreographer. Karen has been a member and featured dancer in various dance companies including Opus Dance Ensemble, New Works Project, and Ballard's Cafe Dance Co. She performed in Las Vegas for 11 years as a featured and lead dancer, as well as working in television. During that time, while working with various choreographers, she was fortunate to work under the direction of Ron Lewis, director and choreographer for Liza Minnelli. Grundy has taught master classes throughout the country and as an assistant for choreographer Tiger Martina.

In 2000, Karen was brought to Columbia, MO to teach at Columbia Performing Arts Centre, where she taught for 9 years. She has trained dancers who have gone on to The Juilliard School, The Lines School, Dance Kaleidoscope, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and Broadway! Her dream was to have her own company. Before starting Missouri Contemporary Ballet in 2006, she was the Artistic Director for Cedar Lake II. Grundy has created a style that is fresh and innovative by maintaining her classical ballet, modern training and adding a twist from the productions of Vegas. Her work is accessible to all. Karen is thrilled to be able to create her vision while collaborating with artists of all genres, and the many supporters of dance in Columbia, across the state of Missouri, and throughout the Country.

Ken Braso, Rehearsal Director

Ken Braso comes to Columbia with over 30 years of professional dance experience. Ken has been a featured dancer with Walt Disney Productions, Southern Ballet Theatre, Pittsburgh Ballet, Ballet Austin, Cincinnati Opera Co, Children's Theatre of Cincinnati, and the Louisville Ballet. Ken has worked with many notable choreographers including featured roles in ballets by Choo San Goh, William Soleau, Stephen Mills, Septime Weber, David Parsons, Patrick Frantz and Alun Jones. After retiring from the Louisville Ballet in



DIRECTORS CONTINUED

2002 as a principal dancer, Ken founded and taught for Step One Dance at All About Kids Sports Center and then later joined the Louisville Ballet School, as a faculty member. Ken moved to Columbia, Missouri with his wife in 2008, where he has been working as a freelance dance and gymnastics instructor for DanceArts, Missouri Contemporary Ballet, Flipz Gymnastics, Tiger Gymnastics, and Stephens Collage.

Joanne Sandorfi, Ballet Mistress/Director of Operations

Joanne Sandorfi is originally from Port Jefferson, NY, where she trained for eleven years in Classical Ballet and Jazz with Harbor Ballet Theatre. During this time she attended summer intensive programs at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and School of Richmond Ballet. Joanne went on to train at the Ballet Department of the University of Utah, where she graduated with a BFA in Ballet Performance and Teaching. There, she studied under professors Conrad Ludlow, Maureen Laird, Carol Iwisaki, Sharee Lane, and Regina Zarhina, and was also coached by Mikhail Tchoupakov. She danced feature roles in the University's annual productions of Ballet Showcase and Ballet Ensemble. Joanne was also a member of the Character Dance Ensemble (CDE) under the direction of Richard Wacko. While in CDE, she organized many fundraisers, community outreach performances, and Ballet/Character Dance Workshops. Joanne was able to travel to Greece and Costa Rica to perform and participate in Folk Dance and Ballet Workshops. Two of her choreographic works were performed at the Centro Cultural Norteamericano in San Jose, Costa Rica. Joanne has danced as a guest artist with Harbor Ballet Theatre and Island Moving Company. She was a company member with Salt Lake City Ballet, under the direction of Terry S. Davis.

Shannon Lee West, Resident Choreographer

Shannon West began her classical ballet training with Francoise Joubert before attending the School of Ballet Arizona, studying the Vaganova method under the direction of Kee Juan Han. At fifteen, she began her professional career performing in Michael Uhtoff's "The Nutcracker". During her time with Ballet Arizona Shannon performed in "The Nutcracker", "Swan Lake", and Balanchine's "Serenade". Upon graduation from Arizona School for the Arts with honors, Shannon performed with The Georgia Ballet and Cedar Lake II. Throughout her career, Shannon has been fascinated by the mind's ability to create movement from the body's raw form and has explored choreography with guidance from Kee Juan Han, Anne Marie Deangelo, and Karen Mareck Grundy. Her works have been premiered by The Georgia Ballet and students of The School of Ballet Arizona, Ballet Pacifica, and The San Angelo Civic Ballet. Since 2006, when she joined the artistic staff of Missouri Contemporary Ballet, Shannon has taken on the roles of Ballet Mistress, Resident Choreographer, and Rehearsal Director.



2013-2014 SEASON

Fall/Winter Season 2013

August 26, 2013 - MCB dancers return from summer hiatus.

September 17, 2013 – Lecture Demonstration at Lenoir Woods Senior Services

September 18, 2013 – Lecture Demonstration as part of Family Fun Fest
at Flat Branch Park

October 11, 2013 – Open Rehearsal at MCB studios as a part of
"Artrageous Weekend"

November 15, 2013 & November 16, 2013 - "CRAVE"
at Jesse Hall, a new repertoire production featuring the works of
Karen Mareck Grundy, Shannon Lee West, and Bryn Cohn.

November 29, 2013 – Choreographic Installation at MCB studios



Spring/Summer Season 2014

January 10-January 14, 2014 – Touring Performance at
APAP Conference in New York City

March 7, 2014 & March 8, 2014 – Collaborative performance with
Odyssey Chamber Music Series at Missouri Theatre Center for the Arts

May 22, 2014 – Eighth annual Dancing with Missouri Stars at Columbia College

April 25, 2014 – Choreographic Installation at MCB studios





REPERTOIRE

- 1000 Details** (2012) Karen Mareck Grundy
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (2013) Karen Mareck Grundy
Alone/Together (2009) Jennifer Medina
Breaking Patterns (2008) Karen Mareck Grundy
Cariño (2010) Shannon Lee West
Catch'Up (2013) Fernando Rodriguez
Coming Home (2003) L.J. Ballard
The Current State of Life (2011) Joshua Blake Carter
Desperate Measures (2010) Karen Mareck Grundy
The Dirt BeNeath (2011) Alex J. Gordon
Falling (2009) Karen Mareck Grundy and Installation Artist Valerie Wedel
Falling...Apart (2009) Shannon Lee West
Falling into Place (2009) Karen Mareck Grundy
Falling on His Own Sword (2009) Shannon Lee West
The Final Hour (2008) Eric Bean, Jr.
From a River's Edge (2009) Shannon Lee West
Furious Angels (2011) Karen Mareck Grundy
hand in hand (2010) Shannon Lee West
History with Me (2010) Shannon Lee West
Hold On: A suite of three short works (2012) Karen Mareck Grundy
Hypnotic (2007) Megan Pulfer
I'm Not Broken (2011) Karen Mareck Grundy
Journey In (2012) Karen Mareck Grundy
Lenore (2012) Thang Dao
Life Has Loveliness (2009) Shannon Lee West
Love and Peace (2007) Karen Mareck Grundy
Loves and Losses (2011) Tiger Martina
Marking Territory (2008) Iquail Shaheed
The Masterpieces (2011) Karen Mareck Grundy
May or May Not (2012) Autumn Eckman
minore al maggiore (2012) John-Mark Owen
Much That Can Be Remembered Is Always Forgotten (2007) David Marchant
Nigel and Marian...A Story (2009) Karen Mareck Grundy
Oh-Lahm Yeh-Shan (2007) Shannon Lee West
proximity (2012) Shannon Lee West
Radical Acceptance (2012) Shannon Lee West
Rock (2008) Nick Kepley, Karen Mareck Grundy, Lisa Morovitz-Geger, and Tiger Martina, with the artists of MCB
S.O.S. (2008) Thang Dao
Saying Goodbye When You've Already Left (2008) Shannon Lee West
Seven (2010) Lisa Belrose
Shrapnel (2011) Shannon Lee West
Six to 1 (2009) Shannon Lee West
Sound Bites and Impulse (2008) Christopher 'Topher' Benjamin
St. Louis Blues (2011) Karen Mareck Grundy
Stairway to Heaven (2009) Karen Mareck Grundy with the artists of MCB
Step into the Light (2006) Nick Kepley
Steam Rising (2007) Shawn Boyle
The Story of What Was (2006) Sean France
Swimming with Sharks (2012) Karen Mareck Grundy
Symbiotic (2008) Shannon Lee West
Tango de Muerte (2006) Tiger Martina
Three (2007) Karen Mareck Grundy
Twisted (2005) Karen Mareck Grundy & Lisa Morovitz-Geger
Unbreakable Code (2006) Karen Mareck Grundy
Waltz No. 3 (2008) Shannon Lee West
We Are Sacred Vessels (2010) Jennifer Medina
Wish (2010) Keisha Lelama-White
Without Consent (2010) Karen Mareck Grundy
The World Lit By Lightning (2011) Shannon Lee West
You Again (2012) Karen Mareck Grundy



MID-AMERICA ARTS ALLIANCE (M-AAA)

Regional Touring Program (RTP)

The Regional Touring Program (RTP) has an exclusive focus on the talented artists in a six state region: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas. RTP funds will be awarded to presenters from the M-AAA region to support performances and residency activities involving Mid-America Artists' Registry Members, such as MCB.

Awards will be made on a first-come, first-served basis in response to Applications received by deadlines determined by M-AAA.

- The Regional Touring Program maximum award per application is \$5,000. An organization may apply for a maximum of three RTP grants. Applicants may be awarded up to 40% of the contracted artist's fee listed in the artist contract, subject to available funding.
- Additional support of 10% of the contracted artist's fee may be awarded if the applicant organization is located in a rural community. Rural status is determined by information from the U.S. Department of Commerce and based on the Metropolitan Statistical Area rating (www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/uc2k.txt).
- Awards must be matched at least dollar-for-dollar with other funds. Other than capital expenditures, all expenses associated with RTP activities are eligible.

Community Engagement with Touring Artists Program (CETA)

The M-AAA Community Engagement with Touring Artists (CETA) program supports and promotes touring high-quality professional performing artists throughout the six-state region of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas from outside the presenter's state and metropolitan area. The program is specifically designed to accommodate a presenting series, build new audiences and deepen the impact of the touring performing arts. Presenters may apply for a single grant of up to \$15,000 covering multiple events or a presenting series. The applicant organization must work with touring artists to promote interaction with local community members and to engage new audiences for professional performances.

Applicant organizations must be based in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, or Texas and be either legally incorporated as a not-for-profit organization with IRS 501(c)(3) status or operating as a unit of a state, local, or tribal government.

For further information on either the RTP or the CETA Programs, including application information, visit; www.maaa.org/performing_arts



MISSOURI ARTS COUNCIL INFORMATION

MAC Funding Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for MAC funding, an organization must be a public or private organization which:

1. Is Missouri-based and has a Missouri Address. Those nonprofit corporations based outside Missouri must be registered in Missouri as a Foreign Corporation, must have a Missouri address, and must provide all MAC-funded arts activities in Missouri.
2. Is tax-exempt as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.
3. Is incorporated as a Missouri not-for-profit corporation and maintain not-for-profit status by filing annual registration report with the Secretary of State's office.
4. Has a DUNS number. If your organization does not possess a DUNS number, it is important to begin the process by calling toll free 866/705-5711. There is no fee for registering for a DUNS number.

Eligible organizations include:

Arts or arts education organizations	Chambers of Commerce
Government Agencies	Youth Organizations
Public School Districts	Private K-12 Schools
Community Arts or Religious Organizations	Social Service Organizations
Colleges & Universities	City Parks Departments

How to Book MCB through MAC

Through the Missouri Arts Council website, www.missouriartscouncil.org, eligible organizations can view the directory listing for Missouri Contemporary Ballet which includes:

- Brief description of the performing artist's programs
- Biographical information
- Contact information
- Performance fees
- Technical requirements
- Availability

The printed fee indicates the cost of presenting a program an average distance from the artist's home area and includes transportation and lodging, unless otherwise noted. Factors affecting the performance fee includes: number and type of performances at a specific location, size and type of audience expected, actual distance traveled, block booking arrangements, and equipment required. However, fees listed are negotiable and subject to change.

Eligible organizations may request funding from MAC to supplement the cost of bringing the artists to the community, up to 60 percent.

1. Contact MCB and discuss the needs of your organization
2. Once a verbal agreement has been reached, formalize this agreement with a written contract or Letter of Intent
3. Apply to the Missouri Arts Council for funding assistance
4. Plan the marketing and outreach for the performance in conjunction with MAC and MCB



COMMUNITY & EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Lecture Demonstrations

Lecture Demonstrations introduce the audience to dance by taking them through the daily life of the company. In addition to performing a piece from the company's repertoire and demonstrating classical steps, the dancers provide an interactive experience by inviting audience members to the stage and participating in a question and answer period. Lecture Demonstrations are appropriate for all audiences and make a wonderful event for children of any age. If your school or organization is interested in attending a Lecture Demonstration at our state of the art studio, or hosting one at your facility please contact Joanne Sandorfi at Missouri Contemporary Ballet by email, info@missouricontemporaryballet.com or phone, 573.219.7134

Artrageous Fridays

Artrageous Fridays, a self-guided quarterly gallery crawl, allows the local community free access to the cultural offering within their area. During these events Missouri Contemporary invites participants into their studio space to view open rehearsals. This intimate experience provides the public with the opportunity to not only view the dancers in action, but also cultivates a sense of personal connection as individuals get to meet and interact with the dancers.

Summer Expedition

Columbia Public Schools' five-week summer enrichment program designed specifically for high potential students. Fifteen students, not served by other supportive services, participate in activities designed to increase world knowledge and provide opportunities to think analytically and critically.

Dance Outside the Box

In conjunction with The Boys and Girls Club and Dream Outside the Box, MCB dancers expose at-risk youth to the art of dance through specially designed lecture demonstrations. In addition, up to 15 of the children from these organizations are offered a special opportunity to study dance with the MCB once a week throughout the school year. A member of the ballet company coaches the children in the studio so they can learn different types of dance, ultimately giving students an opportunity to participate in the arts as performers.

MCB Master Classes & Workshops

Classes and Workshops are offered in schools, colleges, and other facilities and present a unique opportunity to learn the Missouri Contemporary Ballet technique, style, and repertoire from current company members and directors.

Gratis Guest Tickets

In our commitment to the communal spirit, arts education, and contemporary ballet exposure, MCB offers complimentary performance tickets to Columbia-based organizations which serve the under privileged and At-Risk Youth.



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ENDORSEMENTS

"Perhaps more than MCB's previous shows, "Thirst" hinges on team work. Each of the dancers — six company members and three apprentices — is a cog in an elegant machine, moving with impressive synchronicity and cohesion."
- **Karen Pojmann, *Columbia Daily Tribune***

"Artistically the performances were an unqualified success that informed, inspired, and mesmerized everyone in the auditorium...The residency of the Missouri Contemporary Ballet on the Westminster campus was most definitely a tremendous artistic success and a positive promotion of the arts for the life of the community. The troupe helped us recognize how exciting and fulfilling the performing arts can be. At this point our goal is to build upon the success of the visit of the Missouri Contemporary Ballet by planning additional events, and we are especially eager to explore the possibility of a return visit of the Missouri Contemporary Ballet."
-**Robert A. Seelinger, *Professor of Classics, Fine Arts Coordinator, Westminster College***

Mareck Grundy's choreography was engaging and executed with precision and force.
-**Laura Vernaci, *Kansas City Journal of Performing Arts***

"Commerce Bank has a long history of community involvement and support for the arts. Commerce Bank is proud to support the Missouri Contemporary Ballet, which provides exciting entertainment while enhancing our quality of life and the culture of our local community. We feel the Missouri Contemporary Ballet is a true "gem" that exposes children and adults alike to world class dancing performances, here in Central Missouri."
-**Teresa Maledy, *President and CEO, Commerce Bank, Central Missouri Region***

Missouri Contemporary Ballet started off "Journey In" with a bang, their first of six dances: a sexy beat where the dancers are almost animalistic in nature.
-**Angie Fielder Sutton, *KC Stage***

"I have been involved in the business of special events and live music in Columbia for over 30 years. I have had the opportunity to work with many different arts organizations in the community. Karen brings a level of professionalism that is second to none. Every aspect of her dance company is pretty impressive. I must admit that it is a learning experience for me but MCB makes it fun! Karen's business sense is beyond any that I have experienced with any organization. To get the MCB to the high level that it is at is no easy task! I look forward to the next MCB event at the BN."
-**Richard King, *Owner, The Blue Note, Columbia, Missouri***

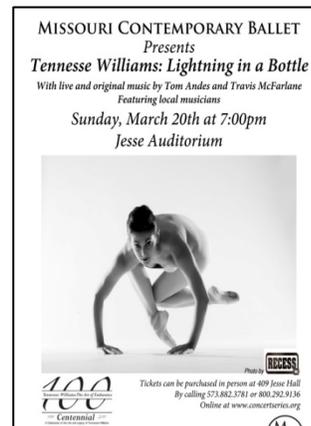
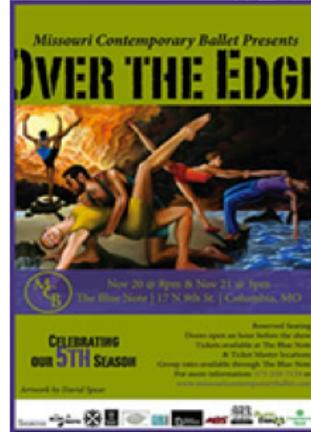
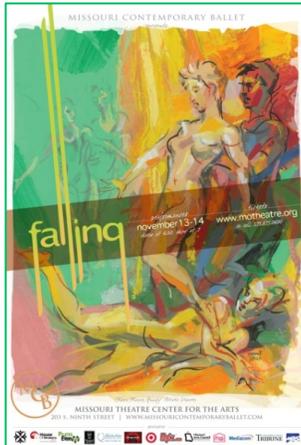
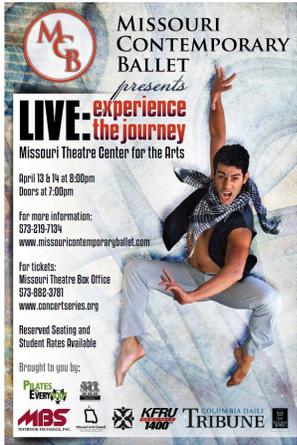
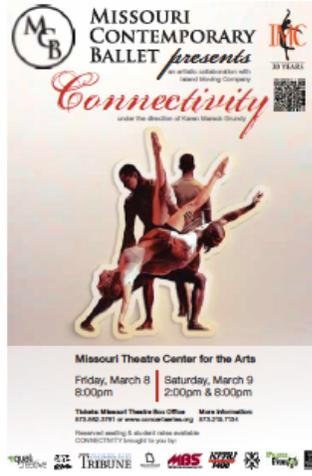


GOVERNMENT & CORPORATE SUPPORTERS





SUPPORTIVE MATERIALS





Ballet impresses with elegant, edgy movement

By Karen Pojmann, Columbia Daily
Tribune

Sunday, November 25th, 2012

In its seventh season, the Missouri Contemporary Ballet, Columbia's own not-for-profit professional dance company, has established itself as a vibrant and limber cultural force. In a community of such modest size, this longevity is no small feat. Yes, we Columbians love our arts. But in the wake of every raging success — Roots N Blues N BBQ and the True/False Film Fest, for example — lie scores of great ideas that have crumbled in a dearth of patron support. MCB continues to stretch itself, always raising the bar(re).

Never sticklers for Tchaikovsky and tutus, MCB members undertake contemporary dance projects that are inventive and edgy, whimsical and sensual. Under the direction of Las Vegas native Karen Mareck Grundy, the company pushes creative boundaries and experiments with themes and other-genre partnerships — live music, literary readings — with varying results but always with vigor, vision and expansiveness.

Such innovation has led to national attention. Upcoming journeys will land MCB at New York's Lincoln Center in January and Suncheon, South Korea, Columbia's sister city, in July.

MCB's latest show, "Thirst," performed earlier this month, reflects the company's versatility. Each of the six pieces presented Nov. 15 and 16 draws from a different

aesthetic. Some are performed en pointe, some barefoot. Some tug at the heart strings, while others tickle the funny bone.

There is the industrial "1000 Details," featuring a Trent Reznor/Atticus Ross soundtrack, with artful lighting and colorblock geometric-cutout-riddled costumes evoking a sci-fi mood. There is the lovely and lyrical "You Again" performed by Elise Eslick, a man's sport coat as her partner. To the delight of post-New Wave Gen-Xers, the moody "S.O.S." is set to British pop icon Morrissey's "Life is a Pigsty." In "Minore al Maggiore," the dancers are exquisite statuary, coming to life as the music — frenetic string performances of Vivaldi and Biber - reaches a fever-pitch urgency.

The playful and complex "Proximity" begins like an enticing avant-garde Fruit of the Loom commercial — all the dancers clad in men's briefs, T-shirts and white tube socks. A dancer freezes and stiffens; another picks up and relocates him/her (sometimes precariously upside down), as if rearranging furniture. Then the music and choreography intensify, and the audience is transported to a nightclub scene.

"Lenore," set to a reading of "The Raven," is a more concrete crowd pleaser, and the literal interpretation of the poem diminishes neither audience delight nor the spooky Edgar-Allen-Poe-meets-Alfred-Hitchcock mood emerging as a murder of crows descends upon the gracefully squirming protagonist (Fernando Rodriguez), the dancers' arms becoming, alternately, wings and beaks.

Perhaps more than MCB's previous shows, "Thirst" hinges on team work. Each of the dancers — six company members and three apprentices — is a cog in an elegant



machine, moving with impressive synchronicity and cohesion. In most pieces, individual dances are like jazz solos; buoyed by the ensemble, a dancer will leap, collapse or contort before blending seamlessly back into the troupe.

Like past seasons' shows, "Thirst" transcends traditional ballet gender roles. Men aren't mere props for female dancers — strong bodies waiting around to prop up a pirouette or execute a lift. Male dancers share the spotlight, freed to explore creative interpretations, liberated in heartfelt performances. Pairings are rarely gender-based — even in pieces staged with equal numbers of men and women. Men lift men. Women lift men. "Minore al Maggiore" features sweetly intimate interactions between male dancers. An emotional depth underlies the sensuality, stirring the audience.

The daring direction in which the company's choreography is moving seems to suit its evolving fan base. In recent years, MCB has gained a stronger foothold in youth culture. Audiences that once skewed toward senior performing arts aficionados and Missouri Theatre supporters have expanded to include artsy 20- and 30-somethings and glammed-up middle schoolers, who mill about excitedly in the lobby before a show.

Two happenings in 2011 might be further fueling the multigenerational appeal. The University of Missouri's lease of the Missouri Theatre, MCB's longtime home, has tied the ballet company to the Mizzou market, tantalizing Tigers with student discounts. Also in 2011, MCB opened a ballet school in the blossoming North Village Arts District, instilling in a new generation skill in — and appreciation for — the art of dance. If you missed "Thirst," you have a chance to see the dancers in action during a choreographic installation in MCB's Orr Street Studios space Thursday. Visit missouricontemporaryballet.com for details.

Karen Pojmann is a writer, editor and arts enthusiast living in Columbia.



MCB assembles curious cast of characters for 'Alice'

By Amy Wilder, Columbia Daily
Tribune

Sunday, May 26, 2013



Photo by Don Shrubshell
From left, Caroline Millikin, Jordan Mazur and Joshua Hasam perform a dance scene called "Directions from the Cheshire Cat" during rehearsal of the Missouri Contemporary Ballet's production of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland."

It has been a year of firsts for the Missouri Contemporary Ballet, a full season of performances punctuated by cross-country exchanges with other companies and preparations for a trip to South Korea this summer. Amid all of that, they've been preparing quietly in the background — for months — for another kind of first. This week, MCB performs "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," and the show includes the talents of 40 children from Columbia and beyond.

This is the first MCB show to feature children. "They're from all over," said

Director of Operations/Ballet Mistress Joanne Sandorfi of the young dancers. "A lot of them are local, but we do have a few from Mexico, from Jeff City. ... We've definitely got a nice mix of kids in there."

MCB has a dance school, but they decided to hold an open audition this January for "Alice." They wanted to give everyone who was interested an opportunity to participate, and no one was turned away after the auditions.

"We had such an array of talent, and you could tell that everyone was just so excited about this opportunity," Sandorfi said. "And we were able to fit everyone in. We were really excited about that."

The dancers who auditioned ranged from four- and five-year-olds, who will play hedgehogs, to teenagers and "two adults — adults with full time jobs," Sandorfi said. "They ... were dancers, so it was easy to cast them." In fact, all of the participants have some dance background.

"We really wanted to make sure this was a community-wide production, not just Missouri Contemporary Ballet and our school," Sandorfi said. "We wanted to open it up to everyone because ... this is a chance for them to actually experience how a professional production is run."

The idea for "Alice" came about in part because of MCB's school. People kept asking when they were going to stage "The Nutcracker," according to Executive Director Karen Mareck Grundy, "but it's not what MCB does. I wanted to find another ballet that could be more edgy, more contemporary. ... So Tom" Andes "and I just started talking about it, and he started playing around with music."



Andes, a music instructor at Stephens College, adjunct professor at the University of Missouri and leading area jazzier, has composed an original score for the production, along with Travis McFarlane, who composed one piece — a lobster quadrille. McFarlane is a musical director and accompanist for MCB and a ballet accompanist at Stephens College. The compositions incorporate elements of jazz, blues and classical but don't really fit into a particular category, Grundy said. The music will be played live.

Grundy designed the choreography, and company member Alex Gordon — who will play the White Rabbit — helped design and create the costumes. Performers have been rehearsing in partial costume for weeks because the complex nature of some of the creations requires a higher level of creativity and precision. For example, the Cheshire Cat is played by two dancers: Jordan Mazur and Joshua Hasam. As a result, the choreography must be carefully designed, and the dancers have to have time to master it.

In order to translate some of the story to the stage, Grundy said the company is utilizing multimedia, including projection. Not wanting to give away too much about how this works, she also hinted that a beloved local landmark will be incorporated into the show.