

Presenting

News for PA Presenters • Volume 14, Issue 2

Connecting the Arts and the Environment Dance Alloy's *Stirrings* Premieres at Frostburg State University

After more than a year and a half of research, creative residencies and scientific exploration, Frostburg State University presented the premiere of *Stirrings* by Pittsburgh's Dance Alloy in April 2003. Commissioned by FSU and supported by a grant from Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour (PennPAT), *Stirrings* is a bold collaboration linking artists from the diverse fields of creative writing, dance, music, and the environment.

The project draws inspiration from the book "Stirring the Mud: On Swamps, Bogs, and Human Imagination," a critically acclaimed collection of essays written by FSU professor and NEA Literature Fellowship recipient, Dr. Barbara Hurd. To translate the beauty of Hurd's book to movement, FSU commissioned Dance Alloy and Alloy artistic director, Mark Taylor. Joining Hurd and Taylor on the artistic team were New York electronic composer Alice Shields, FSU theatrical designers Richard Kagey and Conrad Maust, and lighting designer Barbara Thompson of Dance Alloy.

The artists were faced with questions of how a choreography and music might emerge from Hurd's text, which was itself partly inspired by western Maryland's Finzel Swamp and Cranesville Bog. Does one employ a literal and visual depiction of the swamp that spatially and texturally communicates the imagery found in the text? Is it preferable to communicate a "feeling" rather than strict interpretation of text through movement? It was essential that

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the artists visit the swamps to understand the wetland environment for themselves. Professor Kevin Dodge of Garrett College's Natural Resources/Wildlife Technology program, and Dr. Katia Engelhardt of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science - Appalachian Lab, guided the artists in their swampy research.

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Dance Alloy's Gillian Beauchamp in "Stirrings" at Frostburg State University

Photo by Sarah Higgins

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Maureen Schallcross Executive Director, Strand-Capitol Arts Center, mqshallcross@strandcapitol.edu

Administrator and Newsletter Editor:

Catherine Little

P.O. Box 322, Emmaus, PA 18049

Phone: (610) 797-3042

Fax: (610) 797-6596

e-mail: info@papresenters.org

Newsletter Design: Themes & Variations
Bechtelsville, PA (610) 845-7408

PA Presenters is a non-profit organization founded in 1987. The mission of *Presenting* is to support the goals of the PA Presenters by encouraging networking and information exchange among members and highlighting new trends for presenting organizations.

Regional Initiative

by Hank Knerr, Director of Cultural Events Indiana University of PA

In a continuing effort to keep in touch with our members, your board of directors set out a plan to meet with as many members as possible. We were able to schedule four regional meetings throughout the state in March and April. With the dedicated help from all our board members in getting out the word, we had the exciting opportunity to talk directly with over 50 new and veteran members.

PA Presenters' administrator, Cathy Little, and I were hosted by Larry Stock at Butler County Community College, Ellen Finks at Kutztown University, board member Mike Rose at the Annenberg Center in Philadelphia, and board member Steve Krempasky at the Whitaker Center in Harrisburg.

The agenda was simple: talk and eat! Either before or after a relaxing lunch or reception, we sat down to discuss a variety of items. We gave everyone a chance to tell others in their region what they are doing, something we rarely get to do at our ever-growing annual conference. We informed attendees about ongoing activities of the organization and the board,

updated everyone on upcoming activities including our spring conference, and encouraged feedback on ideas and suggestions.

In Harrisburg, we had the added bonus of having our friends from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Philip Horn and Jim Woland, join us. Both gave updates on PCA activities, renewing their ongoing and committed support of PA Presenters and all its members. Philip additionally reported on international initiatives and the strong support from the Governor's office, evidenced by level grant funding to the PCA for the next fiscal year despite broad budget cuts across the state.

It was truly a pleasure to travel the state for these meetings, seeing old friends and many new faces. We are blessed with a widely diverse and dedicated membership, and it has been incredibly energizing to hear everyone's ideas, comments, and projects at hand. I look forward to addressing the entire membership when we all meet in Philadelphia, sharing information on the great strides we have all made over the past year. See you in Philadelphia!

PennPAT Update

Remaining 2003 Presenter Grant Application Deadlines:

June 15, 2003:

For projects requesting \$1,500 or less, scheduled between September 1, 2003 and August 31, 2004

October 15, 2003:

For projects scheduled between February 1, 2004 and August 31, 2005

Presenters may apply at more than one deadline for Fee-Support and New Directions grants. Presenters may request funds for more than one

artist, however, they must submit a separate application for each separately contracted engagement.

Online applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on the deadline date. In addition, all other application materials must be either postmarked by the deadline date or hand-delivered to the PennPAT office no later than 5:00 p.m. on the deadline date to be eligible. Late, incomplete, faxed or e-mailed applications will not be considered. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Stirrings

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Creative Field Trips

Led by Dodge and Hurd, the artistic team and dancers took several creative field trips to the swamps in fall 2002, and spent time with Engelhardt at the Appalachian Laboratory. The participation of these scientists proved invaluable, as the artists slowly grew familiar with the intricacies of sphagnum and mud and all things "swamp". Dodge even appears within Alice Shields' final music composition, imitating the calls of swamp-birds, frogs and toads.

The result of this "bog-breaking" project is a visually stunning and distinctive dance work. Interpreted by the gifted performers of Dance Alloy, and accompanied by Shields' dream-like composition, *Stirrings* is an hour-long work incorporating substantial segments of Hurd's text. Passing

Dance Alloy's Gillian Beauchamp writing in "Stirrings" at FSU

Photo by Sarah Higgins

through the seasons of spring, summer, fall and winter, it outlines the cycles of life and decay that contribute to the rich, thick mud governing the swamp.

Outreach Programs Offered

To celebrate the four public performances of *Stirrings*, Frostburg State University offered a variety of outreach programs. Included among 12 residency activities were workshops for schoolchildren, master classes in music and dance, a scientific forum on life in the wetlands, a lecture with Dr. Barbara Hurd, a body-mind centering workshop with Mark Taylor, an art exhibition of Impressionist landscapes, performance from Chesapeake musician Tom Wisner, and opportunities to meet the artistic team. In all, over



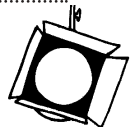
1000 community members attended these programs.

A Visually Stunning Dance Work

Stirrings easily transcends the boundaries of western Maryland, and its presentation within other venues is anticipated. Residency activities are easily tailored to suit the natural surroundings and environmental issues of a new community. To bring *Stirrings* to your community, contact Barbara Thompson (Dance Alloy) barbt@dancealloy.org, or Susan Manger (FSU) smanger@frostburg.edu.

Conference Spotlight

APAP Arts Presenters Seminar at the Annenberg



The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts will host the Association of Performing Arts Presenters annual Presenting the Performing Arts (The Basic) seminar, June 2-7, 2003. The seminar will take place on the University of Pennsylvania campus in Philadelphia, PA.

"The Basic" provides a wonderful opportunity to gain the skills and know-how necessary to serve in an executive capacity or to be a key staff member at a presenting organization. Each year a wide range of participants from various types of organizations and experience levels

come together to better understand the fundamentals of presenting and to network with colleagues from across the country.

The course will be led by a team of leading presenting professionals: Susan Stockton of Penn State University Center for the Performing Arts; Anne Marie Martins, independent consultant and former co-director of the International Music Network; Keri Benell Mesropov, director of marketing and public relations for The Washington Ballet; and Kim Chan, vice president of programs for Arts Presenters.

Participants will take part in group discussions and problem solving sessions using current case studies.

For more information please see the Association of Performing Arts Presenters website at www.artspresenters.org

***PA Presenter members only**
Please note that even if your organization is not a current member of APAP, as a member of PA Presenters we have been told you can register for this seminar at the member rate of \$750, \$200 off the non-member rate.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- May 29-31, 2003 Annual PA Presenters Spring Networking Conference, Philadelphia, PA Call (610) 797-3042 or email: info@papresenters.org Website: www.papresenters.org
- June 15, 2003 PennPAT Deadline for projects requesting \$1500 or less scheduled between September 1, 2003 and August 31, 2004
- June 18-21, 2003 International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) Conference Singapore Call (914) 921-1550 or e-mail info@ispa.org
- July 18-20, 2003 The Association for American Cultures OPEN DIALOGUE IX <http://www.taac.com> Call (928) 783-1757 or email: mailto:pressrelease@taac.com
- September 11-13, 2003 Midwest Arts Conference, Milwaukee, WI Call (612) 341-0755 or email: christy@artsmidwest.org
- September 17-21, 2003 Performing Arts Exchange, Charlotte, NC, Call (404) 874-7244 or e-mail at ltturner@southarts.org
- October 15, 2003 PennPAT Deadline For projects scheduled between February 1, 2004 and August 31, 2005
- January 16-18, 2004 Chamber Music America Conference, Westin Hotel, New York, NY Call (212) 242-2022 or visit www.chamber-music.org
- September 29 - October 2, 2004 Performing Arts Exchange, Westin Hotel, Pittsburgh, PA Call (404) 874-7244 or e-mail at ltturner@southarts.org

BE THERE!



Inside: "Stirrings" debuts at FSU

www.papresenters.org
Emmaus, PA 18049
P.O. Box 322

