

# Choreography leaps, spins and soars into life at Elon University's Senior Thesis Dance Concert

Ashley Fahey  
Copy Editor

The eight senior dance majors of the Class of 2011 were all required to make a thesis based on their own personal dance style and creativity. Each senior dance major choreographed, costumed, directed, promoted and planned every detail in his or her piece, from the first thesis conception to the final performance.

"The biggest challenge for the concert wasn't even necessarily choreographing, but it was the balance of being a performer, choreographer and artistic director all at the same time," dance major Kara Griffin said. "We have faculty guidance, but it's our responsibility to do the planning, marketing, fundraising, budgeting, forming a production team and crew and anything else to make the show run smoothly and professionally."

All 10 pieces were different, reflecting each choreographer's individual style and creativity. Some pieces, such as Griffin's "A Half Made Whole," were inspirational and reality-based, exploring human connections and relationships. One piece was a collaboration of the whole class with professor Jen Guy Metcalf, and another was duet by Griffin and Andrea Work. Other pieces, such as Jenna Farley's "Time Steps," involved flair and wit.

"I have always had the dream to dance on Broadway, so I have been dreaming about this piece since I began choreographing," Farley said. "(My) piece is a culmination of the major points in theater dance history, from the early 1900s to today. I have studied

and worked very hard to gain an understanding of the connections theater dance has had throughout its entire history."

The process that the eight senior student choreographers went through in order to achieve their final products was long and time-consuming. Six months of researching and rehearsing led every dance major to a 10-15 minute long formal piece performed at the concert.

"For me, the biggest challenge was conveying my ideas and story through movement," said Erin Fitzgerald, one of the senior choreographers. "A few sections of my piece came easily and I was very pleased with where my work was going. I personally love to start and finish projects, but being able to maintain a consistent level of enthusiasm and passion throughout the choreographic process is very difficult."

Whether it was the glittery vest tops, clown makeup or gymnastic agility that made up Meg Ralston-Asumendi's "Selves on Shelves" or Ann Sterling Dale's strength-driven "A Battle Waged," the audience in the Black Box watched as out-of-breath dancers made the impossible look effortless. But pulling off this task was not simple.

"Because we're all so busy and wearing so many different hats for the show, we work down to the wire," Griffin said. "Our pieces are finished and polished before the show, but because it's live theater and we're a low-budget student show, things can change up to a few minutes before show time."

Each piece had original twists and turns that required additional time on the part of the choreographer, such as

Alex Pepper's "Rhapsody in College." Pepper's thesis was entirely on film, in which he and his dancers performed throughout Elon's campus in a lighthearted, humorous and relatable manner.

Other pieces included voiceovers, monologues performed by the dancers and even a live drummer as in Andrea Work and Griffin's piece "A Cunning Encounter." Each piece reflected the individual voice of the choreographer.

"The most rewarding part of choreographing for our thesis concert is that it has been a group effort the entire time. My senior class is incredible," Farley said. "I am proud to be able to call myself a senior dance major and have this show attached to us. It shows the caliber of our dance department and the education we have received while here at Elon."

Right and below: Senior dance students choreographed 10-15 minute dances featuring other student dancers for their theses.



BRIAN ALLENBY | Staff Photographer



# European a cappella explores biblical themes

Ashley Watkins  
Reviewer

Harmonious voices rang through Whitley Hall night as the international a cappella group Nordic Voices performed a two-part concert complete with 12 arrangements.

Nordic Voices is an a cappella group comprised of six graduates of the Norwegian Academy of Music and the Norwegian Academy of Opera. The group was formed in 1996 and has since had concert tours throughout Norway and around the world in locations such as Taiwan, Stockholm, Germany and the United States. On Feb. 24, Nordic Voices visited Elon.

The group uses a wide variety of vocal techniques and creates new ways of singing and using the classically-trained voice.

Nordic Voices consists of two sopranos, one mezzo-soprano, a tenor, a baritone and a bass.

The concert was broken into two parts, "Lamentation" and "Consolation."

"These songs come from the time in history when the city of Jerusalem was under siege," said baritone Frank Havroy. "Inside the city, a court officer named Jeremiah wrote texts about the daily life of the people," he said. "How they were coping with the hardships such as having no water, no men and losing their most treasured possessions. The text was then set to music at a later date and is essentially lamenting the absence of God."

The audience appeared enthralled with the singing.

"I could not believe my ears when they began to sing," said freshman Courtney Canizares. "I don't usually listen to music like this, but I was completely engaged in their performance," she said. "They were practically flawless, and I left with a much better appreciation for this style of music than I came in with."

The second part of the concert included more contemporary pieces including Norwegian folk songs, a religious song and a lullaby. These songs took more liberties and had more variety in vocal techniques.

The singers could be heard making different noises using their mouths and tongues. This type of singing is sometimes referred to as throat singing. The result was a full sound that made it seem like more than six people were singing.

"I thought they sounded great and what they did with their voices was amazing," said freshman Stephanie Preve. "The range that each individual had was very impressive, especially the control they had of their voices."

Other than a five-minute delay to wait for the train to pass, the concert went smoothly. When the last piece was finished, the group received a standing ovation and thunderous applause. It was so much that they returned and performed an encore of another Norwegian lullaby, arranged by Havroy.



BRIAN ALLENBY | Staff Photographer

Nordic Voices, an a cappella group of Norwegian music school graduates, visited Elon for a one-night-only concert. The six-member group performed 12 songs in Whitley Auditorium Feb. 24.