

Style

Artistic responses to 'Dancing in the Black Box'

Ashley Fahey
Features Editor

Members of the 2012 Elon Dance Company and faculty members transformed their bodies and the stage of Black Box Theatre through original choreography. Dancers, choreographers and technicians came together to create an innovative eight-piece performance Nov. 10-12.

Four faculty members and four students choreographed the pieces, which differed in mood and movement quality.

"The choreographers and dancers had five weeks to build the choreographic concepts, rehearse and refine their designs before entering the theater," said Cherie Bower, director and choreographer of this year's "Dancing in the Black Box."

Those involved in the show only had four days before the concert to collaborate and finalize what they had been working on, according to Bower.

"The choreographic process is a fast one, as are the directing, staging and lighting design processes once in the theater," she said. "Open communication, focus, collaboration and attention to details by all involved have been important factors leading to the concert's success."

The Black Box Theatre's seating arrangement had to be shifted to accommodate fire codes and to allow the greatest vantage point for the audience.

"The main challenge for this semester's concert has been adjusting to a different seating and stage arrangement," Bower said. "The option that suited the dance concert's needs placed the stage to the side of the tech booth."

Each piece was five to 10 minutes in length and explored an overarching theme or concept.

Jane Wellford, professor of performing arts, choreographed "There is a Time" for the concert.

"The choreographic inspiration from

my work came mainly from the text of my piece: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8," Wellford said. "The piece was my artistic response to the many world events occurring right now that are both extreme highs and lows."

Wellford's piece included extensive traveling and partner work, and the movement was a direct reaction to the spoken text and musical accompaniment. The Black Box setting was a big part of the piece's success, according to Wellford.

"It is an intimate setting for both dancers and the audience to give and receive dance in an up-close, personal way," she said. "The material I had to offer this fall was very personal and this type of space was necessary for the success of the work."

Each piece was an artistic exploration that reflected the choreographer's thoughts, emotions or feelings toward a particular subject. While some pieces, such as sophomore Abby Williams' "Short Circuit," were whimsical and quirky, others were more subdued, such as "Retrospect" by sophomore Aislinn Koch and the duet "Words and Deeds" by adjunct professor Jen Guy Metcalf.

"These works offer insight into our thoughts and inquiries of self, connections with others and how we

perceive our art and world in a given period of time," Bower said. "They are, in a way, journals in motion placed in a staged setting."

Although "Dancing in the Black Box" is an annual concert performed every fall semester, the tone and mood of the



BRIAN ALLENBY | Staff Photographer

Junior Liz Stillerman choreographed Biscuit Poisoning for the annual "Dancing in the Black Box."



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Professor of performing arts Jane Wellford choreographed "There is a Time," based on the Bible verse Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

CD sales to support ABSS art education

Lauren Ramsdell
Arts and Entertainment Editor

Alamance County musicians are a close-knit bunch. So when word got out that Elon University's senior sound and video specialist Bryan Baker was looking for musicians to record a CD to benefit a charitable organization, he found 20 artists willing to sit down in a recording studio and make art happen.

As a part of a service sabbatical, Baker contacted these artists and put the CD, "Make Art Happen," together with other members of the Elon community including professors and students.

Service sabbaticals are offered to staff only, not faculty, through Project Pericles. Staff members are able to take up to a month off to work on a charity or service project that will benefit the community.

Five years ago, Baker did a similar project with Christmas music, recruiting

local musicians to cover traditional songs. The proceeds, nearly \$30,000 from more than 6,000 copies sold, have gone to Christmas Cheer of Alamance County, a charitable organization that provides local families with gifts for the holidays.

Of the 20 songs on the CD, 16 are original works by the musicians. It features local acts like Too Far Gone and Josh Lambert Band, as well as Elon University staff and professors, such as music professor Jon Metzger.

"There are three purposes for this CD," Baker said, "One is to promote Alamance County musicians and provide an avenue for them to display their talents. Two is to sell the CD and provide funds for Alamance County schools' arts programs. One hundred percent of the profits go to work through a group called ACE - Alamance Citizens for Education. This nonprofit was established for Alamance citizens to have a voice in the Alamance County education system. They'll set up a grant



BRIAN ALLENBY | Staff Photographer

Too Far Gone Band performed at the CD release for "Make Art Happen," benefitting Alamance Citizens for Education.

system to provide the money. Three, the CD is a hands-on opportunity for Elon students in sales, marketing and event management."

Elon students and faculty are assisting in the production of the CD. Associate professor of entrepreneurship Barth Strempek's applications of entrepreneurship class worked on marketing and selling the CD.

Baker is an Alamance native, with the exception of a stint in Tennessee for college and working as a recording engineer in Nashville. He said it was easy to fall back into the local music scene.

"Just being a music lover myself and being back here

for a decade, I've gotten myself back into the community and I've heard different groups," he said. "It's basically hearing old friends play with new bands."

The cause of arts education and extracurriculars in schools is close to Baker's heart. He played in a jazz band in high school and recalls budget cuts taking some of that away.

"I remember when I was in high school having music slashed from three days a week to one day a week," Baker said. "I just remember that being an eye opener - that something was wrong with that."

The CD was promoted and

concert differs each year.

"What remains consistent from year to year is the continued development of quality in the crafting and design of both student and faculty works, as well as in the performance presentations," Bower said.

released at a free concert outside Company Shops Market in downtown Burlington Nov. 11. Too Far Gone Band and Josh Lambert Band, performed, beginning at 8:30 p.m. The cold weather prevented a huge turnout, but many people from the community, as well as students and professors, came by to support the album.

Jean Hartley from Leasburg, camped out in a folding chair to listen to the music. Throughout Too Far Gone Band's show, she held on to Cheyenne, the drummer's dog.

"I just like music," Hartley said. "I work in downtown Burlington and I thought I would come out."