Theatre Cast and Crew Forge Lasting Friendships

Members of the theatre world spend long hours working closely with each other – very closely.

“You learn more about somebody than you would dating them,” said Christopher d’Amboise, a choreographer of more than 50 ballets and a former principal dancer with the New York City Ballet. Within the intense atmosphere of rehearsals and live performance, “You learn how courageous they are, what frightens them, how they stand up under pressure,” d’Amboise said.

D’Amboise was on campus in mid-January to choreograph the University Players in a production of the Broadway musical “Guys and Dolls,” which will run Feb. 21-24 at the Fine and Performing Arts Center.

Because success in the theatre depends on others, cast and crew often become like family. In this case, however, d’Amboise actually is family. Terrence Mann, the Broadway star and Western professor directing “Guys and Dolls,” is married to D’Amboise’s sister Charlotte, a ballet dancer.

Mann, a stage director and Tony and Emmy-nominated actor, is the Phillips Distinguished Professor of Musical Theatre at Western. He and his brother-in-law’s professional relationship is extensive and includes a musical adaptation of Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet” that Mann directed and composed.

At Mann’s invitation, d’Amboise spent a week structuring the dancing portion of “Guys and Dolls” with the 40-member student cast.

“Guys and Dolls” is set in the 1940s New York world of gamblers and do-gooders. The plot turns on a bet Nathan Detroit (Anthony Giorando) makes with fellow gambler Sky Masterson (Nathan Mason) and Sky’s ensuing courtship of neighborhood missionary Sarah Brown (Christy Waymouth). Bethany Rowe plays Miss Adelaide, Detroit’s fiancée.

Waymouth, a junior majoring in musical theatre, said the fast pace, hectic schedule and mutual interests of her classmates makes forming friendships natural.

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Want to go?

“Guys and Dolls” will show at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 21-24, in the performance hall of the Fine and Performing Arts Center. Tickets are now on sale and cost $5 for students, $15 for faculty and $20 for adults ($15 for adults 60 and older). For more information, contact the box office at 227-2479 or visit http://wcutheatre.ticketsxchange.com.

Kimmel School Welcomes New Dean

Robert K. McMahan Jr., the North Carolina governor’s senior adviser for science and technology, and executive director of the North Carolina Board of Science and Technology, will be leaving those posts to become dean of the Kimmel School of Construction Management and Technology. McMahan’s appointment was announced in January, and he will begin his duties at WCU prior to April 1, said Provost Kyle Carter.

“Bob’s state and national presence will have an immediate impact on the school’s programs and initiatives,” said Carter. “His academic, governmental and entrepreneurial background is the perfect mix for the Kimmel School’s future.” Prior to beginning work with the state as adviser and head of the Board of Science and Technology in 2003, McMahan was a senior technology strategist and venture capitalist for In-Q-Tel, a private venture capital organization funded by the CIA, where he was responsible for developing a technology investment strategy for the intelligence community. Before joining In-Q-Tel, he served as executive vice president of engineering and research and development for GretagMacbeth, where he was responsible for the company’s worldwide research, engineering and product development activities.

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Kimmel Dean continued from cover

McMahan became affiliated with GretagMacbeth after that company’s 2000 acquisition of McMahan Research Laboratories, an advanced technologies company that he founded in Cambridge, Mass., and later expanded to North Carolina’s Research Triangle Park.

McMahan earned bachelor’s degrees in physics and the history of art from Duke University in 1982 and a doctoral degree in physics from Dartmouth University in 1986. He completed postdoctoral studies at the Harvard University/Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory Center for Astrophysics. He also participated in research at the center that led to the discovery of the “bubble” structure of the universe and the “Great Wall,” the largest known structure in the universe, both of which are now foundational elements of modern dark matter theory.

“I have spent my career at the intersection of academia and business, and I couldn’t be more enthusiastic about the opportunity to be part of a school that is charged with creating significant and dynamic educational opportunities for its students – our next generation of innovators – while at the same time forging flexible and diverse partnerships with businesses and organizations across the region to help build and shape the economy of Western North Carolina,” McMahan said.

Highest Honors

Finalists for the Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award, the highest teaching award bestowed by WCU, will be honored at a reception in Illusions at the University Center at 3:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 25.

They are Kathleen Brennan, assistant professor of sociology; Jill Manners, associate professor and coordinator of clinical education for athletic training; Jane Nichols, assistant professor of interior design; Burton Ogle, associate professor and program director of environmental health; and Debby Singleton, visiting instructor of health, human performance and recreation.

The winner will be announced at the General Faculty Meeting and Awards Convocation, which will be held at 3:30 p.m. Friday, April 25, in the Fine and Performing Arts Center.

WCU Begins Planning Response to Needs Identified in UNC Tomorrow Report

About 200 members of the campus community gathered at a Jan. 31 forum to begin brainstorming how Western can respond to the needs of the state identified in a report recently released by the University of North Carolina Tomorrow Commission.

The UNC Tomorrow initiative was launched to determine how the UNC system can respond more directly and proactively to the 21st-century challenges facing North Carolina now and in the future. The commission conducted a series of campus visits, community and faculty listening forums, surveys, blogging efforts and scholarly research, and its report will guide UNC’s priorities, resources allocations, programming and planning.

Groups discussed how WCU is addressing and could better address the 47-page report’s primary themes: enhancing global competitiveness; increasing access to higher education; helping solve public education challenges; enhancing economic transformation and community development; improving health and wellness; addressing energy and environmental challenges; and expanding outreach and engagement efforts.

“Western is extremely well-positioned to respond to a lot of these needs,” said Chancellor John Bardo.

The forum was an early step in the process of preparing a preliminary response to the UNC Tomorrow report to send to the UNC General Administration by May 1. A more detailed response will be submitted in the fall.

Funding and budgeting decisions for institutions within the UNC system will be strongly linked to how they address the priorities in the UNC Tomorrow report, said Bardo.

“This is a big deal — and a big job,” he said.

“The more people we can involve the better.”

The process will include formation of a diverse steering committee with members representing faculty, staff, students and representatives from counties in the region that WCU serves. Working groups will meet to discuss each of the report’s major themes. A Web site with news and updates about WCU’s response to the report will be developed, and additional campus forums will be held.

“As soon as we get a draft response, we will sit down with Faculty Senate, the University Advisory Council and Staff Forum to ask for feedback,” said Bardo. “I have never seen anything with as much potential to affect our future in a positive way as UNC Tomorrow.”

—for THE REPORTER

Newsfile

Dr. Claire DeCristofaro, visiting associate professor of nursing, gave an invited presentation titled “Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease in Women” at the annual Southeastern Pharmacy Leadership Weekend conference in Asheville in January. The talk provided continuing education credit to audience members, who were composed of registered pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

Laura Chapman, training specialist with the Coulter Faculty Center/Faculty Sandbox, recently attended Apple Digital Media Training in San Jose, Calif.

John LeBaron, the Jay M. Robinson Distinguished Professor in Educational Technologies with Coulter Faculty Center, was the primary author of the chapter “Practical Strategies for Assessing the Quality of Collaborative Learner Engagement” in the recently published reference book “Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning: Best Practices and Principles for Instructors.” Co-authoring with LeBaron was Carol Bennett, a WCU doctoral candidate in educational leadership.

David Dorondo, associate professor of history, has been elected to the board of the World Affairs Council of Western North Carolina, an independent nonprofit organization that works to advance international awareness and foster the region’s global ties. Dorondo also will be lecturing on “Russia and Putin” as part of the council’s winter Great Decisions lecture series.

—BY RANDALL HOLCOMBE

For more information, check out nctomorrow.org. Send additional thoughts about the report to John Bardo via e-mail at jbardo@email.wcu.edu.
Students, Faculty, Staff Join Forces in Relay For Life

When Newton Smith, associate chief information officer, was undergoing radiation treatments in Atlanta for prostate cancer, the Hope Lodge gave him a home and the facilities to continue teaching classes online. “I’m deeply indebted to the American Cancer Society for the information they provided and the accommodations,” said Smith. “They gave me the feeling that I wasn’t alone and that there was hope. Like everyone who hears those words, ‘You have cancer,’ I panicked at first.”

Six years later, Smith is giving back through serving as honorary chair for WCU’s Relay For Life, an event to celebrate cancer survivors, remember those who have lost the battle and support the American Cancer Society. A campus kickoff will be hosted Wednesday, Feb. 13, at 7 p.m. in the Cardinal Room of A.K. Hinds University Center, and Smith will be a speaker at the celebration Friday, April 11, in which relay team members walk throughout the night on the University Center lawn.

The ties between WCU and 2008 Relay For Life are many, with Smith serving as honorary chair of the student-organized campus event; Stephanie Harwood, freshman cancer survivor from Franklin, speaking at the kickoff; Lisa Duff, a WCU alumna and senior community manager for the American Cancer Society, assisting student organizers; and Danell Moses, a visiting professor of business, co-chairing Jackson County’s Relay For Life. Hundreds of students, faculty and staff are expected to participate or make a contribution to the Cullowhee events, which together raised more than $130,000 last year.

“We would love to see more students, faculty and staff join us or support our teams,” said Kathleen Cummins, chair of the campus Relay For Life and a senior nursing major from Clemmons.

And Moses encouraged those who cannot attend the campus event in April to participate May 16 in Relay For Life at Jackson County Recreation Park in Cullowhee. “We walk the track from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., remembering that cancer never sleeps,” she said.

Smith said he doesn’t know anybody who isn’t touched by cancer. “None of us know who will be next to be diagnosed,” said Smith, whose father battled the disease. “That’s why everyone needs to support the work of the American Cancer Society.”

Police Chief Earns Doctorate

Western has a new “chief doctor” on staff, or at least a new “chief Ph.D.” Thomas C. Johnson, chief of WCU’s police department, recently joined a small group of police executives who hold doctoral degrees when he was awarded a doctorate in instructional systems and work force development from Mississippi State University.

“It is a huge accomplishment,” said Don Fisher, chief of police in Laurel Park and immediate past president of the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police. Fisher said it is relatively common to hear of police chiefs who have earned their master’s degrees, but rare to hear of chiefs who earned their doctorates.

Johnson said the achievement fulfilled a more than 20-year-old dream.

“Before moving into law enforcement on college campuses in 1986, I worked for a police chief named Alfred J. Winfield who was very progressive and education-oriented,” said Johnson. “He was a true friend and mentor, and after he earned his doctorate, it was in the back of my mind that I wanted to, also.”

As part of Johnson’s dissertation, he developed several online training courses that used a variety of tools such as video accompanied by workbooks for students to complete as they watched.

“I saw exploring this topic as a way of giving back to the profession,” said Johnson. “FBI statistics show more than half of the nation’s local police departments employ fewer than 10 sworn officers. In many cases, smaller agencies are isolated from training facilities and face budget challenges for training, and effective distance education could really make a difference to them.”

Johnson joined Western as police chief in July 2005 after serving in the same position with Mississippi State. Though Johnson now has an additional credential that could help him land a position teaching at the university level – a move he has seen fellow officers make over the years after completing their doctorates – he says the job he wants is the one he has right now.

“When you look at the leaders in our country in industry or politics, the common denominator is higher education,” said Johnson. “I believe in what colleges and universities do, and what we do in the university police department is critical to creating a safe environment in which to obtain an education.”

—By TERESA KILLIAN
Tuesday, Feb. 12

Coaches Luncheon — WCU basketball discussion. $.
RSVP: 11:45 a.m. Hospitality Room, RRAC. (227-7338)

Living with the Land Folklife Series — The Cherokee Plant Center and Seed Project, speakers Sarah McClintock and Kevin Welch. 5:30 p.m. Auditorium, MHC. (227-7129)

African-American Film Festival — “Jason’s Lyric,” 1994 drama set in the dangerous neighborhoods of Houston. 7 p.m. Theater, UC. (227-2276)

Catamount Concert Series — Woodwind faculty recital, including Eldred Spell, flute; Terri Armfield, oboe; Shannon Thompson, clarinet; Ian Jeffress, saxophone; Will Peebles, bassoon, Travis Bennett, horn; and guest artist Vance Reese, piano. 8 p.m. RH. (227-7242)

Wednesday, Feb. 13

French Film Festival — “Le Retour de Martin Guerre,” suspenseful film set in 16th century France. 7 p.m. Room 121, McKee. (227-3872)

Relay For Life — Kickoff, speaker WCU student and cancer survivor Stephanie Harwood. 7 p.m. Cardinal Room, UC. (800-237-2345)

Thursday, Feb. 14

Presentation — Artist Ken Sedberry leads clay forming demonstrations 9:30 a.m.-noon, Room 151, FAPAC; clay forming and decorating demonstrations 1:30-4 p.m., Room 151, FAPAC; slide presentation 5-6 p.m., Room 223, FAPAC. (227-3595)

Saturday, Feb. 16

Lady Catamount basketball — vs. Wofford. $.
4 p.m. RRAC. (227-7338)

Lady Catamount basketball — vs. Furman. $.
7 p.m. RRAC. (227-7338)

Coaches Luncheon — WCU basketball discussion. $.
RSVP: 11:45 a.m. Hospitality Room, RRAC. (227-7338)

Tuesday, Feb. 19

African-American Film Festival — “Hurricane Nights,” comedic Eddie Murphy film about conflict between the mob and Harlem nightclub owners. 7 p.m. Theater, UC. (227-2276)

Wednesday, Feb. 20

French Film Festival — “Bande à Part,” an intertwining expose of love, murder and robbery. 7 p.m. Room 121, McKee. (227-3872)