



Orchesis Newsletter

Issue 2 April 2010



Celebrating 45 Years

Orchesis 2009/2010 Executive Board

Director/Programmer Tamara Bliss
Chair Heather Stewart
Vice-Chair Kelsie Acton
Treasurer Donald Butterfield
Motif Coordinator Fiona Williams
Media and Design Lindsay Twerdoclib
Marketing Lyndsey Tache
Campus Rec Coordinator Nicolette Marshall
Motif Assistant Kristin Berg
Costume Coordinator Catherine Bawol
Social Convenor Phil Kloc

Newsletter Contributors

Kelsie Acton
Tamara Bliss
Jocelyn Dylan
Fiona Williams

Newsletter Layout & Design

Heather Ruhl

Cover Collage

Lindsay Twerdoclib

Dance Motif 2010 Photos

Penny Mckelvie and Aspen Zettel
Centree Photography

Executive Director



Tamara Bliss

*If you wish to contact
Tamara Bliss, please e-mail
Tamara.Bliss@ualberta.ca
or phone (780) 492-0770*

Dorothy Harris & the Dorothy Harris Award Winners



Dorothy Harris (right), shown with her daughter, Vanessa

It is little secret how much the influential Orchesis founder Dorothy Harris continues to inspire and motivate dancers. Since 1988, the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation has awarded one promising dancer the Dorothy Harris Dance Award through an endowment funded by Orchesis alumni. For this 45th Anniversary Edition of the Orchesis Alumni Newsletter, we reached out to previous award recipients to ask them how dance has influenced their lives.

Reflections on 45 Years of Orchesis Dance

Fiona Williams

This year, as Orchesis celebrates its 45th anniversary, I had the opportunity to sit down with Dorothy Harris, founder of Orchesis, to reflect and recollect the rich history of the organization as well make some goals for the future.

It's a bright, sunny January day, a few weeks before the 45th Dance Motif when Dorothy and I settle into her living room, to chat about Orchesis, then and now. One of the first things I ask her: "Did you still think it would be around 45 years later?". "Absolutely," she replies, without a breath of hesitation. And it was upon that confident foundation that after arriving in Edmonton to teach dance at the University of Alberta in 1965 Dorothy Harris began Orchesis Dance. Dorothy's conception of the group was a diverse and inclusive one, that encouraged participants from numerous faculties and backgrounds. And that model continues today as Orchesis continues to attract diverse and varied members creating a unique and rich environment. After we get the

basic Orchesis history out of the way, Dorothy sets several fat binders on the floor, photos and programs sliding out the sides, and we happily spend an hour flipping through Orchesis past. Famous alumni like Peggy Baker, Bryan Webb, and Bob Baker decorate the pages and Dorothy narrates some of her favorite moments and dances. "Anything you think is missing from the current Orchesis?" I casually ask, "Men!" she replies, laughing. "We used to have more men dancing." We talk about this for a while, scheming how we might entice more of the opposite sex to join us in class and onstage. Dorothy finishes with this thought: "Orchesis has fingers out into the world. I like the fact it's open to anyone whether U students or not. For everyone to have the opportunity to learn to dance and perform and find a way to express themselves. You express yourself in movement, it's a very human need. But Orchesis allows for people to do it in a designed way. It isn't just an educational program, it's a how-people-grow program."

In Memory of Trudy L. Sorenson-Diaz

Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 1993

Orchesis honours the passing of Trudy Sorenson-Diaz. Trudy died of cancer on February 3, 2007. She was married with three sons.

Michaela Brooks-Apelhof, a former high school classmate of Trudy's, shares her memories: From what I remember about the obituary, Trudy was living in Florida and had 3 young sons with her husband, and if I remember correctly she was teaching dance, which she was very passionate about.

We would love to include a photo of Trudy on the Dorothy Harris Award Recipients page. If you have a photo to share, please email Tamara.Bliss@ualberta.ca.

Where Are They Now?

Former Dorothy Harris Award Winners Share Their Stories

Interviews by Jocelyn Dylan and Tamara Bliss



Berkley Laurin

Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 1989

Berkley left the U of A in the mid 80's to attend York University in Toronto to do a BFA in Dance Performance, returning to the U of A around 1988. He kindly answered a few questions for us:

What did this award mean to you or do for you?

Receiving the award money itself did not mean that much to me. I associated the award more so with the person and that was the significant part. I was lucky enough to have studied under Dorothy Harris and she was so much more than an instructor or even a mentor. Dorothy saw in each individual their potential, and not just their potential within the dance studio. She got to know you as an individual and expected much from anyone that was willing to learn. Dorothy always demanded each task, exercise, or piece of choreography be given its due and examined accordingly. Dorothy taught me more about me than I learned about dance. It was truly a pleasure and an honour to study under Dorothy.

Do you have a favourite memory of dancing with Orchesis you'd like to share?

Yes. This would have been back in about '83 when Orchesis was under the direction of Ruth Bartman who was up from the University of Michigan. We had a vibrant Orchesis core troupe that was very committed. Several of the pieces from the final show were reworked and other pieces added, and then Orchesis went 'on the road' around Edmonton. We did several impromptu shows throughout the city that summer. Malls, parks, public squares were all hit... with very mixed and odd reception.

What has it meant to you to have dance in your life?

It was because of Orchesis that I started to dance. It was Orchesis that gave me the base and confidence to audition to the Fine Arts program at YORK. Doing that BFA changed my life personally and profoundly. The people I've met and the experiences I had, enriched the fabric of my life immeasurably. Though I did not work in the dance field for long, it continues to be with me every day in so many ways. The daily discipline and structure, the approach to solving problems, effective listening and communicating, trusting your unconscious/subconscious, and trusting your vision and the vision of others... to name a few...

Is dance still a part of your life now?

Dance is not a part of my life at the moment, but only because my schedule won't allow for it. I currently can't commit to a class or rehearsal schedule. I believe I will be back in the studio within the next two years. I am still extremely active and approach my other training from a dancer's perspective and still stretch most every day.

Tell us a bit about your life now.

I went from dancing in Toronto to managing a conference centre/performance theatre for an educational in Alberta. I then moved on to advertising agency and then to outside sales for two fortune 500 companies. I then started a construction company that did commercial and residential construction in Edmonton, Stony Plain, Edson, and Hinton. I was then recruited by an Edmonton software company for my construction knowledge. I have been there for three years now and am enjoying it immensely (and, yes, my dance experience has been a crucial part of all of these jobs).

Victoria Thoms

Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 1990

Vicki sends her best wishes and had this to say about her Orchesis experiences:

The Dorothy Harris Award meant a lot to me because it allowed me to go to the Ririe-Woodbury Summer School at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. I have so many fond memories of dancing with Orchesis that it is really hard to decide. I loved the after show parties. They were so much about celebrating our achievement together. I also have fond memories of the pre-Christmas showings in the gym and Brian getting the unwieldy "wings" out of the storage area. Everyone being nervous but excited to perform. That storage area was also a great place to get ready to teach and chat and relax - to hide away for a while until you had to be the teacher again! I think more than the importance of having dance in my life, it was and is important, even now, to have had Orchesis in my life ... Orchesis taught me to love dance over and over again - because it was about the joy of dancing. It was not about the competition or the hardship of dance but what amazing things could be achieved when people came together to move together. And indeed dance is still part of my life. I am a Senior Lecture in Dance at the University of Wolverhampton in England. After doing my Masters at the UofA I went on a scholarship to do my PhD at Lancaster University in England and I have been here ever since. It is funny how your life ends up!



Orchesis Dance Motif 2010
Continuum, Choreographed
by Aletheia Mendes

Michalene (Myroon) Giesbrecht Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 2000

What did this award mean to you or do for you?

It was an honour to receive this award as recognition of my years of dancing, choreographing and volunteering with Orchesis. I have been a member of Orchesis from 1997 to 2008.

Do you have a favourite memory of dancing with Orchesis you'd like to share?

I've always enjoyed the classes and rehearsals, but my favourite memory was the year Lyne Wimmer was our guest choreographer and I was lucky enough to be involved in her piece "Car-eography". The rehearsals were intense, but Lyne pushed each of us to get what she wanted, and I am sure that all of us grew in some way through the process.

What has it meant to you to have dance in your life?

Dance has always been an important outlet in my life, and will always be. I have met many friends through Orchesis. I have found many opportunities to teach and to perform. And dancing has helped me to lose the pregnancy weight I gained with my two girls (now one and three).

Is dance still a part of your life now? Yes.

Tell us a bit about your life now.

I am currently living in Sherwood Park, still dancing when and where I can. I am a stay at home Mom of two beautiful girls, and I have started teaching aerial circus classes with Firefly Theatre in Edmonton.

Jessica Pecush Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 2001



What did this award mean to you or do for you?

I was honoured to receive the award, following years of extensive training and performing in various dance disciplines. To receive the award was to be recognized for my efforts and passion concerning the art of dance.

Do you have a favourite memory of dancing with Orchesis you'd like to share?

I always looked forward to the excitement of "Tech Week", in preparing for our annual performances in late January, particularly in 2001, when I presented choreography on stage for the first time. There's nothing like being on stage in front of an audience, doing something you love to do, and Tech Week was when you witnessed everything come together!

What has it meant to you to have dance in your life?

There is nothing else like dance! It has been an invaluable outlet in which to meet others, express one's self and challenge one's self, mentally, emotionally and physically. I love the never-ending challenge that dance poses on the individual.

Is dance still a part of your life now?

Dance is still a part of my life, and always will be! I still attend classes in various disciplines and continue to support the Performing Arts community in Toronto, where I now live.

Tell us a bit about your life now.

In August of 2007 I moved from Edmonton to Toronto, to pursue new life experiences. I am presently in my 6th year of teaching at the elementary level and am presently teaching Grade 1/2. I enjoy integrating my dance background into my teaching curriculum and leading various types of extracurricular activities at my school as well. I've been continuing my dance training in downtown Toronto and have been continuing my music training through the Royal Conservatory of Music here in Toronto as well. I am thoroughly enjoying Toronto and all that the city has to offer!

Maura (Oneill) Sutherland Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 2002

What did this award mean to you or do for you?

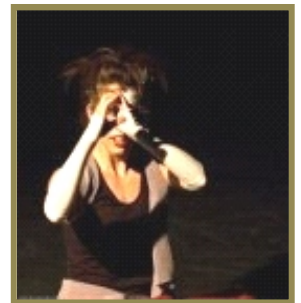
I was and am very grateful for the recognition as a dancer and Orchesis member. It also helped with my tuition costs that year.

Do you have a favorite memory of dancing with Orchesis you'd like to share?

I have so many good memories that I will never forget. One example is from the first Motif I performed in. It was January 2001. I danced in a piece by Tony Olivares where we wore florescent orange bathing suits, black swim caps and blue point shoes! I will never forget that one. I even got to incorporate my cell phone- very memorable and fun.

What has it meant to you to have dance in your life?

Dance keeps me grounded and in good physical shape. I am a lawyer and my work can be stressful and quite sedentary so dance has been a good outlet to keep me balanced and healthy. Orchesis has helped me develop as a dancer, performer and choreographer - taking me beyond what I ever thought I would accomplish in dance. I have had many opportunities to learn from excellent modern and jazz instructors and I have worked with many talented and creative choreographers and dancers. I have had the opportunity to perform in many Motifs as well as for other shows in Edmonton like Nextfest. Through Orchesis, I have also had opportunities to collaborate with other groups like Citie Ballet and Edmonton School of Ballet. I would like to keep dance in my life for as long as possible.



Orchesis Dance Motif 2010
10,000 Feet,
Choreographed by
Laura Krewski



Andrea Tarrant Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 2004

What did this award mean to you or do for you?

Winning the Dorothy Harris Dance Award was a bit surprising. Although encouraged to apply for it, I wasn't confident that I was a good candidate. Dance had previously been just a hobby; an energy release that I enjoyed. Being chosen as the award recipient for 2004 led me to realize that the dancing part of my life was worthy of more attention. In the years following, dance became an ever larger and more integral part of who I am.

Do you have a favourite memory of dancing with Orchesis you'd like to share?

I continued to explore dance, attempting to challenge myself with new experiences each year. I took classes with Orchesis and participated in the yearly Motif performance from 2003 to 2009, as well as volunteering as the Motif Coordinator for the 2008 and 2009

productions and participating in the 2008 Summer Dance Intensive. In addition to my involvement within Orchesis, I included dance courses in my University of Alberta Bachelor's degree and danced in Nextfest 2009 for a local choreographer.

What has it meant to you to have dance in your life?

As the experiences accumulated, I realized that dance was something I wanted to always be involved in, one way or another.

Tell us a bit about your life now.

I am currently completing a Kinesiology degree at McGill University, which will hopefully lead to a degree in Physiotherapy. Developing a career working with dancers at all levels of expertise has become one of my highest aspirations!



Orchesis Dance Motif 2010
The Art Thieves' Tango
Choreographed by
Gisele Boisvert

Tina Covlin-Dewart Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 2005

What did this award mean to you or do for you?

Having completed my undergrad degree in the Faculty of PE (1988-1992) and my masters degree (1992-1995) and having a long association with Orchesis as both a dancer and choreographer, winning the Dorothy Harris dance award when I returned to the university to complete an education degree (2005-2006) was a very meaningful experience. I was grateful for the opportunity to receive an award named for someone who has made such an important contribution to dance in Alberta, Orchesis and the U of A community. Dorothy was an inspiring lecturer, a dance enthusiast, and mentor to all her students. I was honoured to be the recipient for that year.

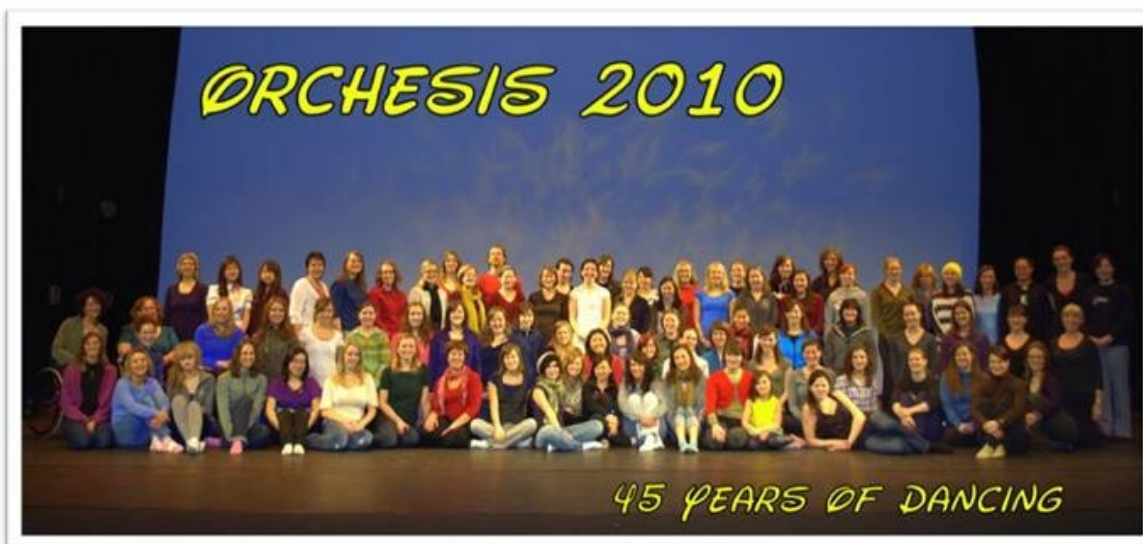
Do you have a favourite memory of dancing with Orchesis you'd like to share?

Orchesis was a tremendous outlet for me as a dancer and choreographer. The chance to try out choreographic ideas that are otherwise not feasible in other settings was an invaluable part of my development as a choreographer. In pieces such as "Seven Verses" I worked with extensive props, and my other works also allowed me to stretch myself artistically.

Is dance still a part of your life now?

I am currently the Director of Contemporary Dance for the dance program at Vimy Ridge Academy in Edmonton.

Stacey Grubb received the Dorothy Harris Dance Award in 2006. She regrets that she is unable to comment on her Orchesis experience at this time.



Anastasia Maywood

Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 2006

What did this award mean to you or do for you?

Winning the award not only acknowledged my academic achievements at the U of A, it also acknowledged my many years with Orchesis. I joined Orchesis when I was in grade 10 (with special permission), and was the first high school student to join the group. I was a member for 9 years, as a dancer, choreographer and volunteer board member. Winning the award further encouraged my current artistic path of being a contemporary dance choreographer.



Do you have a favourite memory of dancing with Orchesis you'd like to share?

There are so many great memories! Being painted all green, choreographing my first piece for Dance Motif, the summer dance intensive, the many friends I made. I think my overall favourite memory was dancing in Cori Caulfield's "Revolver: 6 Shots". Not only did I get to work with one of my favourite Canadian choreographers, I was her assistant while she was in Edmonton. I drove her around Edmonton, and to and from the airport. I became her official Edmonton "MOM".

(Note: Cori Caulfield's work with Orchesis was made possible, in part, by a grant for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts in 2007)

What has it meant to you to have dance in your life?

Dance has always been one of my main joys in life. I remember dancing with my dad in our living room, the music blaring and us laughing like mad. It has always been my main form of expression, my artistic release.

Is dance still a part of your life now?

I take Graham technique classes at York University and attend a weekly contact improvisation jam session, both in Toronto.

Tell us a bit about your life now.

I am currently in my first year of the Master of Fine Arts in Dance and Dramaturgy program at York University in Toronto. I am pursuing the Choreography stream of the program with 5 other talented dancers and choreographers. During our first term we co-created our own collective, Mind the Gap, and put up our first show in early December 2009 in Toronto. I plan to graduate in 2011.



Rhonda Ketch

Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 2007

What did this award mean to you or do for you?

Receiving the Dorothy Harris Dance Award was a great honour for me. It was an appreciative gesture of recognition of my dedication to both Orchesis Dance Group and academic excellence. The award was put towards my tuition that year.

Do you have a favourite memory of dancing with Orchesis you'd like to share?

In reflection of the many years in Orchesis, my favourite experiences are two-fold. Firstly, I have grown so much as a dancer over my 5 years with Orchesis. I came into Orchesis as a full-blown "bun head" and have since done handstands as well as extreme acrobatics, have acted as a ninja and worn a microphone and confessed my innermost emotions in German - all on stage! (Things I never would have dreamed of doing before joining Orchesis.) Secondly, I have established amazing, lifelong friendships since joining Orchesis. Friendships that go beyond dance class and have turned into roommates and travel partners.

What has it meant to you to have dance in your life?

For me, dance has always been a therapeutic outlet. I walk into the studio and can escape the outside world. The stress of life stays at the door; I enter into the studio free and can dance uninhibited. Dance grounds me, yet uplifts my spirit. It is for this reason that no matter how busy I am with school and my life, I always try to find time to attend dance class during the week. It is simply refreshing.

Is dance still a part of your life now?

Yes, dance is still a large part of my life and I hope that it remains that way for many years.

Tell us a bit about your life now.

Since receiving this award, I graduated from the University of Alberta with a degree in Secondary Education. After dabbling in teaching, I decided to return to the U of A and am currently in my first year of doing my Masters in Speech Language Pathology.



Orchesis Dance Motif 2010
Faceless Head Woman,
Choreographed by
Josh Beamish

Jenn Peats

Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 2008

What did this award mean to you or do for you?

This award was an honour to receive and to be recognized in such a talented group of student dancers. In addition, the award was helpful in the pursuit of my academic goals.

Do you have a favourite memory of dancing with Orchesis you'd like to share?

I loved performing in Dance Motif year after year. Every performance was exciting and memorable.

What has it meant to you to have dance in your life?

Dance has been given me lots of great friends and great memories over the years. It has taught me hard work and dedication, and in my university years, has been a great release from the rigors of schoolwork.

Is dance still a part of your life now?

I am still dancing with Orchesis and look forward to dancing every week.

Tell us a bit about your life now.

Right now I am pursuing a MSc. in geology at the U of A and, as mentioned above, I am still dancing with Orchesis!

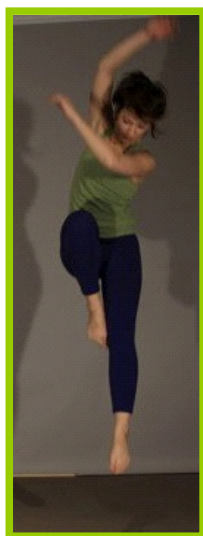


Photo credit: Liz Ingram

Lindsay Twerdoclib

Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 2009

What did this award mean to you or do for you?

I gratefully received the Dorothy Harris Dance Award this past fall of 2009. The award generously aided my studies in Art Education at the University of Alberta. Orchesis is such a wonderful program for student dancers and the broader dance community in Edmonton. I feel extremely fortunate to be a part of the group as a dancer and board member working with so many talented and inspiring dancers, musicians and artists.

What has it meant to you to have dance in your life?

I have danced since I was a little girl. Dancing helps keep me centered and connected with my true self. Indirectly, Orchesis Dance also introduced me to yoga a growing activity in my life. As a part of Orchesis Dance Motif, I was able to work with choreographer, Geraldine Manossa. Her piece "Flight" was performed in Motif 2009 and later that year developed into an hour-long performance that incorporated music, dance and live poetry. The piece, titled "Cipiyak Kanimihitow", was inspired by women and aboriginal culture. The piece was performed at Trent University in Peterborough Ontario during November of 2009. This performance opportunity was incredible for me personally and made possible through the Orchesis Dance Group.

Is dance still a part of your life now?

I am still dancing and participating as a dancer (along with another Orchesis member) in a large-scale art commission of local and world-renowned printer maker, Liz Ingram.

Tell us a bit about your life now.

Now, I am finished my after degree in secondary Art Education at the University of Alberta. I am hoping to continue dancing while working as a teacher!

Sorry We Missed You!

Orchesis no longer has contact information for the following Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipients. If you know where we could contact any of these dancers, please let us know.

Denise K. Wagner, Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 1988

(Unknown), Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 1991

(Unknown), Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 1992

Mardelle H. Miller, Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 1994

Camille C. Beaudoin, Dorothy Harris Dance Award Recipient, 1994

Please Note: the Dorothy Harris Dance Award was not awarded in 1995, 1996, 1998, or 1999.



Orchesis Dance Motif 2010
If I Could Sing, It Would SNOW!,
Choreographed by
Jodie Vandekerkhove



Orchesis Dance Motif 2010
Layered, Choreographed by
Kathy Metzger-Corriveau

The Orchesis Newsletter is brought to you by



UNIVERSITY OF
ALBERTA

