

ORIGINAL INTENT: ARTS BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

By

ERIN KATELYNN RILEY

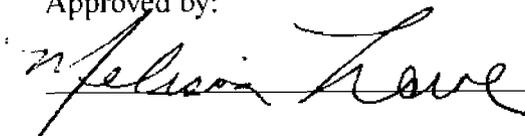
A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College
In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelor's degree
With Honors in

Dance

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

May 2009

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa Lowe". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Melissa Lowe
College of Fine Arts, School of Dance

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Erin K. Riley

ABSTRACT:

Original Intent: Arts Building the Community was a performance that took place at 6:00pm on Sunday, April 19th, 2009 at the Stevie Eller Dance Theater on the University of Arizona's campus. The event's proceeds all went directly to Gospel Rescue Mission, a local organization that provides homeless men, women, and children with shelter and care. The dance performance was organized and directed by Erin Riley as her Senior Honors Thesis. A BFA in Dance is based on performance and choreography. Expanding upon that skill set, this thesis added the skills and experience of producing a show.

As the title of the performance suggests, the intent of the show was to bring into focus the importance of arts in building our community. The benefits of the show were to be three-fold: the Dance Department would benefit for having a new audience introduced to their theater and productions; Gospel Rescue Mission would benefit from the proceeds; and the audience would enjoy a high caliber, family-oriented performance. In actuality, the results of the performance were four-fold. In addition to the three benefits listed, the dancers were significantly impacted by how much the audience enjoyed and appreciated the show.

Original Intent: Arts Building the Community

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By Erin K Riley

My Senior Honors Thesis takes a turn down an unexplored lane on the road to a professional dance-related career. The production of a dance performance has remained uncharted territory in my undergraduate years. As a senior I have recognized skills that are beneficial to have in the dance community. I knew producing a show would provide a tremendous opportunity for personal growth and development of a skill set that would serve me well in the coming years. It would also be a 'Capstone' to my academic experience at the University of Arizona that embodies my values and my desire to reach the community with Fine Arts.

My passions for many years have been dance, giving to charities, and excellence in every academic area. To create a Senior Honors Thesis I chose to combine all of these passions into one grand event: a dance performance to benefit a local homeless shelter. The values of the Honors College at the University of Arizona are values that I aspire to incorporate into everyday living: excellence in scholarship and service, responsibility for selves and our communities, identifying and nurturing talent, and building community and connections. I believe that these values are promoted through the creation and completion of my Senior Honors Thesis.

The scope of my project grew through conversations with Jory Hancock, the Director of the School of Dance. Originally, I planned to add a benefit portion to an existing show on the School of Dance calendar to raise funds for a homeless shelter. Mr. Hancock offered to let me create a new show, in addition to the regular season, the proceeds of which would all go directly to the charitable organization that I selected. The idea fanned a flame into fire inside of me.

The research for a charitable organization involved scouring the Internet and conversing with members of the Tucson community. One organization caught my attention because it presented itself well and was currently raising funds for a new project. The project would renovate a motel into a homeless shelter for women and children. The idea to donate to this organization was confirmed when a faculty member in the School of Dance came to me that same week with a phone number for Gospel Rescue Mission.

In advertising the show, I chose to target large churches around the Tucson community. Through conversations and planning with a board member of Gospel Rescue Mission, Dean Saxton, I identified churches with members who already supported GRM financially. Their interest in helping GRM could also serve as an impetus to support the performance. I designed the show to be family oriented and appropriate for all ages and advertised it as such. This choice was to ease any hesitation people may have to coming to a dance production.

With my heart set on donating all of the proceeds from the performance to GRM, I was surprised to find out two months into the project that several hundred dollars were needed to cover a fee for the technical crew to work the night of the event. Immediately following the release of that information, I set out to find someone who could provide a donation to cover the cost of the crew. A few weeks later I found a woman who generously contributed the money required to cover all technical expenses. Now all the proceeds truly would go to the homeless shelter.

As I continued down the path of production, I worked closely with Jory Hancock to determine the date and logistics of the event. The date was selected based on the School of Dance's current calendar with performances scheduled the weekend of the 19th and nothing that Sunday night. Also, one large church with whom I was advertising has a service every other Sunday night; the 19th was without a service. Planning the logistics of the performance involved determining what pieces would be shown, whether or not students were available to dance, and when technical rehearsals could be scheduled to set lights and sound. This task was particularly challenging because certain aspects were contingent on others: I could not schedule a technical rehearsal if the dancers were unavailable. I could not contact dancers without knowing what pieces I wanted in the show, and I was unable to decide on the pieces until a video had been made of "Showings" (an event in which students show their choreography to faculty).

In the initial stages of planning, I was given 150 as the minimum number of tickets to be sold to make a show worth producing. The theater holds 300, so for production costs and having a good sized audience for which to perform 150 is a reasonable minimum. My challenge with planning the logistics of the event was that Mr. Hancock wanted to know that the minimum of 150 would be met before moving on with producing the show. This meant that I had to delay contacting choreographers and dancers because the show might be canceled if there were not enough tickets sold. The logistics of production seemed backwards as I worked through this challenge because I had to make sure there were people committed to come see the show before I made sure there was a show for them to come see.

Advertising was a hill that I ran straight up. With no prior experience, I used critical thinking skills, research, and community awareness to dive in and develop both a means of advertising and a description to catch the attention of possible audience members. I wrote emails to more than ten churches in the Tucson community. I had announcements printed in church bulletins. K-LOVE, a Christian radio station, posted the event on their calendar. I attended a board meeting at Gospel Rescue Mission to describe the project and talk to members about selling tickets at their churches and home groups. I also attended services at different churches to make an announcement about the performance and sell tickets afterwards. Through these efforts about 80 tickets were sold by the time I felt I needed to communicate with choreographers and dancers who would be in the show.

When I secured approval from Mr. Hancock to go ahead and contact choreographers, time was becoming limited because the School of Dance was preparing for its next show, after which there would only be a week before the technical rehearsals for the next shows (including the benefit) began. The time constraint meant that there would be little to no time available for preparing student choreography with lights. Instead of putting new student work on stage as I had hoped, I chose pieces from the current shows that were scheduled that weekend. As I contacted the choreographers, I found that many students

had already made plans for that Sunday evening with their family; they would not be available to dance. I selected other pieces and continued contacting choreographers until dancers for seven different pieces were finally confirmed. I continued my grassroots advertising with local churches and created an event on Facebook to increase ticket sales.

By the night of the performance, about 100 tickets had been pre-ordered. All the choreographers were confirmed to speak about their piece during the course of the show. All the dancers were prepared and ready to perform. I had coordinated with two friends who generously gave their time and money to bake 7 pies and cakes to sell after the performance. Fliers and handmade posters with information about GRM's project were available in the lobby for guests to read.

Having done months of preparation, I relaxed as I walked on stage to welcome the audience to the benefit performance. It was exciting to see how many people came and to hear them cheer as I spoke about the purpose of the event: to raise funds for GRM. Several people around Tucson had donated money for homeless adults and children at GRM to come see the show. As I stood on stage, I saw a whole row of people from GRM.

The performance went smoothly with amazing speeches by each of the choreographers. The audience was incredibly responsive: laughing during light-hearted dances, engaged for more serious ones, and applauding loudly after every piece. Many dancers commented to me backstage "I love this audience! They are so joyful." and "Congratulations! I'm amazed how many people came." In talking with some of the audience members afterwards, I was blessed to hear more than once "This is the best show we've ever seen at the UA!" "Every piece was amazing! There wasn't one that anyone didn't like."

The ticket stubs numbered 125 upon the final count. Though the minimum number of 150 was not reached the event was incredibly successful for everyone. The School of Dance was able to put out fliers and a sign-up for their newsletter in the lobby. Eighteen new guests registered to receive information about future dance performances. The audience saw a superb show that was tasteful and rich with talent. The dancers enjoyed having such a responsive audience. A total of \$2,000 was raised through ticket proceeds and donations, all of which goes directly to Gospel Rescue Mission.

Through this project I hope to have exemplified excellence in service to Gospel Rescue Mission, the audience members, and the School of Dance. I also hope to have demonstrated the importance of arts and its usefulness in building our community through personal connections and financially. With my choice to target churches around Tucson, I intended to help build connections between those churches and the School of Dance, something that will remain after I am gone. I spent time identifying talent in student choreographers and dancers and helped to nurture that talent by providing an opportunity to share and to shine. All of these motivations reflect the values of the Honors College. I am delighted this event became a success that truly benefited every person involved.

EASTER, APRIL 12, 2009



Northminster
Presbyterian Church

Alleluia!



Christ Is Risen!

SUPPORTING GOSPEL RESCUE MISSION'S 5 TO 25 CAMPAIGN

At the Gospel Rescue Mission's current facilities, they are turning away 5 to 25 women every day who are on the streets, many with children, because their current facility is too small. Women and children who have nowhere else to go are being turned away. GRM's hope is to raise funds to purchase the Wayward Winds Motel on Miracle Mile, and greatly expand their ability to care for these individuals and the number of available rooms. **On Sunday, April 19 at 6:00pm**, you can attend a dance performance, **Original Intent: Arts Building the Community**, at the Stevie Eller Dance Theater at the University of Arizona. Tickets are \$15 each, and Pastor Andy Ross has 20 available in our Church Office. Come and enjoy a spectacular faculty and student dance performance, in which all the proceeds of this night will support the Mission's efforts to provide shelter and restoration to women and children in our city who are on the streets.

DECORATING CREW NEEDED FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School, one of the biggest events of the year, needs you to become part of the decorating crew that will create room and campus decorations, prepare materials for centers and more. Childcare is available. Decorating will take place Wednesday evenings beginning **April 15 from 6:00-8:00pm in Rooms 8/9 of the Children's Education Building**. No experience necessary! For more information, please contact Peter Earhart at 327-7121 ext. 237 or pearhart@northminstertucson.org.

SENIOR HIGH OUTREACH EVENT

Project FEED (Feed Everyone Every Day). Senior High students - help feed the hungry! Northminster's youth are invited to continue their partnership with the Giving Tree's Project FEED program by preparing food for approximately 100 people on **Sunday, April 26, 2:00-6:00pm**.

Students interested in lending a hand should arrive in the Fellowship Hall Kitchen by 2:00pm. Once the cooking is complete, students, leaders and parent helpers will travel to the empty lot on 22nd Street to assist in serving a meal to over 300 men, women and children in need. The regular Senior High Youth Group will not meet on this day. For additional information, contact Sheila Yamanaka at 327-7121 ext. 222 or syamanaka@northminstertucson.org.

QUILTERS SPRING SALE

The Quilters' Annual Spring Quilt Sale will be on **Sunday, April 19 after the 8:00 and 9:30am worship services in the Rowley Courtyard**. The proceeds from all sales go to charities and the needs of the church. There's something special for everyone from newborn to grandma!

JUST COFFEE NEW PRICES

Due to increased product and shipping costs, the Just Coffee coffee prices have been increased as follows: regular and dark roast are \$10 per pound and decaffeinated is \$11 per pound. All sales are still non-profit. Also available in the Ministry Center, formerly known as the Gift Shop, are copies of *Just Coffee: Caffeine with a Conscience* for \$15.