

III. Proposal:

The purpose of this research is to expand the boundaries of uncharted territory between live jazz trumpet and tap dance by exploring improvisation as a driving force in a creative exchange and how this relationship between the two informs both artists' interpretation of the music. As dance and music are both catalysts for self-expression, with the dancer and musician physically together onstage, aware of each other's presence and artistic input, the experience for both artists and audience is greater than the sum of its parts. In blending both disciplines into a unique production, this study will explore how movement is informed by the transformation of traditional jazz melody through the trumpeter's improvisations and conversely, how the tap dancer can serve as drummer, giving rise to new ideas for improvisation. Funding from CARSA would help with the travel costs necessary for Rob and me to present this unique collaboration at *The International Choreographers' Showcase*, hosted by Dance-Forms Productions. This experience will help me gain insight into becoming a self-producing artist, promoting future research initiatives between trumpet and tap dance while helping to realize my goal of making a significant impact in my field.

In response to the proposal of this performance, Susana B. Williams, founder and director of Dance-Form Productions, said "It makes me very happy to learn that you have good possibilities of teaming with your husband in an instrumental duet where you will express music with tap dancing -- with live music, the solo will have more impact. This approach could be very attractive for the Festival audience". Dance-Forms Productions is a professional organization that promotes and presents "extraordinary performances by outstanding artists". Only five choreographers are selected for each *International Choreographer's Showcase* and, in conjunction with the Festival Internacional de Teatro y Danza (FINTDAZ), it offers a thrilling chance to benefit from global exposure, to perform for my peers, to see what other artists are creating, and to be part of a cultural event that takes me beyond our campus.

As Assistant Professor of Musical Theatre/Dance at the University of Alabama, I am busy throughout the school year teaching, choreographing and/or directing for both the theatre and dance programs as well as carrying out other duties required of my job. Since I began my career in academia ten years ago, I have proven myself artistically at the local,

regional, and national level. To be given the time and money to engage in an international artistic experience would be an invaluable aspect to my professional growth as well as an integral facet of earning tenure. Furthermore, funding for this project would demonstrate support for collaborative ventures between two artistic disciplines, providing the means to explore our respective genres within an unlikely partnership of tap dance and live jazz trumpet.

This research allows me to explore dance beyond the standard musical theatre genre that is typical of my work at UA and is therefore vital to my career as a teacher, choreographer and performer. For example, using the skills and knowledge I gain from this project, I can teach improvisation in my tap classes at UA, furthering my students' skill sets, ultimately increasing their chances of forging a career in the entertainment industry. Although tap dance is a traditional American art form, the global tap community is growing rapidly. And because it is one of the most cutting edge dance forms on the stage today, it is part of my job to stay abreast of the various ways to approach this universal language in order to foster a new generation of tap dancers. Furthermore, performing educators have better knowledge of the intimate relationship between audience and artist and are therefore better able to bring such experiences back to the classroom.

Although our performance will feature my tap dancing to an assortment of musical theatre and jazz standards, I believe the most compelling aspect of this research is its improvisatory nature as it is an indispensable component of jazz. In this investigation, my tap dancing will provide the rhythmic foundation similar to a drummer in a small jazz band. Miles Davis notes this connection in his autobiography when he says, "Tap dancers are so close to music in the way they make their tap sound. They are almost like drummers and you can learn a lot from just listening to the rhythms they get from their taps " (132).

Historically, there has been a strong link between drummers and trumpet soloists and from an improvisers' standpoint, the rhythmic foundation and variety provided by the drummer gives rise to a wealth of improvisatory ideas. These improvisatory exchanges become a conversation, informing the artistic product, which in turn makes for a different and exciting performance each time. Countless jazz trumpet players have detailed the close relationship between themselves and their drumming partners and have witnessed about how they rely on the drummer not only for rhythmic fodder to inspire their improvisations

to new heights, but also for the sheer fire and excitement a drummer can bring to any performance. Dizzy Gillespie claims that drums “furnished just the right amount of support, push, or embellishment” and called the trumpet and drums “cousins” (98). And, according to Scotty Barnhart in *The World of Jazz Trumpet*, “the drummer instinctively varies his patterns to fit with certain phrases played by the group or soloist, especially those that are ‘ragged’ [syncopated] and improvised” (15).

It is important to note that both the presentation in Edinburgh and the rehearsal necessary to bring it to fruition are considered research in the field of theatre and dance and that improvisation is a skill that must be deeply explored during the rehearsal process in order to succeed in performance. Although the success of this process will be measured by the response to the actual performance, both by the FINTDAZ community and Susana B. Williams, director of the *International Choreographer’s Showcase*, I will deem it successful when I am able to effectively use other methodologies when creating choreography and for teaching dance styles, incorporating improvisation combined with live music into my syllabi for various dance classes.

Being able to present and expand upon this research in the future is also criteria for achievement. I am excited about the prospect of it ushering in new engagements, as this sort of work has the potential for future performances arranged through people that I meet in Scotland. Furthermore, I hope to attend *The New York City Tap Festival* in the summer of 2014 (dates for 2013 are July 6-13) as well as get involved with organizations such as *The International Tap Association* or *The American Tap Dance Foundation*, which are possible forums for the continuation of this study. The results of this research will be used to apply for external funding because it is an avenue to endless possibilities in which to not only invest in my future but to expose jazz music and tap dance, two American art forms, to other cultures.

Thank you for your time and consideration and for providing UA faculty the opportunity to obtain grant money for research from the Academy of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity. If there is any additional information that I can provide for you, please let me know.

IV. BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

\$2000 (\$1000 x 2): Production Costs, Accommodations, Daily Meals, Transportation within Chile

\$3000: Towards Roundtrip airfare from Birmingham, Alabama to Iquique, Chile

\$5000: Total

For \$2000 Dance-Forms Productions provides each performer onstage a complete production package including rehearsal space, and all technical assistance for four performances including lighting and sound. This amount also includes eight nights accommodation, daily meals, and all transportation within Chile. Besides the performance at the FINTDAZ Festival in Iquique, we will present three other performances in neighboring cities.

The remaining \$3000 would be used toward airfare from Birmingham, Alabama to Iquique, Chile for the two performers. Currently, roundtrip tickets from October 6-14, 2013 through Expedia range from \$1591 to \$2058 per person.

I have also applied for the funding of this research through the Research Grants Committee, asking for help with production costs and airfare. Transportation to and from the airport and other such incidental expenses were not factored into either proposal. Both CARSA and RGC are requests for partial funding of the project.

This research requires that I have live music onstage, which is why I seek travel and production funding for both Rob Alley and myself. Rob is an adjunct instructor teaching in the *Jazz Studies* program at the University of Alabama. He is not only one of the most in-demand freelance trumpeters in the southeastern United States, he is also an award-winning composer, arranger, improviser, educator, and over-all, one of the most diverse musicians in the region.

The research/choreography for this project will occur in May, June, and July 2013, culminating in the performance in Chile from October 6-14, 2013. I plan to present the results of my research at conferences such as the *Musical Theatre Educators Alliance Conference* held January 10-12, 2014 in NYC and the *Southeastern Theatre Conference* held March 5-9, 2014 in Mobile, Alabama. I also plan to write about this experience and my findings in *Dance or Dance Theatre Magazine* by the spring of 2014.

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CREATIVE RESEARCH AND ACTIVITY

SELECTED CHOREOGRAPHY CREDITS

<i>Hell</i>	59E59 Theaters, NYC	July 2012
<i>Gypsy</i>	Theatre Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa, AL	July 2012
<i>Smokey Joe's Café</i>	Summertide Theatre, Gulf Shores, AL	June 2012
<i>Chicago*</i>	The University of Alabama	April 2012
<i>The Buddy Holly Story</i>	Forestburgh Playhouse, NY	July 2011
<i>The Drowsy Chaperone</i>	Theatre Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa, AL	July 2011
<i>Dames at Sea</i>	Summertide Theatre, Gulf Shores, AL	June 2011
<i>Big River</i>	Montgomery Performing Arts Centre	April 2011
<i>Flora the Red Menace</i>	The University of Alabama	Feb. 2011
<i>A Chorus Line *</i>	Forestburgh Playhouse, NY	June 2010
<i>Little Shop of Horrors</i>	Arkansas State University	Nov. 2009
<i>How to Succeed in Business..*</i>	Theatre Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa, AL	June 2008
<i>Beauty and the Beast</i>	Oklahoma Shakespearean Festival	July 2006
<i>Sweet Charity*</i>	The Foundation of Arts, Jonesboro, AR	June 2006
<i>Anything Goes</i>	Summertide Theatre, Gulf Shores, AL	June 2005

*also director

SELECTED DIRECTING CREDITS

<i>Side Man</i>	The University of Alabama	October 2012
<i>25th Annual Putnam...</i>	Theatre Tuscaloosa	Nov. 2011
<i>Calendar Girl Cabaret</i>	Forestburgh Playhouse, NY	July 2011
<i>The Foreigner</i>	Arkansas State University	April 2010
<i>Great American Trailer...</i>	Arkansas State University	April 2009
<i>Dancing at Lughnasa</i>	Arkansas State University	October 2008
<i>The Diviners</i>	Arkansas State University	Nov. 2006
<i>Five Women Wearing...</i>	Arkansas State University	Nov. 2004

SELECTED INSTRUCTOR/PANELIST/PRESENTER

- *Tap Your Troubles Away*, the Southeastern Theatre Conference, Presenter, various locations, March 2002-2006 and (scheduled for) March 2013 in Louisville, KY
- *West Side Story's "America"* Lecture with Liza Gennaro, Moderator, The Musical Theatre Educators Alliance International Conference, St. Louis, MO, January 2013
- *Musical Theatre Dance Faculty Roundtable*, Moderator/Panelist, The Musical Theatre Educators Alliance International Conference, NYC, January 2012
- *How to Succeed at a Musical Theatre Dance Audition*, Instructor, The Alabama Conference of Theatre Fall Festival, Jacksonville State University, October 2011

SELECTED INSTRUCTOR/PANELIST/PRESENTER CONTINUED

- *Musical Theatre Dance*, Presenter, The Musical Theatre Educators Alliance International Conference, Gothenburg, Sweden, September 2011
- Red Mountain Musical Theatre Intensive, Instructor, Birmingham, AL, June 2011
- *Seize the Dance: Integrating Acting and Dance into Musical Theatre*, Presenter, The Southeastern Theatre Conference, various locations, March 2008-2012
- *Musical Theatre Dance for "The Actor who Moves Well"*, Presenter, Arkansas Thespian Festival, Alma, AR, January 2009

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL PERFORMING CREDITS

<i>Radio City Christmas Spectacular</i>	Principle	Radio City Music Hall, NYC
<i>Cats</i>	Bombalurina	Red Mountain Theatre Company
<i>Pump Boys and Dinettes</i>	Rhetta	Summertide Theatre
<i>Peter Pan</i>	Peter Pan	Theatre Tuscaloosa
<i>Tap Girls</i>	Principal	Anita Mann Productions, Los Angeles
<i>Holland America Cruise Line</i>	Principal	Anita Mann Productions, Los Angeles
<i>Royal Caribbean International</i>	Principal	Anita Mann Productions, Los Angeles

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Screen Actors Guild -- member since 1988
- Southeastern Theatre Conference -- member since 2000
- Alabama Conference of Theatre -- member since 2000
- Association of Theatre Movement Educators -- member since 2004
- Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies, NYC -- member since 2004
- Musical Theatre Educators Alliance International, -- member since 2010
- Stage Directors and Choreographers Society – Associate member since 2012

SELECTED TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, The University of Alabama, 2010-present
- INSTRUCTOR, American Ballet Theatre Intensive, 2010-2012
- ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, Arkansas State University, 2003-2010
- DIRECTOR OF MUSICAL THEATRE DANCE, *Firespark!* Performing Arts Camp, Brenau University, Gainesville, GA, July 2006-2009

CURRENT PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- Southeastern Regional U.S. Representative, *The Musical Theatre Educators Alliance International*, 2012-2014
- Chair, Musical Theatre Committee, *The Southeastern Theatre Conference*, 2011-present (Co-Chair 2009-2011)
- Chair, College/University Committee, *Alabama Conference of Theatre*, 2012-2013 (Vice-Chair 2011-2012)

COURSES TAUGHT -- The University of Alabama

Musical Theatre Dance II & III, Advanced Tap, Intermediate and Advanced Jazz, Dance for the Graduate Actor

REFERENCES

- Barnhart, Scotty. *The World of Jazz Trumpet*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2005.
- Davis, Miles with Quincy Troupe. *Miles, The Autobiography*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.
- Feldman, Anita. *Inside Tap: Technique and Improvisation for Today's Tap Dancer*. New Jersey, Princeton Book Company, 1995.
- Gillespie, Dizzy with Al Fraser. *To Be, or not...To Bop*. New York: Doubleday Books, 1979.
- Gray, Acia. *The Souls of Your Feet: A Tap Dance Guidebook for Rhythmic Explorers*. Denver, C & M Press, 1998.
- Nachmonovitch, Stephen. *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1991.
- Werner, Kenny. *Effortless Mastery: Liberating the Master Musician Within*. New Albany: Jamey Aebersold, 1996.