



Workshop Instructor Biographies

Sarah Savelli, known for her “intricate footwork yet easygoing sensuality”; (Dance Magazine 2007), has a style that is distinct and exciting. She began her dance training at an early age in Cleveland and has since grown to be among the most respected professional tap dancers of her generation. Her training with The School of Cleveland Ballet and growing up in her mother’s dance studio coupled with her career accomplishments have established her as an invaluable adjudicator and instructor in the competitive dance world. As a proactive force in the dance field she has consistently created opportunities to keep Tap in the public eye. Sarah has been commissioned three times by PlayhouseSquare, the second largest performing arts center in the country to create, choreograph and present her original work “*Tap Into Peace*”; a show with the incredible music of Stevie Wonder as its inspiration and soundtrack. “*Tap Into Peace*” made its debut at New York City Center’s Fall for Dance in 2008.

As a choreographer, performer and producer, Sarah has presented “*Tappy Holidays!*”, an annual Holiday show in New York, Montana and Cleveland. Sarah also served as Artistic Director and Choreographer for Rhythm ISS..., an all female Chicago based Tap Company she co-founded in 1995. The group was hailed by Dance Magazine as “*a quintet of women tappers impressive as much for their exuberant spirit as for their blistering footwork.*”

Savelli’s soloist work is as extensive as her company work. She has been featured in the PBS documentary “*Juba! The Masters of Tap and Percussive Dance*” and has performed at The Apollo as part of Ayodele Casel’s *Diary of a Tap Dancer*, Symphony Space in NYC, Playhouse Square, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, New York’s City Center among many others.

Sarah has developed her own specific method for teaching a blend of crisp, clean, technique and intricate rhythm that makes tap dancing accessible for all ages and levels. Her work has been presented and performed by the top tap professional tap dancers in the country, as well as competitive groups nationwide. She is a sought after and respected teacher who is known for combining honesty and humor with technique so that her classes remain fun, while challenging. Sarah is currently working regularly with Perseverance Dance Company, (Missy Ridgway, Chicago) and DD&TA, (Krista Sorensen, Montana) as well as several other studios and companies nationwide. As co-founder of Tandem Act Productions, Sarah continues creating events and programs to maintain interest in tap dancing for students and audiences alike.”

Nic Gareiss is a performer, teacher and researcher examining the cultural employment of the human body as a musical instrument. Lauded by the Irish Times as, “*the human epitome of the unbearable lightness of being,*” and, “*the most inventive and expressive step dancer on the scene,*” by the Boston Herald, his work re-imagines aesthetic movement as a musical activity, morphing dance into a medium that appeals to both the eyes and the ears. He has an enduring fascination with sonic aesthetic movement phenomena, their role in different societies and the remarkable concurrent existence of percussive foot articulation in so many disparate cultures - this has lead him to a study shoe-sounds and grooves internationally, tracing the roots of American vernacular dance abroad in a rhythmical adventure using the body as the ethnographic tool and improvisational dance traditions as the lingua franca. He has performed in Ireland, Scotland, France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, England, and Canada, on Irish national television and CMT, for Irish head of state Brian Cowen and American Energy Secretary Steven Chu. In addition, he holds degrees in Anthropology (Central Michigan University) and Ethnochoreology (University of Limerick).

Informed by fifteen years of study and performance, Nic’s dancing reflects his love of improvisation, traditional footwork vocabulary, and musical collaboration.

“The human epitome of the unbearable lightness of being...Gareiss is more fleet of foot than an Olympian sprinter and more buoyant than a helium-filled balloon. He elevates Irish dance to a place where restraint is palpable and freeform flight is inevitable.”

– Siobhán Long, The Irish Times

“Mesmerizing... a whirling dervish in tap shoes.”

– Bay City Times

“A show-stopper...this Michigan native may be the most inventive and expressive step dancer on the scene. The nimble Gareiss called forth visions of Fred Astaire.”

– Daniel Gewertz, The Boston Herald

“He is a total joy to watch – music embodied in physique, gesture, movement and muscle; an eye-opener for the ear, as it were, such is the precision, detail and adventure of his sense of rhythm.”

– Last Night’s Fun

Ariane Dolan has been on the faculty of Lou Conte Dance Studio since 1996. She is a favorite teacher of APA dancers who visit LCDS! She began her training at the Academy of Movement & Music in Oak Park. She began taking classes at LCDS in 1981 & in 1983 joined Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theatre, with whom she performed until 1994, afterward joining the faculty, teaching ballet & Graham technique. Currently, she is a music theatre performer and has worked at the Mariott Lincolnshire Theatre, Drury Lane Oakbrook, Drury Lane Evergreen Park, and the Candlelight Dinner Playhouse. She has a BA in theatre from Roosevelt University.

From the instructor page on the LCDS site:

Ariane's training began at the Academy for Movement and Music and Lou Conte Dance Studio. Her film/TV credits include *Save the Last Dance* (Julia Stile's ballet double) and PBS's *Love in Four Acts*. She has appeared in several musicals throughout the country and served as the principal dancer at Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theatre. Ariane has choreographed for multiple shows at Drury Lane Theatre and *Don't Dress for Dinner* at the Royal George Theatre. Ariane received the Ari Zoni Award for best performance in a musical in 1997.

Samantha Shelton is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Ballet at Alma College and is responsible for choreographing and setting classical repertoire for the Alma College Dance Company, in addition to teaching technique, pointe, variations, pas de deux and Dance Appreciation. She received her professional training from the Joffrey Ballet and the David Howard Dance Center in New York and in Michigan with Rose Marie Floyd. She has also trained in London with Anita Young, former soloist with the Royal Ballet and at the Cecchetti Summer Program in Chichester, England. For the past fifteen years, she has been on the ballet faculty for American Ballet Theatre Summer Intensive, teaching, setting ABT repertoire and choreographing new ballets for the final performance at the Detroit Opera House. She has also taught and choreographed for the professional ballet program at the Walnut Hill School in Boston, directed by former ABT principal, Michael Owen and was on faculty at the Interlochen Arts Academy for three summers. Recently, she was invited to choreograph a new ballet for Wayne State University and to set her ballet *"Two Seasons"* on the dancers at Grand Valley State University. She has performed extensively in both classical and contemporary ballets, including the Grand Pas from *Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Don Quixote*, also principal roles in *Giselle* and *Raymonda*. She had been on the ballet faculties at Wayne State University and the Detroit Opera House, where she was the artistic director for the Detroit Opera House's Civic Dance Ensemble. Samantha holds an M.F.A in Dance from the University of Michigan, where she was awarded a Rackham Thesis grant, and a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Michigan. She has also done graduate work at New York University in Performing Arts Administration with internships in development and marketing at Carnegie Hall and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. She is on the boards for the University of Michigan's School of Music, Theatre & Dance Alumni Society Board of Governors and the Executive Board of the Michigan Dance Council.

She is certified through the American Ballet Theatre National Curriculum Training Program.

Kristen Bennett is a 2007 graduate of Grand Valley State University. She has her BA in English language and literature with a minor in dance. She has been fortunate since returning to her hometown to have numerous avenues to choreograph and teach. These include teaching jazz, tap, and beginning ballet at Alma College, teaching dance at the Academy of Performing Arts in Alma, and choreographing MPHS's productions of *Oklahoma!* (2009), *Cats* (2010) and *Bye Bye Birdie* (2011). Kristen is also a certified Zumba instructor. Her most recent accomplishments include being a featured performer with *Nic Gariess and Friends* at the Wheatland Music Festival. This summer she will be taking classes and teaching with Surfscapes Contemporary Dance Theatre at their summer intensive.