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# New York dance scene hits UWM

By TOM STRINI  
Journal Sentinel dance critic

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Word has gotten around the New York dance scene: The graduate program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is something special. Seven of the nine "student" choreographers on this weekend's "Dancemakers" show are in the middle of New York careers or have spent considerable time working there.

*Advertisement*

The UWM grad program was created with the mid-career professional in mind, and it is attracting them. The sophisticated faculty, the urban environment and the flexibility of the program serve them well.

Each Dancemaker has submitted a brief biography and a statement about what brought her or him to UWM. Here they are, edited for space:

**Mary Cochran** toured the world as a member of the Paul Taylor Dance Company from 1984 through 1996. Since then,

## UWM's Dancemakers



Dancers participating in UWM's graduate program include (clockwise from front): Sara Baird, Joyce Dohnal (far left), Peggy Choy, Rodger Belman, Mary Cochran,



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Cochran has restaged Taylor works for many other companies. She was recently named chairperson of the dance department of Barnard College in New York City. Cochran appeared as a guest soloist in her "Pitiful Vignette" with the Wild Space Dance Company at Alverno College in

November.

"Creatively, the program at UWM has allowed me to move into a new area. I am doing character work, speaking, singing, acting and still moving - and moving a lot! The program has helped me define and redefine what I know. I feel more confident and more capable of being a leader in the field."

**Clare Byrne** has worked in New York City for 10 years. She is the artistic director of Clare Byrne Dance and she teaches at Long Island University in Brooklyn. Byrne did her undergraduate work at Connecticut College.

"UWM, with its unique program of summer study, provided a way to combine several objectives: to be stimulated creatively, to deepen my base of knowledge for teaching purposes, and to earn a master's degree for job opportunities that might arise in the future - while not interrupting the progress of my career in New York."

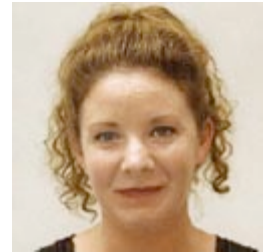
**Aviva Geismar** directs the Drastic Action contemporary dance company in New York. In January 2004 she was featured in Dance Magazine's "25 to Watch."

"At UWM I have freedom to follow a program that interests me, and I can alternate work from my home base with summer semesters on campus. This allows me to keep my artistic and personal life in New York alive, but also have the benefit of working with the UWM faculty in person."

**Joyce Dohnal** has been dancing since 1992. She completed a BFA at UWM in 1998. She teaches full-

Aviva Geismar, Clare Byrne (far right), guest artist Barbara Grubel, and Molly Rabinowitz (center).

**Mary Cochran**



**Clare Byrne**



**Aviva Geismar**



**Joyce Dohnal**



**Peggy Choy**



time at Bradford High School, Kenosha, and is co-director of the Bradford Dance Company.

"Continuing my education helps me with my career in teaching dance and prepares me for future career possibilities in a college or university setting. The dance program at UWM provides me with a strong technical and culturally diverse program that pushes me to succeed."

**Peggy Choy** has taught at UW-Madison since 1993. She received the Wisconsin Dance Council Award for Choreography and Dance in 2002, and was the only American invited to perform in the 2002 Seoul International Dance Festival. Choy, who was born in Hawaii, directs the Ki Project, which supports intercultural contemporary performance.

"I have chosen to be in UWM's MFA program because its professional focus allows me to deepen my artistic exploration and development as a choreographer/director/educator. The terminal degree may enable me to obtain a university position that resonates with my vision as an educator."

**Rodger Belman** has taught, performed and choreographed in New York City since 1989. He performed with Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians until it disbanded in 1995. He has also performed in the companies of Twyla Tharp, Mark Taylor, Rachel Lambert, Joy Kell-

man, Fred Darsow, Freefall and Kristin Jackson Dance. He teaches at East Carolina University.

"The structure and flexibility of the UWM MFA program (offering a summer intensive session, online courses and self-directed research and independent study) allows me to live in NYC, keep my full-time teaching position, yet still complete my degree in a reasonable amount of time. The strong professional and artistic background of the UWM faculty support and strengthen my artistic, choreographic and performance endeavors while providing me with the necessary credentials to teach at the post-secondary level."

**Molly Rabinowitz** grew up in New York and has been dancing and choreographing there since graduating from Wesleyan University in 1987.

**Rodger Belman**



**Molly Rabinowitz**



**Catey Ott**



**Sara Baird**



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Her work has been presented at many venues in the United States as well as the Greenwich Dance Agency in London and at several festivals in Portugal.

"I am going back to school to be in a creative, supportive environment with time to focus on creating choreography and get feedback on a regular basis from both faculty and classmates. I am also interested in developing my teaching skills and getting an MFA, so that I will be able to teach in a university setting. UWM offers a unique opportunity to do all these things and continue my performing and teaching life in New York."

**Catey Ott** has returned to her hometown of Milwaukee after dancing professionally in New York for eight years. Highlights include directing rehearsal and dancing for Heidi Latsky, touring Eastern Europe with Allyson Green and forming her own company with Eun Jung Gonzalez. In Milwaukee, Ott has danced for Wild Space and Danceworks Performance Company.

"A wealth of teachings, ideas, and styles have processed through my body. UWM has the amazing faculty necessary for me to unravel, document and question these experiences while developing as an artist."

**Sara Baird** co-founded Anemone Dance Theater in New York City in 2002. Her Butoh-influenced work integrates movement, sound, costume, sculpture and visuals. She has toured extensively and danced with many other companies.

"I wanted to pursue this degree for two reasons. The first was to carve out time and space to further my development as an artist. The second was for job security down the road - the MFA opens the possibility of teaching at a university. This program supports and nurtures the working artist and molds itself around the individual. It has allowed me to integrate my professional work in NYC into the course work. I have never worked harder in my life!"

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