Using Dance to Save the World
Alumna Cooper Rust Moves to Africa

Cooper Rust is a ballerina. After several contracts with Nevada Ballet Theatre, Las Vegas; State Street Ballet, Santa Barbara; and Columbia City Ballet, South Carolina, she came to UNLV and earned a BFA degree in Dance Performance and Choreography as well as a BA in History. After graduation she returned to a ballet company contract, and during the off-season she decided to take a job in Kenya, Africa volunteering in an orphanage teaching English and mathematics. "I had never been to Africa, and I decided to do something meaningful."

While in Africa, and always the "bun-head", Rust did a bit of exploring looking for a place where she could take a ballet class. What she found was no traditional ballet schools, only an after-school program in the Kibera and Mathere slums where children were taking ballet, music, theatre, traditional African dance, visual art, and creative writing from local Kenyan teachers who had been trained by a United Kingdom charity called Anno’s Africa. Rust contacted the ballet teacher, Mike Wamaya, who immediately asked her to come and teach, as he was actually an African dancer trying to teach ballet. During the course of the conversation Rust went from looking for a ballet class to becoming the chief teacher of ballet in the area. Rust returned to Kenya the following summer and decided to stay and open a proper dance school.

For Rust, Africa is is a rich community for artists. "One of my favorite moments in my first trip to Nairobi was walking up to the National Theatre where all of the artists hang out, and finding a group of amazing people with strange clothes and wild hair just like in any major city anywhere else in the world. Artists everywhere are the same in that they are different. What has been amazing though is bringing ballet, an art form that is hundreds of years old, to Kenya where it is new. And suddenly even for me it is also new. When I set my first Nutcracker here, people were so excited to see the ballet for the first time. When I set Les Sylphides (all white, no story, usual big yawn), we received a standing ovation. What I gave up as a performer, doing another Giselle, another Sleeping Beauty, another Nutcracker just doesn’t compare to the excitement of bringing the richness of traditional ballet to this community."

The children in Kenya inspired Rust to open Dance Centre Kenya. One might ask, why would a group of impoverished students want to pursue a career in dance? Kenya has, however, taught Cooper Rust more about...
what the power of dance and art can offer. "In the United States, if you decide to become a dancer many think you’re going to be poor, with a short career. If you are a young person from the slums of Nairobi, where minimum wage is $2 a day with an unemployment rate of 40%, the prospect of making $25,000 a year as a corps de ballet member is absolutely incredible." One of Rust’s students Joel Kioko, who has been training with her for two years, has already gone to the University of South Carolina Summer Dance Conservatory on a full scholarship. Because of Rust’s fundraising, Kioko has now been the first person in his family to ever go to high school. He is the first person from his community to get on a plane and he will be the first person to own a refrigerator, a car, and consistently have water. It is this kind of impact that inspires Cooper to teach 38 classes per week and stage five productions a year without any other teachers or staff member support.

"There are hurdles. Like explaining to dancers how much training a dancer needs in ballet as well as cross training in modern dance, jazz, tap, etc. This is a big pill for many to swallow." Rust also finds herself having to design every set, every costume, every program, because it is all so new to those around her. "I have had to figure out how to teach a boy how to lift the girl, and I have had to choreograph, choreograph and choreograph. While at UNLV I always remember telling Louis I will never choreograph after I graduate, and Louis would tell me to enjoy the process, not get too planned out in my choreography, be creative, and let the dance speak to and through me. Now I am choreographing everything from twenty-five short recital pieces to full-length ballets. UNLV trained me well and forced me to do the things I thought I hated. I now teach modern, jazz, musical theatre, tap and contemporary dance, as well as ballet, pointe, and pas de deux. You never know where life will take you. One piece I choreographed at UNLV with three ballerinas to impossible music by Mussorgsky, since graduating, has been set on three different casts of professional dancers on both the East and West coasts."

In the future, Rust hopes to expand her school, hire more teachers and create satellite schools throughout Nairobi and throughout East Africa. She hopes to create a boarding school where talented children can receive world-class training. And perhaps with enough support and funding to create East Africa’s first ever professional company. Sometimes dance changes the world.
**Peter Jakubowski Shedding Light on NBT’s Nutcracker**

In 1972, in an effort to bring classical dance to Las Vegas, Nevada Ballet Theatre was begun by two enterprising professional dancers, Vassili Sullich and Nancy Housells. This endeavor began on the campus at UNLV with performances in our very own Judy Bayley Theatre and has now grown into one of Nevada's longest established and largest professional performance companies. Nevada Ballet outgrew its UNLV studio and home and left the university to develop its own center for dance and its own school. In 2009, Peter Jakubowski, UNLV Dance Associate Professor and Design Specialist, was asked by NBT's Artistic Director James Canfield to become NBT's resident lighting designer. When asked about collaborating with Canfield, Jakuboski says, "The collaboration as a designer is exciting, stimulating, and very fulfilling. James is highly knowledgeable of ballet as a classic form but his own personal aesthetic is very now. He asks you as a collaborator to respect the classic but imagine how you push it to incorporate technology, and a more contemporary edge."

For the classical ballet company, winter is the season for *The Nutcracker*, a classic 123 year-old ballet by Marius Petipa based on the story "The Nutcracker and the King of Mice" written by E.T.A. Hoffman and adapted by Alexander Dumas. It is the story of a young girl, Clara, a Nutcracker who comes to life, a battle with a Mouse King and mouse army, and a journey through a magical land of snow, with many divertissements along the way. "Doing a classic does ask you to embrace what has come before. It is one of the joys of being a designer. You have to do the historic research to understand the piece and its previous interpretations. This is one of the hallmark learning outcomes we teach in the BA Dance production and management curriculum here at UNLV-from historic research and creative research come the strongest design choice," says Jakubowski.

There are many productions of the *Nutcracker* in the dance world. NBT's is unique and utilizes all that Las Vegas and theatre technology can offer. NBT's version brings fresh choreography by Canfield with spectacular oversized scenic and prop designs by Cirque du Soleil designer Patricia Ruel. Jakubowski provides the lighting design for this two million dollar production. Jakubowski is aware that his job as a designer is to "utilize technology yet still light the work in a sensitive way that enhances the choreography and not only makes a technological spectacle." For Jakubowski, *Nutcracker* is about tradition, family and personal history. It is also a coming of age story--the innocence of childhood succumbs to the awakening of the adult. This is the universal story we all see and identify as our own story.

For Jakubowski, James Canfield's *Nutcracker* presents certain design challenges. "How do you make Act I feel warm, safe, innocent and a memory, then transition into Act II which needs to become clear, rich, colorful and have emotions blossom as Clara moves from childhood into adolescence?" NBT's production turns the Party Scene into a four-story Victorian dollhouse, Snow becomes a physical and sensual flow, and a large peacock in Arabian becomes a metaphor for an awakening in Clara.

UNLV Dance is proud of Jakubowski's relationship with Nevada Ballet Theatre. As a top tier research institution, UNLV's best faculty are active and productive in creative activity and research within their professional disciplines. For Jakubowski, "these collaborations allow me to stay active in my craft and connect students to the current professional world. My involvement with the Nutcracker has translated into internships for 8 UNLV students. Several have turned this opportunity into contacts that have led to full time work with other companies such as Cirque Du Soleil and Pacific North West Ballet."
After his death in 1994, Erick Hawkins' composer, wife and long-time collaborator, Lucia Dlugoszewski, became artistic director of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company. In 1997 with the help of principal dancers Katherine Duke and Louis Kavouras, Lucia and the Hawkins Company began the task of deciphering Hawkins posthumous choreographic notes and bringing some final Hawkins works to life. These choreographic processes ignited in Lucia her own choreographic journey and in 1999 she premiered Radical Ardent, a fifty minute work for the company that featured her choreography as well as her original music.

Dlugoszewski came to New York as a young musician in the late 1950's. She studied with composer Edgard Varèse. In New York, she befriended many artists that were vital members of the burgeoning New York Art Scene, primarily the New York School Abstract Expressionist painters. This group provided the funding and support for Dlugoszewski's first performances. It was also with this group of painters, poets and dancers at the Cedar Tavern in Downtown Manhattan that Dlugoszewski used to meet, drink, talk about art, and later create artworks and ideas that transformed and reshaped the art world. Robert Motherwell and Dlugoszewski, at this time, began a longstanding friendship and aesthetic dialog. They shared a passion for Lorca and aesthetic duende, a heightened state of emotional expression and authenticity that manifests itself in a passionate (almost to the point of painful) soul. As tribute to Motherwell, in January 2000, Dlugoszewski began choreographing Motherwell Amor, an evening length work of choreography and musical composition, that was a tribute to her great painter friend.

Motherwell Amor premiered in April 2000. Lucia passed away the evening before opening night, so the Erick Hawkins Dance Company and Hawkins Orchestra performed the work without her and it became a tribute and memorial to the genius that was Lucia Dlugoszewski. This was a difficult performance.

2015 marks Robert Motherwell's Centennial year, so it was fitting for the art world and the Robert Motherwell Daedalus Foundation to bring together a series of paintings that had been separated, into an historic show. The prestigious Dominique Levy Gallery at Madison Avenue and 73rd Street became the space where Several of Robert Motherwell's Elegy to the Spanish Republic paintings were brought together from prestigious museum like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Philadelphia Museum, the Hirshorn Museum in Washington, as well as several other private collections. As part of the Centennial celebration, the Erick Hawkins Dance Company was asked to re-stage and perform Motherwell Amor amidst the original Motherwell paintings that inspired the work. When the company collected for the final rehearsals in the space, Katherine Duke, current Artistic Director said pointing to the giant canvases that surrounded the performance space, "that's a ten million dollar painting, that's a ten million dollar painting, and each of those three others are ten million dollar paintings, let's also place our precious dance in this space, but do be careful where you kick your legs, none of us can pay for these."

Motherwell Amor was presented at two separate concerts on Thursday, December 10, 2015. Dancers included Louis Kavouras, Kristina Berger, Erin Parch, Constantine Baecher, Nathaniel Bradley, Antonio Fini and Katherine Duke. Live music was supplied by William Trigg, David Taylor, Wayne Demaine, and Mike Seltzer.

Mikhail Baryshnikov said of Lucia's work, "she has rewritten the rules as to what dance and music can tell us. Lucia continues to blaze new territory."
Motherwell Amor is a cacophony of partnering bodies collide, in bold and unexpected forms similar to the way the paint on a Motherwell canvas transforms the virtual reality of the canvas. Motherwell's and Dlugoszewski's forms unapologetically clash together, negotiating the geographies of space and expressive form.

After the New York performances, the Hawkins Company will present Motherwell Amor during its Texas Tour in January.

Louis Kavouras has been chair of the UNLV Department of Dance since 1994. He is a master teacher and dancer of Hawkins dance technique and has studied it with the Hawkins Company and numerous other Hawkins Master teachers since 1983. Kavouras has been a principal dancer and a rehearsal director with the Hawkins Company since 1995. He has been responsible for numerous Hawkins Residencies at UNLV Dance. Lucia Dlugoszewski and the New York Times have termed UNLV, Hawkins West. In 1997, Kavouras began the Hawkins West Institute with a mission to preserve and share the great aesthetic accomplishments of Hawkins and Dlugoszewski. The UNLV Dance department was the first college dance company to be given the rights to perform works by Hawkins in 1997. Kavouras and UNLV have been awarded grants for the resurrection and staging of many seminal Hawkins' works. UNLV Dance is also home for the Erick Hawkins archive. UNLV Dance's relationship with Kavouras and the Erick Hawkins Dance Company afford dance majors the unique opportunity to understand a rich kinesiologically sound traditional modern dance technique and gain vast experience with this body of classical modern dance work, principals and history.

Rebel Raiser
A New Way to Give

At UNLV we are pleased to announce a new fundraising platform: Rebel Raiser. Rebel Raiser is the official crowdfunding (online) giving platform that provides a place for faculty, students and departments to announce bold and innovative projects and allow the community to get involved, donate, and help bring these projects to fruition.

In December and January, the Department of Dance initiated its first rebel raiser project. We are happy to announce that the project was a huge success and raised 114% of its funding goal. These contributions allowed students in the department the opportunity to travel and represent UNLV Dance at the International Association of Blacks in Dance Conference in Denver, Colorado.

In the future, UNLV Dance will continue to use Rebel Raiser for more crowdfunding opportunities. We encourage all stakeholders including alumni, parents, and those who love what we do to help us spread the word, and help us do and fund our projects. No donated amount is too small and all donations are tax deductible.
Cycles of Motion
Judy Bayley Theatre
Friday, March 4, 2016 at 7:30 pm
Saturday, March 5, 2016 at
2:30 pm and 7:30 pm

Trajectories
Dance Studio One
Thursday, April 28 at 7:30 pm
Friday, April 29 at
2:30 pm and 7:30 pm
Saturday, April 30 at
2:30 pm and 7:30 pm
Sunday, May 1 at 2:30 pm

Tickets:
$18 General
$10 Student/Senior/Staff/
Military/Dance Alumni

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