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## UNCSA Open Dream Ensemble Announces 2009 Cast

WINSTON-SALEM - **The Open Dream Ensemble**, a multi-disciplinary performing arts group sponsored by the **Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA)**, announces its 2009 cast that will perform throughout North Carolina, as well as selected engagements in other parts of the Southeast.

Open Dream Ensemble, a professional outreach program of UNCSA in its fifth season, brings the power of original live performances that integrate theatre, dance and music to students across the Southeast. Featuring the collaborative skills of professional artists trained at UNCSA, Open Dream Ensemble connects the palpable experience of live performance with artist residencies and educational workshops that align with school curriculum. Having captured the imagination of tens-of-thousands of students, Open Dream Ensemble is a creative force of transformation, affirming that the arts are vital, enthralling and relevant to the well-being and enrichment of young people.

The 2009 Open Dream Ensemble cast members, all of whom are UNCSA graduates, are:

Lauren Culpepper, 2008 BFA in acting (Florence, S.C.)  
Dia Dearstyne, 2009 BFA in Dance (Auburn, N.Y.)  
Kjerstin Lysne, 2008 Arts Diploma in Contemporary Dance (Fargo, N.D.)  
Joshua Morgan, 2009 Arts Diploma in Acting (Montclair, N.J.)  
Peter Shanahan, 2004 Bachelor of Music (Petersburg, Va.)  
Rose Shields, 2007 BFA in Dance (Duluth, Ga.)  
James Stewart, 2007 M.M. Composition (Winston-Salem, N.C.)  
Brian Sutow, 2009 BFA Acting (Chicago, Ill.)

Following are bios on each cast member.

**Lauren Culpepper** was most recently in *The Dinner Party* at Lincoln Center Institute and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Sonnet Repertory Theatre, both in New York City. Favorite roles she has performed include Hecuba in *Trojan Women*, Annie in *The Game of Love*, and Sister Aloysious in *Doubt*. Two years ago she taught English and drama at a school in Bangalore, India. Culpepper is a professional babysitter in New York City where she works with kids of all ages one-on-one on a daily basis.

**Dia Dearstyne** studied under the direction of Sean McLeod at the New York Institute of Dance and Education in her hometown of Auburn, N.Y. A few years later she was accepted into the contemporary dance program at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where she not only studied under the incredible core faculty, but also had the great opportunity to work with choreographers like Ivy Baldwin, Jonah Bokaer, Alonzo King, Janice Brenner, and Larry Keigwin.

**Kjerstin Lysne** began her ballet training at the age of eight in her hometown of Fargo, North Dakota. Since then, dancing has transported her from Canada to Milwaukee and from North Carolina to France and London, as she has continued her training in dance. Lysne has experimented with other dance styles, such as tap, jazz, African, Flamenco, Caribbean, and contemporary dance. At the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, she studied with such guest artists as Neta Pulvermacher, Paul Matteson, Niki Juralewicz, Sarah Skaggs, and Jonah Bokaer.

**Joshua Morgan** studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Judith Blazer's 2005/2007 Company of the Artist's Crossing and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Performance credits include roles in *The Trojan Women*, *Godspell*, *Burn This*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Children of Eden*, *Othello*, *Show Boat*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *The Good Doctor*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Laramie Project*, and *Les Miserables*. Morgan has also worked as a Musical Director/Rehearsal Pianist for many shows within the New York/New Jersey/Pennsylvania tri-state area and coaches a handful of select students.

**Peter Shanahan** is a freelance musician in North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida. He plays with the Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Western Piedmont, Salisbury, and Carolina Chamber Symphonies in North Carolina, and with the Southwest Florida Symphony and Charleston Symphony. Shanahan is currently teaching elementary school music in Winston-Salem, N.C.

**Rose Shields** began dancing at the age of three and spent her early years training at the Duluth (Ga.) School of Ballet. While at UNCSA, she studied under and performed works by Dianne Markham, Sean Sullivan, Brenda Daniels, Sara Skaggs, Limón Dance Company, and Camille Brown. Through UNCSA, she choreographed two works, one of which was a solo performed at the Cunningham Studios in New York City in 2007. She has recently been working with and performing works by Bubba Carr and Dance 101 in Atlanta and continues to train as a performer. Shields is also currently working in the Gwinnett County Public School system in Georgia as a substitute teacher for grades K-12.

**James Stewart** is a performer, composer, and minister. He started taking piano lessons from his grandmother at the age of four. At 15, he was interim music minister of Temple Baptist Church in Monroe, La., and continues to be heavily involved in church music leadership. In 2001 he graduated from Toccoa Falls College in Northeast Georgia. He completed his studies with Dr. Lawrence Dillon at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts where he received a Master's of Music degree in musical composition. Stewart returns to Open Dream Ensemble for a third season as performer and composer.

**Brian Sutow** has performed professionally at Eclipse Theatre, Apple Tree Theatre, Light Opera Works, American Theatre Co., and Wildbait Theatre Co. His film work includes appearances in *High Fidelity*, *Train Wreck*, *A Bowl of Cherries* (a finalist at the Chicago TV Comedy Pilot Competition) and *The SunnySide Singers*, the last two of which he also wrote. Favorite roles have included Father Flynn in *Doubt*, Howie Corbett in *Rabbit Hole*, Uncle Sid in *Ah, Wilderness!*, and Jules in *Sunday in the Park*. As an artist and educator, Sutow has worked with the Northlight Theatre Program in Chicago.

Other UNCSA Alumni participating in the 2009 season are:

**Rebecca Nussbaum, General Manager**

Rebecca Nussbaum graduated from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in 1997 with a Bachelor of Music in Flute Performance. She earned her Master of Music degree from the University of Maryland. She has been a member of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, the Opera Festival of New Jersey and the Amarillo Symphony. Nussbaum has performed solo and chamber music recitals in a variety of venues, including the Japanese Embassy, the Arts Club of the District of Columbia, and the Banff Centre for the Arts. She has been teaching flute privately and coaching chamber music for more than 10 years. The 2009 season will be Nussbaum's fifth year of leadership with Open Dream Ensemble.

**Matt Cowart, Co-Writer, Co-Director, *Dream Machines***

Matt Cowart is the Co-Artistic Director of MUDasMAN productions with his collaborator, Isaac Klein. With MUDasMAN, Cowart has directed *Appalling Revelations: The Trials of Niles Kindley*, *dreamscape*, *Lacy Hoodoo*, and co-directed the *prophecy of isaiah*. Recent credits include: *On the Razzle* at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts; *Broadway: Three Generations* at the Kennedy Center (do-director with Lonny Price), and *Camelot* with the New York Philharmonic. He was a 2004/2005 Kenan Directing Fellow at the Lincoln Center Institute, is an alumnus of the 2005 Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab, and a member of the Society for Stage Directors and Choreographers. Cowart graduated from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in 2004 with his degree in directing.

**Isaac Klein, Co-Writer, Co-Director, *Dream Machines***

Isaac Klein is the Co-Artistic Director of MUDasMAN productions, which he founded with collaborator Matt Cowart. With MUDasMAN productions, Klein has conceived and co-directed *dreamscape*; and written, co-directed, and performed in *the prophecy of isaiah*. Other New York credits include: the critically acclaimed *Hot Cripple*; *Actors With Day Jobs (Where Eagles Dare)*; and *Camelot* with the New York Philharmonic. Playwriting credits include *Timebelt 76* and *Soon There Will Be Devastation*. Klein holds a BFA in Drama from the University of North Carolina School of The Arts, where his directing credits included *True West*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Virtual Reality*, *Orphans*, and the devised theatre series *Exposed*, for which he also served as head writer.

**Mollye Maxner, Co-writer, Director, *Peril on the Red Planet***

After graduating from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts high school program in Contemporary Dance in 1993, Mollye Maxner started her own physical theater company, Chimaera Physical Theater, and has spent the last 10 years traveling around the world performing and creating dances. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Choreography and Playwriting (summa cum laude) from Mount Holyoke College, and is currently enrolled in the directing program at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Maxner has co-written and directed three plays for Open Dream Ensemble.

**Ren LaDassor, Costume Designer**

Ren LaDassor has had a love of clothes since she first put them on. Some of her recent designs include *7 Days* (feature film) (Those Guys That Girl Film Production), *Launch of MUDasMAN* (MUDasMan Productions), *Baby With The Bathwater* (GroundUP Productions), *Kikibaby* (workshop) (Primary Stages-Lonny Price), *Adventures of Ezra Jack Keats* (Weston Playhouse). LaDassor is a graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, School of Design and Production.

**Travis McHale, Set and Lighting Designer**

Recently, designer Travis McHale has worked on lighting for *My Favorite Things* (starring Shirley Jones, directed by Lonny Price) (Colorado Festival of World Theatre), the world premieres of *Love Drunk* by Romulus Linney and *Freudian Slips* Off-Broadway (Abingdon Theatre Company), and has created scene design for the New York premiere of Keith Reddin's *All the Rage* (Manhattan Theatre Source). He has toured extensively for The Kennedy Center, Game Show Network, and Weston Playhouse. McHale, who serves on the board of New York's GroundUP Productions, earned his BFA in lighting design from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

**Shona Simpson of Winston-Salem is a Co-Writer for *Peril on the Red Planet***

Shona Simpson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and as a child her family moved to England and New Zealand before finally settling in Dallas, Texas. After college at Duke University, she chose to go to graduate school in English Literature, much to the surprise of her family, who are all scientists. After finishing her Ph.D. and teaching literature at several universities, most recently at Wake Forest in Winston-Salem, N.C., she decided that she still wasn't quite doing what she most wanted to do, which was to write stories and poems. So she stopped teaching and is now working on her first novel for children. She also plays the piano and is a long-distance runner. The 2009 season schedule will be announced at a later date.

Open Dream Ensemble will present two original shows in 2009:

***Dream Machines***, for grades K-5, is an amazing story about travel at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century told by Katharine Wright, sister of the famous Wright Brothers.

***Peril on the Red Planet***, for grades 3-8, is an incredible story about 13-year-old whiz-kid Diana's quest to save the Red Planet.

Open Dream Ensemble is a project of the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts, which incubates projects that sustain artists at every point in their creative development through strategic partnerships that capitalize on visionary thinking in the arts. For more information, visit [www.kenanarts.org](http://www.kenanarts.org).

The University of North Carolina School of the Arts ([www.uncsa.edu](http://www.uncsa.edu)) is the University of North Carolina's conservatory for the arts, dedicated entirely to the professional training of students possessing exceptional talents in the performing, visual and moving image arts. UNCSEA offers students a focused, intense, professional training at the high school, baccalaureate, and masters levels in its schools of Dance, Design and Production, Drama, Filmmaking and Music.

For more information, visit [www.opendreamensemble.com](http://www.opendreamensemble.com).