

AN EVENING OF WORK BY FACULTY, GUEST ARTIST, AND SENIOR STUDENTS
DEDICATION TO SANDRA NEELS

FRIDAY, DEC. 5 THROUGH
SATURDAY, DEC. 6 AT 7:30 p.m.
SUNDAY, DEC. 7 AT 2 p.m.



FALL DANCE SHOWCASE

JOHNSON THEATRE | 2025



WINTHROP
UNIVERSITY

Department of
Theatre and Dance



***Our Fall Dance Showcase concert is dedicated to the memory of
Professor of Dance Sandra Neels***

NOSEDIVE

Choreographer: DaMond Garner in collaboration with the cast

Music: "Piel" by Arca; "Blue Sky I Mirrored Glass" by Ellen Reid and James McVinnie; "Reborn" by Colin Stetson

Dancers: Miracle Etheridge#, Brian Franco-Winn, Rachel Fuller#, Noemi Gaitan, Kelly Ozust, Adelaide Sprawls, Kya Spurgeon, Gabrielle Tull, Dakarai Vann, Jesse Weber

Lighting Designer: John P. Woodey

In life, we fall many times and in many ways. NOSEDIVE is a world that we built to explore those ways. It is an attempt to actualize the images, the moments, or even the memories of how it feels to fall.

Shifting Encounters

Choreographer: Kayelyn Wilburn*

Music: "Pieces of Wood: II"; "Fiddlelicks: II. Second Movement"; "Fiddlelicks: I. Fuiris" all by Oliver Davis

Dancers: Valerie Kempton*, Adelaide Sprawls, Riley Stinson, Bailey Wallman

Lighting Designer: Biff Edge

"Shifting Encounters" is a work inspired by how we react and interact with the people around us. The piece's lighting was created before any movement was made. The lighting design acted as a catalyst to the creation of the structure of the piece in challenge to the usual way dance pieces are crafted. From lighting to movement this piece shifts the way we encounter and collaborate with others.

The Red Rose

Choreographer: Alicia Littlejohn#

Music: "A Rose in the Devil's Garden" by Demure; "When You're So in Love" by The Optimist; "Still God (Spoken Word) by Sean Be

Dancers: Miracle Etheridge#, Kyia Jones, Savannah Scott, Bailey Wallman

Lighting Designer: Shaylee Keogh

"The Red Rose" reflects the beauty and struggle found in love, guided by God's presence through every season. The dancers move through moments of longing, growth, and surrender, revealing how love becomes strongest when rooted in faith and trust in Him.

Another Wednesday

Choreographer: Emily Wiley

Music: "L'Artesienne Suite No. 1 Minuetto and Carillon" by Georges Bizet

Dancers: Kyia Jones, Newlove Jones, Valerie Kempton, Autumn Pearson*, Seyven Schlueter, Kya Spurgeon, Riley Stinson, Kayelyn Wilburn*

Lighting Designer: John P. Woodey

As we began choreographing our piece, Wednesday afternoon rehearsals were becoming significant. Progress made, steps learned, music understood. Now when this music plays, they dance by instinct.

Triptych: a life in three movements

Choreographer: Brian Franco-Winn

Music: "Falling Colour" by Vanbur; "The Twelve Theme" by Frederico Albanese;
"Freedom" by Tim Fain

Dancers: Brandon Barrientos#, Mikey Kesler#, Jesse Weber, Riley Stinson (US)

Lighting Designer: John P. Woodey

"Triptych: a life in three movements" traces one body through the shifting landscapes of time — from the playfulness of youth to the resolve of middle age and the quiet reflection of old age. Each stage reveals not a replacement of the self, but a transformation — an accumulation of movement, memory, and meaning, investigating how the body serves as both a vessel of memory and an agent of change.

~INTERMISSION~

Kitchen Sink Waltz

Rehearsal Director/Choreographer: Gabrielle Tull (2025)

Original Choreographer: Martha Brim (2010)

Music: *The Nutcracker* "Waltz of the Snowflakes" by Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Dancers: Rachel Fuller#, Alicia Littlejohn#, Miracle Parker, Kya Spurgeon,
Melonda Sullivan#, Molly Wilson

Lighting Design recreated by John P. Woodey

This is a restaging from the original work performed by The Power Company Collaborative in 2010. The work intends to juxtapose the reality of a suppressed woman and the veil that society externally perceives as 'the perfect housewife' of the 1950s.

The Feeling is Mutual

Choreographer: James Kopecky

Music: "Hungarian Dances No. 5, Allegro" by Johannes Brahms performed by
Budapest Symphony Orchestra; Csárdás by Vittorio Monti performed by Sarah
Nemtanu and Chilly Gonzales

Dancers: Noemi Gaitan, Adelaide Sprawls, Brooke Trigg, Kayelyn Wilburn*

Lighting Designer: John P. Woodey

We are multifaceted with complex emotions. One moment we are on top of the world, and the next we are curled up in a ball filled with self-doubt. Identity is not found through analysis, but rather exploration. Feel more; think less.

Enduring a Losing Race

Choreographer: Brandon Barrientos

Music: "New Energy-Live Through It" by Daniel Avery; "Painting Clouds" by Patrick Johnson

Dancers: Raina Centner, Valerie Kempton, Alina Luna, Elizabeth Mulinde, Czarkaveus O'Neal, Autumn Pearson*, Mikayla Rainey, Jaylese Savage, Savannah Scott, Riley Stinson, Brooke Trigg, Jesse Weber, Molly Wilson

Lighting Designer: Cydnee Corujo

"Enduring A Losing Race" highlights the challenges the Hispanic/Latino community faces and how their determination is often misread as greed rather than a pursuit of equitable treatment. It underscores the unity that emerges within the community during adversity, rooted in shared experiences that outsiders may not fully understand. Ultimately, the piece serves as a sociopolitical commentary on recent injustices toward undocumented immigrants, portraying their struggle to build stable lives within what often feels like an unwinnable race.

Threads of Fate

Choreographer: Melonda Sullivan#

Music: "Unconditioned, (Following, A Bird) "Out of the Room"" by Ezio Bosso

Dancers: Lauren Bloss, Sydney Burkhalter, Sekadia Craft, Addy Guinn, Kyia Jones, Alina Luna, Sara Montreuil*, Czarkaveus O'Neal, Autumn Pearson*, Hannah Pfenninger#, Kya Spurgeon

Lighting Designer: Layla Steele

"Threads of Fate" is based on the concept of The Red String of Fate Theory, an East Asian belief that an individual is connected to another by an invisible red thread. These people are destined to meet, regardless of time, place, or circumstances. This string symbolizes an unbreakable bond that can stretch, tangle, or knot, but will never break. The piece explores connections that extend beyond romantic relationships to include deep friendships and family connections.

Across the Table

Choreographer: Rachel Fuller

Music: "Orange Juice" by Noah Kahan

Dancers: Raina Centner, Mikayla Rainey, Jaylese Savage, Bailey Wallman, Jesse Weber

Lighting Designer: Ethan Ganzell*

This piece explores how traumatic experiences—rather than bringing people together—can also pull them apart. Such experiences move through all of us, familiar yet unresolved, leaving no single path toward navigating trauma. Each person's response is their own. I hope the audience not only empathizes with the characters, but also recognizes reflections of themselves within their journeys.

Crossfade

Original Choreography by Sandra Neels (1998), Restaged by Kelly Ozust

Music: "Shaman's Prayer" & "Waves" by Gabrielle Roth and The Mirrors

Dancers: Kyran Anderson, Alicia Littlejohn#, Adelaide Sprawls, Sincere Taylor, Emily Rose Walker, Kayelyn Wilburn*, Molly Wilson, Addy Guinn (US)

Lighting Design recreated by John P. Woodey

This piece was created by Sandra Neels in 1998 to honor the late dancer and choreographer, Ulysses Dove, whom she had performed with in The Merce Cunningham Dance Company in the 1970s. The original work featured 20 dancers all wearing hospital gowns, a reference to the HIV/AIDS crisis, which had claimed Dove's life. In our version, there are fewer dancers, and we have shifted the focus slightly in order to honor Sandra and all that she contributed to Winthrop and to the dance field. The original movement has been retained, but formations and relationships have shifted to demonstrate how we can each leave traces of influence whenever we move on, be that through death or through life transition. This iteration of "Crossfade" explores the building of community, the struggles that befall us as we move through life, and ultimately the trace we leave behind that will influence the next generation, just as Sandra has done.



Sandra Neels was born in Las Vegas on Sept. 21, 1939. Neels grew up in Portland, Oregon. With two parents who excelled in the arts, Neels was destined to join the performing arts field. Her father was a construction worker who enjoyed ballroom dancing. Her mother was a singer, entertainer and pianist for a dance school, where Neels first studied tap and ballet. After attending Portland State College for a couple of years, Neels moved to Seattle to study with modern dancer Martha Nishitani, and that's when she really fell in love with modern dance. Shortly after that, she moved to New York City, studied with modern dance pioneer Merce Cunningham, and he asked her to join his company.

Neels spent a decade (1963-73) traveling the world with Cunningham, who is considered one of the greatest American dance artists. This was followed by a prolific period during which she choreographed more than 300 works across diverse platforms—founding her own studio and company in New York City, creating pieces for the Utah Repertory Dance Theatre, musicals nationwide, and fashion shows in New York, Toronto, Winnipeg and Los Angeles.

She also appeared as a guest choreographer on *The Merv Griffin Show* and served as artist-in-residence at numerous universities.

Canada benefited from Neels' talents, where she created works for The Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers, the Manitoba Opera Association, and more. As an educator, she inspired students on faculty and summer sessions at institutions such as the University of South Florida, York University, Harvard, CalArts, UNC-Greensboro, and, of course, at Winthrop where she taught dance for 35 years.

Neels was a revered adjudicator and coach, working with Canada's arts councils, the National Endowment for the Arts and national rhythmic gymnastics competitions. She returned to her roots with Merce Cunningham's legacy in the last decade, showing off an amazing memory for choreography as she helped reconstruct seven of his works and restaging solos, including for the 2019 Cunningham Centennial at Brooklyn Academy of Music.

CREW

Director	Kelly Ozust
Stage Manager	Grayson Skidmore*
Assistant Stage Manager	Mary Savanna Truett*
Costume Designer	Leslie Cook
Assistant Makeup & Props	Abigail Bast
Technical Director	John P. Woodey
Costume Shop Supervisor	Cheralyn Lambeth
Box Office Manager	Brandon Dawson
Scene Shop TAs	Reese Dinacci, Cole Flournoy, Kiernan Hedlund*, Kayelyn Wilburn*
Costume Shop TAs	Sierra Dennison, Ethan Ganzell*, Mirrel Sharpe*
Box Office TAs	Kyran Anderson, Kyia Jones, Samiyah Jeffery, Val Kempton*, Taylor Morgan, Grayson Skidmore*
Costume Construction Crew	Savannah Amos, Ashley Colson*, Ash Hernick*, Alicia Littlejohn, Elis Long*, Kirk Lowe
Scenic Construction/Lighting Crew	Abigail Bast, Ashley Colson*, Cydnee Corujo*, Sierra Dennison, Ethan Ganzell*, Dorothy Hamrick, Shaylee Keogh, Kristin Lowery*
Running Crew	Talyn Allen, Chloey Frates, Alex Fleury*, Alyssa Pearce, Marlee Sellers, Elijah Shanks, Jason Tesh
Poster Designer	Molly Wilson

*Denotes members of Alpha Psi Omega National Theatre Honor Society

#Denotes members of National Dance Education Organization

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