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## UM Dancers Chosen to Perform at National Conference

Dennis Irwin

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## UM Dancers Chosen to Perform at National Conference

Students close out American College Dance Association meeting with special performance

APRIL 3, 2015 BY DENNIS IRWIN

Fa Tv Li Er Co SM Pr Sr



Mississippi The Dance Company performs in Meek Theatre on the campus of the University of Mississippi on Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2015 (Phillip Waller | Ole Miss Theatre)

OXFORD, Miss. – A dance group from the **University of Mississippi Department of Theater Arts** was selected to perform one of its original pieces at a gala to close out this year's American College Dance Association conference at Austin Peay University.

**Mississippi: the Dance Company**, led by second-year adjunct instructor Roxie Thomas Clayton, is composed of seven UM students: Gwyn Clemons, Courtney Borsierine, Christine Cooper, Sydney Gibson, Victoria Burrow, Blake Summers and Kaleb Mitchell.

Conference adjudicators said the piece, titled "Set in Motion," took them to another place in time.

One adjudicator noted, "It was like looking at old photographs and bringing those memories back to life, reminding us even though things change, the people and memories still exist," Clayton said

"Set in Motion" explores the grieving process. Clayton found inspiration from the story of Sarah Winchester and her life after losing her daughter and husband in the 1800s. Winchester attributed her misfortune to her family business (Winchester Rifles) and moved to California to begin building a house, a process that continued for 38 years.

The house was riddled with staircases and doors to nowhere, which Clayton channeled into her choreography. Clayton says her biggest joy came from watching the Ole Miss dancers bring the piece to life and that she loved surrendering her artistic ideas and desires to the dancers to create an experience for the viewer.

"The dancers were able to breathe life into this idea," Clayton said. "I never want the observers to talk about the dance or the actual steps. It's about the experience and the piece (should make them) them think."

Choreographing a dance piece is about an emotional attachment and the creative process, Clayton said. Her process involved a great deal of research, as if writing a book on the subject. She worked to develop costumes, emotional shifts of the audience, movements and gestures of the dancers, and to blend lighting, props, set design and sound to immerse and inspire audiences.

For Clayton, this has been her modus operandi since she was very young.

"I feel like I have always been moving and creating in some way or another," Clayton said. "Ever since I was young, I have loved to create movement and put it on bodies, watch it evolve and turn into actual dance."

For more information on the Department of Theatre Arts and Mississippi: The Dance Company, visit <http://theatre.olemiss.edu/dancetraining.html>.

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OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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### Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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### Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

“James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier,” a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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