



stage

THEATER » DANCE » PROFILES

BY AMY KEPFERLE

Making Connections

PARTNERING DANCE WITH PARKINSON'S



RICK HERMANN

TO EMULATE the feeling of walking on pins and needles that some of her neurologically impaired dance students have told her they experience on a regular basis, Pam Kuntz recently sat on a toilet seat until her legs went numb.

"All I could think about was the excruciating pain and the confusion because I couldn't feel my feet anymore," Kuntz says of the ensuing minutes during which she tried to ambulate normally, but instead ended up struggling to drag her aching limbs from one step to the next.

"I see that walk sometimes with folks in class," says Kuntz, a choreographer and dancer who's well known for pairing community members with professional dancers in order to explore a wide range of social and personal issues through performance. "Now I get it: How else do you do it?"

Being empathetic to her students is one of the reasons Kuntz embarked on this experiment, but it wasn't the only one. She says she wants to know what they're feeling, but she also wants

to understand how to better instruct them.

For the past year, Kuntz has been teaching the aforementioned class to as many as 22 students a week. Some have Parkinson's Disease, while others are struggling with multiple sclerosis (MS) or other brain-related impairments that affect a person's ability to control their movements.

In an effort to generate awareness about the need for more research to find cures for such neurological diseases, Kuntz recently embarked upon a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds to make a film to submit to the American Academy of Neurology Foundation's Neuro Film Festival.

On her Kickstarter page, Kuntz says the five-minute color film, which will feature one of her students—dancer and Parkinson's patient Rick Hermann—will show "the grace of his movement when he's dancing and the challenges he faces when he's not."

Although this story was originally designed to urge community members to help Kuntz raise the \$5,000 goal the campaign needed in pledges by Dec. 1 in order to receive the funding, as of press time the project had surpassed its goal by a few hundred dollars.

That's good news for Kuntz, who says in addition to production costs, pledges will go to help post-production marketing of the film and its message.

"In addition to submitting to the Neuro Film Festival, I intend to submit a slightly different version of this film to other film festivals," Kuntz says. "The more pledges we receive, the more we're able to increase efforts to get this film seen by as many people as possible."

To get a better sense of what Hermann's been able to achieve through dance, go to Kuntz's Kickstarter page to see for yourself.

The short, black-and-white explanatory video features a thin man who, at first, seems to be moving only his right arm in order to get the rest of his body revved up. Soon, though, his arms lift above his head, arcing in graceful, studied motion. He whirls, twists and, eventually, brings his hands to floor level with his bare feet. It's a beautiful thing. ☺

To be directed to the "Partnering Dance with Parkinson's" Kickstarter campaign, go to www.kuntzandcompany.org and click on the accompanying link

doit

STAGE

FRI., NOV. 25

STAND-UP FINALS: As part of the 32nd annual Seattle International Standup Comedy Competition, attend a night of finals at 8pm at the Mount Baker Theatre's Walton Theatre, 104 N. Commercial St. Tickets are \$20-\$25.

📞 734-6080 OR WWW.MOUNTBAKERTHEATRE.COM

NOV. 25-26

MIXED BAG: Attend "Games Galore" shows at 8pm Fri.-Sat. at the Uprfront Theatre, 1208 Bay St. At 10pm, stick around for "Director's Cut." Tickets are \$8-\$10. P.S. If anyone was looking to score tickets to Rooster shows last week, the gigs were rescheduled for Dec. 2-3

📞 733-8855 OR WWW.THEUPFRONT.COM

THE ANDREWS BROTHERS: The song and dance of *The Andrews Brothers* shows at 7:30pm every Friday and Saturday through Dec. 17 at Mount Vernon's RiverBelle Dinner Theatre, 100 E. Montgomery. Tickets are \$20-\$40.

📞 WWW.RIVERBELLEDINNERTHEATRE.COM

OVER THE RIVER: The comedic *Over the River and Through the Woods*—billed as "a story of love, loyalty and lasagna"—opens this weekend with showings at 8pm Fri.-Sat. at the Anacortes Community Theatre, 918 M Ave. Tickets are \$18.

📞 WWW.ACTTHEATRE.COM

NOV. 25-27

BABES IN TOYLAND: Expect fantastical sets and costumes when you attend *Babes in Toyland* at 7pm Fri.-Sat. and 2pm Sun. at Mount Vernon's McIntyre Hall, 2501 E. College Way. Tickets are \$18-\$35. A special "pay what you can" performance takes place at 2pm Saturday.

📞 WWW.MCINTYREHALL.ORG

NOV. 25-30

PLAID TIDINGS: The boys from *Forever Plaid* come back from the great beyond to share the seasonal spirit at opening performances of *Plaid Tidings* at 8pm Fri.-Sat. at the Bellingham Theatre Guild, 1600 H St. Tickets are \$8-\$12. There will also be a Nov. 30 performance to benefit the Whatcom Council on Aging. Tickets to that show are \$25.

📞 WWW.BELLINGHAMTHEATREGUILD.COM

NOV. 30-DEC. 1

THE CHRISTMAS TOY SHOP: Michelle Vacca's *The Christmas Toy Shop* opens this week with dinner theatre shows at 6:30pm Wed.-Thurs. at Lynden's Claire vg Thomas Theatre, 655 Front St. Tickets are \$8-\$12 generally, \$30 for the dinner theatre gigs.

📞 WWW.CLAIREVGTHEATRE.ORG

DEC. 1-3

MUSIC BOX: Local actors will be joined by local musicians for the latest iteration of "Music Box" at performances at 8pm this coming weekend and next at the iDIOM Theater, 1418 Cornwall Ave. Tickets are \$10.

📞 WWW.IDIOMTHEATER.COM

DANCE

SAT., NOV. 26

CONTRA DANCE: Tonight's Contra Dance takes place from 7-10pm at the Fairhaven Library, 1117 12th St. Suggested donation is \$8-\$10.

📞 WWW.BELLINGHAMCOUNTRYDANCE.ORG

DEC. 1-3

FALL INTO DANCE: Six new choreographic works can be seen when WWU's Department of Theatre and Dance presents "Fall Into Dance" at 7:30pm Thurs.-Sat. at the Performing Arts Center. Tickets are \$8-\$12.

📞 650-6146