

## Final Report for 2014-15 IN THE RAW Series

The UAlbany Performing Arts Center debuted its IN THE RAW Series in the 2014-15 season. The venue's experimental Lab Theatre was adapted to create a studio setting with 100 seats. Brian Brooks Moving Company and Keigwin + Company performed on November 2 and April 9, respectively, both to sold out houses. Funding from the Dance Alliance was used to support the artist fees.

Striving to afford the Capital Region with an alternative way to view dance from the traditional stage setting, the performances were presented in the raw, so to speak, with technical amenities at a minimum and performers up close and personal with the audience. A review in the Times Union after the first performance helped underscore this purpose of the series: *"When you watch great dancers from a distance—say two dozen rows back from the proscenium stage—you admire their craft. When you watch them from a few feet away, you fall in love."*

Conversation between the artists and audience was a key component in the structure of the series. Brian Brooks introduced each individual work in the program and then answered a few questions following the performance. KEIGWIN + COMPANY culminated their performance with a Q&A that was moderated by company Executive Director Andrea Lodico Welshons, an Albany native. Both performances were followed by a reception in the theatre lounge so that the dialogue could continue.

The opportunity for outreach into the community was offered to both companies. Brian Brooks had to decline since uninterrupted rehearsal time and space was most desirable and critical for him and his company at that juncture. Several KEIGWIN + COMPANY dancers arrived in Albany early so that three master classes could take place at Skidmore College and one more at Albany Academy for Girls, providing an experience for approximately 125 students. All of the master classes were coordinated with the assistance of the UAlbany Performing Arts Center but financial arrangements and compensation were strictly between the company and the academic institution.

Reaction to the series has been overwhelmingly positive. Testimonials from some audience members are included below. Plans to continue in 2015-16 are underway with Kate Weare Company and ZviDance participating.

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*"I felt that the performance experience was enhanced by the In the Raw format. It is rare to see such a close connection between the audience and the performers, particularly the choreographer. Brian [Brooks] gave us insight into his creative process after each piece which aided the development of my interpretation of the dance."*

*"The In the Raw setting was a unique way to experience dance and I wish more choreographers would take advantage of similar set ups. I am really glad that I had the opportunity to see the Brian Brooks Moving Company in such an intimate setting."*

*"When Brooks stepped out of his role as a dancer and choreographer to talk with us about his intention of the pieces and to answer our questions, it enabled me to think of the dances in new ways and also to gain a greater appreciation for the work that was presented."*

*"My 5 year old daughter was breathless.....she understood how special it was to meet the K+C dancers that she had just seen perform. They made a wonderful fuss over her. During the program, I heard her whisper to herself "this is beautiful" and then "I can't breathe it's so pretty." She went to school the next morning and the first things out of her mouth were about the grown up dance show she had gone to see."*

*"I loved the Keigwin + Company performance. I thought it was very creative and visually pleasing and I also liked the popular tunes (in addition to the more classical ones) to which they danced. Overall I can only congratulate you for all the great performances you are bringing to campus. You are doing a fabulous job!!!"*