

Performers Bios and Performance Descriptions for

Earth Beat: A Celebration of World Cultures through Storytelling, Puppetry, Dance, and Music

PERFORMER: MICHAEL J. VETERE III

Michael J. Vetere III teaches the Creative Dramatics and Puppetry courses at Illinois State University in Normal, IL for Theatre, Art, and Education majors. He received his M.F.A. from Virginia Commonwealth University in Theatre Pedagogy and his B.F.A. from West Virginia University in Creative Dramatics, Puppetry, and Youth Theatre. He taught and directed creative dramatics and puppetry programs in West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the DC area. Several of Michael's performance credits include The Puppet Co., Spectrum Puppets, Milwaukee Rep, and Bread and Puppet Theatre. He has trained at Banff



Institute of Puppetry, Sandglass Institute of Puppetry and the Prague Puppetry Workshop. Mr. Vetere is a published author with articles appearing in *The Puppetry Journal* and *Teaching Tolerance* and has presented workshops and papers at state, regional, and national conferences on various topics in the arts, education, and civic engagement. Michael was highlighted as one of the top 40, under-40 international puppet artists in *Puppetry International*. Currently, he directs the Saturday Creative Drama program at Illinois State University for youth in grades kindergarten through sixth grade.

Presenting:

Michael will share a story indigenous to Asia called "The Monkey King and the Mangos" using two-dimensional puppets and storytelling.

SAHIRA ZEDARÉ

Sahira Zedaré is the founding director of Synergy Rhythm and Dance and the Synergy Sirens Dance Company in Bloomington-Normal, IL. Sahira has performed across the US and in Europe, blending Egyptian *raqs sharqi* technique with her extensive background in jazz, tap, and modern dance. Sahira has over twenty-five years of training and performance experience in many dance forms, having studied with Ariel Weiss Holyst, Shelly Oliver, Sara Semonis, Kaeshi Chai, Tamalyn Dallal, Hadia, and many more outstanding master teachers. Sahira currently devotes her energies to bellydance, a dance of deep beauty and boundless joy. She dances to embody the music and entertain the audience, as each performance provides an opportunity to be an ambassador for this art form. Her style blends Egyptian, Turkish, and American technique with a variety of world dance forms. Sahira's skills include drumming with *doumbek*, frame drum, and *riqq*, for which she's studied with Carmine Guida and Patricia Storm, among others. Dancing and drumming generate a joyous synergy!
www.synergyrad.com



Presenting:

During our museum tour, Sahira Zedare will share a variety of Bellydance styles, from American fusion to Turkish Romany to Traditional Middle Eastern. Get ready for a scimitar, finger cymbals, a loud drum, and more! We're hoping you'll clap and shimmy along with Sahira!

PERFORMER: TANYA PICARD

Tanya Picard is a choreographer and teacher from the Chicago area who took her first tap class at the age of 6, her first Luigi class at the age of 10, and has never stopped moving since. In New York, in addition to studying jazz with Luigi, she has studied modern at the Martha Graham Dance Center and tap with Bob Audy and Charles "Cookie" Cook. She is also a lifelong student of Gus Giordano, and last summer was awarded scholarships for 3 of her students to take master classes at the Giordano studio. She did her graduate work at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis where she served as Artistic Director of Pasticcio Dance Ensemble, a contemporary regional company. While in Minneapolis, she also worked as choreographer for the Renaissance Faires in Chicago and Boston, creating the original *Gypsy Dancers*. In Chicago, in addition to teaching technique classes and directing an adult tap ensemble, she received grants to produce two original works: *Amelia and Leonardo* and *Elements*; and in 2009, she organized a two-day Luigi workshop and produced *Never Stop Moving*, a special performance honoring Luigi's influence.



Tanya has been studying tap with nationally renowned tap dancer Jimmy Payne, Jr., of Chicago, and was delighted that the members of Impulse Tap Ensemble were able to spend some time taking several master classes from Payne and his sister and dance partner Sarah this spring. Payne created and choreographed a piece for Impulse that they call *Jimmy's Beat*, which premiered in their June concert. Tanya is excited about working with the members of Impulse Tap to create their 2011-2012 season. Her favorite quote is: "To dance, put your hand over your heart and listen to the sound of your soul."

Presenting: Percussive Dance: A Global Phenomenon

Havelock Ellis wrote in *The Dance of Life*: "The significance of dancing, in the wide sense, thus lies in the fact that it is simply an intimate concrete symbol of a general rhythm, that general rhythm which marks, not life only, but the universe..." Indeed, dance in general and percussive dance in specific is a cross-cultural global phenomenon. We, as humans, feel the rhythm of our heartbeats, experience the sight and sound of waves crashing on the shore, and hear the wind rustling the leaves in the trees. People all over the world have used the drum to express this cosmic heartbeat and have created dances that employ audible footbeats and/or rhythms produced by patting the body. Our presentation is a tour of cross-cultural percussive dance from the cradle of civilization through West Africa to Europe and the United States.

PERFORMER: SHANNON EPPLETT

Shannon is a PhD student in Theatre History at University of Illinois. His area of research is the history of Chicago's Off-Loop Theatre movement, particularly the manner in which the success of Steppenwolf Theatre Company has contributed to the growth of the theatre scene in the city since the 1970s. In March 2011, he presented the paper *An Ensemble of Supporting Players: Chicago's Immediate Theatre* at the Mid-American Theatre Conference, and in May 2011, he presented *The Influence of the Steppenwolf Script on Chicago's Off Loop Theatre* at the first Chicago Theatre History Symposium. Prior to graduate school, Shannon worked as a director and theatre administrator in Chicago. He founded Radiant Theatre with Tanya Picard, and together they created several works that mixed dance and theatre. From 2000–2009, Shannon was the Operations Coordinator for the Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago and had the opportunity to work with such artists as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Merce Cunningham, Joe Goode, Eiko and Koma, and Urban Bush Women. In 2011, he directed a movement-based production of Lee Breuer's *Red Horse Animation* at Illinois State University.



Presenting: *The Earth on Turtle's Back*

The Earth on Turtle's Back is a creation story from the Onandaga (Iroquois) tribe. The story recounts how life on Earth began: when the Skywoman fell to Earth and was saved by the birds and animals, who provide a home for her on the back of the Great Turtle. Using stick puppets and a document projector, the presentation is a mix of the traditional and high tech. The piece has been described as a mediated fireside story.