

Darrell Hoemann/The News-Gazette

From left, Jonathan Ustin, Sarah Haas and David Singer work on Haas' Eco-Mobile in a grassy area on South Goodwin Avenue in Urbana earlier this month.

UI GRADUATES

# IMMERSED IN THEIR ART

Dancers plan to hit the road in mobile dwelling/performance structures

By MELISSA MERLI  
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URBANA — Hallie Aldrich and Sarah Haas, who both finished master of fine arts degrees in dance this spring at the University of Illinois, believe the struggle to create a dance career that pays a living wage is pretty daunting.



ALDRICH

"You can be sure you'll never have enough money unless you're one of the few hundreds who work for established dance or ballet companies," Aldrich said. "Most people go into related businesses, like Pilates or bodywork, or else into teaching, in order to pay the bills."

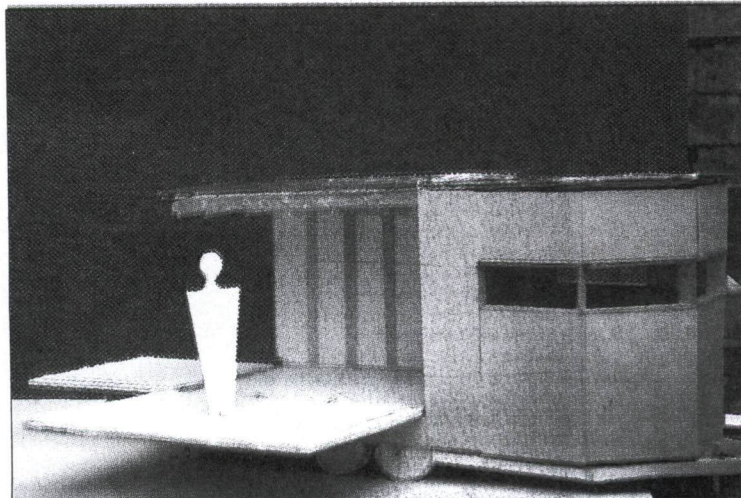


HAAS

Those and other alternatives do not appeal to Aldrich, a choreographer, and Haas, a movement artist.

So they are creating their own and somewhat unusual dance careers that will take them on the road for residencies and performances at universities and community centers.

What's more, they will travel, live and perform in their own ecologically sensitive mobile dwelling/performance structures they designed, with help from architecture Professor Mark Taylor.



A model of Hallie Aldrich's future Eco-Mobile.

"We basically call it an Eco-Mobile," Haas said. "Parts of the wall will come down into a stage space. When you're done, you crank the wall up."

Jan Erkert, head of the UI Dance Department, called the project entrepreneurial and imaginative.

"The project is really exciting — the idea of building their own space in which they can live and perform and be mobile," she said. "Dance artists often live in untraditional manners, but these

two are making a conscious effort to sculpt a life in which they can travel and perform.

"They don't have to have money for an apartment. They can create residencies around their Eco-Mobile. They are expanding their art but also building a whole lifestyle around it. They're experimenting and blazing new ground in integrating all these things."

Please see DANCE, G-2

## Dancers seeking contributions for projects

URBANA — Dancers Sarah Haas and Hallie Aldrich would certainly like financial contributions to build their Eco-Mobiles, which will combine dwelling and performance spaces. Donations are tax-deductible, via their fiscal sponsor, the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center.

They also seek sponsorships from businesses that would like to contribute materials, like solar panels.

But perhaps more importantly, they would love to have help building their Eco-Mobiles, especially from people who are experienced in construction and have the appropriate tools.

The two, plus friends, are working from 8 a.m. to noon and

struction site and the University of Illinois greenhouses.

Donating their time so far to the Eco-Mobile cause are Jonathan Ustin, a doctor of musical arts degree candidate in jazz studies; Chantelle Hoagland, a dancer and CEO of a startup company; and Jessica Cornish, who will be a senior in dance this fall at the UI.

Also helping is Aldrich's friend, Dave Singer, a Seattle resident with building experience. Like the others, he is volunteering his time and expertise.

"It's fantastic. I love it," Singer said of the project.

Added Aldrich: "He said it could go one of 1,000 directions."

People willing to help may contact Haas or Aldrich

# You'll no a few cha on funny

By AUBRIE WILLIAMS  
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"Cul de Sac," a comic strip from Richard Thompson, will join the Su pages of The News-Gazette, beginning

Thompson's work tells the tale of Alice Otterloop, a willful preschooler, and her explorations in and interactions with the world around her, including her friends, parents, teacher — and the occasional guinea pig.

The strip, which originally appeared in February 2004 on the pages of The Washington Post, is now read in more than 150 newspapers worldwide. Thompson recently was named the National Cartoonist Society's Cartoonist of the Year. Past artists to achieve this honor included Charles Schulz ("Peanuts"), Bill Watterson ("Calvin and Hobbes") and Scott Adams ("Dilbert").

The inclusion of "Cul de Sac" is one of the latest changes made as the result of The News-Gazette's Stay or Go Comics Poll. The purpose of the campaign, which took place in February, was to let readers express their ideas to the editorial staff by voting, either online or by paper ballot, for their top three comics to "Stay" and their top three comics to "Go."

Readers also were given the opportunity to check out new strips, dubbed "Guest Comics," that appear in other papers and comment on them, with an eye toward including one or more in the daily or Sunday comics pages.

"Cul de Sac" had appeared in the latest round of "Guest Comics."

To open a position for "Cul de Sac" in the Sunday section, editors chose to say farewell to "The Middletons," created by Ralph Dunagin and Dana Summer. "The Middletons" finished No. 31 — next to last — in the "Stay" portion of the February poll, and No. 31 in the "Go" poll, leading editors to believe readers did not have strong feelings for the strip.

Fans of "Judge Parker" and "Rex" welcome additional changes as a result of the poll — which finished No. 9 and No. 11 appear in the daily pages — will not section as well.

"Judge Parker" and "Rex" Morg Nicholas P. Dallis has have lasted; each, will replace "Rose is Rose," the bottom of the poll at No. 25.

In the daily pages, a single "Guest" comic to appear, with a new comic at Next up in that position will be "Cand" illustrated by Darrin Bell. "Cand" characters, including young, black to provide social and political cc world.

Initial changes to reflect the recent Comics poll were made in April, all of "Big Nate," which finished "Stay" poll, from the daily and Sunday changes included moving all comic section — with the exception of t

Alic star

'Rex' will con Gaz

Rost so far has heard no complaints about the striking piece of community

I think it's cool for people to make things made from recycled material."

life as a jazz musician on the South

a men's chorus founded by Stephen

about.

## AMARA YOGA AND ARTS

# Fundraiser will benefit the Piatt County Animal Shelter

By The News-Gazette

URBANA — Amara Yoga and Arts will present a fundraiser show and yoga class on Friday evening for the Piatt County Animal Shelter.

Amara seeks local artists willing to donate art representing animals for the event, "Animalia: An Art Show for Animal Welfare." Any and all media are welcome. The event will feature the show, starting at 7 p.m., and a buy-and-take sale that evening. Each piece will cost \$50.

All proceeds will go to the animal shelter, founded in November 2007 in response to the rapidly growing stray and abandoned animal population in Piatt County. The nonprofit organization is dedicated to establishing an animal shelter in Piatt County and to educating the public about the most important way to solve the problem of stray and abandoned animals: spay and neuter pets.

The shelter's long-term goal is to establish a full-service Humane Soci-

ety/Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals organization capable of caring for both large and small animals. For information on the shelter, visit [www.piattanimals.org/index.html](http://www.piattanimals.org/index.html).

As part of "Animalia," Grace Giorgio will teach an Animalia Yoga class from 7 to 7:45 p.m. Friday. The by-donation class will teach animal poses from the familiar such as adho mukha svanasana (down dog) to more exotic poses such as simhasana (lion pose) to kurmasana (tortoise pose). All levels and ages wel-

come.

One does not need to take the yoga class to enjoy the art show, which will have an opening reception during and after the class. People who wish to donate art for the show may drop it off, by appointment or during studio hours, through Wednesday at Amara on the east side of Lincoln Square Village in Urbana.

For more information, contact Kathryn Fitzgerald at [kathryn@amarayoga.com](mailto:kathryn@amarayoga.com) or Giorgio at [gracegiorgio@gmail.com](mailto:gracegiorgio@gmail.com).

## DANCE

Continued from G-1

Last week, Haas and Aldrich, who know of no other dance artists who have created similar mobile dwelling/performance spaces, and friends were in the beginning stages of adding the structure to Haas' custom-made flatbed trailer.

Despite the recent and prolonged heat wave, the two and volunteers have worked on Haas' project outside each day in a grassy area on South Goodwin Avenue in Urbana, next to the UI's 2011 Solar Decathlon House building site.

Each woman's flatbed trailer has the same design, but the blueprints for their homes diverge, with Aldrich settling on a modular design and Haas trying to use as many reclaimed materials as possible.

"Sarah's is one that could be built with regular materials, like reclaimed lumber available to anyone," Aldrich said.

"Mine is a modular-based. You have to know how to put it together before you order the materials."

For her Eco-Mobile, Haas purchased for \$50 a clawfoot bathtub she plans to put in her kitchen, which will be a bit bigger than her bathroom.

"For me, it will be like camping out," said Haas, who will travel with a cooler rather than a refrigerator.

Aldrich is forgoing a tub for a shower space. Each Eco-Mobile bathroom, though, will have a composting toilet.

The bedroom and living room in Haas' will be combined, with a platform, with storage underneath, that will rise up from the floor and serve as a bed or table.

Also a Trager bodyworker, Aldrich will divide her living space in two to include a simple, neutral studio where she will have her massage table and where dancers can make pieces and perform.

Outside the home, Aldrich's stage will drop from the two

ends and one side of the Eco-Mobile. Haas's will drop from one side wall and a back wall.

And they'll be able to travel anywhere year-round: Each home will be insulated to accommodate four-season living.

For energy, Aldrich hopes to install solar panels, marine-size wind turbines and LED (light-emitting diode) lights.

On a tighter budget, Haas would like to eventually incorporate solar panels. She does plan a filtrated rainwater reservoir, with the water collected from a slightly slanted roof with gutters.

Each Eco-Mobile will be 24 feet long and will conform to highway regulations as well as rules for parking recreational vehicles at parks and campsites.

Haas and Aldrich consider their Eco-Mobiles not only a way to start off their post-MFA dance careers but also as part of the "tiny home" movement and as models for the working poor.

A Chicago-based artist, Haas, 33, hopes to take her Eco-Mobile on the road in late August. She has set up dance residencies in Detroit, at Austin Peay University in Clarksville, Tenn., and possibly in Utah. Locally, she will take her Eco-Mobile to the CU Pride Fest from 4 p.m. Aug. 20 to 2 a.m. Aug. 21 in Urbana.

A Seattle native, Aldrich, 39, might have to build her Eco-Mobile in Seattle because most of her building materials likely won't arrive in Urbana to meet her timeline.

Once she has her Eco-Mobile, she will set up a home base in Seattle and then tour through the Rocky Mountains, starting in Boulder, Colo.

"One aspect of this is that I'll be able to connect to nature. It's a really important part of my artistic work," she said. "And the first place I want to go is my favorite place, which is the mountains."

Along the way, she will connect with local dance artists to perform contact improv, her

specialty, and other forms of dance.

Both women are paying for their Eco-Mobiles, with Haas putting the charges on her credit card. She bought a 1999 Dodge Ram to pull her Eco-Mobile; UI dance alum Will Schneider gave Aldrich a '92 Dodge Ram that will accommodate group tours.

The two seek donations for their nonprofit project and had two fundraising events earlier this summer. But the first made only \$20 and the second, \$80. (Please see sidebar.)

Erkert is particularly delighted about the Eco-Mobile project because Haas was among UI students who helped transform the old Art Annex into two graduate student dance studios, using recycled materials.

"She was part of the student group that designed and built the first space," Erkert said. "It's exciting to see that interaction with architects be carried into a whole other project now."

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