

Interviews with SCVTHS Alums



Pictured from left to right; Maureen Glennon Clayton, Alyson Monaco, Audra Hofacker, Anna Gichan

On May 2, 2021 four SCVTHS dance alumni performed in *Outside the Lines*, a new site-specific dance series launched by SCVTHS teacher, Maureen Glennon Clayton. *Outside the Lines* mission is to present immersive site-specific dance experiences throughout the state of New Jersey. By moving dance out of the theater and into the unique landscape of the Garden State, we create unique, visceral experiences for our audiences. *Outside the Lines* will inspire an imaginative way of looking and thinking about dance. We aim to provide cultural experiences to the diverse communities of the state of New Jersey.

Maureen was so thrilled to see our SCVTHS dance alumni all together and asked them to answer some questions about their time at vo-tech and what they are up to currently.

Enjoy reading their stories below!

Alyson Monaco

1. What year did you graduate from SCVTHS? 2004

2. Were you full-time or share-time? Share-time

3. If share-time, what was your sending school? Bridgewater-Raritan HS

4. Please write a line or two about your experience at vo-tech.

Before I became a student at vo-tech, I had only ever taken ballet, so the program launched me into a love for everything else. The training I received improved my technique and artistry in leaps and bounds by the time I graduated. I will always proudly say that my time in the dance department was the BEST time I had in high school.

5. What did you do after high school? Please list college and degree.

After high school I attended the Boston Conservatory as a dance major from 2004-2006. I left Boston at the beginning of my junior year and started working as a dancer and choreographer. I became the resident choreographer of three theatre companies here in NJ, taught at studios, performed in musicals, received various fitness certifications, and joined the Nikki Manx Dance Project in 2015. Along the way I started choreographing and costuming productions for the arts high school in Elizabeth, and was so inspired by the work that I went back to college to finish my degree. I received my AFA degree in dance from County College of Morris, and shortly after was awarded my alternate-route Dance Teaching Certification.

6. Please share any highlights of your career thus far.

Life is never dull when you are in the arts field! I've had a lot of exciting performance experiences in dance and theatre, and opportunities to dive into other creative outlets - like costuming full musicals! I am proud to say I was the founding choreographer of the first, fully inclusive theatre group in Union County - The CAU Community Players. I was also the choreographer (and a performer) for the first production to open the House of Independents in Asbury Park.

7. What are you currently doing for work, in the field of dance and/or outside the field?

I currently dance for the Nikki Manx Dance Project and also act as the company's Rehearsal Director. If all goes to plan, I will finally be taking over a full-time dance position at the arts high school in Elizabeth this coming fall. I have been working within the school and district choreographing, costuming, and substitute teaching for almost a decade, so I am excited to become an "official" member of the team. It will sound incredibly cheesy, but I hope to create the environment in my own classroom that I loved so much being a student at vo-tech.

Audra Hofacker

1. What year did you graduate from SCVTHS? 2012

2. Were you full-time or share-time? Share-time

3. If share-time, what was your sending school? Bridgewater Raritan Regional High School.

4. Please write a line or two about your experience at vo-tech.

The Dance Program at vo-tech really opened my eyes to what I was missing from my dance studio training. Learning subjects such as choreography, lighting, anatomy, and dance history taught me that dance was very much mental as it was physical. There was a degree of self-discipline and accountability that you needed in order to be successful in the program which I still carry with me to this day. My time spent at vo-tech made the transition into college a breeze as I had already been familiar with subjects such as improvisation, dance methods, and labanotation. The dance program and my teachers there introduced me to the various ways in which I could turn dance into a career, and attending the school definitely changed the trajectory of my life. I am forever grateful to the program and always think back on that time in my life fondly!

5. What did you do after high school? Please list college and degree.

After high school I graduated magna cum laude from Montclair State University with a BFA in Dance and minor in Business.

6. Please share any highlights of your career thus far.

Some highlights of my career thus far have been doing the Welcome Show on the castle stage at Disney World in Orlando, Florida as a character performer, working in Development and Outreach for NYC based dance company Damage Dance, performing Panorama at the Martha Graham Studio Theater, and being selected as the 2017 Emerging Choreographer at my alma mater, Somerset County Vo-Tech!

7. What are you currently doing for work, in the field of dance and/or outside the field?

Currently I freelance choreograph and teach for a handful of studios throughout New Jersey, I have brought my choreography to some festivals in the tristate area including the HATCH Presenting Series, Equilibrium Showcase, and Amalgamate Artist Series 10. I dance for Maureen Glennon's NJ modern based company moe-tion dance theater as well as continue to audition for other projects. I also substitute teach in the public school system for three different school districts, and am currently attending Rutgers University obtaining a Masters in Dance Education and certification in Middle School Math.

Danielle Ramon

1. What year did you graduate from SCVTHS? 2007

2. Were you full-time or share-time? Full-time. My mom and I believed SCVTHS would offer a better dance education than my sending school (Franklin)

3. If share-time, what was your sending school? N/A

4. Please write a line or two about your experience at vo-tech.

The dance and choreography program at Vo-Tech was the best dance education I received as a young dancer. In this program, I was taught what it means to train like a professional dancer; I learned about technique and why it is important. I learned proper etiquette in taking a dance class and how to prepare for the stage. Dance studio education could not compare to the level of education I received at Vo-Tech, and because of that, I was more prepared than most of my classmates in college. I was also taught how to express my deepest emotions through choreography and was chosen to present my piece at the NHSDF.

5. What did you do after high school? Please list college and degree.

After high school I graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a BFA in Dance and Choreography. While attending college, I performed with a modern dance company, RVA Dance Collective.

6. Please share any highlights of your career thus far.

Highlights of my career include learning from numerous prestigious dancers, seeing my choreography being performed on stage, guest teaching at Vo-Tech, and performing!

7. What are you currently doing for work, in the field of dance and/or outside the field?

Currently I am a company dancer for Maureen Glennon in moe-tion dance theater, I teach at a local dance studio as well as in an elementary school, and hold a Pilates Mat certification.

Anna Gichan

1. What year did you graduate from SCVTHS? 2013

2. Were you full-time or share-time? Share-time

3. If share-time, what was your sending school? Hunterdon Central Regional High School

4. Please write a line or two about your experience at vo-tech.

My experiences at vo-tech were, like most high schoolers, a challenging experience due to the nature of being a teenager. But I'm thankful I went to vo-tech for the rigor of the program and the high expectations of my dance teachers who really did prepare me for a BFA program. I still want to make them proud, even years out of graduating. Going to vo-tech creates a community which I'm glad to know will always be there.

5. What did you do after high school? Please list college and degree.

B.F.A Rutgers University Mason Gross School of the Arts

Study Abroad Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance

6. Please share any highlights of your career thus far.

Working with Olga Rabetskaya especially on the film #freebelarus and performing in MA, presenting my own work at the Cooper Hewitt Museum in NYC, receiving the BAX Disabled Artist Space Grant, having community within Disability Arts Culture

7. What are you currently doing for work, in the field of dance and/or outside the field?

Work. Art is my work, dancing, choreographing, filming, drawing, witnessing, learning. I work on lip drawings, videos, photography conveying the lowercase d-deaf/hoh experience assimilating into hearing culture. This has led to teaching opportunities with Artists in Education and a residency grant with APLI. I'm currently working on three dance films with Amy Buchwald on the topic of depression, that will premiere in July. A dance film at the Brooklyn Museum with Elisa Hernandez and Alice Chacon. And I'm very fortunate to be teaching private dance lessons to dancers with Cerebral Palsy and those who identify as Disabled. On top of working with a bilingual deaf/English family and their autistic son.