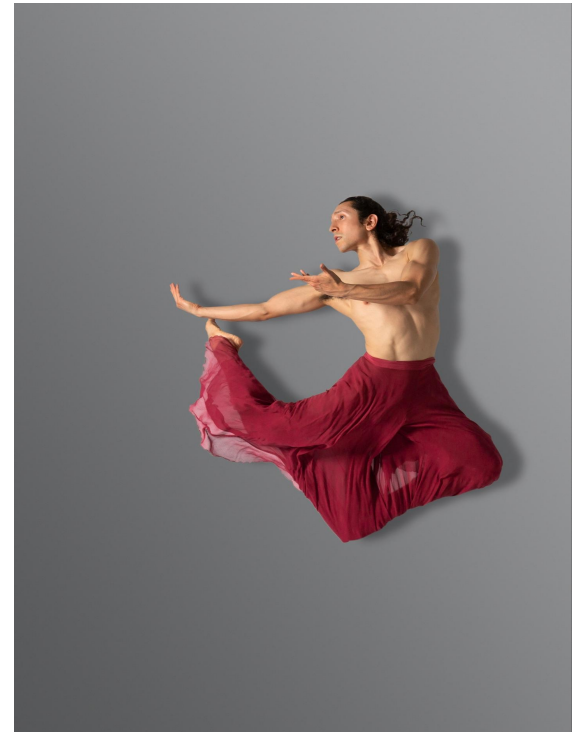


# CSUF Dance Alumni Series: Edward Salas, Katie Sovik, and Stormy Gaylord

By: Emily Kelley

Katie Sovik, Edward Salas, and Stormy Gaylord are all proud alumni of the CSUF Dance Department, who are now continuing their dance career in Madison, Wisconsin with Kanopy Dance Company. Edward and Stormy graduated from the program in 2018 while Katie graduated just last year, in 2021. They all joined Kanopy Dance Company at the beginning of this year and couldn't be happier. Read below to have all your questions answered about these wonderful alumni!



## **Tell me a bit about Kanopy Dance Company...**

Katie: Kanopy Dance Company is a Graham based company. Both of our artistic directors- Lisa and Robert- are trained and have danced professionally in Graham. Lisa trained at the Graham school, was certified in Graham, and danced with the Graham company while Robert trained under one of Martha's students. The overall mission of Kanopy is to create a rich modern dance experience in Madison. We often dance at the Overture Center downtown as they are very connected with other dance centers down here. We dance at festivals. Generally our goal is to connect with the community and get them involved with modern dance.

## **What does your everyday life look like from classes, to rehearsals, etc.?**

Eddie: We typically have class in the morning that's taught by one of the directors, and if we have a guest artist coming to set a piece on us or perform with us, they may also teach a class. Our training sessions go from 9:30-11:00, then we have a short break, and the remainder of the time is dedicated to rehearsals. Overall our day typically starts at 9:30 and ends at 2:00 four days a week, with Saturdays being a half day with no mandatory class. However, there are instances where our schedule is different. These last two weeks we were in the studio from 9:00 to 4:00 working with a guest artist and that was six days a week. This doesn't happen too often, but

when a guest does come in to work with us they only have a limited amount of time to get their pieces show ready.

### **What helps you balance a busy schedule?**

Stormy: Most of us work at least one other job in addition to dancing for the company, but we do prioritize Kanopy. In order to stay balanced we make sure we are maintaining our health. We try our best to make nutritious meals, plan ahead, and eat at home. We prioritize sleep. The work you do as a dancer is so physical, you can't afford to not. When we do have multiple days off in a row we try our best to exercise and cross train.



### **How was the transition going from being a dancer in college to a company member?**

Eddie: Training wise, when you're dancing for a university it is so accessible. Unless you have a job off of campus, everything you need is in one place. Outside of classes, you can go to the Student Recreation Center to exercise. Once you graduate classes are far and few between. It's expensive, there's limited adult classes, and there's limited classical modern classes- if that's the route you choose to take. In LA there's tons of contemporary and jazz classes, but if you're looking to train in the more codified techniques, the West coast isn't as bountiful in teachers. For that reason, during post grad we did a lot of contemporary movement, and some classical modern when we went to intensives. Now we are very fortunate to work with Kanopy, because we are able to train and get better in the styles we need to, in order to perform in the ways we need to.

Stormy: Nonetheless, no matter what training you do whether it be in college or working professionally, sleep, nutrition, and mental health should be prioritized. As dancers our primary job is to show up everyday and be the best we can be, so we need to do everything we can to be physically and mentally prepared.

### **How was your first professional performance? How did you manage any nerves that arose?**

Katie: Coming out of my senior year I joined Kanopy immediately after. Because COVID prevented us from not being able to perform for a while, I was more excited to be on the stage again than nervous. I was ready to be back in the studio with others, doing what I love. When the time came to perform I felt amazing. Additionally, our directors and the other dancers are the nicest people in the world, so we don't have to worry too much about mistakes. If anything it's fun, and if we make a mistake we'll laugh it off, work together, and fix it for next time. We're

lucky to have such a healthy environment, so we can really show off how well we work together instead of worrying about perfection.

Eddie: Yeah I'd say Katie hit it on the nail. She was out here before us. Stormy and I moved here in January and had our first performance in February, so we only had 6 weeks to prepare a whole show. It does feel a bit different in school when you're surrounded by mostly friends and faculty members. When we arrived we only knew Katie so it was interesting meeting everyone, and we were really fortunate that we all clicked. It was a super supportive environment. I felt nervous but it was no different than feeling nervous to perform on stage at CSUF.



### **What are you working on now?**

Stormy: Right now we're working with our artistic directors on a few pieces for a show in April. We have three pieces choreographed by our artistic directors and one 30 minute piece choreographed by a guest artist, Pascal Rioult. We just finished learning the guest artist's piece and working with him two weeks ago. Now we're working on the other pieces- a trio, a duet, and a solo. That will all be performed mid April.

### **What's your favorite part of working with Kanopy?**

Katie: I love being in an environment where you're genuinely being pushed to be your best. It's been fulfilling to feel growth in my dancing. Often as a dancer, I feel you go through moments where you feel you're really growing and moments where you feel like you're in a plateau. Here I really enjoy the way they push us and how they give us hands-on corrections. I feel I've made steady progress. There are still times where I feel really challenged but I know through it all I'm pushing myself to be better. It's been satisfying to feel that, and not be stagnant. It gets more exciting the more we do and the more we perform to see growth within myself.

Eddie: I think so too. I think feeling valued and seen is an important aspect to me. Coming in I didn't have the greatest Graham background, although I took a few classes at Cal State Fullerton. The way my schedule worked out I didn't have the biggest repertoire or the most knowledge in Graham. However, despite that fact, they still embraced me. They see me for my strengths and they invest in growing my weaknesses. I always feel like I'm training and that's the best part. I've worked with people in my past where we were just producing shows, but I didn't feel like I was still growing. Because of that I didn't feel artistically fulfilled. I think a lot of people that I used to dance with in college feel stagnant now and are probably less motivated to pursue dance professionally because they feel they have peaked. However I feel I haven't

reached my peak yet. I still feel like a student, and the more I learn the more I realize the less I know. For me that keeps the ball rolling.

Stormy: Kanopy is a special case because we get to learn Graham technique everyday, and we get to take different classes with the guest artists that come in. In some companies you don't get to take class- you warm up and go into rehearsal. Also, you could only be doing work that your artistic directors set on you, so it can become somewhat one note. At that point you might get tired or bored of doing the same thing. However, with Kanopy I feel really lucky for the way we continue to keep growing and trying new things, like these two have said.