



ARTS

## IU graduate student to create new short film 'Dancing Man'



Robert Mack shoots a scene for his newest short film, "Dancing Man". The film is about a dancer's struggle between his dream career and the girl he loves. Photo by [Gino Diminich](#) / *The Indiana Daily Student*

**By [Gino Diminich](#)**

Apr 17, 2022 2:38 pm · Updated Apr 18, 2022 2:35 pm



**IDS**

The film, titled "Dancing Man," is currently

in post production, and the team hopes the film will be screened at respected festivals and eventually be available online.

"Dancing Man" follows a young male ballet dancer, David, who, demotivated by his current ballet career, finds himself lost in a fantasy world heavily inspired by classic Hollywood movie musicals. However David is soon torn between the girl he loves and the chance for his dream career when a new choreographer presents him with the opportunity.

Mack is co-directing the film as well as acting as David. The film features many dream ballet sequences as Mack said he was inspired by his love of the classic films with actors Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly.

"The dream ballet is something they used to do a lot in Hollywood," Mack said. "It was purposely stagey, it was stylized, it was a way to not necessarily progress the narrative, but a way to get inside the character's head."

***Related: [Kristin Hahn and Tim Fort to discuss storytelling through film](#)***

To accomplish these impressive dance numbers, Mack enlisted the help of IU alumnus Chris Lingner, a Tony Award Nominee and the founding dancer of the Indianapolis Ballet. However it was filming these fantastic sequences that proved complex, Mack said.

"Taking a cue from the classic Hollywood musical," Mack said. "Most of the dancing is in long takes, the challenge with that is you have to do it over and over because there's more that can go wrong, and it puts more pressure on the performers too."

Despite the complexity of the production, IU sophomore Zoe Gallagher, playing David's friend Ally, said she had nothing but praise for the entire team.

"Everyone is super knowledgeable, super skilled, and super focused," Gallagher said. "They've all just been really great and fun to work with."

What drew Gallagher to audition for the film was its depiction of the difficulty of choice, as David must decide between his future as a dancer and the girl he finds himself in love with.

"As artists we want to follow our passion," Gallagher said. "But as humans, we want to follow our hearts, and it was that decision that just really resonated with me."

IU alumna Clarisse Gamblin, the movie's screenwriter and co-director, said she drew on her past experience as a ballet dancer to not only properly convey this complicated decision but also to help with her directing.

With the shooting schedule coming to an end and the post-production work beginning, Gamblin said she hopes audiences will find an appreciation for the art of dance after seeing the film.

"Ballet can seem quite inaccessible to a lot of people," Gamblin said. "By putting it on film, we're making it available to so many who might never normally seek it out, hopefully they might fall in love with a form of art they might not have experienced before."

Mack said he hopes his newest collaborative process will raise awareness for the arts and those who dedicate their lives to bringing them to life in a time where safety restrictions still make it difficult to put on shows in theaters and companies worldwide.

"People are less likely to seek out live entertainment, and the performing arts continue to take hits from changing habits that were exacerbated by the pandemic," Mack said. "Films like these help keep music and ballet alive in new ways."

## Featured Local Savings

# The Herald-Times

---

## ENTERTAINMENT

# Indiana University ballet graduate pirouettes into filmmaking

**Connie Shakalis** Special to the H-T

Published 7:14 a.m. ET April 22, 2022 | Updated 8:45 a.m. ET April 22, 2022

Robert Mack is learning filmmaking. That's extra hard, because he's also a dancer and a graduate student.

Mack, an Indiana University ballet graduate who is now working on a master's in public affairs at IU, chose to produce the film himself, with guidance from Bloomington filmmaker Jo Throckmorton, a member of the Directors Guild of America and an Emmy Award winner. Mack could have handed his film off to a film company, but he wanted to produce it himself.

They shot the scenes over four days in Bloomington, moving dancers and equipment to IU's Musical Arts Center, Switchyard Park, IU Cinema, Showalter Fountain, the East Parking Garage and the home of an IU ballet major.

**More:** Bloomington Chambers Singers' spring concert to be dedicated to Peter Jacobi

The public will be able to see the finished movie this summer, Mack said.

"I'm jumping into filmmaking as a dancer," he said over the phone. "I'm learning as I go, from people who know more than I do." In fact, his IU filmmaking professor told him, "nothing beats experiential learning."

Having more knowledgeable people surrounding him is how he is growing.

"In any meeting, I don't want it to seem like I have all the answers. I don't want to be the smartest person in the room," Mack said.

The plot is Mack's team of dancers' own stories, based on their experiences in the dance, and particularly ballet, world.

It's the story of a young artist struggling with his two loves, ballet and Gabrielle. It's also about the way David wants to see the world versus the world as it is. And it's about all of the "Gabrielles" that create turning points — almost everybody has one.

In this case, Gabrielle is the girl who comes into the life of the film's main character, David. She represents the distractions that reroute a career. Mack has assembled a team that is creating a film about what it's like to be a dancer — and how easily our dreams can be offered a tempting ultimatum.

David has long searched for greener pastures. Add to that his adoration of old Hollywood's musical era, and everything else seems mundane. To alienate him further, no one else in the dance company shares his idealism.

The film features professional dancers and ballet majors from IU plus a choreographer from the Indianapolis Ballet. On the teams also are Media School instructor Kasey Poracky and recent graduate and writer and co-director Clarisse Gamblin, who is now studying screenwriting in England.

Like many dancers, Mack practices daily for at least six hours. Unlike many dancers, he has not sustained a major injury. Fractures and sprains among dancers, unfortunately, are common.

"I think the hardest thing about dancing is taking a step back and asking what might have been," he said.

**More:** Arts column: Suzanne Vega's upcoming concert stirs New York memories

Bloomington pianist Vicki King played for the production during one of the shoots, in the upstairs ballet studio at the Musical Arts Center. "It was fascinating watching these dancers make a film."

Next year, Mack will dance with the Indianapolis Ballet as he also completes his master's degree. He says he will never relinquish the performing arts and would later like to build a life as a filmmaker and actor. He has more stories to tell.

Mack will submit the finished "Dancing Man" to a number of festivals, including those by Heartland Film and Hoosier Films. It will also be available for the public to see late this summer.

And, thanks to crowdfunding, there are several ways people can participate right now.

Those who donate to the "Dancing Man" project can get a variety of perks, including their name in the film credits, early access to the film, access to behind-the-scene footage, and for significant donations, an "executive producer" credit.

The film's crowdfunding page includes a pitch video with the group's previous work: <https://bit.ly/3Ezidx9>.

ARTS

# Student film 'Dancing Man' to premier Feb. 26 at IU Cinema



[Courtesy Photo](#)

"Dancing Man," co-directed by Robert Mack and Clarisse Gamblin, premier's at 2:30 p.m. Feb. 26, 2023 at IU Cinema. The short film is created by an IU graduate student.

By **Gino Diminich**

Published Feb 22, 2023 2:00 pm

Last updated Feb 23, 2023 12:38 pm

"Dancing Man," a new short film from IU graduate student Robert Mack, will premiere at 2:30 p.m. Feb. 26 at IU Cinema. The event is free, but tickets are available through the [IU Cinema website](#).

Mack's newest short film follows David, a young ballet dancer who finds himself unmotivated by his career. Losing himself in a fantasy world, David is torn between the girl he loves and the chance for his dream career offered by a new choreographer.

Co-directed by Mack and IU alumna Clarisse Gamblin with an original score by IU alumna Yi-Chen Chiang, the film was shot in Bloomington over the course of four days in April 2022. The short shooting period kept Mack on his toes, ready for anything to happen, he said.

"Flexibility is the name of the game in independent filmmaking," Mack said. "It's not about the biggest production value, it's working with what you've got, and luckily Bloomington is a very supportive city for the arts."

**Related: [COLUMN: 'The Bachelor' week 5: a 'shocking' twist]**

Mack used the landscape of Bloomington and IU's campus as the set for his film, and despite the film's 20-minute runtime, Mack said he and his team had several different locations to set up and shoot, making for a long but productive four days.

"To try and get everything you need to get in four days is insane," Mack said. "There was a lot to do and a lot of complicated dance sequences; we were shooting in different locations, so we'd have to pack up and go to the next place, but we pulled together."

After filming wrapped, the post-production phase of the film began. Aside from editing the film, Mack decided to give an extra flavor to the dance numbers by recording portions of Chiang's score live in studio with Jacobs School of Music musicians.

"The music is a character in the movie and adds so much to get the rich, bigger sound that older dance movies had," Mack said. "We wanted to get actual musicians so that it didn't sound entirely computerized."

***Related: [Pep up your two step: local performances this week]***

Mack also felt it crucial to use real musicians for portions of the score to deepen the film's ties with the IU student community.

"This is an IU homegrown movie; this is a movie being made with students and alums of the Media School and the ballet department," Mack said. "We have a Jacobs alum composing, and I thought — to really bring in the most this campus had to offer — we should bring in the musicians as well."

The film utilizes students of the Jacobs School of Music Ballet Theater department for fantastical dance sequences, sewn carefully throughout the film to ensure the dancing didn't overshadow the human drama and vice versa.

"Every scene matters," Mack said. "We had to make sure every dance sequence was adding to the story."

The dance scenes — which express the main character's desire for better times — were heavily inspired by Mack's love of classic Hollywood dance films.

"I grew up watching Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly; these movies inspired me to dance," Mack said. "The way they told these larger-than-life stories through dance is charming and irreplaceable."

"Dancing Man" will be shown alongside Mack's other short films, "Chisel" and "North," at IU Cinema, followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers and cast members.

*Like what you're reading?*

Get more award-winning content delivered straight to your inbox. Sign up for our Daily Rundown.

**Signup today! →**

# COLUMN: Student film 'Dancing Man' transcends homage to become its own film



Gino Diminich

Co-director Robert Mack (center) alongside co-stars Zoe Gallagher (left) and Ahna Lipchik (right) answer questions during the premiere of "Dancing Man" on Feb. 26, 2023, at IU Cinema. IU Cinema screened Mack's short film and hosted a short Q&A afterward for attendees.

By **Gino Diminich**

*Published Feb 28, 2023 8:00 am*

*Last updated Mar 3, 2023 3:18 pm*

IU graduate student Robert Mack is no stranger to the art of combining dance and film — two things he has a clear passion for — and nowhere is this better seen than in his latest short film “Dancing Man.”

The film follows a ballet dancer, David, as he finds himself entranced by a new female dancer at his ballet company. After being offered a chance for his dream career by a guest choreographer, David finds himself torn between the girl he loves — Gabriella — and the career he’s always dreamed of.

Mack’s short film was brought to my attention last year, and I have been keeping a close eye on production ever since. I was very excited to see the finished product, and I was not disappointed.



**Related: [Girls Rock Bloomington and Far Contemporary Arts Center hosts open mic event in honor of Black History Month]**

The opening shot sets the tone instantly — a black-and-white shot of a top hat on a stage, picked up by David in a white tie and tails à la Fred Astaire. As the opening credits play, David dances in a style emulating classic Hollywood films, relaying to the audience that this is a film with a clear love of a bygone genre.

While this is all revealed to simply be David's imagination as he daydreams before ballet class, it shows the audience very quickly that the main character enters this fantastical dance world to escape from the drudgery and complications of reality.

The film avoids being a copy and paste homage to classic musicals by interweaving the plot within the fantasy dance sequences choreographed by Tony Award Nominee Chris Lingner. The numbers are incredible and serve as entertaining representations of David's thoughts and feelings, never stopping the momentum of the plot.

By blending plot and dance, the dance numbers have a clear purpose and drive, never once is there confusion as to the reason a dance number is occurring nor what it is conveying.

A rather striking number is after David receives his written offer to transfer companies, and he imagines himself dancing with a ballet corps and his love before being pulled into a different dance with members of the other company — brilliantly representing his internal conflict to belong in both worlds.

The way in which these numbers are shot is also — like the rest of the film — visually stunning. Mack chooses to shoot the dances in long takes, allowing the skill of the dancers to truly shine and the overall number to truly breathe and take on a life of its own.

The characters are brought to life rather naturally by the entire cast, particularly IU junior Zoe Gallagher, whose performance as David's friend, Ally, got more than one hearty laugh from the audience with her witty remarks and sarcastic attitude.

**Related: [Jacobs School of Music Ballet Theater elevates 'Anne Frank' opera through dance]**

Additionally, Mack and Ahna Lipchik — who plays Gabriella — also have great scenes together, and the first dance between the two of them that David imagines is something that can really only be experienced firsthand.

Yi-Chen Chiang's score is also worthy of praise as it perfectly emulates the spirit and sound of old films while still being unique to itself and the story it accompanies.

The underlying message of the film — a reminder of the consequences of escapism — is a poignant one; the ending is a realistic and striking moment that again, is visually captured perfectly.

Mack and his team deliver on a film that is not only incredibly fun to watch, but also leaves one pondering their own fantasies — questioning if we sometimes go too far into our own minds in search of an easier road to walk down.

*Like what you're reading?*

Get more award-winning content delivered straight to your inbox. Sign up for our Daily Rundown.

**Signup today! →**

## Around the Web



**The Days of Asphalt Roofs Are Over. Here's What Comes Next**

metalroofnation.com



**This Credit Card is Worth Its Weight in Gold: Best Credit Card for 2023**

CompareCredit.com



**Try This Fizzy Juice Method Each Morning to Burn Belly Fat Like Crazy**

The Happy Life

Indiana University **Cinema**

## Event

JUST ANNOUNCED, WORLD PREMIERE

### DANCE ON SCREEN: FOUR SHORT FILMS



Sun, Feb 26, 2:30 pm; Free but Ticketed

**Get tickets** <<https://am.ticketmaster.com/iucinema/buy>>

Additional Films and Guests <<https://cinema.indiana.edu/upcoming-films/series/additional-films-and-guests>>

Various Directors | 2019-23 | USA | Not rated | DCP

**The world premiere of *Dancing Man*, plus three original short films, in a meld of dance, music, and storytelling from the IU community.**

Robert Steven Mack Productions presents the world premiere of *Dancing Man*, plus three original short films, in a meld of dance, music, and storytelling to showcase talent from across Indiana University and the photographic beauty of Bloomington.

***A Q&A with the filmmakers and cast members will follow the screening and be moderated by Connie Shakalis, freelance arts writer for The Herald Times and other publications.***

***Chisel (Robert Steven Mack, 2021, 8 min):*** A lone woman wakes up in an abandoned quarry, followed by a masked stranger who seems to want to tell her something. Shot in haunting black-and-white 16mm film, this short was made during the pandemic in the decaying remains of a limestone quarry. *Chisel* features choreography by Michael Vernon and premieres a newly recorded version of Isaak Liu's original score by the Budapest Film Orchestra.

***Shift (Kasey Poracky, 2019, 8 min):*** A studious boy finds himself bogged down by his uninspired and mundane chores and responsibilities. Suddenly, the beautiful Terpsichore appears and whisks him away to a dreamscape where she beckons him into a romantic pas de deux. *Shift* features choreography by Sasha Janes to a lush score by Larry Groupé.

***North (Robert Steven Mack, 2021, 8 min):*** A music video set to John Raymond's nostalgic composition "North" with choreography by Sarah Wroth, danced jointly by IU Jacobs School of Music Ballet Department and dancers from IU's Department of Theatre, Drama and Contemporary Dance. Bright, grainy, and naturalistic, *North* was shot on Super 8mm entirely in the Musical Arts Centre on IU's campus.

***Dancing Man (Clarisse Gamblin and Robert Steven Mack, 2023, 23 min):*** David, a young and quixotic dancer, is confronted with the decision of whether to stay at a Midwestern ballet company with his new love interest Gabrielle or follow a promising choreographer to New York to chase his pipe dream of dancing in Golden Age musicals. Featuring vibrant cinematography, an elegant score by Yi-Chen Chiang, and toe-tapping choreography by Chris Lingner, *Dancing Man* showcases dancers from IU Ballet Theatre and Indianapolis Ballet in a colorful and bittersweet coming-of-age story.



# The Herald-Times

---

## ENTERTAINMENT

# Performing in a pandemic is a hard nut to crack

**Connie Shakalis** Special to the H-T

Published 5:00 p.m. ET Dec. 2, 2020

Worldwide swarms of talented people vying for a limited number of paying positions has always made for nights of tossing and turning on damp sheets. Bloomington, like many cities that are much larger, bursts with students majoring in the performing arts, a precarious endeavor even before the pandemic.

And the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music Opera and Ballet Theater is not doing the iconic “Nutcracker” this year, either.

Some students have switched majors, finding other riveting interests they never knew they had, according to dancer Lexi Eicher. Eicher isn’t one of those and is determined to pirouette, glide and leap into her future. A ballet major at IU Jacobs School of Music, she said much depends on how willing a dancer is to pursue this new kind of virtual career.

The pandemic is extra worrisome for dancers, who need to exercise daily or lose motivation and muscle memory. And whose windows of opportunity, age wise, can close sooner than other performers’.

“I always make myself take class,” she said in a phone interview, noting the importance of nearly constant exercise, studio access and going en pointe (on toes).

“Sometimes turning your (computer) screen on that 100th day in a row is (lonely),” she said.

Practicing back home in Fort Wayne is particularly difficult because her floors are made of wood, which is dangerously slick, so no twirling on toe tips.

Ansley Valentine, a director and an Actors Equity performer who teaches acting and directing at IU, has witnessed positives from the pandemic. Being online has allowed him to spend more quality time coaching students.

“I started studying jazz, experimented more with harp and electronics, and even started a TikTok account — never thought I would say that — where I found huge success breaking into that media industry,” she said.

Novilla took up the violin at age 4 and the harp at 7, studying with William Lovelace, past president of the American Harp Society. Three years later she made her solo concert debut opening for renowned German concert pianist, Uwe Romeike. She was principal harpist with the Oak Ridge Philharmonia 2014-2017 and the Knoxville Symphony Youth Orchestra 2011-2017, and won their Concerto Competition, which led to a solo performance with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra.

Novilla participated in Bloomington’s Black Lives Matter protest and said she will never forget its impact.

“Seeing the countless faces of people my age, younger or older unite to fight injustice gave me hope that ... we can set aside our differences to fight for what we believe,” she said. “It once again reminded me how important the arts are as ... a universal language that connects us all, regardless of race, gender or religion.”

Robert Mack is not only a ballet student but a filmmaker collaborating with The Media School at IU. This may account for the chillingly moving video “Solitude” he produced using only his smartphone and his dancing. The video is the result of an April class assignment and shows a pensive, disappointed-then-joyful Mack as he sorts out his post-pandemic future as a dancer.

When Mack learned that all in-person events were canceled he was in the midst of rehearsing Prokofiev’s “Cinderella.”

“The loneliness,” he said over the phone. “We never got to perform it.”

Nevertheless, he continues work on his variations, which include “Swan Lake,” “Coppélia” and “Red Angels” (created in the 1990s for New York City Ballet’s Diamond Project).

Jacobs operatic bass Steele Fitzwater earned a master’s in vocal performance and in the spring will have his Performer Diploma of Solo Performance certification. Recently he sang the title role of Schicchi in Puccini’s comic opera “Gianni Schicchi.”

“You never know what a person is bringing to the theater,” Fitzwater said over the phone, referring to the comfort that live performances can provide an audience. “We can get people



ARTS

## IU student film 'CHISEL' uses ballet to depict longing for human connection



'Chisel', a 7-minute silent dance narrative film was created, directed and produced by a 2021 IU graduate. The film starred IU ballet alumni Alexandra Jones and Anderson Da Silva, who received an award for "Best Performances". *Photo by [Courtesy Photo](#) / The Indiana Daily Student*

**By [Haripriya Jalluri](#)**

Jun 29, 2021 6:55 pm · Updated Jun 30, 2021 11:56 am



with sound, according to an Instagram post.

The 7-minute silent dance narrative film was created, directed and produced by 2021 IU alumnus Robert Mack. Starring IU Ballet alumni Alexandra Jones and Anderson Da Silva, the film features music by Jacobs School of Music student Isaak Liu, choreography by IU Professor Michael Vernon and editing and cinematography by Media School Ph.D candidate Caleb Allison.

The ballet dancers, Jones and Da Silva, were awarded “Best Performances” for their role in the film.

Filmed during the pandemic, the dancers wore masks for most of the film. The masks and the lack of dialogue meant Jones and Da Silva relied on their eye expressions and body language to fully communicate the message and emotions of the film.

“To really communicate emotion, you are having to use your eyes, your eyebrows, parts of your body you would not really think to put so much detail into,” Jones said. “The eyes do tell a lot: what a character is feeling or what they are going through and it adds to the scene so that the person watching can understand what is going on.”

The overall message that the film aims to communicate is the longing felt for human connection during the pandemic, Jones and Mack explained.

“It basically is a meditation on being alone during the pandemic. This kind of sense of isolation and alienation that a lot of us felt,” Mack said.

Mack said the film is a product of the pandemic. The original inspiration came from his performance in the Arabian pas de deux in “The Nutcracker” in December 2019.

“I was like, gosh it would be kind of interesting to set this in an industrial like location, some kind of factory location, and make a black and white art film about it,” Mack said.

But before he could begin the filmmaking process, IU shut down and sent students home due to COVID-19. Mack kept thinking of this concept and wrote the treatment, a document describing the film idea, over the summer of 2020.

“I concocted this idea of doing kind of a contactless pas de deux and still fitting it in kind of a desolate industrial location, shooting on film and black and white. And giving it a darker or topical kind of feel,” Mack said.

When Mack returned to campus in the fall, working on the film was his top priority. Through his previously established contacts in the Media School he was able to partner with Allison, who has experience working with celluloid film.

“I happen to teach a course, P360 Motion Picture Production, that only uses celluloid film,” Allison said, “So I was able to lend my talents to the project, which he wanted to shoot on 16 millimeter.”

The majority of “Chisel” was shot on a 16mm camera, which Mack purposely chose due to the texture film produces on the final cut. Every shot was also filmed on a digital camera, Allison and Mack explained. In the final scene, the footage switches from film to digital, which gives the film a different feel and texture.

Sometimes the story of a film changes during the filmmaking process but, as a dance film, “Chisel” did not have much room to change. The choreography requires the story to be told in a certain way and Mack was able to plan the whole film thoroughly prior to filming.

“It could not evolve too much because there is so much continuity that needs to be held between the choreography,” Allison said about editing the final cut. “I did not want to break that because Michael Vernon, the choreographer, is phenomenal at that and [Mack] had a very specific vision of this story that he wanted to tell.”

“Chisel” is currently submitted to several film fests, so it is not available to watch on public platforms yet. Updates on when and where to watch it will be posted on Instagram @robertmackproductions

[Home](#) / [Stories](#)

# 6 films with IU ties chosen for inaugural Hoosier Films Annual Festival

Sep 1, 2020

The [Hoosier Films Annual Festival](#) is set to make its debut this month, after being postponed from its original date in March. Although the festival cannot be held in person, the show must go on. The festival will virtually screen 40 films from Indiana filmmakers and films shot in Indiana from Sept. 3 to 6.

“Being a graduate of IU myself, I love seeing what IU students can accomplish,” said Meredith McGriff, CEO of [Hoosier Films](#) and membership director for the American Folklore Society headquartered at IU Bloomington. “I want students at IU and all around the state to know their work is valued here in the Midwest, and I’m excited for Hoosier Films to help them connect with more local audiences.”

Hoosier Films is a multi-platform distribution company for films made in Indiana. The services include their streaming service, which will be available on Roku in one week, and their inaugural film festival.

Films were submitted online by the filmmakers and reviewed by a panel of jurors, McGriff said. Fifty percent of submissions were selected: 37 short films and three feature-length films in a variety of genres, including comedy, drama, sci-fi, horror and animation. A virtual awards ceremony will take place Sept 6.

Six films have ties to Indiana University, whether the directors attended IU or the movie was shot on campus. IU seniors Robert Mack and Clarisse Gamblin fit both of those categories with their film “Midnight in the Park.”

[Skip to main content](#)

“I’ve always loved movies,” Mack said. “I’ve always loved filmmaking. You can see I’m obsessed with movies.”





Clarisse Gamblin and Robert Mack join two other crew members filming their production “Midnight in the Park” on the Bloomington campus during fall 2019. Photo courtesy of Clarisse Gamblin

The Irvine, California, native is a history and ballet major, but he said he still wanted to get involved with film.

“I just decided I wasn’t busy enough,” Mack said. “I got way too much sleep.”

And as for Gamblin, a Bloomington native, she has always adored movies, too, and she majors in cinema and media arts within The Media School, she said.

During her senior year of home school, Gamblin was planning to pursue ballet in college but changed to film instead.

“I really like doing dance and film collaborations because I get to sort of revisit my [skipping class](#),” Gamblin said.

Gamblin and Mack first worked together on a short film called “Shift” in 2018. The film focused on dancing, which is how Mack and other dancers got involved.

Fast forward to 2019, and Gamblin and Mack decided to co-direct “Midnight in the Park.”



Behind the scenes and the production process of “Midnight in the Park.” Photo courtesy of Clarisse Gamblin

“I’m kind of coming up with a whole new idea about this kind of older, distinguished gentleman who’s going back to a park where he and his late wife first met,” Mack said as he recalled the idea for the film plot. “It goes through the history of their life together.

Mack said “Midnight in the Park” includes 13 actors: four ballet faculty members, two ballet students, two kids and five extras.

Since Gamblin and Mack’s work on “Shift” was well-appreciated by the ballet faculty, Mack said he asked them to be in their new short film, and they happily agreed.

[Skip to main content](#)

“There’s a particular scene in it when the college-aged couple is dancing together, and it was sort of golden hour,” Gamblin said. “It was on the verge of sunset, and we had

some really beautiful shots of the sun filtering through the trees. Aesthetically, it's a really beautiful film."

Gamblin and Mack started the project at the beginning of the fall 2019 semester and concluded filming in October. They dedicated about three to four hours to the film every week and then 15 hours for filming day, Mack said.



A still shot from a scene of "Midnight in the Park" featured at the Hoosier Films Annual Festival. Photo courtesy of Clarisse Gamblin

Gamblin and Mack were in a time crunch, since they needed the nice weather to shoot the movie. Showalter Fountain shut off in October, and Mack had to call and ask the people in charge if they could turn the fountain back on for their movie, which they did.

All of the crew members worked on the film for free, Gamblin said. However, Gamblin and Mack were given a grant in April to pay their composer and their entrance fees to film festivals.

"I love the whole process from pre-production all the way through," Mack said.

[Skip to main content](#)  
Anything can happen in the subsequent hours, but you just see everything come together.