

Dance Arts Now!

The official NHSDA Newsletter for Middle and High School Students
Summer 2016



Photo of dancer Tegan Reschke courtesy of TR

What exciting adventures await us as we move into summer? In this issue, discover journeys that our NHSDA members experience as they brighten the lives of others in their quest to share the joy of dance!

~ Dance Arts Now! Editorial Staff

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Acrostic Poem...
By: Lillian Mundy
The Dancer's Extension
Advisor: Sonya Monts

Lillian is in her fourth year of dance studies at The Dancer's Extension. She is in sixth grade at Polk County Middle School, where she is also a member of the band. She likes blending her passions for dance and music to express her creativity.



***D* on't give up
***A* lways try
***N* ever be lazy
***C* are fly bye-bye
E* nergize!*******

NEWS

Upbeat "Dance Day!" – ALL STARS shares the Joy of Dance with a Community Twist

ALL STARS Performing Arts was created in Sugar Hill, Georgia, as a nurturing place for young dancers to learn the art of dance in a non-competitive way. From assisted living facilities and senior group gatherings to school assemblies and other venues, the group shares the joy of dance throughout the community.

As part of this goal, ALL STARS now sponsors "Dance Day!"

This free studio workshop opens the world of dance to children in the foster system. NHSDA ALL STARS chapter members teach the classes in a spectrum of styles one Sunday a month, with the goal of expanding to two Sundays per month the next season. Teacher volunteers supervise to ensure the safety and appropriateness of every class.

DOWNBEAT/UPBEAT DAY

At the first "Dance Day!", held in February, only one child attended. At first, hearts sank. They felt like the efforts to get the word out did not work, but as director Victoria Kesler stressed. "Now, this is what sets these kids apart, and fills my heart with pride. They put their chins up, and were thrilled that one 10-year old showed up for



Photo courtesy of ALL STARS

this event. It may seem strange that they were so happy to serve just one child, but she had never taken a dance class, and was overjoyed to be in a real studio to do so." All of the members jumped in and took the class with her, so that she would not feel disappointed, out of place, or "on the spot."

After two hours of classes, this one child was "walking on clouds," and the NHSDA members felt like that, too. She returned for the second offering, which had three participants

On this positive note, the studio will continue offering the program.

FUTURE PLANS

ALL STARS now partners with CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children) in three adjacent counties, in hopes that "Dance Day!" will grow as a special part of the lives of many more children in the area.



Photo by Shelley Gefter, courtesy of Andrea M. Seidel

Book Review

***Isadora Duncan in the 21st Century*
Capturing the Art and Spirit of the Dancer's Legacy
 (McFarland, publisher)
 Andrea Mantell Seidel,
 Founder, Isadora Duncan Dance Ensemble**

As a dancer, it is important to study Isadora Duncan, to learn the meaning of the free spirit of dance and how to express yourself. –Janae-Brooke Marcia

We should all study Isadora Duncan because she was a powerful and thoughtful dancer who believed everyone could benefit from the arts. – Hailey Allsbrook

We should study Isadora Duncan because she helped dance become more accessible by using elements in nature and Greek inspiration; she was the grandmother of modern dance and she influenced the decreased use of corsets and shoes. –Bella Burr, Ruby Swafford, Emma Wynn

*Student quote credits: Kemps Landing/Old Donation School
 Advisor: Mary Ann Laverty*

Sometimes when we spend hours in the studio, we may question whether we are "good enough," or "why we make this sacrifice," or "why we dance at all." For students searching for the purpose in dance, author Andrea Mantell Seidel offers her book about how Isadora Duncan discovered her own answers: "I [Duncan] spent long days and nights in the studio, seeking that dance which might be the divine expression of the human spirit."

More than a history lesson, Seidel explores how this early 20th century visionary stripped the frivolous, the ego, reaching deeply into the heart and core of movement; basically, she explores how relevant Duncan's methods are today.

The author analyzes Duncan's basic principles and musical choices, then delves into her approaches to solo and group choreography with the goal of "enlightened performance." Reading these pages, and

exploring the lovely illustrations, students will discover that Duncan's style is definitely not dated but classic, ageless, universal, and can be performed throughout one's life. The author also suggests a variety of lesson plans, such as how to re-construct

or create a piece inspired by Duncan. As the artist proclaimed: "The dance must implant in our lives a harmony that is glowing and pulsing" ~ A must read!

For more information or to order,

<http://www.mcfarlandbooks.com/2015/12/newly-published-isadora-duncan-in-the-21st-century/>



Photo by Shelley Gefter, courtesy of Andrea M. Seidel



***Dancing a Dream
A Summer Adventure at the
Academie Americaine de Danse de Paris
By: Deirdre McMahon
Ridge High School
Advisor: Rachel Miranda***

Deirdre studies dance at Ridge High School and Gotta Dance. She participates in Ridge Dance Collective, Ridge Dance Team and master classes at RHS. She has also performed with the Moscow Ballet, the Paul Taylor Youth Ensemble and Ballet Forte.

If I was told as a child that I would one day visit Paris just to dance, I would have cried tears of joy. For as long as I can remember, I have dreamt of going to this magical place, of having an authentic *ballerina* experience. It was my first year at a new dance studio when the directors announced they were taking students to engage in the Academie Americaine de Danse de Paris intensive. My parents, knowing this was my absolute wish, found a way to support me and last summer I was on a plane on my way to France with a few friends and my dance teacher.

It was my first time traveling across the Atlantic when I had never left my family before. I met the other girls staying in the dorms the first night. They were from Atlanta, Seattle, New York, and even Dublin. We quickly became friends, bonding over different bun styles, cool leotards, and our mutual tiredness from walking up three flights of stairs to get to our dorm rooms. We had our nightly "pow-wows", where we would eat Nutella we had bought that day, or have intense rap battles. I never imagined I could have so much in common with people from so many different places.

We danced Monday through Friday, 10 am–4 pm and Saturday, 10 am–Noon. Most of the teachers spoke only French. So being a third-year Italian student was not exactly beneficial. Without language as an option of communication, I relied more on observing the teachers in their demonstrations and corrections awakening

dancing in a beautiful new light. No longer caught up in the memorization of the order of steps, I focused on interpreting movement in my own creative way.



File photo

When we were not dancing, we were exploring all that the city offered. We promenaded on the quaint cobblestone streets and toured the Paris Opera House. We were in awe when visiting various museums with dance-inspired art. Happily, my family arrived near the end of the trip and so I spent a few afternoons with them. By the end of the trip, I felt as if I were a native. I had a favorite bakery, I experienced the sights of Paris with both friends and my sisters, and I had climbed the Eiffel Tower three times.

Such an incredible experience carried me back to the United States as both a better dancer and person. I learned independence, dedication and how to enjoy every moment ~ for this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.



Deidre dancing in the gardens of Versailles.



SPECIAL REPORT



Photos courtesy of Jeanette Layton

ACTING OUT DANGEROUS SCENARIOS IN SAFE SPACES

Success Stories of Dance Driven Anti-Bullying Campaigns

Not long ago, a loaded gun was confiscated from a student at school. He said he brought it because a specific student was bullying him and he was scared. The incident was handled well by our security and administration, but it wasn't clear if he had reported previous incidents or tried to get help from anyone before bringing the gun.

-Jeanette Layton, Arizona School District (Interview, March 16, 2016)

This chilling quote exemplifies how bullying and its consequences are far too familiar to us all today. How do teachers and students deal with the threat and recurring fears that may linger? Dancers should lead in alleviating the violence through the power of creative movement.

In this three part series, the *Dance Arts Now!* editorial staff and contributing NHSDA members examine programs that successfully counter the negative by spreading the positive message of respecting everyone.

Part One, which appears here, examines specific anti-bullying programs set up within two Arizona schools. In our upcoming Back-to-School issue, Part Two highlights how a studio in Idaho engages the community in a “No More Bullies!” campaign. And Part Three, to appear in our holiday issue, examines how the Dancing Wheels Company & School transforms the tale of Dumbo into a dance about how a girl with disabilities triumphs over ridicule.

Part One

Dancing the Message in Two Arizona Schools

A Tale of Two Schools

Dance teacher Jeanette Layton, who reported the gun incident quoted above, mentors students within the Arizona school system. In an environment of wide cultural and economic diversity, “dance students feel safer as they progress to the higher levels because their classes are smaller, so easier to make connections.” Her beginning classes of freshmen and sophomores are more challenging, “They are still finding themselves, caring more about what people think, which can make them prone to bully or be bullied.” She maintains that “the studio is where we must support each other.” When they discuss issues that affect them directly, “they open up and share specific stories.”

Two of Layton’s successful anti-bullying programs to be discussed now were performed at Central High School in Phoenix and at Westwood High School in Mesa.

Performing on Film and Onstage ~ Clues to Understanding

Layton’s students at Central High School spent several weeks on in-school videography. Improvisation transformed into compositions about school-related conflicts. One resulting student dance film, *Bully*, is startlingly raw: No music, only ominous sounds of a school hallway or lavatory. A girl is cornered and grabbed by her tee-shirt and hair, her face is then dumped in a toilet. While another girl is harassed, a witness runs

away in fear. Still another, pushed downstairs, lies silent, not moving ~ is she still breathing? The film presents violence in mundane but potentially dangerous places that should be safe.

Layton’s Westwood High School students participated in *Young Voices Dance*, in collaboration with Arizona State University graduate Kiersten Willis. (Other participating groups: Marcos DeNiza High School in Tempe and Washington High School in Glendale.) The youth discussed how their own experiences could act as a catalyst for a dance, and then their ideas progressed to improvisation, and ultimately, choreography set to film and stage.





Young Voices... produced a stirring film about student anticipation prior to performance and what lessons they learned as a result of the project (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kn60K2WcZOQ>, accessed February 3, 2016): Images flow from one film footage to another. Aggressors encroach upon those lying vulnerably on the floor; others are seen in combat. One discerning target was a distorted view of the “imperfect” body image. Intense staccato moves struggle amid rejection. Yet those survivors stand united with pride. Students with honest eyes face the camera, expressing how dance alleviates pain and positively empowers them.

Also as part of *Young Voices*, the Westwood High School Dance Company staged a performance and film titled *Redemption*, about how witnesses must help those oppressed. (<http://www.teachertube.com/video/redemption-387892#ixzz40ObrsyDJ>, accessed February 20, 2016): Movements demonstrate tension, leaps,

falls, extensions, contractions, release. In two duets, a brutal foe abuses a girl as blindfolded dancers symbolically turn away. Almost miraculously, one by one, each dancer tears off her blindfold and comes to the victim’s aid. However, the troubling finale suggests one dancer, alone and helpless, attempts suicide. Is this what the audience really sees?

Teachers and Students Connect

By means of writings and recordings, the teachers and students of each school independently evaluated their creative achievements:

- *What was the depth of the finished product (composition, length, movement, sound, theme, execution effectiveness, technique, group cooperation)?
- *How thorough was your self-analysis?
- *Did you present startling images of how the theme affected you?



Layton reflects, “I saw positive outcomes after each program’s completion. Students achieved a supportive community, as well as advanced in skill tests.”

Willis queries, “Are we ready to listen?”

... And it is clear that students want their voices heard ~ “Stop Bullying!”

Students’ insightful comments

"I had never done a dance that meant something to others."

"Dance motivates me to stay in school."

"Dancing shows my personal side...You're really putting yourself out there."

"Where will the neglected person go?"

"Dance helps when I hide being bullied."

"Should we look away or stand to help?"

NOTE:

Part Two, featuring the Footlight Dance Centre, will appear in our 2016 Back-to-School issue.

Part Three, featuring the Dancing Wheels Company & School of Cleveland, will appear in our 2016 Holiday issue.



CHOREOGRAPHY PROJECT

The Internal Dialogue

Continued

2014 NDEO Artistic Merit, Leadership, and Academic Achievement Award Recipient Revisits Her Dance
NHSDA Advisor: Laurel M. Zakrobsky
Girls Preparatory School/ Chattanooga

Mary is now an undergraduate at Yale University, majoring in Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry. She has studied dance for fifteen years and is active in two dance groups on campus. In one course, she examined the relationship between physics and dance and looks forward to applying those principles to future choreographic exploration. In this article, she revisits her award winning choreography that she received as an NHSDA member, Girls Preparatory School/Chattanooga

As a senior in high school, I had been choreographing for about four years, and I felt the urge to create a piece that was a current internal dialogue. Up until that point I stuck to pieces inspired by literature or movement itself, but it was time to attempt a transcription of my emotional state. So for my high school dance company's spring concert, I choreographed and performed *To Couch the Freedom*.

The major thought going through my head (once college applications were submitted, of course) was what it would be like to move out of my home. Having lived in the same place since the age of four, it was difficult to picture myself elsewhere. However I could not wait to start the next phase of my life and be where no one knew me. So even though I could not pinpoint when I was to leave the following August, I could not wait to be in my new surroundings. Each day was a back and forth between "can't wait to bust out of here" and "how will I be different away from home." To work through these thoughts I decided to choreograph.

Props, Space, Magnetic Appeal

I wanted to use a prop for two reasons.

#1: I had not worked seriously with any as a choreographer and wanted the challenge.

#2: I figured it would keep the audience more engaged ~ it can be difficult for an audience to maintain focus on just one person moving.

I chose a couch as my prop to represent home while the down stage corner/wing became "college" or the next phase. Throughout the piece I keep pulling the couch towards me, pushing it away, running from and finding comfort in it. The magnet between the couch and me was one I hoped the audience would recognize in their own personal story.

Besides the obvious difficulty of working with a heavy prop for the first time as a choreographer, the biggest challenge was using a current emotional struggle. Each day I entered the studio meant that I was at a different place emotionally than before. There were many times the choreography was reworked to match my internal dialogue, essentially up until the day of the performance.

The resolution of the piece was taking pride and comfort in where I came from by taking

a cushion with me. I will always have a piece of home with me and there will always be a place where I can return. Re-watching the choreography as a college sophomore gives me a new perspective of my mindset then, as a freshman last year, and now. Last year it was easy to be dismissive of where I

came from, but after returning this summer I am reminded of how much my home shaped my character. So as I go into sophomore year, I will take pride in my cushion just as I did carrying it off the stage at the end my high school senior year.



Photos of dance from video courtesy of Mary Chandler Gwin



***NDEO's 2016
Artistic Merit, Leadership and Academic Achievement Award***

Junior and Senior high school students who have been inducted into the National Honor Society for Dance Arts are eligible to apply for this award, one of the highest dance honors program in the United States.

Learn more,

http://www.ndeo.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=893257&module_id=190126

2016 Award Winners

Winner ~ Joy Giuffre, Passaic County Technical Institute
Finalist ~ Catherine Marrone, 24/7 Dance Studio
Finalist ~ Molly Roher, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12
Honorable Mention ~ Alyssa Harsock, Avon High School
Honorable Mention ~ Anaya Gass, Perry High School
Honorable Mention ~ Ramsey Miller, Studio Bleu Dance Center
Honorable Mention ~ Lauren Hawks, Westwood High School
Honorable Mention ~ Taylor McQuilan, Perry High School



Dance Arts Now! is a publication of the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO). For information on newsletter submission requirements go to www.ndeo.org/nhstdasp.

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