



# *Dance Arts Now!*

The official NHSDA Newsletter for Middle and High School Students  
Back-to-School Issue 2017



*Taylor Teen Ensemble. Photo by Paul B. Goode*

**W**elcome to another exciting school year, when we establish a fine comradery of dancers that will enable us to reach new creative heights ~ *together!*

In this issue, we will discover how... a dance educator becomes a mentor as part of the Taylor School, students express the importance of classic modern training to establish a strong artistic foundation, and

poets explore the magic of entering an empty space. Continue by examining choreography that focuses on social issues, and then, discuss how we should respect other dancers amid the competitive arena.



***Dance Arts Now! Editorial Staff***

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## ***The Dance Studio is Empty...It is Waiting***

By: David Griffaton

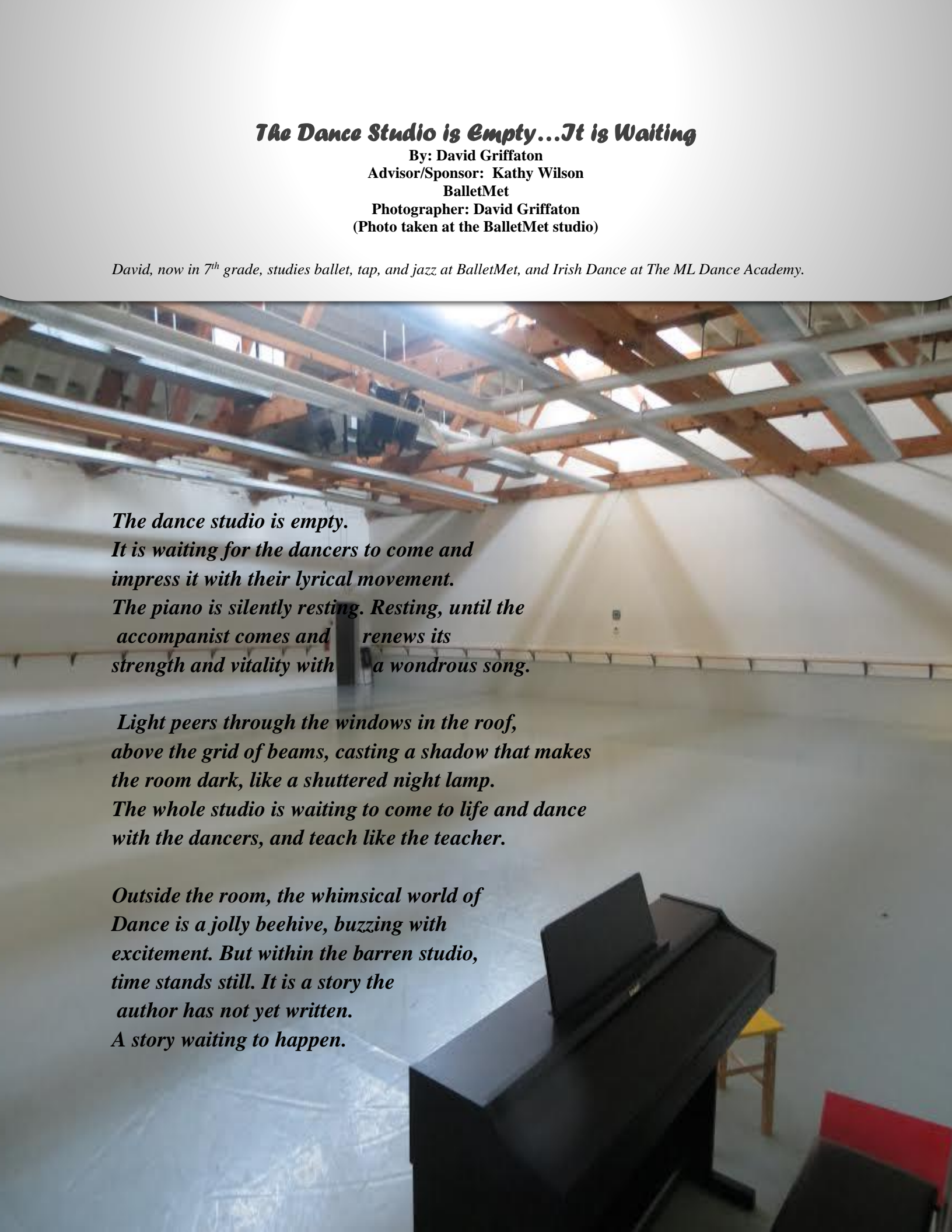
Advisor/Sponsor: Kathy Wilson

BalletMet

Photographer: David Griffaton

(Photo taken at the BalletMet studio)

*David, now in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, studies ballet, tap, and jazz at BalletMet, and Irish Dance at The ML Dance Academy.*



*The dance studio is empty.  
It is waiting for the dancers to come and  
impress it with their lyrical movement.  
The piano is silently resting. Resting, until the  
accompanist comes and renews its  
strength and vitality with a wondrous song.*

*Light peers through the windows in the roof,  
above the grid of beams, casting a shadow that makes  
the room dark, like a shuttered night lamp.  
The whole studio is waiting to come to life and dance  
with the dancers, and teach like the teacher.*

*Outside the room, the whimsical world of  
Dance is a jolly beehive, buzzing with  
excitement. But within the barren studio,  
time stands still. It is a story the  
author has not yet written.  
A story waiting to happen.*



## ***Must Have Been Something in the Air***

**By: Makayla Bullock**

**Advisor/Sponsor: Lindsay Cyrus**

**Franklin Academy High School**

*McKayla is a member of the National French, Dance, English and Honor, Honor Society and SCWAD, Team Inspire. She reflects how: 'I thought that I could best express the most beautiful parts of dance and my love for this art form through this poem.... a poem is like dancing or choreographing, with words.'*

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***Stage Lights up,  
No, dimmed***

***Words were in the air; they were the air  
Tainting her skin  
Invading her lungs  
Flooding her blood stream  
Screaming in her head  
It was equivalent to a fever, burning from the inside out  
Some talk the universe out of its pity  
Or sing the same story over and over  
Or write long, incomprehensible poetry***

***See, she does it differently***

***She glides across the steady, constant ground  
Turning, tumbling, flipping, sliding  
Leaping, running, kicking, punching  
Falling, heaving, dying, crying  
Exposed  
Yet safe in her own vulnerability  
Tears falling salty and wet  
Or maybe that's sweat  
She can't hear them anymore  
The words that brought her to her knees***

*For she embodied the living-breathing-heartbreaking-  
Bone-shattering-killing-me-softly-loving-me-harder Emotion  
Emotion that words couldn't even begin to comprehend or simplify  
Emotion that her body knew so well  
Maybe it was the muscle memory  
Some kiss the wrong person at the seemingly right time  
Or send that long meaningful text at the untimeliest hour  
Or meet someone in the thrill of night, only to walk in the light of  
Shame by mourning*

*See, she did it differently  
Through it all, she danced*

*Clarity silenced her screaming  
Enveloped into her blood stream  
Washed over her skin  
Breathed into her lungs  
Clarity was in the air; it was the air*

*Stage Lights up*

*Yes, all the way up*



*Makayla dancing poetically. Photo courtesy of MB*



## NEWS

*"Mr. Taylor walks the halls whenever he is at the studio creating a new piece." ~ Raegan Wood*

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### *Congratulations to Raegan Wood, Recipient of the NDEO Outstanding Dance Educator ~ Private Sector Award (2016)*



**A**s a young girl, Raegan Wood drew her early inspiration from her parents who had been members of the Martha Graham Company. She later performed with the Paul Taylor Dance Company and her sister's Ellis Wood Dance. She holds a B.F.A. in Dance from Montclair State University and an Ed.M. in Dance from Temple University. With Mr. Taylor's

blessing, she established the Taylor Teen Ensemble, which has "blossomed into a group of enthusiastic, disciplined, and talented young artists that reflect the friendly culture and high quality of training at The Taylor School." (BDancewear.com) And under Ms. Wood's leadership, The Taylor School grows by leaps and bounds, from its on-site camps and intensives to its K-12 Outreach Programs. Within this ever-creative atmosphere, she emphasizes that the clearly defined modern classes "draw deeply from the source of inspiration ~ Mr. Taylor himself."

Learn more about The Taylor School, <https://www.facebook.com/TheTaylorSchool/>



*Raegan Wood teaching. Photos by Francisco Graciano*



*Taylor Teen Ensemble perform 'Esplanade'. Photo by Nina Wurtzel*

## **Journal Entries:**

### **Taylor In-School Residency Program**

By: NY Junior and Senior High School Students

Advisor/Mentor: Raegan Wood  
Monticello High School

**Open Response Task:** *Describe your experience with embodying Taylor-style movement.*

**Response 1:** *Doing the Paul Taylor movement at first was very different but soon I became comfortable and now I love it. Paul Taylor makes modern dance his own, and it's cool ~ it gives you that boost to be yourself in all dances, period. When doing warm ups in dance, you do the basics, the easy stuff, but when doing the Paul Taylor movement, you step out of your comfort zone and do both odd and beautiful things.*

**Response 2:** *Paul Taylor has contributed so much to modern dance! He has choreographed over one hundred pieces, which are highly praised. He has opened new doors and continues to inspire many people ~ I know I was inspired! Learning his repertory and style means that we can keep an open mind and even go back to previously studied techniques with a new perspective.*

**Response 3:** *Being able to experience Paul Taylor movement has been great and*

*unforgettable. Taylor has made a significant contribution to the modern dance world. This informs me as a modern dancer because learning actual Taylor Choreography will allow me to become a better artist and have a better understanding of modern dance.*

**Response 4:** *My experience with embodying Paul Taylor's movement style was complicated but exciting to learn. When we*

*ran through the dance we had to bend down a little. That was difficult at first, but I soon got it after practice. Paul Taylor is a great choreographer, and it was great to learn his piece contributed to the Modern Dance World. This informs me how complex and different contemporary dance can be. Learning Taylor repertory was way different than any other type of dance class I've been taught.*

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***I want to lift the audience to the miraculous in human nature.***

*~ Paul Taylor*



*Paul Taylor performs 'Aureole'. Photo by Jack Mitchell*

**P**aul Taylor, one of the most accomplished artists this nation has ever produced, continues to shape America's homegrown art of modern dance as he has since becoming a professional dancer and pioneering choreographer in 1954. Having been a virtuoso performer with Martha Graham's company, he bridges the legendary founders of modern dance and dance-makers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Through his initiative at Lincoln Center ~ Paul Taylor American Modern Dance ~ he presents great modern dance of the past, outstanding works by today's leading choreographers, and dances he commissions from the next generation of choreographers, alongside his own growing repertoire for the Paul Taylor Dance Company, thereby helping ensure the future of the art form. Recurring themes in Taylor dances include life and death; the natural world and man's place within it; love and sexuality in all gender combinations; and iconic moments in American history.

The *New York Times* places Paul Taylor "among the great war poets;" critic Terry Teachout calls him "the world's greatest living artist irrespective of medium." Among his many tributes, Mr. Taylor, 86, has received the Kennedy Center Honors, an Emmy, a MacArthur "Genius Award," and France's *Légion d'Honneur*.

(Bio courtesy of the Paul Taylor Dance Company)



## ***Endangered Species ~***

### ***A Choreographic Concept***

**By: Molly Rohrer**

**Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12**

*Molly was a 2016 NHSDA award finalist, chosen for her high artistic merit, academic achievement, and leadership.*

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### ***I am strong and powerful!***

**M**y solo, titled “Endangered Species,” is a statement about myself and my place in the world as a female, a dancer, and a human being. My experience as a woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is confusing, conflicted, and ever changing.

The world is full of mixed messages for a girl growing up today. We are held to double standards, told that our strength is unladylike but our weakness is undesirable. However, I find dance to be a source of empowerment for me, and for many others, and so I choreographed this solo as a vehicle to share the strength I have found through dance, a gift for myself and for my audience.

I want to show the balance and meeting point between strength and beauty, between wisdom and power, being a girl and a woman. I then incorporated movements that made me feel confident in my body and my art and I hope that every girl and woman who watches my dance feels this passion.

***This solo is meant to be a statement of strength and solidarity.***

View the dance,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oF0kCz4mgns>

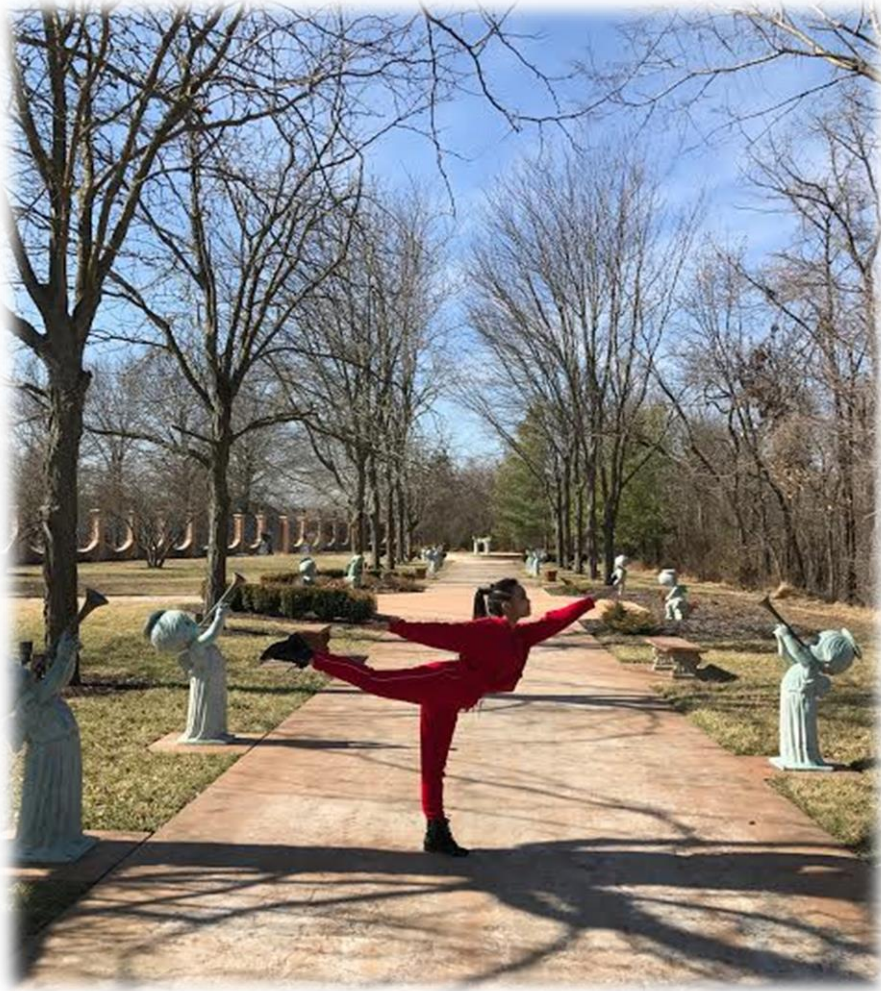
**SAVE THE DATES**

Oct 22-28  
NHSDA Love Your Body Week

Mar 4-10  
NHSDA Dance a Difference Week

May 3  
Thank A Dance Teacher Day  
[nhsda-ndeo.org](https://nhsda-ndeo.org)





*Photos courtesy of MPB*

## ***Competing with Emotion & a Story***

**By: Micahaela Irina Perez-Bayanin**

**Advisor/Sponsor: Victoria Billington  
Point Performing Arts**

*Micahaela is an award-winning dancer who also sings in 4 languages. She plays guitar and is a trained actress, performing primarily in the in Los Angeles area.*

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**I** believe, as a dancer, you can be anything. You can portray any character through movement and motion ~ a bird trying to escape a birdcage, a fairy who flies without wings, or a deer prancing around in the forest. Dancing is more than just randomly moving your arms and body to the tune of music. Dancing is an art, and to be amazing doesn't mean you must always point your toes, or see how high your legs can leap. Obviously, technique does

matter, but most important of all is the story being told and its great impact upon us.

As if watching an engaging movie, everyone focuses on every move, waiting to see what will happen next. Many people may use the term "fake it till you make it," but that's not good advice. When I dance, I feel the music, the movement, the emotion...everything. I can't "fake" something, even if I try. All emotion is real; it must be real.



That's what makes dance so beautiful. Who could make jumping around or falling asleep look so pretty? ~ ***Dancers!***

I started dancing when I was just 18 months old...so young I didn't exactly know what I was doing most of the time, but I enjoyed every second. I was about 8 or 9 when I realized that dance was what I wanted to pursue. As a lover of fantasy novels, I liked to portray a princess in danger, or a wizard fighting a snake. Dance clicked as something I would never grow tired of, and I'm still dancing my heart out today.

### ***That Two-Minute Moment***

I remember the adrenaline rush of my first competition. It felt like I would drown amid all the commotion there. It was loud, and smelled of hairspray. People dashed in and out of the dressing rooms; sometimes they would cry. Girls and guys changed costumes and characters at the speed of light, but I couldn't keep up. I remember seeing them running through their dances in the hallways and backstage. It seemed like there were just legs kicking in the air everywhere, and it was amazing. Everything was so wild, but I loved it all. I especially loved being on stage, with the feeling of those warm lights hitting one's skin, the audience's eyes focused on that one dancer the whole time.

Yes, you were judged, but that was fine. All that mattered in that two-minute moment was you, your story, your emotions, and how you performed for everyone. Sure, you could be intimidated by the other dancers who you believed were "better" than you. Every dancer is amazing. And you, reader, are too. Yet when you're out on that stage, no matter how high others' leaps are, they don't matter in that second. The judges, those backstage, everyone is looking at you ~ and engaged by your story. It's your turn to shine! If you mess up, if your music stops, keep going. No one will make fun of you. And if you forget something, improvise to make your performance even better than it was before.

### ***All That Matters***

All that matters, then, is to get the story out there. Someone once told me: "Tell them, 'I'm excited!' when you're nervous," and I've been doing that ever since. When nervous, you might forget. When uneasy, you might get scared. You may want to back out, but if you say to yourself, "I'm excited!" I'm excited to go out on that stage, to slay the dance, and win first place," suddenly that nervousness disappears. If you have the determination, the drive, you'll get through with newly found confidence. Since my first competition, I've loved all those that have followed. I still enjoy being around so many people within this exhilarating atmosphere.

My heart races as I watch the other dancers tell their personal stories on stage. My heart stops when the competition host calls my name on stage. Yes, my team and I are awarded many trophies and medals, but I'm so proud to represent my teachers, my peers, myself. My amazing mentors Jordyn Jones, Maddie Ziegler, and Sophia Lucia all inspire me to be a better dancer. What do they all have in common? Telling each story uniquely. Yes, they're famous, and have perfect pirouettes, but they all love what they do. When I struggled with pirouettes, my dance teacher said to repeat them over and repeatedly until I was exhausted. Yet, I didn't complain. I had determination. I *wanted* to get better. If I wanted to tell my story, I had to learn the basics first. And that I did.

In short, this is my story, and I always say three words within a simple phrase that get me through with a smile. I hope they will inspire you, too ~

***"I love dance!"***



*Photo by Kayla Pacenka*

## ***Collegiate Feature:***

### ***Audition Advice***

**By: Rebecca Santone**

**Advisor/Sponsor: Dr. Donna Dragon  
Bridgewater State University**

*Becca is pursuing a BA degree in dance; she has choreographed many musical theatre productions and the BSU Dance Company premiered her first ballet piece.*

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**A**uditions happen all year round, but with the school year starting, new opportunities may soon come your way. If you have one scheduled, no matter how big it is, start preparing ASAP so that you are ready to do your best in the limited time you're given to show off your lifetime of work. After two years filled with auditions (four auditions of which I especially received great opportunities), here is my best advice for getting ready for that ***Big Break!***

#### ***Plan Ahead***

From my experience, the worst thing that can happen at an audition is that you enter unprepared. Don't wait until the last second to figure out your travel arrangements, and be sure to give yourself plenty of time to arrive, check in, and warm up ~ you don't want to be flustered when you must jump right in. Remember to stretch out gently to get into the zone to do your best.

#### ***This Includes Your Outfit***

I am guilty of showing up late to some events because it takes me forever to figure out what to wear (and once I do figure it out, I helplessly dig through piles of laundry, praying it's clean). Avoid getting stuck in your spare leotard ~ you should feel comfortable and wear what you look best in.

#### ***Treat Every Audition Like a Class***

In ballet auditions, I've started with barre then moved into center and corner exercises. Whoever is leading the class might even give

corrections. The best way to calm your nerves is to get in the mindset that this is just a class. Work on technique and show the judges how hard you will work if you are cast or accepted into the program. The more you focus on learning from the audition, the more comfortable you will feel in that environment and it will be easier to showcase your talent.

#### ***If You Mess Up, Just Keep Going!***

The judges will be impressed if you do not become frustrated or give up when you forget a combination or fall out of a turn. If you mess up in class, an audition, or on stage, just brush it off and keep going.

#### ***Be Yourself***

No need for fifty pounds of makeup, especially if you don't normally wear it, just because you think you will stand out. I recommend that you do a clean double turn sequence rather than struggle through a triple set just because you see other dancers doing this. Wear that lucky "scrunchie" that you never dance without. Let the judges see your best qualities!

#### ***...Something You've Never Done?***

One audition weakness for me has been that I only recently started training in modern dance. However, judges understand that many ballet dancers have little or no experience in modern or other styles; all they expect is that you try your best so that you can adapt to new challenges. Ask questions to clarify movements or counts. Perform like you've



been doing modern, or whatever the task, since you were born.

### ***Be Nice To Competitors!***

Try not to show off your flexibility or how many flips you can do while warming up. Don't give other dancers dirty looks, nor sabotage the competition. Avoid thoughts to snap others' pointe shoes or steal CDs or cut holes in others' tights or lock them in a closet. Stop "faking nice," too.

Introduce yourself, ask competitors where they dance...they are just as nervous as you are, so it would be comforting to have someone friendly in the room while you go through this grueling process. Be sincere; cheer someone on, wish him or her "Good luck". Who knows, maybe you'll both get in and you'll become partners! The bottom line: ***Join in the Movement to Get Cattiness Out Of The Ballet World.***

Ballet is an art form that transforms us into beautiful, regal, poised individuals. Act like this in every scenario you experience. If the judges want you, they'll pick you, regardless of who else is there. Don't risk making yourself look bad or ruining someone else's chances just because you're too insecure to realize you have what it takes to make it on your own regardless of the competition.

### ***Keep Audition Materials In Your Back-Pocket***

Keep a supply of head shots and dance photos plus a resume on hand in case you hear about an audition at the last-minute. They may also require a prepared solo, so keep the musical accompaniment on your phone (with a backup CD), along with your back-pocket dance. Mine is The Lilac Fairy solo from *The Sleeping Beauty*.

### ***Performance or Technique?***

While ballet terminology is important for an audition, remember the power of a smile while you dance. Technique is something that can always be improved, but the judges want you to dance with your heart. It's your job to



*Photos courtesy of RS*

show the panel that you are both a performer and a technician. Yes, point your feet and turn out from the hips etc., but what will really sell is how you tell a story and show confidence when you step out on stage.

### ***Don't Put All Your Eggs In One Basket***

Through the entire process, remember that this audition will not make or break you. Have faith that your destiny, your time, will come. Out of my last seven auditions, I was cut from three, yet received great opportunities from the others. Sometimes I wonder what might have happened if the odds were different, but I am happy with what I have accomplished ~ and you will be, too!

Your path will become clear as you mature and go through more experiences in the dance world. It's okay to be heartbroken about not making it through, especially when it was for something you really wanted, but there are so many more opportunities out there. Your whole career will not ride on just one audition, so stay positive, work hard, and love dancing.

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View Rebecca's site,  
<http://balletwithbecca.weebly.com/>



## ***Welcome Back to School!***



*Raegan Wood teaching. Photo by Francisco Graciano*



### ***Dance Arts Now!***

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