



# Dance Arts Now!

The NHSDA Newsletter for Middle and High School Students  
Premier Edition, Vol. 1  
November 2014

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## WELCOME!

Welcome to the premier edition of *Dance Arts Now!*, the official NHSDA newsletter for dance students ages 11 to 18. We are truly impressed by all of the articles, illustrations, and poetry we have received so far. In the process, we have enjoyed lively, constructive discussions about editing and discovering more powerful words to strengthen the original voice within our writing.

Our readers will find here just the beginning of a series of engaging, thought provoking and, sometimes humorous contributions.



Dancer: Sam Filipowski- Photo by Steve Clarke.

We invite all future and current NHSDA members to contribute to our newsletter. Expand your creativity and be published! The next issue will come out

in March 2015. Submission deadline for this edition and future editions will be January 20<sup>th</sup>.

For more details on how to submit original materials for the newsletter visit the official NDEO website at [www.ndeo.org/nhsdasp](http://www.ndeo.org/nhsdasp).

The National Honor Society for Dance Arts (NHSDA) is a program of the *National Dance Education Organization*. The NHSDA Secondary Program (ages 11-18) was launched in 2005 and currently has 332 chapters, while the Collegiate Program was launched in 2012 and has 33 chapters. Over 1,800 students were inducted last year.

Best wishes,  
*The Dance Arts Now! Editorial Staff*

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## NEWS



Photo by Immaculate Conception School, Towson, MD.

### Thank a Dance Teacher!

On December 2nd, NDEO is calling to all students and teachers to take the "Thank a Dance Teacher Challenge" and post "unselfies" and short dance videos to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Our social media pages should be ablaze with messages that thank our dance teachers. Make sure to use #ndeothanks in your social media postings.

If you dance, thank your dance teacher. If you used to dance, thank your dance teacher. Do this on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram on December 2<sup>nd</sup>! And, let's make dance education go viral!

For more information, visit [www.ndeo.org/givingtuesday](http://www.ndeo.org/givingtuesday)

### Award Opportunity:

NHSDA inductees who are in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade are eligible to apply for the 2015 NDEO Artistic Merit, Leadership and Academic Achievement Award. The application packet will be available on the NDEO website by 12/19/14 at [www.ndeo.org/nhsdasp](http://www.ndeo.org/nhsdasp).

### NHSDA Mission:

1. To recognize outstanding artistic merit, leadership and academic achievement in students studying dance in public and private schools in K-12 education, dance studios, cultural/community centers, performing arts organizations, and postsecondary education.
2. To foster an appreciation for dance as a true art form and one worthy of recognition and prestige.

### NHSDA Goals (ages 11-18)

1. To identify honor students of junior and senior high school age for nomination to the *NDEO Artistic Merit, Leadership and Academic Achievement Award*, one of the highest honor programs for dance in the United States.
2. To promote a desire for life-long learning in the field of dance.
3. To encourage an understanding of, and an appreciation for, dance as an art form and develop knowledgeable audiences for tomorrow.

<i>Dance Arts Now!</i>	
	<b>Editorial Staff</b>
	Susan McGreevy-Nichols, NDEO Executive Director Colleen Hearn Dean, Senior Editor Melissa Greenblatt, NDEO Director of Marketing Lori D. Provost, NDEO Special Projects

## Define a Dance

By: Claire Donovan-Suguitan  
El Cerrito High School  
Advisor/Sponsor: Jessica Kronenberg

*Claire, a sophomore, began dancing in 2013 in the Jazz Dance 1 class. Last summer she attended the Teen Choreography Intensive at Luna Dance Institute. Claire uses poetry and dance "to visualize my ideas, thoughts, struggles, and feelings, so to turn them into art that will heal me and others."* Poetess Claire. Photo courtesy of El Cerrito HS.

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### Breathe, Beats, Bones bonding together in your Body

Each with your own duty yet brought together  
To bring upon beauty  
The breath that keeps you going  
The bones that keep you moving  
While your body holds it all together

The beat of your heart begins the start  
Of the background sound to your dance  
Music is the medicine you digest  
While dance is the medicine used to express  
When the two are combined  
It's a beautiful find

When dance is so driven into your bones  
You turn it on and become in the zone  
Chaînés create a vortex of churning air  
Beckoning a breeze through the distilled air  
The wind being created slips in and out of your chest  
To the rhythmic beat of the organ beating against your breast

As the dance slips from your fingertips, it drips  
And it stains the ground you dance upon  
Causing the movement to stick  
And roll off the stage and fall on to the onlooker's feet  
So when they leave  
They will carry it  
With them to through the streets  
And it will seep through their soles  
Eventually entering their blood stream  
Causing their bones to strengthen  
Their heart beats to speed up  
And their breath to deepen

Dance not only exercises your body but your mind  
Yet it is articulated through the spine  
Creating movements that represents signs  
That you have to inhale in, in order to find





"Keystone" Photo courtesy of CDDC.

## **KEYSTONE**

### **Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company**

#### **Review**

By: Rachel Keough  
Ridge High School

Advisor/Sponsor: Rachel Miranda

*Rachel, an eleventh grader, has been studying dance for the past seven years and is a new member of NHSDA. She is an active member of Ridge Dance Collective, a modern dance-based student choreography group. She also performs in the Ridge Drama Club musicals and enjoys watching many styles of dance and is inspired by the passion of dancers.*

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### ***Dance inspired by Life, Lives inspired by Dance...***

**T**his is the motto of The Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company (CDDC), which is stationed in Union, New Jersey, and it is a clear and accurate interpretation of the art of dance and why dancers express themselves through dance. This contemporary dance company features fantastic artists and mind-blowing choreography. Carolyn Dorfman, leader and main choreographer, created one of the most extraordinary and unforgettable dances I have ever seen: "Keystone," symbolically named after the central stone in an arch - the piece that joins two ends and keeps them together.

First performed in 2012, the dance features distinctive music: Rufus Wainwright's "Halleluiah," Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World," and Jamie Randolph's "White Christmas," respectively. The story follows the relationship between two individuals and how they depend on each other, work together and overcome hard times. It involves beautiful partnering and movement where the two move in

synchrony, and seem as if they truly are connected like two elements united by a keystone. The dancers, Louie Marin and Jacqueline Dumas Albert, seem to never disconnect, and are constantly relying on each other to achieve every movement. In an interview, Albert has stated that the two are "Always in contact and always supporting each other" resulting in a beautiful metaphor for relationships.

This work of art stands as the embodiment of the Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company's motto by taking life experiences and molding them into consequential movement. Dedicated to Dorfman's husband of 40 years, she is motivated by "the endurance of a relationship," (interview, "The Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company at 30!") which is clearly evident through the strong, steady partnering of the duet. Not only do the dancers move as one, they literally support each other's weight through lifts and paired motions, constantly working off each other's momentum.

Various phrases begin with an intimate scene, where the couple does not detach, even for a second. They slide, spin and roll over each other, constantly balancing and working to establish this aura of durability and tenacity creating the physical embodiment of this ongoing relationship. They then flow into different scenes and periods of their relationship, from lust to love to humor, freely, without interruption. Their interdependence is indisputable, as is their struggle to move forward. Nonetheless, they continue, and that authenticity and real-life struggle is as relatable as it is admirable. Every step, turn, flick of the wrist or arm movement has a reason behind it, which further establishes the credibility of the choreography and again connects to the dance company's motto.

I first saw this performance "front row" at the Grounds for Sculpture in Trenton, New Jersey where various dance companies performed within and around the sculpture. CDDC performed this piece inside for an audience of about fifty in the summer of 2013 and I will always remember this moment.

I cannot connect my true love for this dance to any single aspect of the performance; it is the sum of how every part fit together as impeccably as a puzzle. The music effortlessly sets the perfect tone, in regards to the movement that not only constructs aesthetic shapes, but also makes me feel a passion deep within my heart. Most importantly, the veracity and sincerity depicted creates the most brilliant dance masterpiece I have ever set my eyes on.

The audience is never told what this dance is about, however its meaning is conspicuous. It is the movement, the expression, passion and connection between the two dancers that establishes this tone of dependency. It is such a vulnerable, yet alluring treasure that I had the luck to stumble upon. I have seen this dance only once on stage, and I always try to find it on YouTube, only to come up empty-handed. There is a small two minute clip at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nz5h9XX-4Ck>

For now it will suffice, but I would give anything to see this dance again; not only for the beautiful scenes it depicted, but also for the warmth and enjoyment I felt deep within my soul while watching it. This dance is as beautiful as it is truthful and it will remain as a constant reminder to me that dance is the physical embodiment of the trip-ups and triumphs of life.

Source:

"The Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company at 30!" *YouTube*. YouTube, 17 May 2013. Web. 16 Oct. 2014.



"Keystone" Photo courtesy of CDDC.

## BACKSTAGE

By: Lianna Shimoun  
Ridge High School

Advisor/Sponsor: Rachel Miranda

*Lianna, an eleventh grader, has been studying dance for the past fourteen years and is a new member of NHSDA. She is an active member of Ridge Dance Collective, a modern dance student choreography group. She has been a member of the Washington Rock Ballet for twelve years, performing in a production of the Nutcracker every year. She loves all forms of dance and studies them extensively, whether through her own performance or observing others perform.*

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Lianna enters, SL, as another dancer prepares. Photo courtesy of L. Shimoun.

Nothing can describe the anxiety before going on stage to perform. It is an experience unlike any other. You have worked for months, through five-hour rehearsals, sweat, blood, and tears, and have finally reached the pinnacle moment. And the moment is fleeting. You only have one or two shows for the many hours that it took to learn the choreography, rehearse it, and perfect it.

You stand backstage, along with the other dancers, waiting anxiously for the music to begin.

There is that moment of anticipation where there is silence as the audience waits for the music to start and for you to enter, to move under the lights. You start to sweat, but then freeze at the same time. Your legs won't stop shaking. Your eyes dart nervously around to see if everyone else is feeling the same way. They are all nervous as well, and the silence backstage is deafening.

You know that you have to perform your very best, but there is that inkling of doubt rising. Maybe you aren't ready. Maybe you need to run through it one more time. What if you mess up? What if you fall? What if you finish early or late? What if you get the timing wrong, and are not dancing in sync with the others? What if you forget the choreography? There is so much to think about, so much to worry about, so much that could go wrong.

The music starts, your heartbeat flutters... But the moment you step onto the stage you are calm, you are controlled, you are performing with your entire soul... *You are a Dancer.*

## MY INSPIRATION FOR CHOREOGRAPHY

By: Savannah Ward  
Valley Stream Central High School  
Advisor/Sponsor: Kristin Martine

*Savannah, a senior, has been a member of the district-wide Performing Arts program since her freshman year and is a leading member of the program's Dance Concentration as well as captain of Central's award winning kick line team. She is looking forward to creating more choreography for the school's annual dance concert and continuing her endeavors in dance and choreography in college.*



Savannah and company dancing. Photo courtesy of Valley Stream Central HS.

**I**nspiration, the process of being mentally stimulated to do something creative; choreography, the art of symbolically representing dance...

My inspiration for choreography comes from many places that invigorate me. Choreography isn't just the sequence of steps and movements in dance, it is the way I speak what I feel, using different motions or movements. I speak with dance. I punch and fight with dance. I cry with dance. I scream with dance. I dance with dance.

Sometimes I have issues communicating my inner thoughts. But if I hear that 808, the thumps, the rhythm running over the track I

can't help but bust out a move. To shake what my mother gave me and stamp my feelings on the floor. However, I do have times when I'm choreographing with a vision or reason for the dance piece. At times I aim for a more emotional dance, a fun dance, or even to just get "crunk" or angry with my dancing.

Yet, most of the time I just like to sit or lay down with my earphones tucked in my ears and listen to where the music takes me. Travel to that never-never land of my internal desires; trapping those aspirations and releasing them into the world. Everyone should experience these movements in their own ways. Everyone should understand how I feel at that moment, but don't always listen to the words of the song; it may confuse you. Just listen to the beat and read my body language.

What really touches my heart and keeps inspiring me to create, is when I see my choreography come to life on the stage or even just the gym floor. I love to sit back and watch others do my choreography; it makes me feel awesome inside. It's like my canvas, my piece of artwork in the gallery. It's truly beautiful to be in there dancing with the dancers and to watch them, not dance my feelings but their own.

The funniest thing of all is that I was scared to choreograph about a year ago. I looked at myself as a joke. I couldn't take myself seriously at all, and if I couldn't then no one else would. I would say "me, me choreograph, I'm not capable of that." I had only choreographed two times before I auditioned my piece "Mine" in our school's Dance Concert. What I choreographed before were Sweet Sixteen hip-hop or talent show dances. So of course I didn't think I was capable of choreographing a 27 person contemporary/hip hop dance, but I did.

Let's just say I loved Beyoncé's (new at the time) self-titled album and listened to it about a thousand times. But then one great day, not to be corny, the sun hit my room in just the right way, so I closed my eyes and envisioned this dance with 12 dancers performing to her song "Mine" (featuring Drake). It was as if the beat took me to another place; I thought it was my favorite song on the album. The first thing that popped into my head was DANCE CONCERT! I kept thinking I HAVE to do this song; I made up two counts of eight to Drake's verse in the song and auditioned for my school dance teacher, Mrs. Martine. She loved the different patterns and beats of the song ("it was contagious").

The piece was accepted into the concert. I just had to keep creating and develop my concept, which I did by pacing myself. Finally the middle of May came and my dance was performed by all of the hardworking dancers on that stage - the crowd went insane!

That day gave me clarity - the sky is the limit, I can truly do anything that I put my mind to. I guess the creative process in making that dance is my inspiration for everything I do now. It has helped me find out that I have the ability to be something great, whether in dance, song, my career, or even life itself.

The valuable question is, "Do I have an inspiration for choreography or many inspirations for choreography?" Life is an inspiration experienced through different points of pain, suffering, joy, peace, and frustration. These are aspects that we all seem to reach within common ground. I believe every choreographer just wants to get a point across to an audience and to one's peers. We, I, want to make a statement; I want to be remembered not only in my mind, but in others' hearts and souls.





Menaka teaching young children. Photo courtesy of M. Narayanan.

## **LESSON PLAN**

### **Handling Energetic Children in 15 Easy Steps**

By: Menaka Narayanan

Roosevelt High School

Advisor/Sponsor: Mary Pisegna Gorder

Studio Director: Maygan Wurzer

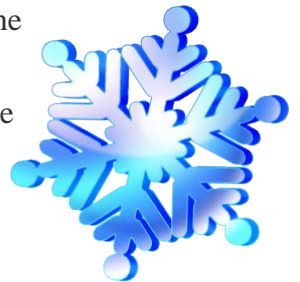
*Menaka, a senior, dances at All That Dance in Seattle, Washington. She takes ballet, tap, jazz, and lyrical classes. She is also a member of the All That Dance Company, and is serving as President of her NHSDA chapter.*

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**I**'ve taught dance for the past few years, through assistant teaching at my studio and running a creative dance program in local elementary schools. In this experience, I have seen sweet kids, quiet kids, and talkative kids, but mostly lovable kids with enough energy to launch a rocket.

From my research, both as a teacher and as a student, I have compiled a step-by-step instruction manual on how to deal with and inspire the craziest of little dancers:

1. **Embed class rules in the children's minds through inception. - Blackmail 101.** Have the kids brainstorm the list, so every time they are wreaking havoc, remind them that it was *their* idea in the first place to not talk when the teacher is talking (so they're really just disobeying themselves, not the teacher).
2. **Assert yourself as the teacher.** If you're too informal, the kids will think you will be okay with anything they do. It's important to make the distinction of teacher versus students.
3. **Make them feel special.** Having said that, remember that little kids love big kids who care about little kids. Before and after class, and during water break, ask them about their day. Follow up on details about their lives, even if you have to endure long repetitive conversations about "What I'm Doing at Grandma's House after Class." Be their friend, they'll respect you for it.
4. **Empower the troublemakers.** Does someone just refuse to stop wandering around? Ask the child if he or she thinks he or she can handle being the line leader (100 times out of 100, the answer will be YES). Every time the kid starts on an orbit around the classroom, remind him or her that with great power comes great responsibility.
5. **Reward the good kids.** Well-mannered children deserve serious credit. The esteemed titles of "Special Demonstrator" and "Dot Picker-Upper" should be reserved for these stars.
6. **Discourage sitting out for no reason.** Once one sits down with a "my foot hurts a little," a domino effect may ensue. Soon, the foot ache will magically transmit itself to every other child in the class. First try, "Let me look at it." Examine the nonexistent injury. Proceed: "I think you can make it until the end of dance class, what do you think?" If the child continues to refuse to dance, give him or her a few minutes to sit out. After this, if the child still doesn't feel like dancing, link the inability to do the dance with an inability to partake in the fun game at the end of class. This usually does the trick. If a child really is injured, of course, let him or her sit out, but it should be easy to make the distinction.
7. **Play *Frozen* songs, all day, every day.** Remember to cover ears before pressing play, in order to escape being deafened by a dozen high pitched squeals. (Note: after 3 weeks, you may never want to build a snowman again. Ever. )
8. **Know which battles to pick and which battles to leave.** If they want to be partners with their friends for one game, let them be partners. It's an opportune time to get a rep as the nice teacher; save your "no's" for a more significant problem.



9. **Get the boys to stay.** Keep the Taylor Swift to a minimum, get boys to come with friends, don't talk about pretty ballerinas all the time, and make references to the LEGO movie at every possible moment. Boys like to dance too; help them feel free to do it.
10. **Find an ally.** If you feel that all hope is lost in the classroom, take a moment to focus on this sweet angelic (usually kindergarten) child – a deviation from nature – who is probably at this time gazing at you with big round eyes as the rest of the class reigns terror. Take a deep breath, renew your faith in humanity...then proceed.
11. **Never tell Mom that her child was naughty.** It might be because, at 17 years old, I was recently a child, but that's just low. What happens in dance class stays in dance class.
12. **Let the little dancers know they're improving.** When you're dancing, despite how you look, you imagine yourself to be beautiful. This is especially true with children. Kids love hearing that they're doing well and improving, and it inspires them to continue practicing and dancing.
13. **Stamps. Are. Magic.** Kids love stamps. One for dancing, one for listening. Works every time.
14. **Keep calm and carry on.** Even if there are thirty children and one of you, they don't feel like its chaos – they're just having fun. They'll just start thinking it's funny if they see you getting flustered, and the pandemonium will escalate. Appearing cool and collected (even if you don't feel it) will gain you respect.
15. **Love them.** Kids are my favorite kind of people. They don't overthink things, hold grudges, or judge others. Their voices are an incessant stream of funny quotes. They'll give you big hugs and tell you they're excited to see you. They'll bring you hilarious crayon drawings and tell you all about their lives. They'll look up to you, want to be your friend, and love you.



~ And so, make dance class fun and aspire to be that teacher whom the kids will remember for the rest of their lives.

## **My Summer Dance Experience**

By: Paige Myers

Clonlara Home Based Educational Program

Studio: Dance Dynamics Performing Arts Center

Advisor/Sponsor: Dori Matkowski

*Paige started dancing in first grade, and this year is her eleventh year of dancing. She became serious about dance around 5 years ago, when she realized it was all she wanted to do from then on! She has been at the same dance studio for eleven years, noting “I wouldn't go anywhere else! She has studied ballet, tap, jazz, hip hop, ballroom, modern, and contemporary training.*

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Paige and dancing friends at the studio. Photo courtesy of Myers.

**M**y summer dance experiences are usually the same every summer. Don't get me wrong, I absolutely love the immense training my dance studio offers me; I just wanted to try something new.

Every summer a group of students from my studio goes to Las Vegas for a week of ballet classes with the highly recognized teacher Tara Foy and her staff of educators. This past summer I had the chance to go on this amazing trip, which included five days of Ballet, Pilates, Contemporary, and Modern dance for ten hours a day. It also included multiple blisters and feet icing treatments, but it was well worth it.

The training was rigorous, difficult, and the days were long and tiring. If I didn't have an extreme passion for this art I would have been done and ready to go home, but this thought never crossed my mind. It was absolutely amazing being around students and teachers with the same passion that I possess. They made me want to work harder to be as good as they were or to meet the expectations that the teachers had for me.

To be honest, I wouldn't have had the same training if the teachers weren't hard on us. Nobody is perfect; don't expect to go into an intensive like this and not be corrected in front of everybody. If you are never given corrections, you would never improve; these

teachers were there to help us because they *wanted us to succeed*. The feeling of taking corrections and changing what needs to be changed is a wonderful feeling; it's a feeling that isn't there unless we truly care about what we're doing and put work into it.

There were twenty-five students from my studio who participated in the program. I couldn't have asked for a better group in class or as roommates. This trip was not only work, but we also had our nights in which we went out and shared adventures together. We ate at In-N-Out Burger (a must!) and rode the amazing high roller where we saw the whole city from up above. We also experienced the breathtaking city while on our way to see an absolutely incredible Cirque du Soleil show and dined at the stunning Wynn hotel.

And then there were the stories we shared when we returned to our hotel rooms about what we all experienced throughout the week. We truly bonded: the jokes and the

icing of our feet, the crying together when physically and emotionally exhausted, striving through it because we knew they were happy tears from all that we had accomplished. Every day we got up because we knew we were there for a reason, and we had people pushing us to do our best. We had to have the energy to push others so everyone would reach their best level of training possible.

Dance trips like this aren't just about dancing, but also about spending time with amazing people at a studio and bonding with those who have the same passion for dance. Having mentors to push us to do our best is just as important as the actual dance training itself. This past summer was incredible and I couldn't have asked for anything more.



Paige and dancing friends in Las Vegas. Photo courtesy of Myers.

## FEATURE STORY



### **THE PINK HAT**

By: Amanda Ramirez

Bak Middle School of the Arts

Advisors/Sponsors: Martha Satinoff and Hollond Schiller

*Amanda's award-winning writings have been published in several student composed books. This year, her short story "Speed for It" and poem "Peep and Crack" were published in Cannon Solutions America: Future Authors Project. In 2012, her poem, "A World Saved" was published in Young Writers of America! Last year she was awarded the Silver Key Award in Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for her short story, "Off to Mars." She also received two honorable mentions for her short stories, "The Adagio Class" and "Desire to Die."*

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I sauntered out of the hotel room. I knew I was forgetting *something*.

As I ran down the stairs, I felt like something was missing. "Mami I left my phone and my...." I couldn't remember what it was. She let out a sigh as she took the room key from her black purse and passed it to me.

I sped down the aisle to room 369. I scanned the room key against the electronic sensor. BEEP. Now inside the room I searched for my phone. Of course! I left it charging on the night stand. I continued inside the room and...ah ha! My pink hat! This wasn't any ordinary hat but a smaller version of a top hat - all in pink, with a trim of black lace

around its rim. Several green and black feathers shot out from its break, held to the hat by a single velveteen pink rose. I enjoyed wearing my pink hat to the side of my head, for a greater feminine appearance.

We were then on our way to the Gerald R. Ford Theater on the opening night of the Vail Valley International Dance festival. I could not contain my excitement as I bounded to the hotel's parking lot.

We drove through the mountain's curving, winding road. The tall mountains pierced the horizon as the golden sun sank behind their peaks. The mountains were spotted Dalmatians, with snow patches on black terrain. The snow lifts stood on the cliffs casting long shadows. The sky's vivid pinks,



Amanda models the original **Pink Hat**. Photo courtesy of A. Ramirez.

oranges and gold blended together like watercolors. The sky slowly became a dark gray transforming into an inky black.

Our Jeep Compass slowly pulled up into the theatre's parking lot and we briskly walked into the gates of the theater. I zipped up my white furry jacket. Once inside, my mom handed me a generous 20 dollar bill.

I went into the open-air concession stand, waiting for my friend to show up. My dance colleagues stood in a dense huddle, like penguins avoiding the cold. As I neared them, trying to get a better look at the hot cocoa prices, I was greeted with a chorus of giggles. *Never knew I was so funny*, I thought. "I love your hat," One whispered in my ear, her sarcasm evident. "And I love your sarcasm," I calmly replied.

She skittishly ran to her friend, as if she had seen a ghost. The cold wind took the little warmth I had in my limbs on this frigid July night. I pulled my jacket a little tighter and made my way to the stand where toasty hot cocoa was sold.

*Magdalena, where are you?* I thought, searching through the crowds. Finally I spotted her making her way towards me. We exchanged hugs and usual greetings. "Let's get a seat towards the center, there is no one sitting there so we'll get a better view of the upcoming performance of *Serenade*," I said.

"Great idea," she replied as she headed down the concrete steps. Lifting my maxi dress a bit in order to move faster, I made my way through the narrow seating. The icy seats' touch gave me goose bumps through my skin.

"I love your hat, darling!" exclaimed an elderly lady sitting a seat away from me.

"Thank you!" I responded

"It's adorable!"

"Thank you!"

"Where did you get it? Did you make it?"

"I got it at a thrift shop in Edwards," I replied.

She offered a polite smile in return. "A great attribute in these events, is the dainty attire found acceptable."

"I know! My mom lifted her eyebrows when she saw me wearing this hat."

"Well, tell her this: '*Mom*' - make sure you say it in a firm voice - 'I'm wearing this hat to the theatre!'" She added a British accent when she said "*theatre*." I smiled from ear to ear.

"Not to mention," the lady continued, "tell her I have the jurisdiction to allow you to wear such attire to this events."

"Oh I will!" I exclaimed. "And I'm also going to wear it to school!" Her eyebrows shot up. "Well, see, I go to an art school called Bak," She eagerly leaned closer; her snow powdered curls nearly touched my face. "It's a public school and you have to

audition to get in,” I added. She nodded her head in response. “In order to attend this school, auditioning is required. There are different art areas to audition for such as dance. As a dance major, dance classes are part of my schedule.”

Her eyes grew big as her mouth formed a sort of “o” shape. “Where is this Bak School of yours?”

“In Florida, and this kind of clothing is normal at Bak.”

“Oh I’m sure. I’ve worn boots with one inch heels and leather jackets,” she chuckled and drew in to me a little closer. “You know,” she said in a slight whisper, “it takes courage to stand out from the ordinary, take a stroll outside the box. When people see something unexpected they think, ‘Oh! I wish I had the courage to do that!’ ” The lady grinned. “It’s nice to see something out of the unexpected. Why? It moves crowds!”

“It’s like in one of the pieces earlier! The dancer flexed her foot when I expected her to move an arm!” I added with wonder. “Or like when the man turned the blond haired dancer’s body by rotating her calf as she stood in arabesque! I thought she was going to do a penché! She performed the unexpected when the expected was expected. It made the ballet piece exciting! ”

“Art is about creation, putting things and ideas together to form a... wondrous master piece.” Then, she turned her gaze towards me, “or at least that’s what I think.”

I nodded slowly, trying to absorb all I had been told.

“Art is centered on creativity, it involves taking risks,” her eyes twinkled. “You aren’t

going to stay long in middle school, are you?”

“No, I still don’t know what high school I want to go to.”

“You have some tough decisions to make, my girl. In the meantime go for it!” She shouted and pumped a vigorous fist into the air, which very much startled me, considering she seemed frail (not that she looked haggardly or anything of that sort).

“Live the moment!?” I asked.

“YES! Go for it!” The lady said.

“Just do it!” I said, accidentally cutting her off in my excitement.

“Go with your gut! You only live once,” she chuckled while making herself comfortable in her chair.

“Very true” I took a sip of my hot cocoa. My thoughts raced in my head, as my heart pumped fresh blood. A burst of energy coursed through my veins. These concepts were new and intriguing. They wrapped around my mind. So, go with my gut. Live! Seize the moment! Such simple truth and yet so profound...

The lady leaned in close and I did the same. “I danced,” she said with a light skip in her voice.

“Really? What kind of dance?”

“Argentine Tango...”



And a classic tango hat. Photo courtesy of [argentina-tango.com](http://argentina-tango.com).

“Whoa! I never knew that existed!”

“When I would tango, I had to be very careful how I stepped and where I placed my feet. My knees had to be always over my toes, if not I created a bad habit that could injure me.”

“Very true,” I responded.

“One of the dancers, the blond one you mentioned earlier, that’s Wendy Whelan!” The lady said.

“Wendy Whelan,” I thought, “Who is she? I’ve heard that name before...”

“She is a spectacular dancer with the New York City Ballet! Have you seen her move?”

“Hmmm, Wendy...Wendy,” I thought.

“Moves like a snake and in positions I cannot tell you, you must see for yourself!”

“Is she a contortionist?”

“Maybe.... For years Wendy trained rigorously so her body could do those positions. In the process she had to have hip surgery.”

I gasped, “Wendy Whelan! Oh - *her!*”

“Yes! Go see her!”

“I will,” I answered. The lights dimmed and *Serenade* was about to start.

“And remember...Keep on wearing your pink hat! Makes you special,” the lady said with a wink.

*“I will!”*



The beautiful Wendy Whelan in George Balanchine's *Mozartian*. Photo by Paul Kolnik. Courtesy of NYCB.

*~ Wishing All  
Peace & Joy  
Dancing into the New Year ~*



Photo courtesy of Valley Stream Central HS.

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