



**The NHSDA Newsletter for Middle and High School Students
Back-to-School Issue 2015, Vol. 4**



Photo of dancer Liana Kleinman by Tony Lee.

Back~to~School means sharing our summer experiences while looking forward to new adventures and engaging projects throughout each semester.

And so in this issue, we read an inspiring message from a recent NHSDA graduate on how we continue to learn about the wonders of life by dancing. Members of an honor society chapter share their achievements. A lovely poem accompanied by a graceful image dares us to dance and an award-winning choreographer shares how composing a dance creates a deeper understanding of one's family and culture. Young male dancers discuss their positive experiences with their mentor as part of an artist-in-residence program.

~ Dance Arts Now! Editorial Staff

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A Way of Life ~ Lessons Learned for All Student Dancers

By: Lauren Pritting

**Advisor/Sponsor: Mary Pisegna Gorder
All That Dance
(Director Maygan Wurzer)**



Photo courtesy of ATD.

*A recent graduate of Seattle Preparatory High School, **Lauren** has been dancing for 14 years. She has worked with younger dancers as an assistant instructor and is a member of All That Dance's performing company. She plans to continue dancing in college.*

Dance is a mystery. It is confusing, difficult to understand, secretive. Occasionally, dance is frustrating. There are days when we want to say *sayonara* to the long nights, the countless injuries and bruises, to the stress we feel when we can't land that perfect triple pirouette while the girl next to us achieves this so effortlessly. Sometimes it feels like dance lets us down and is disappointing more often than not. But dance is also stunning, emotional, creative.

We can do anything when we dance. We fly and fall at the same time. There are no limits to what a dancer can make an audience feel. When I am on stage, with the lights warming my skin, the music pulsing in my head, nothing else matters. I am free and don't have to pretend to be someone else. When I create something exquisite ~ this is happiness.

Many people tell us we should only do what is comfortable. This is not always true. Of course we should love what we do, and of course we should love the way it makes us feel about ourselves, but it should also challenge us. I desire to do something that leaves me saying "...what?" rather than, "that is too easy."

Personally, if something doesn't push me to accomplish what I never thought I could do, then still demanding more, I lose interest and don't want to do it anymore. That's one reason I love dancing so much.

We are never done learning. Sure, studios have levels to help us expand our dance knowledge, companies have some of the best dancers around, but nobody is ever finished. And that's fine. We don't have to be perfect. When we have class or rehearsal, we are only on time when we are at least ten minutes early. If we don't show up to class for a legitimate reason, it's our responsibility to find out what we missed.

Even if I leave the classroom, dance is never really over. These skills influence my whole life. I always show up early to every occasion, even if I am not required. If I make a commitment, I am always alert and well prepared. I make a point to ask questions when I need help, even with something small or seemingly insignificant.

Dance offers so much that we love, which in turn helps us grow as a dancer and as a person. I now expect greatness and persistence from myself, but also acceptance when I experience difficulty. I am patient, both with myself and with others. Dance has taught all of these qualities and I wouldn't be who I am today without this experience. Dance is more than an enjoyable activity; it is a way of life.

Note: A photo of Lauren dancing is found on Page 11.

News

Dance Program - Holly Springs High School Advisor/Sponsor: Laura Stauderman

This Past Year in Review

From the freshmen with their blossoming talent to the most creative seniors, this past year at Holly Springs High School (HSHS) was phenomenal. The annual *Nutcracker* production was most successful, seventeen students attended Festival, and the NHSDA chapter was reinstated - all while growing together in the HSHS Dance Program. At Festival, dancers attended technique classes and performances and won invitations to other intensives.

The Dance Program welcomes all students of any ability to develop their talents. They enter the studio as novices, evolving as dancers. The Program offers classes not just occasionally but every school day.

No matter what happens in our lives, we freely express ourselves in ways unlike any other through movement. The amount of learning and joy this brings to 100 students is unfathomable. And that makes OUR Dance Program unique.

~ Adapted from an article by
Madeline Dyke, NHSDA Secretary

Symposium Experience

The Symposium is a senior independent study for dancers to discover their choreographic talents. In this yearlong course, they choose a topic with accompanying music, and sculpt their original work upon assigned dancers.

This experience is unlike any other. Student Monica Murray commented, "I adapted my experience as a dancer to create an original piece that revealed a part of the choreographer as portrayed by other dancers." And student Abby Holbrook noted, "The first semester focused on how to choreograph; the second, to transform our choreography onto our cast...Although it was a long, difficult process, all eight choreographers are now close. I couldn't have done it without them." Student Zoe Wampler reflected, "Symposium was my most challenging course but the most rewarding. I've not only improved my choreographic ability, but increased my confidence as an artist."

Read more,

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4Lyx1i7eoDN-Dd1V3M4bkJ1djA/view?usp=sharing>



Photo courtesy of HSHS.



Daring to Dance

Poem By: Claire Donovan Suguitan

Advisor/Sponsor: Jessica Kronenberg, El Cerrito High School

Art Work By: Ellie Madwed

Advisor/Sponsor: Mary Pisegna Gorder, All That Dance

Poet Claire began dancing in Jazz 1 class and attended the Teen Choreography Intensive at Luna Dance Institute. She “explores poetry and dance to visualize her thoughts, struggles, and feelings, and turn them into art to heal both herself and others.”

Visual Artist Ellie is a senior at University Prep. She has been dancing for 12 years and studies jazz, ballet, lyrical, and modern. She is a member of All That Dance's performing company.

*I*deas flood my mind

But putting them into my body takes time.

So I try to break my wall,

So I can show my all.

But dancing without a filter,

Exposes my vulnerabilities much quicker

Putting your emotions into motion is no easy task,

You must take off your mask and look deeper into the past.

Putting your story on stage allows the audience to be on the same page

Then there is the act of occupying space

And not just with your body but with your presence,

To let your presence seep out of your skin

And slide down your face,

Eventually evaporating into the audience without a trace

Dance with a passion that leads to purpose.

Paint a picture with your liquid like limbs,

Forming a river that flows through others,

& fills them up beneath their skin...



NHSDA

Award-Winning Choreography

Reflections of Moon Festival

A Brave Woman, Her Rabbit Companion, & Discovering Oneself Through Dance

By: Liana Kleinman

**Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts
(2014 Graduate)**

Advisor/Sponsor: Diana Delcambre

Liana has danced all styles at Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts and in summer programs with the Alvin Ailey, Boston Conservatory, and Joffrey Ballet schools. She worked with the Broadway and National Touring cast of In the Heights, collaborated with Matthew Bourne's New Adventures, and was a soloist for the VAPA Dance Company. She is now a sophomore at Marymount Manhattan College (Dance BFA program). She received the 2014 NHSDA Artistic Merit, Leadership and Academic Achievement Award for this choreography.

Dance is a way to understand the emotions of others, to express ideas not yet articulated, and to interact with one's community... And I love looking at the moon. We have great conversations and its imagery inspires me.

My composition, called "Moon Festival," was a study for my high school choreography class. In order to explore ways to present an explicit message, my fellow dancers and I wrote a tale set to movement. My text was based on my memories of Chinese Moon Festival and how these experiences ultimately had made me feel disconnected from my culture. I had very clear memories of my Chinese cultural experiences, but being American and half-Chinese, I didn't speak the language, or look Asian. I felt I could expand upon the visceral nature of my memories of Moon Festival with my family to create interesting choreography, while analyzing my cultural conflict.

The Moon Festival is held in the fall to celebrate the harvest moon, the brightest, fullest moon of the year. This conjures a Chinese legend that I heard as a child, of a brave lady named Chang'e. During this time, the shadow of her rabbit companion is easiest to spot.

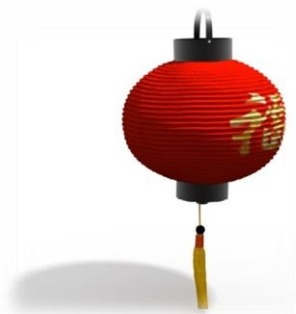
The most difficult part of choreographing this was working with spoken text. The music for the dance

was a Tayal Folk Song. My grandmother taught Tai Chi to this song, and I thought the sparseness of the bamboo flute complimented my recording of the story. Speech, however, does not have the regularity or beat that music does, which made it challenging to create rhythms physically. It was also tempting to mime the words, and I had to concentrate on choreographic devices I had learned at school and in master classes to finish the piece.

The text has taken on a much bigger meaning for me. After studying Mandarin at UC Berkeley for one year, I competed in a Chinese speech competition using a transcribed version of the story! It was a real full circle experience, like the moon, and I'm so grateful to NDEO for helping me realize how important this sweet memory was for me.

View two versions of Liana's award-winning dance,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmHBrRMdLCY>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eiW6CrZL3A



Moon Festival

When I was little, I thought there was a rabbit on the moon. I believed what my mom told me, that a young maiden named Chang'e had run away many, many years ago, and fled to the moon, where she lived with her rabbit companion in a jade palace.

I heard this story every Moon Festival, when our house was filled with cousins and aunties and rapid-fire Cantonese being shot across the kitchen. Bright red lanterns would be brought to the table, and we would parade around the house and out the door. In the darkness of the fall evening, the glowing, spherical lanterns floated like specters all the way up to the park. The lights looked so red, so lucky, as we held them up next to the moon.

Never was Chang'e so real or so powerful. We wished her luck. We told her that tonight she was safe. Maybe she and her rabbit could come home. The excitement of the night dimmed with the candles burning inside their red paper prisons.

The moon cake would be put away or eaten, and tomorrow, we would go to school and think that Chang'e and her rabbit were children's tales. But for now, we would sleepily follow the commands spoken to us in a language we didn't understand. And we would close our eyes and still be able to see the bright outline of the rabbit on the moon.



Photo of dancer Liana by Molly Kleinman.



All photos of Victor Alexander and students courtesy of Wheeling High School, District 214.

Feature Story

A Role Model to Emulate

Male Student Perspectives of

Artist Victor Alexander's Mentorship

Contributing Writers: Abraham Barrantes, Angel Jimenez, Eduard Popa, Bruno Salgado, Josh Salgado, Mark Tannous, Noel Tint, Kendelle Trotter, Jayyaram Yeluri

Advisor/Sponsor: Diane Rawlinson

Wheeling High School

Vitas: *For several writers, this was their first experience taking dance class (from freshmen to seniors). Two writers, Bruno and Josh, are Orchesis members.*



Renowned Cuban dancer Victor Alexander, who embraces the philosophy, "We're not just training dancers, but making artists and good human beings," recently taught a master class series at Wheeling High School and after-school with the Latino Club. This project, which was supported in part by the Illinois Arts Council, included students in a shared cultural experience.

Alexander is Director of The Ruth Page School of Dance in Chicago. As part of his residency, he alternated styles to give students diverse experiences and incorporated both history and culture along with protocol. The Latino Club learned an extended Cuban dance, which was included in an Orchesis concert. Orchesis is the highly acclaimed Wheeling High School dance group. Classes were held in the dance studio and the performance was in the school's Sang Theatre.

Alexander created a lasting impact as a strong role model, especially for the young male dancers. NHSDA Advisor Diane Rawlinson reiterated this enthusiasm: “It was great to have guys in all five of my classes this last semester - first time in my 24 year career at Wheeling.” She continued, “As a mom of two sons, who also danced in

high school, it was such a joy - Love the energy they bring to class!”

These student experiences, expressed in their own words, should positively shape their future appreciation of dance and multi-cultures.



Young Male Student Viewpoints

“The residency, from our perspective, was novel. Victor made it easy for the guys to connect with him. And so we were comfortable with the lessons. Having a male figure teach provided a role model to emulate, with distinct similarities between us. He clearly defined male and female roles within the dances, which allowed the males to demonstrate masculinity. For one dance, the girls incorporated their skirts into their steps, while the guys worked with their partners, establishing a connection. By distinguishing roles, the steps felt practical, focused on power and technique. This experience was new for the male dancers. Therefore, we focused on many technical aspects.”

“Victor successfully broke down the parts of each dance, addressing rhythm, body movement, and individuality. This made it easier to build a complete dance by the end of the lesson. His teaching introduced us to a new branch in the art field, which connected the physicality of movement to the precision of artistic ability. This allowed a smooth transition from lifting and sports, such as water polo and tennis, into the fine arts.”

~ **Eduard Popa and Kendelle Trotter (5th period, seniors)**

“As a guy entering into this dance class I didn’t really know what to expect. When I heard that Victor Alexander was coming for a “residency” I had no idea what that meant but I went along

with it. Mr. Alexander didn't just teach us new dances for five days, he taught us about life. As much as I wasn't an expert at the dances (didn't really know what I was doing), he helped me feel good about myself anyway."

"It didn't matter how capable we were, he just wanted us to give our best and I was thankful for that. He was nice and always open to questions and comments; he made the class enjoyable. He wanted us to give 100% but he also wanted all to have fun. I'm grateful I got the chance to be a part of Mr. Alexander's residency and I hope others appreciated him as well."

~ Mark Tannous (8th period, senior)

"My whole life I have enjoyed the performing arts, but I had never been into dancing at all. So I wanted to explore this part of the spectrum. My older sister participated in dance here and she recommended that I join. So I did but I really didn't know what to expect. I was nervous at first just because not many of the guys I knew danced."

"When I discovered there was another guy in my class, that already made me ease up a little, but when I heard that the guest teacher was Victor Alexander, I felt even better. He was fun, honest, and his teaching was good. He made the steps clear and was patient with us. The different dances that he taught had a lot of interesting history and the dances themselves were different from what I had seen before. So I enjoyed these as well. I was happy to have worked with Mr. Alexander."

~ Angel Jimenez (8th period, freshman)



"Victor Alexander made the experience excellent for both male and female dancers. He was energetic teaching us a variety of Cuban dance moves. He broke them down so they were easy to follow. When we did not understand something, we repeated the move again slowly. Along with helping us learn the sequences, he threw in jokes here and there."

"At first, we were intimidated by our first lesson, but the fact that Victor was a guy eased our nervousness. Everyone felt comfortable exploring the new steps. He got the best out of all of the students and was very supportive. We had a great time working with Victor."

~ Jayaram Yeluri and Noel Tint (5th period, seniors)

"Performing made me think about many ways of moving and to realize how great it is to work as a team to accomplish our goals, including not only to achieve our dancing but having fun, both personally and with everyone else. This was the first choreography I have performed my

freshman year and it is a fact that it helps me figure out how everything works. When I first joined Orchesis I was afraid, but when time passed and I became confident to talk more, to analyze an exercise or to express my feelings.”

“Working with Victor Alexander was an honor because there are so many ways to make a dance; I enjoyed each minute, and it makes me care of how important the residency and its outcomes were to me. I was happy to spend time with Orchesis and Victor Alexander.”

~ **Bruno Salgado (Orchesis freshman)**

“At first, I thought Mr. Alexander was a student but it turned out that he was a guest teacher. He did an amazing job teaching us about different techniques; I loved the flow of his movements, which were simple to learn and to do - amazing. The class as a whole had a fun experience with Victor because he was a really great guest teacher and I hope to meet him sometime in the future.” ~ **Josh Salgado (Orchesis junior)**

“The overall experience I had with the Arts Council Residency was great. I received not only experience to work with professionals, but learning about cultures and what they do for people my age. The highlights of the exercises that I performed are now a part of me, which I share with others. It's something we don't get to do every day and definitely a memory and skill to retain. With my full honesty I can now say, having guest professionals as a part of us is... *phenomenal*.” ~ **Abraham Barrantes (core group, senior)**

From Stage Fright to Cheers

The residency demonstrated to the students the value of cultural understanding and the importance of dance in all of their lives. Rawlinson noted, “This opened their eyes to what wonderful experiences are out there beyond the walls of their high school.”

At the concert, the audience cheered this

core group from all social components drawn together in a Cuban dance. Rawlinson concluded, “It was wonderful to witness the students help one another in the process, those who did not know each other before all easing stage fright and practicing together in the halls, to prepare their residency finale with unified precision, friendship, and joy!”



Back to School

Dance Arts Now!

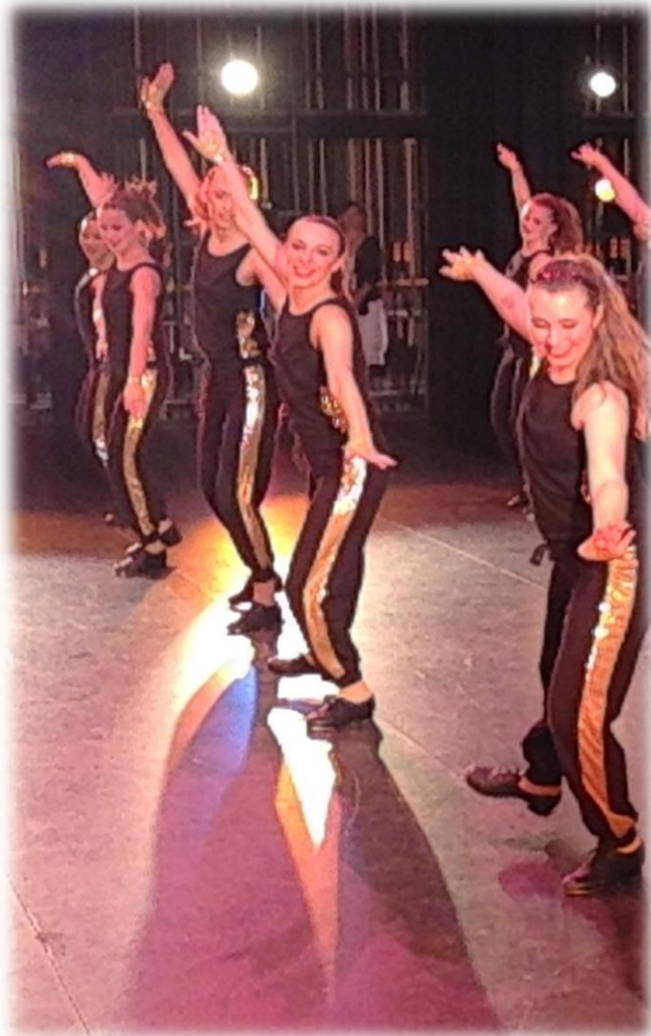
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*Photo of dancer Lauren Pritting (center) with All That Dance members.
Photo courtesy of ATD.*

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