



Dance Arts Now!

The official NHSDA Newsletter for Middle and High School Students
Summer 2017



As we approach summer, let us reflect upon what we have achieved in school this year and now, in the warmth of the season, let us share our joy of dance. This is a time when we can delve into strengthening our technique, act as interns, create original work, and devote moments to those in need.

In this issue, our NHSDA members share their experiences as they “Dance a Difference,” soaring with creativity as a family of artists.

Let us stand powerfully upon the stage of life, and dedicate ourselves to meaningful experiences as we embrace humanity through the art of dance.

~ **Dance Arts Now! Editorial Staff**



Photo courtesy of CASA

Contents

News/Awards

Creative Writing/A Voice

Choreography Block

Audition Challenge

NEWS



Photo courtesy of CASA

Update: NHSDA Dance A Difference Week

In March 2017, NHSDA chapters celebrated the first annual "Dance A Difference Week," dedicated to dance-based service in our communities. Here are two examples of rewarding projects.

Capital Area School for the Arts Charter School

We conducted a lecture demonstration for a local elementary school to promote interest in the arts. We demonstrated ballet, modern, improvisation and jazz techniques and encouraged student participation. Finally, we wrapped up with two pieces of choreography, each with a specific socially conscious theme. NHSDA Members organized and served as leaders during the program.

~ Rosemary Battista, Dance Teacher

All That Dance Studio

Our NHSDA members organized an open-level improv jam and exercise session for local teens. All participants brought nonperishable goods for the community food bank and homeless center. Our dancers also performed their original choreography at the local Ronald McDonald House. Here they teach dance twice a month for young patients at Children's Hospital. Their families are always welcome to participate in the program.

~ Mary Gorder, Dance Teacher



...To our NHSDA Student Award Winners!

2017 Winner, Finalists, and Honorable Mentions

Winner ~ Akylah Cox, Dr. Phillips High School (FL)

Finalist ~ Maya Addie, Skyline High School (AZ)

Finalist ~ Miranda Kim, Palos Verde High School (CA)

Honorable Mention ~ Madison Balsinger, Centerville High School Dance Program (OH)

Honorable Mention ~ Jordan Gaskin, Woodside High School (VA)

Honorable Mention ~ Emily Rauchut, Dance Unlimited (CO)

NDEO's 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 US. Candidates must excel in all three categories:

-  **Artistic Merit**
-  **Leadership**
-  **Academic Achievement**

*Learn more about the award,
nhsda-ndeo.org/award2017*



Google Online Photo



Sonya Monts

NDEO Outstanding Dance Educator - Private Sector

Her members have enthusiastically performed in these venues:

Congratulations to Sonya Monts who earned the title of NDEO Outstanding Dance Educator. Ms. Monts is the owner of The Dancer's Extension in Saluda, NC where she teaches ballet, pointe, jazz, contemporary, and creative movement to all ages. She is also the dance teaching artist for Polk County Schools.

Committed to lifelong learning and high quality dance education for her students, Ms. Monts excels in choreography, workshops in the public library, teaching, staging local theatre productions, and liturgical dance.

Ms. Monts believes that her students' participation in NHSDA "enables them to achieve in the arts as they connect to the community and to the family of dancers at state and national levels..."

- ✚ **National Water Dance Program**
- ✚ **Hometown Christmas**
- ✚ **Entertainment for Autumn Care Nursing Facility residents**
- ✚ **Entertainment for Love Feast Valentine's Dinner fundraiser**
- ✚ **Tryon's Super Saturday**

Following are two of her students' literary works. These young writers, Autumn Jones and Clara Monts, have been dancing together since the age of five and have recently completed their first year as candidates into their NHSDA chapter. All of the arts continue to nurture both their creativity and their friendship. Autumn is home schooled, while Clara attends Polk County Middle School.



Sonya Monts and students celebrate dance as community service

50/50

By: Autumn Jones

Advisor: Sonya Monts

Dancer's Extension



Autumn and friends share the love of dance. Photo courtesy of Monts

When Ms. Sonya asked me if dance is serious or fun, I told her that I think dance is *Super Fun*...But it's a lot of *Hard Work*.

Everyone should love dance and also should cooperate. When everyone works together and supports each other to do their very best, we can make something beautiful!

And when we learn a lot, then we will grow up to be pros! Without concentration, it would be very difficult to learn and to improve.

In the end, it's about 50/50, and they go hand in hand. Without fun you can't learn. So there is only one answer:

Dance is both serious and fun!

~ Dance to Me ~
By: Clara Monts
Advisor: Sonya Monts
Dancer's Extension

***Dance to me is
Like flying,***

***I'm soaring gracefully
through the clouds,***

***Spinning, springing
through the fresh air,***

***Dance to me is like I'm in
my own world....***



Dance Extension Students Soar! Photo courtesy of Monts





Finding My Voice

By: Berkeley Loper

Advisor: Mary Gorder

All That Dance

Berkeley is a senior at Roosevelt High School and serves as Vice President of her studio NHSDA chapter. She excels in modern, ballet, jazz, tap and lyrical techniques. She will attend the University of Utah in the fall to pursue a BFA in Modern Dance, and hopes to perform professionally.

When I was young, I was too shy to talk to people, or look them in the eyes, or come out from behind my parents long enough to introduce myself. Every word I said was too quiet to be heard by anyone. I was constantly asked to speak up, which only made me feel more embarrassed. I've changed immensely since then, and I owe it all to dance.

As I started ballet at the age of eight, I finally found a way to communicate with those around me. Dancing was fun. I felt alive and safe in a way no other activity had felt before, and yet I didn't realize the world of good it was doing me until later.

For a while I still felt shy...my voice remained silent. I avoided excessive human interaction and was anxious in any situation that required holding a conversation. When called upon to answer a question at school, my face turned red and I had to repeat what I said until I was heard. However, in dance class I occasionally offered an answer to a question, and sometimes even asked some of my own. I began to gain confidence.

A Revelation

In my first lyrical class at age 13, we explored emotional qualities that told a story. That's when I truly understood that I

could put what was inside me out into the world. I discovered a new way to use my voice, one that didn't require words to get my thoughts across. For the first time ever, communication felt accessible for me; it no longer seemed so scary.

Performing gave me even more opportunity to practice vulnerability, putting myself out there for a few hundred people. The first time I danced onstage wasn't nearly as terrifying as I pictured it would be. When I first learned how easy it was for me to dance in front of an audience, I felt for a moment that I was capable of anything.

The dance community also fostered my growth of expression. The studio meant entering a protective place with people I loved, who I felt comfortable talking to. Making friends there was natural. Conversation never felt forced and everyone around me loved the same thing I loved ~ *dance*. I felt at home.

Finding my voice through dance has helped me outside of the studio as well. As I became more comfortable in my own body, I gained confidence in my everyday life. My fear of speaking disappeared. Today, I

believe I am somewhat outgoing. I make an effort to talk to new people, and I raise my hand more often in class. Social interaction can still be challenging, but I now know that I can initially overcome this.

No longer does the thought of talking to a group cripple me with fear, and I rarely feel embarrassed to share my ideas and opinions. In dance class, I speak often and am completely comfortable addressing people,

which is something I never expected to say of myself. When I dance, I feel free. I put what's inside me out for anyone to see. Speaking in front of people may never be something I am absolutely comfortable with, but because of dance, I have grown more than my parents, teachers, or even I thought would be possible.

Dance has equipped me with necessary skills that I will use all of my life.



Most of all, dance has given me a voice that I did not always believe I could possess...



Photo by Steve Clarke

Breaking through the Choreography Block

NHSDA Members and Editorial Staff

Recently, NHSDA member Matthew J. Toto posted the topic: **Choreography Block**, on NDEO's "Men in Dance" Forum. He described the frustration when one's work "lacks a certain spark and power," and asked for ways to find new expression in movement. Matthew, a student at Monmouth University, actively participates in all dance courses and concerts on campus.

Here follow three professional choreographers' responses to breaking through that "wall," to create meaningful dances.

A~B~C~D

One approach that I use when in a comparable situation, is to exchange phrase rhythms. For example, let's say we have the four long phrases A~B~C~D:

- #1 Superimpose the rhythm of Phrase A over Phrase B, then connect both into one long phrase so that the whole is less disjointed ~ the audience then sees the same rhythm repeated
- #2 Continue the process using Phrases C and D to move another new long phrase and perform it after the one created in #1 above
- #4 Connect the four original phrases, A~B~C~D, and execute them with their original rhythm
- #5 When exchanging phrases or rhythms, be prepared to adapt. For example, a quick *jeté*, with its new rhythm, is equal to a full quarter that might be adjusted to a slow *fondue* to *relevé*. Now shift the weight and balance

The choreography should flow so that the audience then becomes immersed in the performance.

My dancers find this choreographic tool both fun and challenging, stripping away the original approach while superimposing a new one. Dancers tend to marry a phrase's movement and rhythm as if the two are completely inseparable; this exercise, however, broadens the possibilities that will help develop one's collaborative skills with choreographers.

Try this method and see if it works for you!

~ **Doug Risner, Wayne University**



Google Online Photo

A Quiet Space Clears the Mind

It is my belief that anybody can dance. Hence, the choreographer and teacher should design a pedagogical approach that inspires dancers to engage in all aspects of performance. In turn, we should seek to enhance our lives through our creativity, both personally and together. Here is one choreographic method that I learned when working with Twyla [Tharp]...

Find a quiet space, preferably a dance studio, but anywhere to be free from distractions.

Turn on a random piece of music, especially one that is unfamiliar. Listening to the radio is often good ~ just find some random radio station.

Clear the mind and allow the body to respond to the experience. If you are not familiar with this way of working, it may take some time to adapt but it will be most rewarding.

Good Luck, and, Thank You Twyla!

~ **Daniel Levi-Sanchez, former member Twyla Tharp Dance;**




Paul Robeson P.S. 191



Google Online Photo

Elements

From a choreographic perspective, explore the following elements:

-  **Acceleration** ~ change of velocity based upon all forces acting upon an object
-  **Deceleration** ~ cause to move more slowly
-  **Transposition** ~ transfer to a different place or context

Apply one or more of these in relation to a place in space, and then add an object or prop, which may be real or imaginary.

Explore ways of lying on the ground, sitting in a chair, changing direction (*de côté, en face, croisé, manèges, etc.*)

Now expand upon these elements:

- ✚ **Retrograde** ~ performing in reverse
- ✚ **Rondo** ~ retuning to the same movement
- ✚ **Canon** ~ same movement repeated by each dancer to different counts

Wrap these elements around A~B~A ~C~A, with each letter representing a different step or movement phrase.

Now try this exercise:

If A = *pas de chat*, the sequence could look like,

- ✚ *pas de chat*
- ✚ *glissade*
- ✚ *pas de chat*
- ✚ *assemblé*
- ✚ *pas de chat*

~ **Justin Bellamy,**
Paul Public Charter School

A Combination of Approaches

Matthew reported that he successfully utilized a combination of these approaches. “I just let my body react to the unfamiliar music, which inspired me to develop movement more naturally. I then reviewed my chosen rhythms, stripping and isolating them from my original sequences. This process allowed me to re-evaluate my work independently, which really helped me fight through my block!”



Photo by Steve Clarke



Photo courtesy of Brooke Nolan

Paradise in the City ~ The Audition Challenge

By: Abbey Machnik

Advisor: Marissa Stahl

Gloucester County Institute of Technology

Abbey, a senior, is president of her NHSDA chapter and has been dancing for 14 years. She will continue her studies at Oklahoma City University in the fall.

To the average person, an extensive hallway is merely an inconvenience. But for me, it is a grand stage awaiting my presence so that I can leap until an external force stops me. I feel this jubilation because I am a dancer and have been since my first crawl. Dancing is something that has always been natural for me, and, I will never stop. If ever questioned about taking dance, my answer will never simply be, "Oh yeah I took ballet just for a short time, when I was like three years old!"

Although dancing is my life, my plans to keep performing do not always work out as I anticipate ... yet disappointment may ultimately lead to ***Triumph.***

All school year at my studio, I take ballet and pointe, jazz and tap. Acting as my second home, I spend about fifteen hours a week in the theatre. In the fall, my dancer friends and I rehearse for our annual



Nutcracker; in the spring, we prepare for our recital. After these are completed, we are free until fall rolls around again.

For some, the summer is a two-month break to binge-watch *Grey's Anatomy* or *Stranger Things*. But for those who strive to improve technique, this is a perfect time for intensive study. Dancers around the world often audition for many programs that catch their eye, and for a long time I have had my sights on working with specific professional companies.

The auditioning process is always nerve racking as I strive to perform my best in hopes of acceptance. As for my mother, she becomes my taxi driver, transporting me to various locations. Unfortunately, I cannot say the auditions are just “down the road.” Luckily, however, they are no pilgrimage to a distant land.

Upon arrival at an audition, my nerves may kick into maximum override as I pin my number to my leotard. The ballet school director then orders what seems to be an infinite number of girls, with a sparse group of boys, into a huge room. All auditions being basically the same, we plié and move through barre and center work. The judges sit at a little table on the side, observing our every move. Two hours later, we are sent home with the itching thought, “was I good enough?” Some two weeks later, the verdict is in....

This past winter, I discovered my best was perhaps not always enough. Immediately after receiving the sad news, I was crushed; the two companies I aspired to did not want me. Although disappointed, I was determined to attend another program. One week later, my mother announced, “You

have one more audition coming up. If accepted, you will live in New York City during the summer break!”

Then in July, I transformed into a city girl on cloud nine. In translation, I was accepted into a summer intensive in the Big Apple ~ *with a scholarship!*

Every morning, my roommate and I took a subway uptown to learn from inspiring dance instructors. As for the weekend, my new friends and I sauntered across the Brooklyn Bridge to capture images of the Statue of Liberty. Our goal each night was to experience a place like Times Square or SoHo, with only a nine o'clock curfew holding us back. I could go anywhere to the hum of “*bippidi boppidi boo*” and swipe of my MetroCard. Those two weeks were the best of my life.

Despite not being accepted in one or two places, I know that my technique and dedication will always be valuable somewhere else. Although I have experienced failure, it is an important lesson for me to never give up, so that I will realize my dreams!

***Congratulations to all of
Our NHSDA Graduates,
Class of 2017!***



Dance Arts Now!

Editorial Staff

Susan McGreevy-Nichols,
NDEO Executive Director
Colleen Hearn Dean,
Senior Editor
Melissa Greenblatt,
NDEO Managing Director
Tiana Chambers,
NHSDA Program Associate

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

National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) 8609 2nd Avenue, Suite 203-B
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301.585.2880, info@ndeo.org
©National Dance Education Organization, 2016, All Rights Reserved