



Dance Arts Now!

The official NHSDA Newsletter for Middle and High School Students
Holiday Issue 2018

When we enter the holiday season...
*we dance with deep sincerity, remembering
all we love.*

*Our NHSDA contributors poetically describe the
power of the stage ~ to break out of darkness into
a shimmering light of tolerance and understanding.*

*Pictured here, just a few wonderful students
and a colleague of Fiona Thomas, the NHSDA
member who resonates her love of teaching dance:
“No matter how different our lives may appear...
ultimately, we all need comfort, support, and
inspiration!”*

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PC Fiona Thomas

Disclaimer: “All opinions and beliefs articulated in the following articles are those of the authors. References herein to any specific religious beliefs or practices do not necessarily constitute or imply any endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) or the National Honor Society for Dance Arts (NHSDA).”



Photo by Cynthia Clayton, PC The Dance Inn

The Power of the Stage

By: Naoko Maeda

Advisor/Sponsor: Thelma Goldberg
The Dance Inn

*Beams of light cascade onto the untouched stage
Splashed with adrenaline, overflowing with energy
We enter the stage
We are only here for two minutes
Two minutes to release every little intricate detail and movement that
We have rehearsed
Over and
Over again
And for those two minutes
Everything in the world is perfect
The song starts to fade
And the flow of movement fades as well
As we exit, the sounds of cheers and clapping
Resonate through our bodies and
The smiles eventually fade
But the feeling is embedded in every little inch of my body
Forever*

News



PC James Bowie High School

Silver Stars Shine in the Community

As part of James Bowie High School (JBHS) dance program, the spectacular **Silver Stars** light up the whole campus. The group's objectives render community service as models of school spirit and academic excellence. Their elected officers ~ Captain, Lieutenants, and Steering Committee Officers ~ demonstrate strong

leadership especially because, unlike other athletic programs, the **Silver Stars** must independently seek sponsors to meet financial support and scholarships. The JBHS Dance Department offers all levels of Technique and Musical Theatre.



Dance, Play, Learn, and Twirl

The Dance Corner and its NHSDA chapter offer the interactive story time

Dance, Play, Learn, and Twirl

on Wiggle Wednesdays! Babies, toddlers, and preschoolers enjoy reading, music and movement, while interacting with others in this free class.

NEWS (cont.)

**ATTN: NHSDA Members and
Advisors/Sponsors ~
Find the Right College Dance Program
for You!**

The college application season is in full swing, and the **NDEO National College Dance Directory** lists over 100 institutions of higher learning to help high school students ~ *like you* ~ choose the best programs across the United States and abroad.



Learn more:

https://www.ndeo.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=893257&module_id=292680



Photo by Jay Clark, PC East Carolina University



**Extra, Extra, Extra!
2018 NHSDA Award
Applications!**

Junior and Senior High School NHSDA Members are eligible for the 2019 **NDEO Artistic Merit, Leadership and Academic Achievement Award**, the highest student dance award in the nation. Recognized will be a National Winner, Finalists, and Honorable Mention Recipients.

Learn more about the application process:

nhsda-ndeo.org/NHSDAaward



Jlluminate

By: Leah Suskind

Finalist: 2018 Artistic Merit, Leadership, and Academic Achievement Award

Advisor/Sponsor: Lisa Peluso

Morris County School of Technology Academy for Visual and Performing Arts

Photo of Leah, PC Morris County School of Technology Academy for Visual and Performing Arts

My solo, ***Jlluminate***, derives its title from Max Richter's song *Luminous*, but my brother is the true inspiration of my piece. One of my younger brothers was recently bullied at school ~ the victim of an anti-Semitic hate crime. He chose to speak out, to bring awareness to this issue and atmosphere of hostility born from ignorance.

Through his voice, other students were given the opportunity to discuss their negative experiences which stemmed from racism, religious intolerance, homophobias, jealousy, or just any form of prejudice against innocent human beings. By choosing to be an upstander and *illuminating* the hatred epidemic in his middle school, he has inspired our community, the administration, the students, and me.

While choreographing this dance, I struggled with how to put such an emotional and personal issue into movement. In the piece, I experimented with and performed different gestures to symbolize reaching for understanding, answers, guidance, and hope. By holding an array of positions, I hoped to display the control and strength my brother showed while dealing with these disturbing issues.

There is great conflict in the world and my dream for dancing and as a young, evolving choreographer is to help bring awareness to important issues and promoting change through dance like my brother did in his middle school.



Hurricane

By: Miranda Kim (Graduate)

**Advisor/Sponsor: Kathleen Mastan
Palos Verdes Estates**

Miranda was a 2017 NDEO Award Recipient, has raised funds for Pediatric Therapy Network, volunteered as a TA at PVPUSD STEM Summer Programs, and is now Marketing Director, Alumni Scholars Club at UCLA.

In my piece ***Hurricane***, I illustrate finding love, peace, and joy amid darkness and chaos in the world ~ or inside of us. My dance represents happiness from the passions that uplift and motivate, rather than hurt or discouragement.

Much of how we perceive our universe has to do with our outlook on life. We can all be positive contributors to those around us by spreading love, optimism, and gratitude. My intent in choreographing this piece is to inspire others to “pay it forward,” spreading words of encouragement and kindness.

One challenge encountered while composing my piece was finding ways to exemplify the massive impact of a hurricane. As a solo it is difficult to apply the full space of a studio or stage. I experimented with various leaps and movement to represent chaos. However, I found that literally being a hurricane was not what I hoped to convey. Instead, I simply represented myself. Thus, this dance illustrated how I would respond to pressure and chaos.

Through the dynamics of my technique, I depicted evolving emotions and character. Life itself seems to rush by so rapidly that it’s nearly impossible to slow down and enjoy every moment.



Photo of Miranda, PC Palos Verdes Estates

My choreography represents the perception of a fast-paced modern age and encompasses the message that peace and love are more powerful than the ***hurricanes*** in life.



A Safe Place To Move Freely, To Worship Fully

By: Samuel Gaines (Graduate)

**Advisor/Sponsor: Min. Amanda F. Standard
Divine Dance Institute**

Samuel is now a dance major at Goucher College and has been a family member of Divine Dance Institute for over twelve years.

I vaguely remember the day that I fell in love with what would greatly influence my life. I was a one-year-old sitting on my mother's lap at church; with my feet dangling above the faded, red carpet, I watched a group of people in bright, flowing garments dancing in worship. Their movements, and how the long, purple dresses responded, captivated me. After this experience, whenever the choir sang, I would wave my hands and try to wiggle out of my mom's lap when the dancers would minister. Ever since, my parents tell me, I have been dancing ~ even before I could walk.

After I took my first steps, my mother and father played uplifting gospel music around the house while I imitated the dances that I saw at church. By the time I was three years old, I was performing in our living room. I would sit them on the couch and put on a full show combining dance, acting, and singing. My parents quickly realized my gift and after a few years of improvising every day on my own, they encouraged me to take technique classes.

Knowing that I had my parents' full support, I joined Divine Dance Institute (DDI) at the age of seven. There, I found my second family and trained in many genres ~ ballet, modern, Graham, Horton, jazz, African, tap, step, and even hip-hop. Learning these forms at such an early age helped me get closer to become the adept dancer and disciplined student that I aspire to be. My parents and instructors remind me of the joy that they have while watching my passion grow. I can truly see how influential

DDI and dance are in my life, especially in my relationship with Christ. Dance is my form of

worship, and DDI is a safe place for me to move freely and worship fully. I believe dance is the tool that God has given me to reach out to people in darkness, to touch their hearts, and to guide them to the light. Dance is also a way to encourage and minister to myself. It palliates my body and mind and enables me to communicate without ever speaking. I am grateful for this, which is why I am pursuing a career as an artist and choreographer and will one day own a performing arts company.



Photos of Samuel, and partner, PC Divine Dance Institute

Habari Gani?! What's the news?!

I can't stop dancing! ~

Celebrating Kwanzaa

By: Emily Allison (Graduate)

Advisor/Sponsor: Mary Ann Laverty

Virginia Beach City Public Schools

Emily, an NHSDA member in high school, graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University, with a major in Psychology and minor in Dance and African American Studies. She has been writing prose and poetry since the fifth grade.



Photo of Emily, PC Emily Allison

Mama dances without missing a beat. Her toes follow her hips and her shoulders follow her legs. She is grounded; knees bent, heart full of intention, and a big smile on her face. Mama's body calls unto mine and I respond. Together we move our backs and buttocks. We open our palms to let everyone know we have no weapons.

Spinning toward a corner, I proceed to do the solo I choreographed all by myself. My body glides on the polyphonic rhythm emerging from hands hitting *djembe* and *dundun* drums. My *lapa*, a wrap skirt handmade by my mother, vibrantly displays green and red, the colors that represent **Kwanzaa**. Under it I wear a black short-sleeve leotard.

My earliest memories of **Kwanzaa** begin around the age of nine or ten. The twenty-sixth of December was a full day of joy for about ten years of my life, which included many people along with my immediate family. Sometimes my parents hosted a feast and sometimes my mom and I were invited to dance and choreograph for many community events.

So, growing up, **Kwanzaa** always meant extended family.

Growing up, Kwanzaa meant a great deal of dancing.

Growing up, Kwanzaa meant trying to remember each of the Nguzo Saba, the seven principles, and pronouncing them correctly to impress my friends.

Growing up, Kwanzaa meant celebration and love and tons of wonderful fried fish.

Origins

Dr. Maulana Karenga created **Kwanzaa** in the late 1960s as an African American and Pan-African commemoration of community, culture, and what it means to be black. The term '**Kwanzaa**' evolved from the **Swahili** phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, which means "first fruits of the harvest" or "first fruits." Despite the politics that often follow this holiday that grew out of the Black Nationalist movement, overall, it has given African Americans (and parts of the diaspora) a space to exalt in our blackness.

One **Nguzo Saba** is celebrated each day starting the day after Christmas:

- ✚ **Umoja** (unity),
- ✚ **Kujichagulia** (self-determination),
- ✚ **Ujima** (collective work),
- ✚ **Ujamaa** (cooperative economics),
- ✚ **Nia** (purpose),
- ✚ **Kuumbaa** (creativity), and
- ✚ **Jamani** (faith)

We light a candle for each principle, which is then placed in the **Kinara** (candle holder). Seven candles ~ three red, three green, one black ~ are placed in the middle. The **Kinara**, along with corn (and other crops), a unity cup, and a small present are placed on the **Mkeka** (mat). Each object is symbolic: the corn represents purposeful and celebratory eating, the unity cup and gift offer respect to our ancestors.

Habari Gani?! What's the news?!

I am thankful for my mother, because in recognizing **Kwanzaa** she has always maintained that blackness is not a monolith. Being African American mean many things. As a child, we celebrated with both old and new friends, which for me, symbolized a growing community. Most years, my family lit all the candles in one day. We'd have our day for Christmas and then our day for **Kwanzaa**. We utilized the holiday in a

way that best worked for us and we transcended to learn about the many cultures that Africa holds. Opening our minds to positive new ways of looking at the world and to our rich heritage, we sculpted philosophical ideas and traditions into our own. This, I believe, is what **Kwanzaa** is truly about.

My mother always encouraged me to choreograph my own solo in every **Kwanzaa** performance. At twelve years old, that was what freedom was all about. Being able to dance and celebrate my birthright was a large part of my adolescent experience. I'd shake my shoulders and pick up my feet. I'd jump from one end of the stage to the other; I'd rock my hips and laugh. Without dance, **Kwanzaa** wouldn't feel like **Kwanzaa** to me. Dance was necessary for celebration and it still is necessary, especially in my home.

Although now I consider every day as a praise of my blackness, I find **Kwanzaa** still has a fond place in my heart. It gives me purpose to be extra celebratory about my history. I will not force my children to commemorate this holiday, but I do hope they will find the joy in **Kwanzaa** that I did as a child. I anticipate us dancing together to the sound of drums, to share the glorious rhythms, and plan to create a prolific environment that honors a multifaceted heritage ~ as my parents did for me.



PC Mary Ann Laverty



Akshata dancing as Andal.
Photo by Siamak Poursabastian

To Dance through Diwali

By: Akshata Aravind

Advisor/Sponsor: Guru Joyce Paul Siamak

Arpan Dance Company

Akshata's recent solo debut in Bharatanatyam (classical dance) was described as "pure joy." Among her dances performed was a tale of the poetess named Andal.

Arpan Dance Theatre is dedicated to promoting the folk and classical traditions of India and to create works that have relevance to our modern lives. Learn more: www.arpanarts.org

An exhilarating feeling passes through us when we're holding a sparkler for the first time. For a little girl, it's almost as if she's a fairy holding a wand with all the magic in the world, especially during **Diwali**. When I was a child, this was one of the most magical times of the year.

Diwali is the five-day Indian Festival of Lights and, in **Sanskrit**, translates as "a row of lights". Many people around the world who celebrate this interpret it in different ways, but one common concept rings true: *the festival honors the victory of good over evil in the world*. The lighting of a **diya**, a candle or oil lamp, symbolizes hope and spreading light over darkness.

I remember how my family would celebrate the festival by decorating our house with the **diyas** and lanterns all around. Outside our house, my mom and I made the most colorful **rangolis**, which are beautiful patterns of colored flour created on the ground. For some extra embellishment, I generously placed flower petals on top of our designs. During the night,

my family enjoyed the fireworks display in our neighborhood.

Diwali is not only about outer-illumination, but it's also the time of year to express the inner-light in the core of every human being ~ sharing that happiness with others, whether through music, art, or dancing. Even more so, I remember going to the big parties nearby, dancing with my family and friends to our hearts' content. Everyone would join in a big circle and dance together. It didn't matter if we knew the person next to us because everyone simply wanted to share this joy with each other through dance.

Performing is always a passion for me ~ especially in **Bharatanatyam**, the powerful, expressive classical dance form of southern India. During **Diwali**, my dance teacher gives students in our studio opportunities to be on stage. My classmates and I are so excited because the idea of sharing our passion for dance with others is very special.

Personally, the festival season is a time for introspection, to contemplate and dismiss the darkness in life. When dancing and performing on stage, we not only let a light shine within ourselves, but we shine this light outward to others, so that they radiate and share joy with us.

*Like waving a sparkler,
we all have a
magic light
within us, and
expressing ourselves
through dance
is one way of
sharing this light with
the world.*



*Akshata in her debut performance.
Photo by Siamak Poursabastian*



Wishing All ~

*Peace & Joy
Dancing into the
New Year!*

PC The Dance Inn

Dance Arts Now!

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