DANCE ARTS NOW!

THE OFFICIAL NHSDA NEWSLETTER
HOLIDAY ISSUE
2026



nhsda

DANCE ARTS NOW!

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GREETINGS FROM THE "DANCE ARTS NOW!" EDITORIAL STAFF

AS THE HOLIDAYS APPROACH, LET US CELEBRATE OUR NHSDA CHAPTERS! IN THIS ISSUE, WE RECEIVE THE GIFTS OF POETRY'S RHYTHMS, EXPRESSIVE ARTWORK, AND HONESTY WITHIN OUR MEMBERS' ARTICLES. OUR STUDENTS EMBRACE THEIR HERITAGE, DRAW UPON THEIR INNER CREATIVITY, GIVE BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITIES, & OVERCOME PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL INJURIES ~ ALL WHILE DANCING JOYFULLY!

SPECIAL INVITATION: NHSDA MEMBERS ~ BE PUBLISHED!

DANCE ARTS NOW! IS THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR DANCE ARTS™. (NHSDA) JUNIOR AND SECONDARY PROGRAMS. OUR EDITORIAL STAFF INVITES OUR MEMBERS AND SPONSORS TO SUBMIT ARTICLES, POEMS, CHAPTER NEWS, PHOTOS, AND OTHER CREATIVE WORKS FOR OUR FUTURE EDITIONS. LEARN MORE: HTTPS://WWW.NDEO.ORG/NHSDA/DANCE-ARTS-NOW.



PHOTO: NHSDA ARCHIVES

Poetry

THE SONG OF THE SALANGAI

BY: Abitha Narayanan

SPONSORS:
DR. SUSHMA IYENGAR,
SILAMBAM DANCE SCHOOL
DR. KAUTAVI SARKAR,
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

William Annin Middle School



The bells are heavy, a familiar weight that anchors my ankles to the wooden floor,
the brass salangai singing a muffled song before the first stamp even begins.

I walk into the room and the air changes; it smells of cedar, old sweat, and the sharp, clean scent
of incense, a fragrance woven into the fabric of my skin.

Here, the world outside ~ the rush of traffic, the buzz of screens, the constant need to explain ~ simply falls away.
I am among my people. The girls with long braids, the aunts with palms adorned by mehrdhi, the teacher whose eyes hold a lineage of a thousand years.
We speak a language that requires no tongue. A tilt of the head, a specific curve of the finger ~
the mudra says everything about the blossoming of a lotus or the fury of a god.

When the mridangam starts, a low thrum in the gut, my spine straightens by instinct. Tai-yum-tat-tat. It is a geometric conversation.
We move in unison, a forest of limbs creating sharp angles, tracing the invisible lines our ancestors drew in the dust of temple floors.
There is a comfort in the repetition, the way our bare feet strike the ground in a collective heartbeat.
I look to my left and see the same sweat on another brow, the same focused fire in a pair of determined eyes, and I know I am not just dancing; I am being held.
This is the ancient architecture of us. It is the place where I don't have to translate my soul, where the stomps are my signature, and the silence between the beats is where I finally come home.



POETRY
PROLUSION TO DANCE



POEM & DRAWINGS BY: Twisha Yogindra

Sponsor: Andrea Dula

Green Level High School

I put my shoes on
Scuffed, beat up, raggedy
Mom said she's taking me to a class today
Tired, sleepy, curious
She dropped me off at this place
Confused, nervous
It had so many mirrors
Weird, interesting
The teacher guided my hands to move
in different ways

Is this dance?
It was fun
The more I danced
tired
The more I spun
sleepy
The more I watched
curious
I could see it was good
This was good
This was great

I knew what I would never forget for as long as I lived then
I knew what completed me and my life
It was dance, and it always has been





“WHERE TO?”

ANALYSIS: ART TRANSFORMED

BY: Aiyley Hammerschmidt

SPONSOR: Grace McCann

Graceful Academy of Dance

I took the original photograph this year, during my first time attending a professional ballet ~ The New York City Ballet’s Sleeping Beauty at the Edward L. Koch Theater. I was mesmerized by the theater's beauty and atmosphere, and the light above the auditorium immediately caught my attention. It felt magical, and I wanted to capture that moment. In my school photography class, I used this image as inspiration, transforming the resulting piece into black and white and adding clouds, water, and a ladder to create a dreamlike scene around the original light.

I titled the piece “Where To?” because the light represents a dream or goal that we can see but are still working toward. The ladder represents the journey it takes to get there. The light also represents the inspiration and possibilities that can come from experiencing something new and beautiful.

I chose to submit this piece because it came from my first experience seeing a professional ballet, and creating the final piece allowed me to express what that experience meant to me in a different way. I also like that the photo's meaning can apply to anyone, not just dancers, because everyone has dreams and goals they are working toward.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my work.



VIEWPOINT
"Determined Mindset"

BY: Jordyn Gobern
2026 NHSDA Award Winner

SPONSOR: Kathleen Gavin

Union County Academy for the Performing Arts

In and out of the studio, dance has had an incredible impact on my life. Dance is a rigorous and challenging art form that takes much effort to grow in, and from a young age, I knew I wanted to be the best dancer I could be and possibly make a career of it. Dance has taught me how to be determined, hard-working, and persistent.

At eight years old, I clearly knew that to be a successful dancer, I had to put in a great deal of time, energy, and work into my dancing. It was at that time when I started working out, stretching, practicing on my own in my basement, and trying even harder in my dance classes. However, sometimes I noticed that if I was extremely focused one week and then less focused the next week, I would progress, then regress. This immediately taught me that I had to be consistent, and I could not be consistent if I did not have a determined mindset. Since then, I have applied this mindset to dance, and this has helped me in other aspects of my life.

My determined mindset is where all my motivation in school comes from. For instance, I always try to complete homework and assignments as soon as they are assigned. Also, when I do not understand a school subject right away, I will put in a lot of effort to study until I master the material. I am certain that my dedication to my academics stems from a determined mindset, devised by my commitment to dance.

In the future, I will use my determined mindset to impact people I am surrounded by and the communities I belong to. After graduating from high school, I hope to attend college to earn my Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance, specifically in Commercial Dance. I hope my hard work and drive will inspire my future classmates, roommates, and even my professors.

Additionally, it is my hope to use this influence by giving back to a community that has had a great impact on my dance career from a young age ~ my studio. I am fortunate to attend a studio that supports my goals and encourages me to be resilient in the dance industry. To give back to my dance community, I plan to return to my studio and teach younger students. Along with teaching dance, my goal is to encourage students to stay on course, achieve their goals, and work hard in all facets of their lives.



I believe that the energy within a dance community is cyclical; when you exude a certain energy, it reciprocates onto other people. Once that energy is reciprocated, it returns to you. Eventually, this cycle will continue in my professional career, carrying my determined mindset into new professional spaces.

Photographer: Jacqueline Gedonious



VIEWPOINT
"The Value of Failure"

BY: Aaliyah Angel
SPONSOR: Laura Ward Moran
John Carroll College Preparatory Dance Program

Failure can come in many forms, like falling out of a turn or forgetting your choreography on stage; it can also mean failing a test or making a friend unhappy. Failure can seem bad, but the lesson you take away determines its value. You can either decide to give up, or use it as motivation to keep striving for success. This is something I still try to get better at every day: not viewing myself so negatively when I take a wrong step or answer a question incorrectly on an exam. This is something all dancers struggle with since we are often considered perfectionists and always striving to be the best.

We never want to be caught in class doing something wrong, so we don't take risks and therefore don't learn how to get to the next level. Failure is valuable because it shows you your mistakes and how to fix them. Without failure, no one in this world would learn anything new, so as negative as it may seem, failure should be viewed in a positive light. I try to carry this thought in every class I step into, whether in a room with a barre or a desk, and remind myself that it's okay to fail.

In the next couple of years, I plan to pursue dance in college, perform professionally, and be a dance instructor so I can share valuable lessons. I want to mentor the next generation who, as dancers, we don't have to be as perfect as the outside world makes it seem.

Now, with the rise of social media, it is easy to compare ourselves with unrealistic ideals and feel as though we have to be perfect all the time. I will be an advocate, embracing my students' imperfections and encouraging them to take smart risks. I will influence them like so many people who are role models for me now.

I want to give others the same sense of love and reliability I feel as a dance teacher, not only teaching technique but also life lessons ~ especially that failure leads to growth.



VIEWPOINT
"Dance Taught Me How to Speak"

BY: Artianna Luong

SPONSOR: Victoria Blevins

Victoria's School of Dance

Before I found my voice in words, dance taught me how to speak. It became a place where I learned to express emotions I couldn't yet articulate, a language my body understood long before I did. Dance became both a remedy and a form of therapy, grounding me when life felt overwhelming. The studio quickly became a second home, a space filled with people who felt more like family than anything I had known. I didn't realize dance was reshaping my life until I noticed it reshaping the way I moved through the world.

Dance has molded my work ethic and strengthened my ability to trust myself. Hours spent in the studio revealed not only my strengths but also how much I could achieve when I committed fully. Rehearsals were built on repetition, corrections, and drills, a cycle that demanded discipline and perseverance.

Being surrounded by people who shared the same drive pushed me to work even harder. We weren't just dancers in a room; we were a team, each responsible for giving our best so the whole group could rise.

Through this process, I learned to stay focused, push through challenges, and show up even when the work felt exhausting. As my discipline grew, so did my self-trust. Learning new choreography and performing in front of outsiders taught me to believe in my own abilities, even when confidence didn't come easily. Dance showed me that progress is built on patience, and that trusting myself is just as important as perfecting any movement.

Dance has also shaped the way I think and lead. It taught me to adapt quickly and solve problems creatively. In the middle of a routine, anything can happen: someone might fall, spacing might shift, music might glitch, and you learn to adjust without breaking the flow.

That instinct to stay calm and think on my feet has carried into my life outside the studio, especially in school, when I'm faced with questions or challenges I don't immediately know how to navigate. Working in groups strengthened my communication skills and taught me how to collaborate with people of different personalities and strengths. These experiences helped me grow into a leader who listens, adapts, and supports others, qualities I carry into every environment I'm part of.

Ultimately, dance has shaped not only how I move, but who I am, grounding me in discipline and self-trust inside the studio and teaching me adaptability and leadership far beyond it. In the future, I plan to use this influence to uplift the people and communities I'm involved in. Whether I'm mentoring younger dancers, creating inclusive spaces, or leading teams, I want to turn what dance gave me into opportunities for others to grow. Dance didn't just teach me how to move; it taught me how to move people, and I'm ready to create that same community spirit for others.

> "The studio shaped my confidence, and I'm determined to share my experiences with the world."



VIEWPOINT
"Fight for What You Love"

BY: Gabi Pagel

SPONSOR: Pilar Steiner

Roseville High School



While I've danced most of my life, the impactful experiences happened during high school. I joined the Dance Team as the only freshman, and definitely the least skilled. In my sophomore season, no dancers or coaches returned. I was on my own with a new coach.

I felt anxious about not upholding the previous years' standards or becoming the leader my team needed. Under the pressure of high expectations, mostly placed on me by myself, I pursued a new studio and got better at asserting my vocal leadership and advocating for this team. This meant pushing myself physically to the limit and getting better at saying "No" or calling people out when needed.

I would be lying if I said the Athletics Department at Roseville High School isn't a little bit afraid of me. I learned to fight for what I love, like this year when the Athletics Department took away our coach and threatened to shut down the program, so I organized practices at 7:00 am at a local park. I learned to commit to excellence and work diligently toward my dance goals, like when I doubled my hours at my studio to pursue my dream of dancing on a college team.

Dance, and the learning opportunities it holds, have changed who I am: from a bystander and follower to a leader and advocate for resources and justice. I also joined DNA Dance Collective, and I love it. I've noticed a lot of improvement in my technique, and it's a great push.

I will keep pushing others to be their best selves, physically and mentally, because I never would have known I could improve so much, so fast, if I hadn't applied myself and worked harder. If I keep giving 100%, I will succeed in dance and any avenue I pursue.



I commit myself to excellence.
In the future, I will apply my advocacy experience to speaking up for my team and all arts programs, especially if underrepresented.

Pictured: Gabi's competitive DNA Team (Photo Credit: DNA Dance Collective)

Watch an interview with Gabi:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yeJiFFfxtw



GOOD NEWS!



Body Language Dance & Theatre Arts ~ Long Island's Premier Studio



Body Language Dance and Theatre Arts Studio offers several movement styles, along with voice and theatre. Each year, students perform in a Nutcracker Ballet, Broadway-style musical, and recital, all in full productions. Top choreographers lead master classes, and students attend arts workshops on their NYC field trips.

These young dancers enjoy performing at community events while the award-winning Dance Company competes nationally. Skilled teachers engage students, fostering a family-friendly atmosphere with professional performing arts training,

> “We are delighted to see many of our students succeed in theater!”

GOOD NEWS!(cont.)

Just in time for the Holidays ~ NHSDA Merchandise! Check This Off Your Gift List!



NHSDA Crewneck Sweatshirt

Wear your NHSDA pride in comfort and style with our "Dancer, Leader, Artist" Crewneck Sweatshirt, perfect for everyday wear or special events!

Check out all the super NHSDA merchandise!
https://www.ndeo.org/nhsda/Merchandise

GOOD NEWS!(cont.)



Congratulations to NHSDA Sponsor Betsy Graves, NDEO Outstanding Leadership Award Winner!

Congratulations to NHSDA Sponsor Betsy Graves, recipient of the 2026 Outstanding Leadership Award for K-12 Educators. She teaches dance, directs musical theater productions, and chairs the Fine Arts Department at Needham B. Broughton High School. Her choreography has been selected for the prestigious American College Dance Festival Gala.

Grave's dedication to her students' quality education is evident in how she launched the school's first Dance Boosters and secures grants for guest artists to lead master classes. She organizes student training trips to New York and Los Angeles, as well as competitive performances.

To her credit, Graves develops curriculum, facilitates standards, and presents arts education programs statewide, earning her recognition as Wake County Teacher of the Year and the Broughton Jenrette Excellence in Education Award.

In 2021, Broadway World named BHS Dance as Raleigh's Best Dance Studio of the Decade!

Beyond classes, Graves directs the school's Queen of Hearts production, leads the annual Powder Puff football game, and has served on the School Improvement Team.

Learn more about this incredible teacher here.

> I have seen the hours Betsy gladly and willingly puts in to ensure that she can make everything that she is involved in meaningful for her students. ~ BH Fine and Performing Arts Dept. Chair Margie Harrison.



All Photos courtesy of
Needham B. Broughton High School

GOOD NEWS!(cont.)



Applaud Twisha Yogindra
Who contributes to the Community
As a team dancer and future agriculture professional!

NHSDA member Twisha Yogindra, who has performed with Studio One Dance Center and the Campaneria Ballet Studio, especially enjoys competitive team numbers that help her and her friends achieve collaborative goals. As a student speaker, she has taken part in the McIntyre Youth Leadership Challenge, advocating for water health, and continues to raise awareness about forever chemicals polluting our rivers and encourages support for River Watch. In this Dance Arts Now! Holiday issue, she has gifted us with an original poem and accompanying drawings.

Twisha is a member of her local North Carolina Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter, a leading organization for students in agriculture. Among her achievements are earning 2nd place in Junior Agricultural Sales at the State Business Competitions and participating in livestock events, including the Showmanship Showdown Sheep Show.
Next, Twisha compares the benefits of studying dance and farming.

FEATURE

A Unique Link Between Dance & Agriculture

BY: Twisha Yogindra

SPONSOR: Andrea Dula

Green Level High School



I live in a town with many agriculture-based operations and farms, as many places in North Carolina do, which sparked my interest in agriculture and led me to become deeply involved when I joined my school's Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter. Like the roots of dance in my life, albeit for a shorter time, FFA has quickly taken hold.

I have gained so many great friendships and meaningful connections through my time in dance and FFA, and they have enriched my life in many ways. Both dance and FFA have given me spaces to share my ideas and be creative, whether it's through choreographing and applying my own interpretation to dance or by creating a research project on various agricultural topics for FFA. Dance drew me in when I was very young, and I have participated in countless styles over the years, so my interest keeps growing.

Dancing feels very special, and I'm sure every dancer has a different reason to keep coming back. Mine is how free dance feels, with endless possibilities for expression, like the many stages of a fruit tree.





PHOTO #1: Twisha dancing
PHOTO #2: Twisha preparing a science experiment



FEATURE

"Dislike" Cascading Social Pressure

By: Gideon Stanton Sponsor: Sarah Strong The Dance Inn

My choreography, entitled "Dislike," grapples with the cascading effects of social pressure in a time of unprecedented isolation. We base so much of our own worth off what others think of us and when we sense loneliness or a greater feeling of isolation in us compared to those around us, we feel it must be our fault which spirals the mind into a negative view of ourselves.



I generally consider myself a happy person with a happy life, but every once in a while, I go through a period where I feel like a large portion of the people around me don't care about me and don't want to actually be around me. While this doesn't happen often, this spring was a difficult one of these periods for me. There was no direct event that caused the feeling, simply an impending sense that those around me had more friends they spent time with, as compared to me.

In this challenging time, I turned to the one thing that I knew would never stop being a way to express and work through my negative emotions ~ dance.

I knew that by creating this piece it would let me understand these feelings in a way otherwise impossible to see. Ever since I began dancing at eleven, I discovered its powers of emotionally venting while also being a way to celebrate the positives. It might not be a happy piece, but life isn't always happy and one of the biggest aspects of dance is to reflect the emotions and story of the choreographer.

And the result is worth noting. No, the dance didn't immediately absolve me of those negative feelings; they are still very real, but it showed me a way to move past them. This summer I've given myself the challenge of sending a grateful or encouraging text to someone different each day. By reaching out positively, I hope to strengthen bonds and show people who might be struggling like me that I care about them, while also becoming a more positive and grateful person.



“Dislike” represents a snapshot of my emotions, but it is also the start of something bigger: a realization that dance is more than tricks; it can also be more than expression. It can open your eyes to things you didn’t know existed, even at the scale of your own emotions.

My choreography can be viewed on my YouTube channel: https://youtu.be/LRfenZINaoQ





FEATURE

"Fractured & Sidelined"

By: Ariana Sudol

Sponsor: Jennifer Ackermann

Passaic County Technical Institute

My understanding of, and connection to, dance has changed significantly over the past few months. Sidelined with a lower back fracture, I did not know how I was going to cope with not dancing. It seemed like my world was ending, that my outlet and way of communicating was taken away after I had given my heart to dance ~ absolutely terrifying! It would have been so easy to give up and let my artistry deteriorate, but my perseverance taught me how dance is an art that unites and inspires.

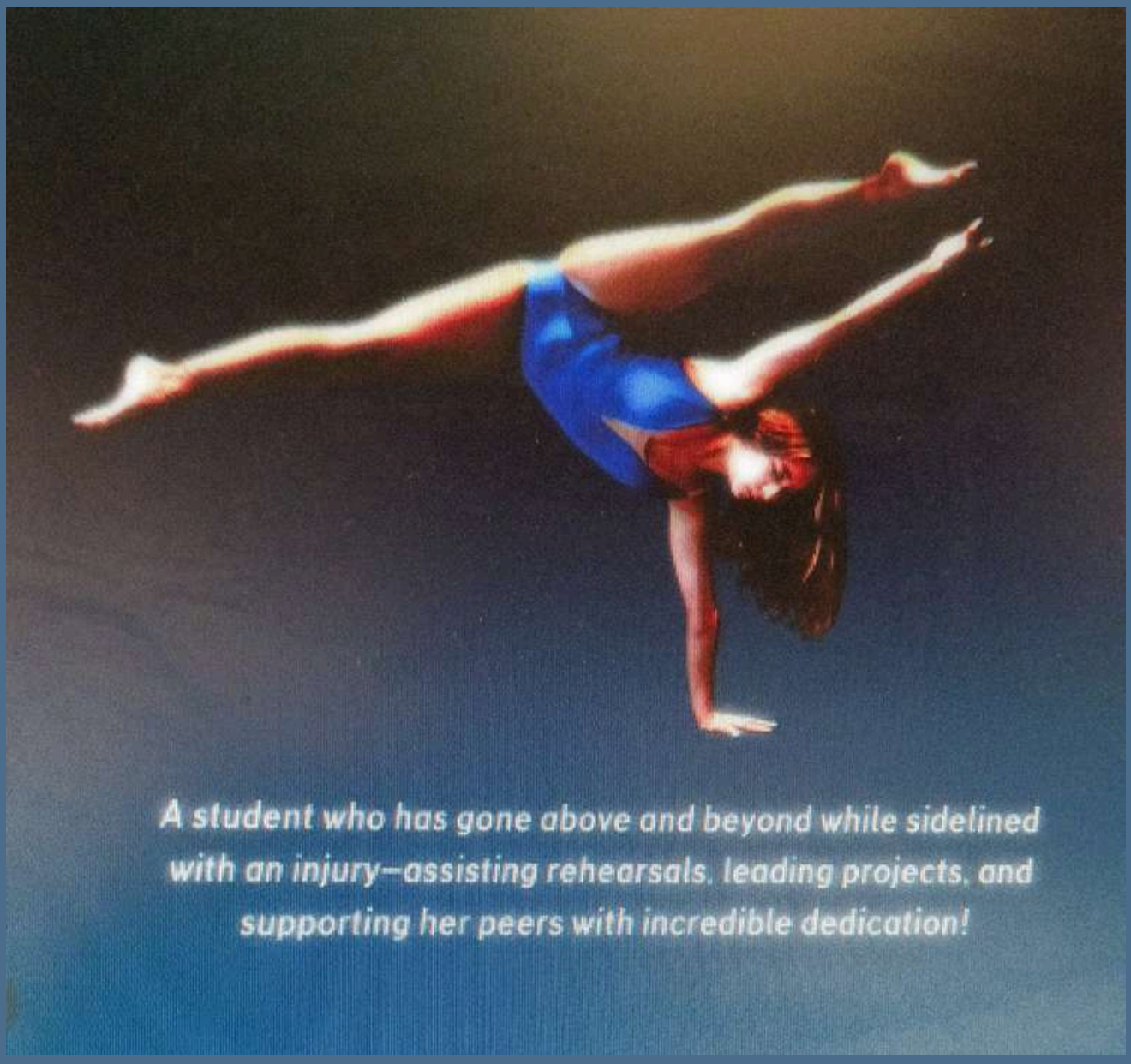
Dance isn't just for me; it serves and impacts an entire community, even when we cannot physically participate. In a list of everything I wanted to accomplish, my goal was to bring dance back to my community:

1) Collaborating with Head Start and my NHSDA chapter to teach kids a fun, Winter-themed creative movement class;
2) Starting a dance podcast to raise awareness of sensitive dance topics and the latest local art events; and
3) As the Dance Club rehearsal assistant and stage manager, learning behind-the-scenes production work, running productive rehearsals, especially in lighting, staging, and cleaning dances effectively ~ all rolled into Theater Magic.

In physical therapy, the positive doctors and trainers around me also showed me the importance of building a healthy relationship with dance. My physical therapist, who was a dancer throughout college, guided me in my understanding in how I need to give my body what it needs, conquering that toxic idea so often associated with dance to keep going despite pain. Her genuine care and determination to get me back to what I love, using her experience and knowledge to personalize my recovery, inspired me to want to help dancers heal, get stronger, and dance not for a trophy, but to share their rare gift.

My future goal is to own a dance studio and become a physical therapist who specializes in dancers. The most frustrating thing for dancers is getting injured and feeling like they aren't taken seriously or understood because they aren't a typical athlete with a clear recovery plan. My goal is to change that misconception because no dancer should feel hopeless or face a prolonged recovery because they are an artist.

Dance has given me more than the discipline to overcome inexpedient obstacles, igniting the passion within me to use art as a tool to inspire young kids, enlighten society, and give people voices rather than clinging to it as only a hobby or competitive sport ~ because dance really is so much more.



FEATURE

"Am I Dreaming?"

BY: Abby Gibson SPONSOR: Amber Corriston Harrisonburg High School

This piece is entitled "Am I Dreaming," a solo I created for my college dance program auditions. I specifically choreographed the dance to fit my body and style, letting my natural instincts take over while still experimenting with new movements. I challenged myself to create something that contrasted significantly with my usual choreography, which helped me think creatively and made me even more excited about the project.

The movement is intended to feel as if I am trapped under water. The music made me feel as though someone were trying to escape, but kept finding themselves in the same vicious cycle, which influenced my spacing. Throughout my piece, there are moments when I almost "break free" from the frame, but then am somehow dragged back to the center of the room.

I focused on using different points of initiation to show the tension between myself, the music, and the space around me. I wanted the movement quality to feel very fluid and internal, staying with the underwater theme. Keeping this in mind, I made sure each phrase was smooth and followed the ornamentals in the music, so that the piece conveyed a wave-like quality.



FEATURE

"PT: REAL Healing Power"

BY: Amanda Lin

SPONSOR: Viki Jenkins

Edison High school



I have been dancing since I was nine years old. When my family moved to the USA, I joined my high school dance ensemble right away. Although I was originally timid, dancing was the most direct way to express myself and connect with my teammates without a language barrier.

To begin, I volunteered at my Chinese language school, where I became the dance instructor. This built my confidence to then lead my school's team. I spent so much time at the studio, leaping and turning again and again. Before long, the dance team became the center of my school life: In my sophomore year, I was selected as its secretary; during my junior year, I was appointed recital soloist.

I was so excited because I had always dreamed of being a soloist. I worked so hard for this goal and couldn't believe that my dream finally came true. I pushed myself even harder to prepare. I attended every rehearsal and was ready to show my best skills and enjoy my time to shine. Unfortunately, an accident happened during one rehearsal. I sprained my ankle.

As a dancer, this type of injury is common, so I wasn't nervous about it. Based on my experience, it would take about three weeks to recover. Since our first performance was two months away, I knew I would be fine to perform. I iced my ankle and went to urgent care for an X-ray checkup. Everything seemed better after a month, until I started pushing myself to get back on the dance floor ~ I chose to keep prepping for my performance because I knew this might be my last chance to perform on stage as a soloist.

At the center of the spotlight, I danced as if nothing had happened to my ankle. But after the recital, I learned firsthand that pushing through the challenge too quickly might not always be wise! I knew it was time for me to take baby steps; otherwise, my injury wouldn't heal. I underwent physical therapy for several months until I fully recovered.

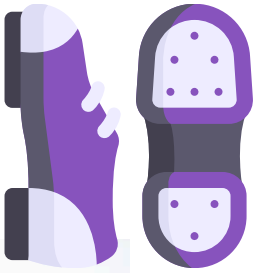
During those initial boring sessions, I discovered something amazing: the simple exercises my doctor had me do repeatedly had REAL healing power! Physical therapy opened a new door in my life. I wanted to experience more, and that became my future path. I got an internship at a PT clinic, and at the end of the training, I decided to keep working there ecause it gave me the opportunity to help others get back on their feet to do what they loved. This is the career path I have set my mind to pursue, all because of dancing.

I know there will be challenges ahead, but I am not a quitter because dancing requires persistence.



FEATURE

"Where Joy Finds the Pocket"



BY: Emma Kerber

SPONSOR: Dena Cronholm

Elevate Dance Center

My choreographic intent was to move in harmony with the music. "Where Joy Finds the Pocket" began as an audition piece when I applied as a college dance major, but I loved the tap element so much that I also shared it with NHSDA.

I originally choreographed to another song I often freestyle to, assuming familiarity would make the process easier. I was wrong. Each time I started, I had too many ideas, about twelve possible starts and countless transitions. It felt like an indecisive "choose your own adventure."



Committed to tap but needing a shift, I chose "Boogie Wonderland" by Earth, Wind & Fire, a song that represents who I am beyond dance.

Once I found that fit, creative ideas clicked. I began with simple steps like paradiddles and syncopated pullbacks, then layered sound as I found the pocket in the rhythm.

Instead of matching the music, I harmonized with it ~ filling silences and shifting accents. The ending challenged me most, so I left it open, a "to be continued."

> The joy I felt while tapping became the heart of the piece.

FEATURE

"Legos & Dance: Start a Foundation & Challenge Yourself to Grow"



By: Brynn Larscheid | Sponsor: Kourtney Owens | Roseville High School

When you receive your first LEGO set, you rely on the instructions to build the set correctly.Once you feel more confident, you can build solely on the blueprint of your own creativity. When I was young, I would sit on the living room floor, staring down at colorful piles of LEGO bricks, picking out the perfect pieces to make my design unique. The same would later be true for me with dance.

To me, LEGOs resemble what dance has brought to my life and the many pieces that come together to make me who I am. Just like LEGO bricks, you start with a foundation to build your skill set and succeed in dance. From the time I picked out my very first pair of dance shoes, I have also been building myself as a person. I have built my dance foundation through ballet, which led to 14 years of training in multiple dance styles. In some ways, this is similar to using bricks from different sets and pulling from various dance styles to create something new. But what I didn't know were the intangible things I would learn from dance ~ the pieces that have helped me build who I am as a person.



These pieces include hard work, determination, teamwork, performance, confidence both on and off the stage, and, most importantly, how to keep going when you get knocked down ~ just like rebuilding a LEGO structure when it falls and breaks. Through dance, I persevere through pain and keep moving forward, even when things get tough. The mirrors surrounding my studio's walls have seen me grow, and their reflections have become a tool for growth, allowing me to see things in myself I didn't know were possible.

Seeing my image in the mirror, I used to focus on my imperfections, but dancing has challenged me to look beyond them and use dance as an outlet to express my feelings creatively, embracing all the pieces of who I am. I remember the first time I stepped onto a stage, the sensation of being alive and putting all my emotions on display.

Now, when I take the stage, that feeling lives within me, and I reflect on the many pieces dance has brought me. As I head off to college, I look forward to embracing new expectations and rebuilding myself on the same foundation, with new, more challenging structures. Like LEGO builds and dance, I have learned there is no singular way to grow and discover myself.

> While I appreciate the instruction book, I also value the opportunity to express myself and select the very special bricks that make my work unique, and challenge myself to grow. All the pieces that dance has brought me have allowed me to become who I am today, and I would not be complete without it.



Photo: Lego at the Danish Architecture Centre in the Blox building in Copenhagen. Christian Ursilva, photographer. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license



PC DAL Dance Collective

Wishing All,
Peace & Joy
Dancing into the
New Year!

Dance Arts Now!

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NOTE: Contributing writers or their institutions submitted all photos unless noted.

Photo: All That Dance

