Dance Arts
Now!
The official Junior/Secondary
NHSDA Newsletter
Back-to-School Edition 2022
Extra! Extra! Extra! Our Back-to-School edition offers exciting news with inspiring stories that reveal our deepest love for dance — impacting us artistically as we embrace humanity.

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Dancing Through the Aisles
By: Mia Zhang (Graduate)
Valley Christian Schools

Confused shoppers uneasily stare as they walk down the grocery aisle. They spot a peculiar 16-year-old, standing with feet weirdly turned out. Then spinning “uncontrollably,” [Yet, truthfully, with precision] she delicately plucks the last sparkling cereal box off the shelf.

As what many may call this a strange encounter during their daily shopping, I call the joyous influence of dance on my life.

PC Mia Zhang
Dance Sonnet
By: Ella Jeffries
All That Dance
Advisor/Sponsor: Mary Gorder

Allow me to describe my newfound truth
The greatest luxury offered is dance

For every other pastime is uncouth
No way can they compare, oh not a chance

To dance is to express your inner soul
As poems leave their heart upon the page
To show the big wide world you as a whole
Let creativity out of its cage

Yet there are those who cannot break the chains
The numbers re-create the bars of steel
So even simple dancing in the rain
Then must be calculated ball and heel

Despite all this truth, it will remain
Strong is my love of movement all the same.
Where to begin? Dance has served me as a therapeutic outlet, a way to communicate with those unlike myself, a connection with others without having to say a word, a way to help others, an educational tool to learn about new things, and a way to create and learn about my world. I have been a teacher, a student, and an explorer.

When I was nine, I realized I was running out of outlets to plug into the art I so dearly loved. Beginning to outsource, I went to North Carolina and met Michelle Dorrance, Elizabeth Burke, Derick Grant, and many others. Through the years, my relationship continued to grow with them, and I realized I wanted my studio back home to experience the artistry. I attempted to put together a tap festival in 2015, but alas, it failed. Alabama simply did not have enough tap dancers.

The following year a dear mentor of mine, Sarah Reich, was coming to town with Postmodern Jukebox. I garnered enough interest to bring her in for some master classes. So, Alabama Rhythm Tap, A.R.T., became official. When I was fifteen, I took over the competition tap program and choreographed like a mad woman. My students made me a better teacher and taught me how to be patient, creative, and open. My students and mentors have paved the way for me to accomplish things like becoming a Jacob’s Pillow alum and a better human.

Fast forward to November 2021, when I made my directorial debut. I presented the first Tap Nutcracker to Alabama with 70+ dancers who would perform before 600 audience members. It was challenging yet fulfilling to translate a classic piece into the art of tap dance. Transforming the musical elements into our feet while maintaining balletic elegance brought unique details to the story’s life. Previous to this experience, I had choreographed many pieces, but none had exceeded 3 minutes.

Creating choreography for an hour and a half show allowed me to play with new time signatures and styles. This venture also made me realize what goes into making a show happen. One of my favorite parts was designing the lighting changes, which made me question how we view light. What encapsulates the feeling of a snow scene? What makes us feel like we are in The Land of Sweets? With so many people attending, I wanted to make sure this performance was easy for everyone to understand while the dancers portrayed incredibly complex language throughout the fantasy.
In a way, this was my senior thesis, being a senior in high school, and it wrapped up everything I have learned about dance, education, and psychology. It is fulfilling to look back and realize the tap community has grown from not having enough to put on a festival to presenting a complete Tap Nutcracker.

My future has many uncertainties. I am currently figuring out how to balance cultivating my community with pursuing a professional career. I know the Tap Nutcracker will be an annual celebration for family and art. I want to give back to those who have poured their knowledge and love into me. Dreaming of performing with Dorrance Dance and creating more shows, dance is what keeps my life colorful. I hope my students view me as a vessel for artistry as that is how I view them, and I plan to continue to pour all I have into helping them grow as artists.
I do not have the “typical” dance story that most dancers claim. I was a professional gymnast from age five to ten, training over forty hours a week and traveling the road to the 2020 Olympics. Due to an injury, I needed arm surgery, so my mom enrolled me in ballet classes to keep me in shape. I fell in love with ballet, retired from gymnastics, and have thrived ever since.

Dance has taught me to be strong, powerful, graceful, and vulnerable in the best ways. Dance has opened my mind to innovative ideas with perspectives that most people cannot experience. Ballet instills invaluable principles that shape a young person into a mature, graceful adult. Ballet has been my backbone and ultimate goal; however, the contemporary movement has improved my artistry and applied what I learned to classical ballet pieces. The daily grind, striving for excellence, and the dedication that dance has taught me are blessings. I love performing. Making an audience member feel something profound, an emotional connection with performances always inspires me. I seek to reach an elevated level of technique while improving my artistry and individuality.

I hope to become a positive role model for the ballet community, breaking from stereotypes by inspiring the next generation to follow their dreams and express themselves. To join a professional company, collaborate with talented choreographers, and perform for thousands of people ~ would be a dream come true.

At community outreach performances, audiences asked, “Is dance cool?” Yes, dance is cool. I want more people to realize this fact, and it is an art form that everyone can experience, whether by watching or performing. I want children in low-income families and communities to share the gift of dance first-hand. Even if they are new to dance, the respect and dedication that develops will help them create a beautiful perspective throughout life.
Communicating has been my weakness since age four. Constructing coherent sentences from my thoughts into verbalizing them has always been challenging. While struggling to improve, this disconnect left me frustrated and disengaged from others. But dance is a form of communication that effortlessly allows me to converse my feelings in ways I never imagined. Emotions were once impossible to express with my lips but now easily spew when performing a story.

Finally, I discovered my lack of communication skills was partially due to a condition called Synesthesia.

Learning this unknown part of myself was scary, but I quickly found it a blessing to create beautiful dance pieces. In Synesthesia, a sense somehow disconnects yet is interpreted as another sense or concept. I hear colors and see sounds. When I listen to a song, I dance with violin components transforming into a vivid shade of purple projected within a space-like dimension, frolicking in intricate ways.

I recently entered the dance world after leaving behind many years of training in competitive gymnastics and triathlons. Walking away from the known comfort of these sports took courage. However, the joys of exploring the untested waters were well worth the leap. If I had never done so, I would never have discovered how dance could become more significant in my life.

Many fellow dancers share a different background from mine. Their careers began as they learned to walk, which became engraved in their lives. Nonetheless, dance has also impacted my life as an outlet, an escape. I can express emotions that I often find too complicated verbally. Dance is a moving and breathing art with many sounds, movements, and shapes. Dance allows me to embrace creativity on stage, in the studio, or elsewhere.

And happily, I have met so many amazing people, including my best friend, who have had a significant impact on my life. Dance is:

- Community,
- Dedication,
- Creativity,
- Patience, and
- Passion.

I want to share these with:

- Devotion,
- Perseverance, and
- Drive.

With these qualities, we can all become extraordinary dancers.
Breaking News!

2022 NHSDA Artistic Merit, Leadership and Academic Achievement Award

**Winner**
Cheryl K. Marshall
Beverly’s Dance of Gardendale

**Finalists**
Dominic Roberts
Atlantic County Institute of Technology

Madeline Golingo
All That Dance

Olivia Thread
California School of the Arts ~ San Gabriel Valley

**Honorable Mentions**
Alisha Edward
Edison High School

Courtney Scaffolds
OCVTS ~ Performing Arts Academy

Emma Jane Zaher
South Carolina Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities

James Oldham
Franklin High School

Keely Davidson
Elite Dance Academy, Inc.

Nicole Espinel
Miami Arts Charter School

Noria Nuru
Akron School for the Arts at Firestone High School

Liv Klingler
Appomattox Regional Governor’s School for the Arts and Technology

Luciano Olivieri
Osceola County School for the Arts

Miniaris Montanez
St. Thomas Aquinas High School

PC Beverly’s Dance of Gardendale
**Dance and Real Life**

Santa Fe High School offers a full dance program, including jazz, tap, contemporary/modern, and ballet. The choreography class is open to any student who has passed Dance I or demonstrates equivalent experience. Repertory develops artistic skills through the creative process combining:

- Concepts and improvisation,
- Execution and development,
- and the “Final” product

One year of classes fulfills the school and state PE requirement for graduation, and Administration/Production projects offer practical applications for “real-life” challenges. Students contribute to the community through a winter dance concert and collaborative public performances, including a Halloween “Thriller” Flash Mob, Teach-Your-Parent-to-Dance night and off-campus dance activities. Their ultimate adventurous achievements: Exciting New York City field trips!

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**Great Teamwork ~ Dance Innovations Dance Company (D(DC)!**

Team DIDC members show they are ready to achieve their personal best while sharing their gifts in community service. Dance Innovations Dance Company instills a passion for performing with their shared experience at fairs, nursing homes, regional competitions, recitals, and more. The staff encourages all to be dedicated equally to their academic and dance studies, and as one graduate described in her heartfelt memories:

“Dance Innovations has been a place that has offered happiness to my life, from amazing teachers to lifelong friends. I will forever be grateful!” ~ Carli L.
“Love Your Body Week (LYBW)” began at All That Dance in Seattle, Washington. After instructor Rachel Stewart heard 5-year-olds compare their thighs in what they mistakenly considered “physical flaws,” she immediately alerted the staff, who then set out to counteract negative messages many young dancers face outside their studio.

During LYBW, NHSDA members spend a Sunday afternoon leading positive imagery activities with their peers and younger dancers. Mary Gorder, the Chapter Sponsor, now oversees the studio’s annual event. In one improvisation exercise, teens write about and create movement based on the questions: “What do we love about ourselves physically? What makes us uncomfortable? How can we overcome any obstacles?”

Gorder noted: “This simple exercise’s power strikes me. Our brave dancers perform so fearlessly and with deep hearts. I am proud to teach at a studio that has created a safe space for young artists to move, explore, and express, which this exercise always exemplifies.”

Participants cover the studio mirrors with colorful body-positive messages during this valuable week’s finale.

“Love Your Body Week” has become a big part of our NHSDA mission across our nation and deserves a Dance Arts Now! Star – Learn how your chapter can mount this inspiring event: https://www.ndeo.org/nhsda/Events/Love-Your-Body-Week
**Testimonials**

“LYBW shows me how ‘Every Body’ has a place at the table and every dancer has a place under the spotlight.” ~ Ella Endres

“What I value about the LYBW program is how it encourages young dancers to continue sharing the message of self-love and acceptance in their future years. With this inspiration, I joined my high school honor club. As an ATD kid, I saw how the NHSDA members lead LYBW activities. I, too, love teaching these classes to the little ones ~ as an active part of the positive community change and message.” ~ Adelle Sager

“LYBW creates a safe space within our dance studio and allows us to engage in vulnerable conversations and exploration with positive outcomes. Over the years, the meaning behind LYBW has changed for me. Still, it has built upon this experience to help me understand my relationship to my body and how it impacts my dancing. It is an honor to be part of this movement which has expanded to reach many dancers.” ~ Thea North
Dance to Success is an initiative at Skidmore College that brings mindful movement into the elementary school routine through the magic of guided videos. Where in an educational environment, funding is limited, and play-time constrained, this program provides young students free quality arts engagement with exercise in and out of the classroom.

In this program, undergraduate college students develop interdisciplinary learning and leadership experience within the Skidmore Dance Department. They participate in all aspects of production, including choreography, performance, filming, editing, marketing, research, and community outreach. Topics deal with friendships, sharing, inclusivity, and more!

Editors’ Note: These videos are terrific, offering fun exercises that take the children’s imaginations around the world and into their playgrounds ~ so we award the participants an official Gold Star! Look for videos on the Dance to Success Website or PBS Learning Media.
Special Invitation for NHSDA Members, to 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 student members and their chapter sponsors to contribute stories, poems, articles, chapter news, photos, and other creative works for our future editions.

Learn more: National Honors Society of Dance Arts > Dance Arts Now (ndeo.org)
In one moment, as a young girl practicing an adagio, Shannon Dooling, NDEO Special Projects Coordinator, knew she must dance and now engages us through her transformative approach. In her Blog, Shannon Dooling Dances, LLC, she shares what she continues to learn as a student, artist, and teacher.

Here is a sample of her explorations celebrating Autumn:

Fall is my favorite season ~ and I know I am not the only one! The season has a special magic, even here in Southern Arizona. The air becomes crisper, the nights cooler, and a coziness prevails.

Some of my favorite dance class activities celebrate Fall:

- Rock a festive playlist
- Compose and analyze fall-themed choreography
- Be available for fun fall dance games
- Create a ‘gratitude ritual’
- Embrace Halloween
- Practice Pantomime

Shannon lists how we can all share our love of dance with the community throughout the year, from organizing a concert for a senior center to hosting free classes for children in need.

And Shannon receives our Dance Arts Now! Gold Star ~ Check out her complete Blog here: Shannon Dooling Dances | Dance Workshops, Choreography, and Resources for Dance
Beverly’s Dance of Gardendale, owned by Shannon and Krista Simpson, celebrated its 20th year of artistry this past season. In this nurturing, safe space, young dancers explore creative movements while honoring the disciplines handed down by their dance ancestors. The studio has partnered with Alabama Rhythm Tap (A.R.T.) to reach the tap community by providing a safe space for hosted events.

Noted the staff: "The future is bright with our students and instructors pouring into the community. We look forward to hosting more A.R.T. masterclasses, as well as annual ‘Tap Nutcrackers!’"

All cheered: "We are over-the-top thrilled about Cheryl Kaye’s NHSDA award!" Check out Cheryl’s “Viewpoint” in this issue and her choreography analysis in our upcoming holiday edition.
"Innocent/Guilty"
By: Dominic Roberts
Finalist, 2022 NHSDA Award
Atlantic County Institute of Technology
Advisor/Sponsor: Lisa Zuener

This dance portrays the African American experience from a young Black man's perspective. What inspired me to choreograph was the research conducted by Margaret Spencer, a student from the University of Chicago. She led a study to see if children ages three to five had racial attitudes towards each other. She showed the kids a card with a Black or a White child. She then asked the question: “Here are two girls. Which one would you say is the good girl?”

Both Black and White children chose the White child on the card at 70 to 80 percent of the time, meaning most of them correlated Black skin with negative connotations.

During our childhood, adults may see us as innocent. However, when Black boys become adults, an irrational part of society will look at us as suspect — that we are automatically guilty of something. My choreography portrays this experience of being held guilty because of my melanated skin. This concern is why I title my dance “Innocent/Guilty.”

While choreographing, I had a tough time finding mellow music to contrast my sharp and rigged movements, yet this approach helped carry the narrative in the artistic process. I used improvisation frequently while choreographing so that it would be more artistically authentic and from the heart, allowing my body to take over what I am feeling.
Stepping on the stage is a most fulfilling experience. Now, I do not mean the quick costume changes! The stage is my home, and I hope it stays that way.

This past year I have devoted time in Studio B ~ our downstairs dance space. My recent journey began with a solo called “Stuck on You,” which I choreographed and practiced in the studio and in my bedroom. I first performed it at our Spring Preview, and later at a competition. I then retired this dance to work on two new routines, “Dancing Queen,” and “The Night We Met,” both performed at our Spring Recital.

I have been dancing since I was four years old, yet when I hear that cue: “On Stage, On Stage, ON STAGE!” I still get nervous that it is my turn to go on. My stress levels are different with each routine. If modern or jazz, the feeling is not as bad. Challenging can be tap or ballet, including pointe work. The piece is not the rough part, but the possibility I could embarrass myself in front of a whole audience is troubling.

Thankfully, I remember ~ It is essential to enjoy a routine because Then, when we step on stage, we exude a smile. The best part of the show is the final bow ~ walking on stage, not to dance, but receiving applause for how we danced.

Looking exuberantly out on stage is a feeling I do not ever want to leave ~ I feel at home and hope to dance forever!
We move through life rapidly, not looking back, only forward. The constant flow underpins our hardships, joy, love, and conflicts that never end. How can we slow down when everything accelerates around us? How do we control this perpetual motion that never waits for us?

Recognizing our need to pause and breathe, I titled my piece “Interval.”

My piece’s speed and repetition demonstrated the constant course ~ barring a deluge or other obstacles ~ that life accelerates. Hand gestures established a sense of letting go in addition to grasping for breath. Throughout my choreographic process, my inner critic challenged me. My thoughts raced a mile a minute, and I nearly broke down amid the intensity of my journey.

In the studio where I grew up, encouragement met with kindness and unconditional support. This environment continues to influence me as I study who I am and look toward my future. My dance community has taught me such an incredible sense of courage, tenacity, and hope. It has taught me to understand dance as an embodiment of authenticity, inspiration, and inner strength. With this understanding, my approach to life has transformed. I have learned to embrace dance as a medium to encourage individualism and strength.

Dance has become a means to establish my authenticity and confidence, with creativity shining in every aspect of life. Dance influences how I approach the world: I set forth with an open heart, a willingness for communication and collaboration, and strength in my vulnerability. Dance shapes my perspective, critical thinking, and awareness of myself concerning others ~ which continues as an outlet for my thoughts and emotions outside the studio. I often turn to this powerful art form in moments of uncertainty, seeking inner guidance or inspiration, and in happiness. Dance is always by my side, even if four walls and a mirror do not surround me.

When I was younger, art was all about taking classes and learning a combination. However, dance has built my sense of community while assuming leadership roles at my studio and experiencing a good life. I have made deeper connections in teaching younger dancers for four years, and I now share this love with those sweetly following me.

Not long ago, a three-year-old told me she was nervous because she “wasn’t the best ballet dancer.” At such an early age, I saw her already being self-critical. I then reminded her that we all must practice improving at what we love, so we take a dance class. Following that short conversation, she held my hand, and we stood on an orange dot to do plies.
I know why I continue to teach and choreograph in times like this: to support those around me, bringing strength and courage to them in challenging moments.

While pursuing a school research project, including choreography, I was enlightened to how dance encourages a communication style before forming words or language. This art supports the expression of thoughts and feelings, develops an awareness of self and others, fosters connections and collaboration, and strengthens the cognitive loop between ideas/problems to form a solution.

Researching these aspects and differing areas of how movement impacts our lives reinforces my decision to keep moving. Dance has much to offer, presenting a better understanding of our world. Combined with the impact on physicality, cognitive development, social awareness, and mental health, all these factors confirm why I dance.

I plan to attain a BFA in Dance, and in this commitment, my future mentors will help me realize my objectives—forming genuine bonds with professionals while guiding those just discovering dance. Although I do not know where my future will lead after college, I entrust I will discover my unique path with dance integrated in a significant capacity. I am excited to share with those around me, bringing art into their lives through performing, community engagement, and teaching.

Dance has been my love forever and will always stretch my limits to:

- teach new concepts,
- create connections,
- build community, and
- show me how to explore the world.

This emotional connection functioned as the driving force for my choreography. In “Interval,” my body initially felt like the ocean, with the beginning phrase representing hardships crashing down like waves. Life kept moving forward, and still, I would endure, persevere in a storm, laugh in the rain, breathe in the silence, and pause.

Thankfully, dance has become my best friend in joyous moments and as “my shoulder to lean on” in challenging times—my constant rock, a grounding force, my home.
My choreography, “Hello,” says goodbye to my childhood and how I once lived. Memories and feelings will remain, but it is time to move on to the next chapter of my life. While creating this solo, I wanted every piece of movement to have meaning. Deeply I thought of how to portray each action from my childhood and of being reluctant to let it go. How do we express the frightening responsibility of becoming an adult, accepting the natural course of life, and taking the risk of venturing into the unknown future? Because the topic was compelling to me, it was challenging to trust my choices as a choreographer.

At first, nothing felt good enough to represent my vision; I was not allowing the intention, actual vulnerability behind the piece, to speak for itself. However, I pushed through those negative thoughts by referring to simple words, phrases, and events that helped trigger honest, rather than forced, movement.

Dance's impact on my life, in and outside the studio, has been irreplaceable ~ and life-changing. Dance has taught me countless lessons, shaping me into today's person. It has shown how important it is to respect and connect with everyone in the world around us. Being open and vulnerable with each other helps us make lifelong friends and family. It has taught me discipline, loyalty, and dedication. It has kept me focused, motivated, and grounded. It has given me a goal in life to pursue with passion. Be brave, taking risks while pushing through boundaries. Dance has allowed me to be transparent in a safe space to express myself, no matter how terrifying something may seem. It is okay not to reach perfection, even being unashamed of failure as a step closer to genuine fulfillment. This approach in itself is already a success. Be a supporter, a team player, a giver of time and energy, and a listener who is always willing to be a student first. Finally, dance has taught me to be authentic and truthful to myself and my voice created as a person and artist.

Be generous to share knowledge, inspiration, and life experiences with others, and vice versa. My voice resonates most naturally when expressed through the art of dance. I have struggled with using words to share my feelings, but I have been lucky to discover an outlet to release my issues to inspire others who might be going through similar struggles. This experience is why dance has become my chosen focus, and I want to pursue a BFA curriculum. One day I hope to obtain the proper skills to teach the next generation about expressing themselves, for teaching is the most beautiful way to give back to the community and the art form which has given so much to all who have invested in it.

I dream of expanding and uniting the community around me by owning a dance company ~ creating a safe environment where we can all share a typical dialogue that inspires, opens, and heals. I will create meaningful work surrounded by artists who
believe in and respect dance and the beauty behind vulnerability and honesty. Therefore, we will touch many lives together as a team instead of alone.

I hope my solo, "Hello," makes the audience react emotionally, to lose themselves in the moment and remind them of their childhood and how they once lived. Thank you for this opportunity allowing me to share my art.

Overall, I want to inspire by having an open heart, allowing a continuous flow of inspiration, and giving energy to all around me. I strive to be someone others can look up to as a dancer, creator, and human. I will forever cherish what dance has given me, and I hope to be a contributor and a protector through this beautiful art form by sharing how it has impacted me.
Dance Arts Now!
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Welcome Back to School!

PC Roger Mastroianni & Inlet Dance Theatre