



Dance Arts Now!

The official Junior/Secondary NHSDA Newsletter

2025 Summer Edition





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When we dance, we glow like the summer sun! What wondrous adventures our NHSDA members have, whether as interns, heading for college, meditating by a lake or beach, or engaging in intensive workshops!



Table of Contents

Poetry & Prose

Viewpoints

Good News

Cheers for our

Graduates

Features



PC NDEO/NHSDA

Poetic Prose

Magic of Pointe Shoes

By Eliana Arriaga

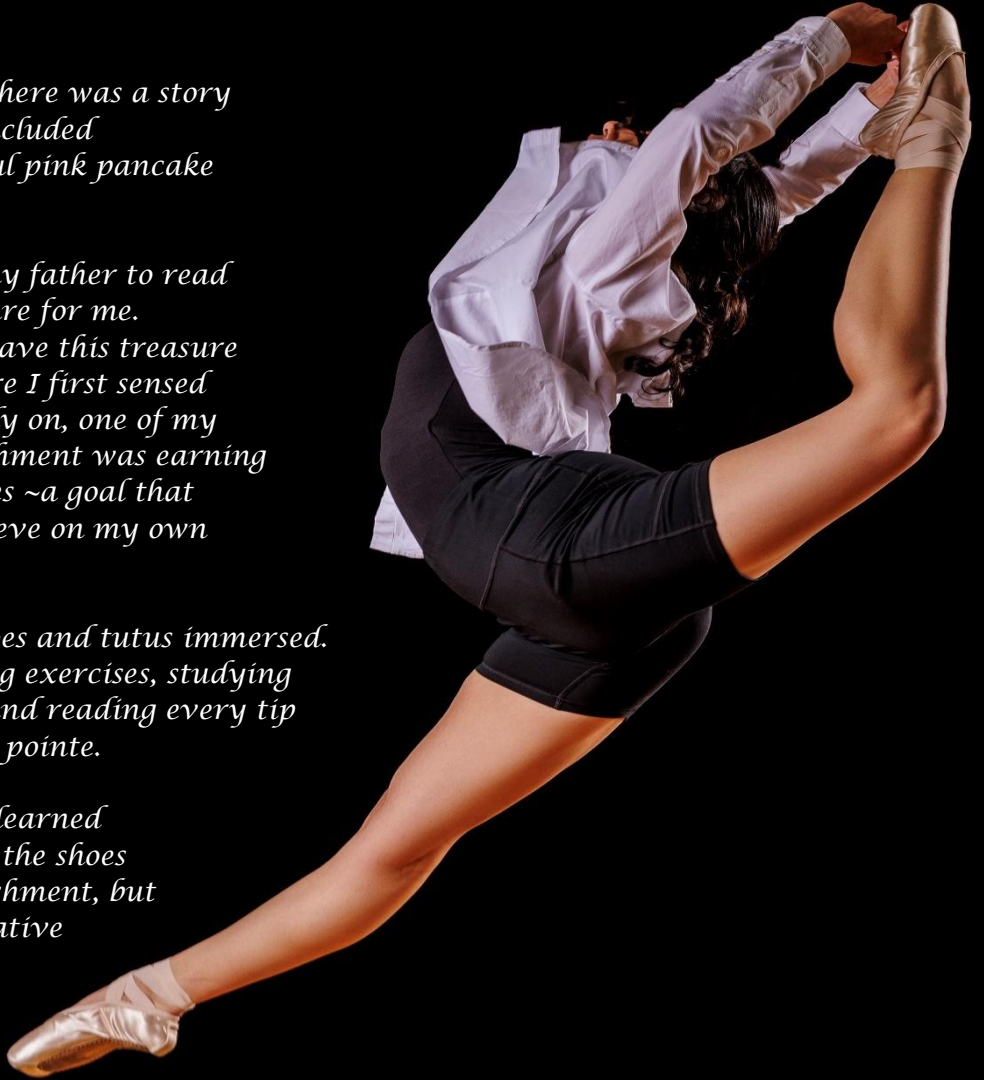
*Sponsor/Advisor: Jacqueline Aguirre
Louis D. Brandeis High School*

One day, in a newspaper, there was a story about a ballerina, which included a photo of her in a beautiful pink pancake tutu and pointe shoes.

I, then a little girl, asked my father to read the story and clip the picture for me. Fifteen years later, I still have this treasure as a remembrance of where I first sensed My passion for dance. Early on, one of my most significant accomplishment was earning my first pair of pointe shoes ~a goal that I worked diligently to achieve on my own through daily practice.

The world of pink satin shoes and tutus immersed. I spent my time researching exercises, studying how to prepare the shoes, and reading every tip and trick for beginners on pointe.

After I earned the shoes, I learned a more significant lesson ~ the shoes were not the end accomplishment, but a stepping stone in my creative journey. The magical pointe shoes opened new chapters of my life with beautiful milestones.



*Dancing, dancing with my legs, dancing with my
arms, dancing
Dancing, I feel free, dancing I feel good
Sometimes people say dancing couldn't be me, it can be
you, it's dancing
It was me
Dancing in the light, dancing in the dark, the corner,
the center, everywhere
No matter where it may be, it will always be great
Dancing is impressive; dancing is dancing
It's just for you*

*By: Aubrey Webb
Sponsor/Advisor: Nicole Willis
Madison Middle School*



PC Aubrey Webb



PC Chloe Cerreto

Viewpoint

Dance's Effect on My Life

By: Chloe Cerreto

Finalist, NHSDA Award

Sponsor/Advisor: Trista DeFilippis

High Tech High School

Movement, regarding dance, reflects one's passion and understanding of life. Effectively, such variables infuse our motion.

Transcending beyond the studio into the realm of humanity, I have established myself as a respected leader who has shaped a culture unique to my dance company due to the life experiences I have prevailed through.

I was the youngest girl in the fifth grade, training closely with high schoolers five years my senior. Being a new studio, we were all relatively young with much history to make. Being ambitious, I worked tirelessly to improve my strength and technique to excel at our regional and national competitions. Despite being the first in my team to achieve coveted accolades, I faced discouragement during rehearsals. My age seemed to overshadow the quality of my contributions, and my voice went unheard.

This experience catalyzed my commitment to empowering younger dancers as I got older, breaking traditions of seniority and amplifying their voices. Today, I actively involve them in the creative process, asking others to lead a review of choreography and for their contribution to the cleaning process. This culminates into a culture that champions inclusivity, encouragement, and empowerment, regardless of age.

My quality of movement and intensity in dance are deeply rooted in my life experiences. Witnessing my mother battle

depression and alcohol dependence, I owe a debt of gratitude to continue my studies under a scholarship when she struggled to support us. I embraced this opportunity, dedicating myself to improving with unwavering discipline and denying excuses of exhaustion from calming my mom's late-night episodes during Saturday morning ballet. Moreover, I wished to be an outlet and support to peers who faced similar challenges in their home lives, bolstering a sense of community via our adversities.

Unlike my mother's absence as a foundation, dance has consistently encouraged me to avoid complacency. Acknowledging the wisdom in my shortcomings and actively seeking ways to improve is essential to my training. As a dancer, I spend most of my time looking in a mirror, adjusting to what is wrong, and, as a leader, guiding my peers to do the same. Thus, my team's shared commitment to self-improvement with humility fortifies the solidarity of our bond.

The multifaceted impact dance has had on my life is why I commit to exploring the quintessential values celebrated. Dance has proven to be a powerful vehicle that has transformed me into a leader seeking to empower others and foster a culture of opportunity and inclusivity. I aspire to coach the elite future generation of dancers.

My vision extends beyond dance, allowing each unique journey to unfold through movement and molding virtuous, creative human beings.



PC Riley Burnett

Viewpoint
This Beautiful Sport
By: Riley Burnett
Honorable Mention, NHSDA Award
Sponsor/Advisor: Stacy Shane
Boulder Creek School

Having been in the world of dance since the tender age of 2 ½ and in company dance since age 6, I've spent most of my life rehearsing in studios, competing on stage, and performing at breathtaking venues. This beautiful sport has been instrumental in shaping my pivotal milestones and teaching me valuable life lessons. Over 16 years, I've formed deep bonds with talented, tenacious, and inspiring individuals. Beyond these connections and experiences, this journey has been fundamental to my artistic and personal growth. The skills I've honed, the sacrifices I've made, and the successes I've celebrated continue to guide me.

Because of dance, I know the undeniable satisfaction of pushing past one's mental and physical limits. Whether scoring well at a competition, learning a new skill, or setting aside differences with fellow dancers for the sake of our craft, each success built my confidence and taught me comfort in the discomfort. The dance world is a community, a family that supports and encourages each other. While I did not realize it at the moment, these skills have helped me navigate life, family, friends, school, and work.

Dance ignited my passion for choreography and instruction. In seventh grade, I volunteered as an assistant teacher at my studio, which transitioned to employment when I turned sixteen, a position I still hold.

This role has enabled me to feed young dancers' passions, and with firsthand experience in finances, management, leadership, conflict resolution, and being a positive force in conflict resolution and being a positive force in others' lives.

I have been fortunate to share my passion with my Boulder Creek High School classmates as a four-year member of the competitive Varsity Pom team, including as co-captain my senior year. Performance Dance (the highest-level fine arts elective) has enthralled me since my freshman year. Both programs have introduced me to fantastic guest choreographers and expanded my skills. These activities have taught me about managing priorities, deadlines, and demands. The people, programs, and passions we pursue define us, and I am grateful that so many of my hours involve dance.

None of my incredible experiences came without sacrifice. I have missed countless birthday parties, family gatherings, vacations, and more due to rehearsals, auditions, and performances. But that's what life's about, right? ~ Managing our priorities and following through on our commitments. Dance has been an excellent teacher in this regard, and I would not change a thing!

I plan to major in business and minor in dance in college while exploring performance opportunities and employment at a local studio where I can share my passion in a way that will leave a lasting impression.



PC Arianna Green

*Viewpoint
Past, Present, Future*

By: Arianna Green

Honorable Mention, NHSDA Award

Sponsor/Advisor: Becky Moyer

Lehigh Valley Charter High School

For the Art

Dance is my past, present, and future. It has been the only constant in my life, from dancing to Beyonce’s “Single Ladies” in my childhood, performing as an angel in “The Nutcracker,” and attending an arts school for both middle and high school. It has always been dance. Even when I managed to sprain my ankles playing basketball or my single mother could not afford costly class tuition, I persistently found ways to express myself through movement. Because of this, I can count on dance to exist in my future; I hope in the shape of a career.

Dance provides me with the comfort that an artist receives from the fulfillment of their work; however, it has also been the core of my upbringing. Dance helped me through petty middle school bullies and the loss of family members, but it has also united me with some of the most influential people in my life. At The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts, I am a part of the most loving and charismatic group, consisting of thirteen dancers, including myself. The shared love of the art form, despite fighting infrequently, performances bring us together, as there is no better experience than doing what one loves alongside a friend. I try to encourage a kind and loving community around me in the dance world because I can attest to feeling unworthy and outcasted.

After all, there was a time when my friends did not share my passion. Dance has become

more technical and challenging. Ultimately, it is a form of expression, and everyone should be able to indulge in the liberating feelings, moving however we please. I have also discovered my love for choreography from taking a Creative Process elective at school. I am beyond excited that the Regional High School Dance Festival in Norfolk, Virginia, sent an invitation for my piece, “The Masquerade of Self,” to be exhibited.

Additionally, I hope to share my passion for dance at a dance studio where everyone is welcome and comfortable. There was a time when none of my dance role models looked like me. Often, I felt left out because I could not conform to the sleek bun or elaborate styles my team wore due to my textured hair. For instance, I would be the only girl who could not put French braids in my hair for a performance. I often felt insecure looking in the mirror during class because I did not fit the stereotype of a ballerina.

However, my love for ballet and all styles of dance persisted. I began to student teach young dancers ballet at my local dance studio, where the student population is diverse. My love of dance aside, wanting to inspire young girls to embrace their identities in dance is another reason I want to pursue dance and continue to evolve the narrative in dance communities.

Dance is my future.



All PC NDEO

Viewpoint

Cheers to our Outstanding Leader!

Honoring former NDEO CEO

Susan McGreevey-Nichols

for her Commitment to NHSDA and

Excellence in Dance Education

I cannot express how honored I am to receive so many accolades. I have been grateful for my dream job, especially because of my amazing colleagues and brilliant young dancers. Please do keep in touch!
~ Susan McGreevey-Nichols

Cheers for our outstanding leader, Susan McGreevey-Nichols! While we express our sadness at your departure as NDEO Executive Director, we understand you will continue championing our shared mission to improve dance education globally. In these challenging times, which test personal expression, you will tirelessly promote the arts, especially dance, allowing us to embrace creativity, interdisciplinary learning, and multicultural appreciation. Thank you! ~ Colleen Hearn Dean, Senior Editor, Dance Arts Now!

Since 2012, Susan McGreevey-Nichols has been the Executive Director and CEO of NDEO. Her leadership has significantly propelled the development of NHSDA, highlighted by milestones such as creating a dedicated website to streamline the induction process and launching important initiatives like *Dance a Difference Week* and *Love Your Body Week*. Thanks to her guidance, NHSDA has garnered increased national recognition, with over 1500 active chapters and 6,186 inductees across Junior, Secondary, and Collegiate levels by 2024, which includes 1,311 students who graduated with honors.

As Executive Director, she recognizes that the insights of these brilliant NHSDA minds must be shared through the power of words. Thus, she developed *Dance Arts Now!*, which has transformed into more than just a newsletter; it serves as a platform for our honors students

as artists and future educators to convey their innermost thoughts and dedication to community service, complemented by their stunning photographs and original art that capture the beauty of movement.

Her innovative strategies view dance as a core discipline, highlighting the creative processes involved in theory, performance, and interaction inherent in the arts and other areas. Additionally, she has developed an advanced reading comprehension technique that motivates children to design original choreography based on text. This literacy-embedded approach merges the creative process with reading instruction.

From 1974 to 2002, she taught at Roger Williams Middle School in Providence, Rhode Island, where she played a crucial role in establishing the school’s renowned dance program and mentoring numerous students throughout her tenure. After relocating to California, she became an independent National Arts Education Consultant. Her work included coaching districts in Los Angeles County through the Arts for All initiative and assisting with Alameda County’s Revitalizing Classrooms Through Arts Learning: Strategic Plan. She also taught as an adjunct professor at Loyola Marymount University and California State University, Dominguez Hills.

This Master Presenter advocates for dance arts as a vital part of quality education, sharing her mission with key leaders on Capitol Hill and within education contexts. She played a role in developing the 21st Century Skills, STEAM, and National Dance Standards, which now serve our members in their studies and future careers. Additionally, she has co-authored five notable books: "Building Dances" (1995), "Building More Dances" (2001), "Experiencing Dance" (2004), "Dance About Anything" (2006), and "Exploring Dance Forms and Styles" (2010).

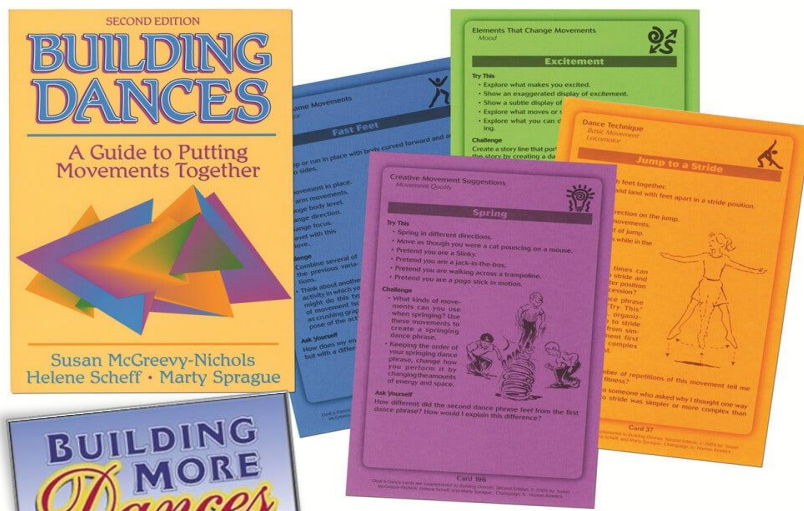
Tributes are flowing in, and here is just one: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1131558369009962&set=a.208634857968989>

And here is an interview where she shares how to unify the dance sectors for all, her experience with royalties and state adoptions for textbooks, NDEO services and membership, and leadership strategies rooted in listening and grit!

<https://www.knowboxdance.com/post/33-susanmcgreevynichols-ndeo>

And here is another interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sB5K4HeBtV4>



Our Dance Educator joins forces with colleagues on many projects. Here is a Sample Presentation:

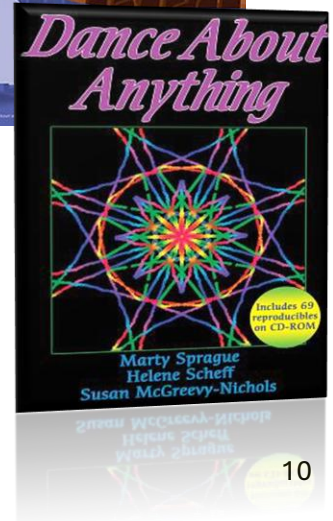
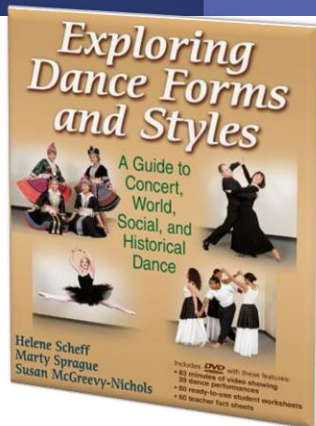
Online Professional Development Institute (OPDI)

Implementing the National Core Arts Standards in Dance

Professors: Susan McGreevy-Nichols and Marty Sprague

12 Weeks; 3 NDEO-Endorsed PDCs

This course delves into the National Core Arts Standards in Dance, launched in 2014 as part of a collaborative effort with all the major art forms ~ dance, music, theater, visual, and media arts ~ centered on the four artistic processes: creating, performing, responding, and connecting. Learn how to apply the standards in classrooms or studios, developing strong curricula and lesson plans.





Good News!

Congratulations to Our NHSDA Graduates

~ Past & Present!



*We wish you all the best in your new adventures and
we know you will achieve your dreams!
Reach high ~ all the way to the sun!*

*“The higher the sun rises, the less shadow it casts; even so, the greater the
goodness, the less it covets praise; yet cannot avoid its rewards in honors.”*

~ Lao Tzu, philosopher



All PC Spotlight Dance Works

Good News! (cont.) Spotlight Dance Works

Spotlight Dance Works (SDW) is celebrating its 25th season and has earned a reputation as a studio dedicated to quality, originality in choreography, strong technique, performance, and dancers who possess a clear understanding of movement and teamwork. The dancers receive honors and scholarships from renowned universities and international companies and are guided by top master teachers.

Nine thousand five hundred square feet of beautiful, clean studio space includes a student homework area, a parent waiting area, and a kitchen. Parents can comfortably observe their dancers in six spacious dance rooms equipped with closed-circuit cameras.

NHSDA members act as assistant instructors, mentors, and community service leaders.

Competitive company members take part in a curriculum that upholds the following:

SDW Pillars of Community

- Positivity,
- Artistry, &
- Dedication

To foster long-lasting relationships with the studio family, the community, and dance as an art form, dancers in the highest category, **IGNITE+**, choreograph original solos or duets/trios in their chosen style and music. The assigned instructors review the compositions for future performances.





PC Adriana Willis



Good News! (cont.)

Book Review

How "Life in Motion~ An Unlikely Ballerina"

Inspired Me

By: Taylor Robinson

Sponsor/Advisor: Adriana Willis

Madison Middle School

A girl in poverty, neglected, often not knowing what she would eat, transforms into a glistening figure of such passion that the rhythm of her pointe shoes entrances us.

This is one of the many stories we hear about dreams coming true for those who chase them. Yet, the world persuades us naive dreamers that we could never succeed, that we would never be good enough, that we started too late, that passion is just a feeling, and often we give up before we even start. Still, ballerina Misty Copeland's story, "*Life in Motion~ An Unlikely Ballerina*" has inspired me to think maybe that's not so.

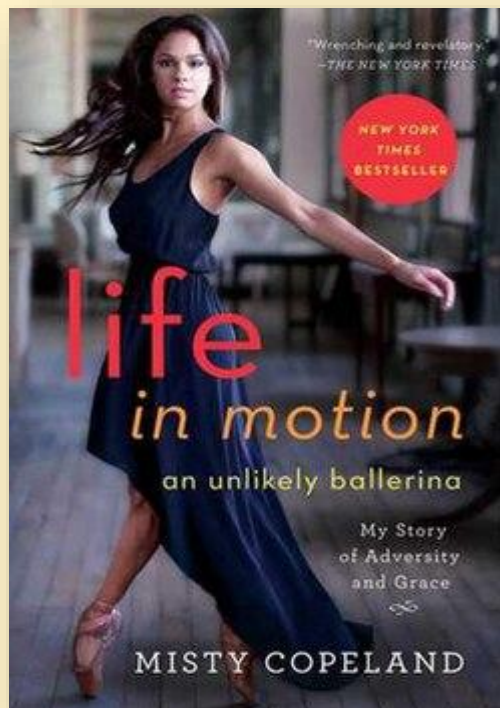
As someone who has also dealt with anxiety, it is incredibly inspiring to find another girl who has faced those same struggles. Misty documents all the highs and lows of her life,

not afraid to shine a light on some of the most difficult moments that others would sweep under the rug.

Not afraid to express her opinions, that is something I really like about this book ~ she is not afraid to tell the whole story.

Misty broke down walls in ballet to become the first African American woman to be promoted to principal dancer in the American Ballet Theater's 75-year history. Her story has greatly inspired our Madison Middle NHSDA chapter members.

Misty's story shows us that dreams can come true no matter who we are, where we come from, what we struggle with, or how broken the path may be. Don't let the world tell you otherwise.





All PC NDEO

Good News! (cont.)

Article on Dance-Teacher.com about NHSDA

Read about dance teachers whose students and programs have transformed through the National Honor Society for Dance Arts.

<https://dance-teacher.com/ndeo-nhsda-2025/#gsc.tab=0>



NHSDA Day of Recognition – Senior Photo Slideshow

The NHSDA Senior Slideshow displays pictures of our graduating students, including their names and chapters. On June 5th, we will share this slideshow on social media using the hashtag #NHSDA2025Dance

NHSDA Merchandise

Wear your NHSDA medal, cords, and shirts with pride; you have earned this recognition! Order now:

<https://www.ndeo.org/nhsda/Merchandise>



Feature

"All I Need Is the Girl"

By: Jackson Beck

Honorable Mention, NHSDA Award

Sponsor/Advisor: Patricia McNally

Patricia Ann Dance Studio

J choreographed "All I Need is the Girl" from the Broadway musical Gypsy for the Florida State Thespians District Competition. I tap with a soft-shoe style to remain as true to the Broadway musical as possible. The song and show inspired me because I love tap, but finding a musical theater solo with dance is challenging, especially for men. Therefore, when I discovered this song, I knew it was the perfect choice.

Choreographing required intense work, and I had to overcome many hurdles, especially in making the work more varied. At first, I relied on the same steps, whether shuffles or time steps. I knew I had to find variations! When I used too many single-time steps, I added triple-time steps, military time steps, and so on. Alternatively, if I performed too many shuffles, I incorporated shuffle pullbacks to accommodate level changes. I knew I had to "*think outside the box.*"

Choreographing this number was a great learning experience and excited me to do more self-choreography.



PC Jackson Beck

Feature
"Caravena"

By: McKenna Dunn

Honorable Mention, NHSDA Award

Sponsor/Advisor: Dee Buchanan
Dee Buchanan Studio of Dance

"Caravena" is music composed for and played in Cirque du Soleil's show **"Mystere."** Therefore, when assigned to create a piece of choreography, it was a no-brainer that this brilliant company would inspire.

The first time I saw a Cirque du Soleil performance was when I was fourteen. I remember the show starting and falling into a trance, watching the artists tell a complex story through their movements. The dance transported me out of my body, and the two-hour show felt minutes long. The artists demonstrated both strength and control as effortlessness and agility were mesmerizing. This feeling and experience I have never felt anywhere else.

The main character in **"Mystere"** is Red Bird. My choreographic goal was to emulate this delicacy and unique movement qualities of the bird in the wild, adding another layer by seamlessly transitioning in and out of Acrobatic skills comparable to those of Cirque du Soleil.

When choreographing, the most challenging part was combining acrobatic skills with the quality of the rest of the piece. Instead of separating artistic moments from skills, I developed a cohesive feel throughout, taking the audience on a mystical journey.



Feature

"A Light in the Darkness"

By: Sophie Unsell

Honorable Mention, NHSDA Award

Sponsor/Advisor: Dex Honea

Colorado Ballet Society



Combining my passion for ballet and contemporary dance, I choreographed "A Light in the Darkness."

Inspired by my music selection, "I Could Have Done More" composed by John Williams from the film *Schindler's List*, I focused on hope and how, even in a world filled with so much hate and negativity, one can escape darkness.

The greatest challenge faced in this choreographic process was finding moments of stillness. Initially, I found myself moving continuously with full intensity, losing my message.

Whether through a back extension or balance, I better express my intent by incorporating moments of stillness ~ which can have the most significant impact on an audience.

Despite the tragic tone, I nevertheless felt a message of hope as the main strings rose in pitch, reaching higher and higher.

I began with floor work to symbolize my initial despair, collapsing under the low timbre of the violin. As the notes rise, so do I, ascending as I slowly gain hope.

As the violin reaches its final and At the highest pitch, I finally escape the darkness and bonds of despair.



Feature

"Autonomy"

By: Layla Fowler

Honorable Mention, NHSDA Award

Sponsor/Advisor: Janelle Spruill

Governor's School for the Arts

Layla will study dance and business in college to achieve "my vision of owning studios that offer formal dance training in low-income rural and urban communities."

Autonomy: the ability to make decisions without being controlled by anyone ("Autonomy," Cambridge Dictionary). When I first saw this definition, I knew it would instantly be my solo's title.

After being constantly instructed on how to live, I wanted to create a piece that depicted this situation through movement. I casually browsed through the music and came across this beautiful melody. I love how it told a story instrumentally and wanted the movement to do the same. It was challenging to figure out how to design this solo to convey my concept to the audience. I eventually realized that I had to develop one common theme throughout, understanding that my freedom or self-government would lie in the downstage right area.

My journey in dance began at the tender age of three when I discovered my love for performing. From transforming my home into a stage to orchestrating impromptu concerts for my family, I reveled in the spotlight. This early inclination towards performance evolved into a passion for dance as I discovered the power of movement to convey emotions beyond words and move others. Each childhood encore paved the way for a rhythmic journey. While there have been bumps in the road, nothing is more fulfilling than pursuing dance in its various aspects for the rest of my life.

Dance has always allowed me to express my most profound dreams and concerns, and I am fortunate to have a family supporting me emotionally and financially. I grew up in Hershey, Pennsylvania, the sweetest place on Earth. Yet the lack of diversity in the predominantly white area was bittersweet. Although competition is essential in rewarding a dancer's quality training to effectively be "discovered," seeing people of color in such a world is uncommon. It was not until I moved to Virginia that I saw many peers and teachers who looked like me.

During my solo, I devised chaotic or indecisive choreographic movements to match the intensity of the music. I love stepping on stage to embody a character and tell a story that profoundly exposes one's inner feelings. This creativity makes dance unique, for we never know how an audience will react to our performance. This desire to feel one" belongs "may result in anxiety, but it also fuels my passion for dance and the emotional connections it creates.

I hear so many voices throughout this piece, but my focus remains on that downstage right area, as I am curious about what the future holds for me there. After battling this situation, I finally decided to better myself ~ and exit stage right. As reflected in this dance, my mission is to expand dance to children in underprivileged places, ensuring they break through any barriers and build the confidence and resources to pursue the many opportunities in the arts.

*I will always advocate for equality to ensure
everyone achieves their dreams,
boldly stating, Autonomy!*





All PC Fusia Dance Company

Feature

"Why I Dance"

By: Leonna Aponte

Sponsor/Advisor: Francesca Marinaro

Fusia Dance Company

Dance brings me immense joy and fulfillment ~ a passion that guides me on a boundless path I wish to tread in the future. Dance is my medium for narrating stories and transcending words. I aspire to touch hearts, weaving tales that resonate with people's experiences. Whenever an opportunity to perform arises, I seize it, even amidst a busy schedule. Dance is not just a part of my life; it's my life's essence.

Favorite Parts About Dance

My favorite part of dance is the exhilaration of performing on stage. The thought of facing an audience can be nerve-racking, for the fear of making a mistake lingers. But when the show day dawns, I am filled with excitement and joy. I cherish our hard work and dedication, even if it means long hours in class. My preferred style is contemporary, allowing more freedom of movement and a stunning stage presence.

My Dance Journey

I have been dancing since I was 2 years old. It all started when I was watching *Angelina Ballerina*. I would copy what the mouse ballerinas were doing. Then, at 3 years old, my parents put me in my first ballet class. At 5, I began taking tap, jazz, and ballet. At 12, I started taking every type of dance, including contemporary, modern, jazz, tap, ballet, and hip-hop. Now, at 13, I have a hectic schedule at Fusia Dance Center. Taking every class can be overwhelming, but I learned much and loved doing each.






My Dream

My dream is to be a professional dancer. Even when I was little, I knew I was meant to dance. My goal is to be on the big stage one day. I love *The Nutcracker*, which I performed in when I was younger. I dreamed I would one day play the Snow Queen, Sugar Plum Fairy, and Clara. I first performed in the Mother Ginger scene, later as a boy throwing snowballs, and as a candy cane dancer.

Colossal would be to perform the Black versus White Swan roles in *Swan Lake* ~ I can't wait for that day on stage! I don't just want to be a part of some professional company; I want to be more than that and to inspire audiences through dance. I want to teach and show freedom through dance. I don't just want to be good, average, or okay; I want to become amazing ~ to be great! And the only way to do that is to work harder.



Another goal is to be *en pointe*. Seeing the older girls on their toes thrills me, and I look forward to earning my own. Now, on pre-pointe, I am one step closer to realizing my dream, with all its physical demands, pressures to perform, and sacrifices. However, these challenges only fuel my determination to succeed.

People I Look Up To

I admire two prominent artists. First, Misty Copland represents the achievements of African Americans who "make it" in the arts; she is diligent and a fantastic dancer. I love how she inspires people and uplifts the dance world. The second is my dance teacher, Mr. Joey, who is also a good dancer. He teaches his students much about the professional arena, especially technique. I look up to *all* my teachers, who are excellent dancers and train us so well. I hope to make them all proud of me one day.

My Support Community

My biggest supporters are my parents. They push me to be my best and do what they can to help me achieve my dreams. They attend every show, and my mom volunteers backstage to help me, which I always need. She ensures my costumes are clean and handles my quick changes. My dad, on the other hand, is my main cheerleader, celebrating my achievements. I also receive support from my grandparents and never miss my shows. They push me to be my best. My grandma is my biggest fan, showering me with love and support.

Our teachers support all the Fusia Center students, daring us to escape our comfort zones to become true artists. I am forever grateful to my family, friends, studio members, and the community.



All PC Jaya Dave



Feature
"Exposed Tree Roots"

By: Jaya Dave

Honorable Mention, NHSDA Award

Sponsor/Advisor: Kelli McGovern

Washington Rock Dance

What if a force stripped us of everything but ourselves? Where would that place us? We would transport into a space of vulnerability, intimacy, and attention to beautiful connections. What is fascinating about people is how we suffer without anyone knowing. What inspired my dance was a genuinely open conversation shared with friends that revealed how little we know each other's struggles, yet how many shared experiences lead us to connect beyond friendship.

I titled my piece "*Exposed Tree Roots*" to confront my fear of vulnerability and explore the potential for deeper bonds. The movement explores how we disguise our imperfections, fearing judgments, yet the more we hide, the more we sacrifice the chance at love and belonging. To connect with others, we must empathize with them, which is only possible with vulnerability. My resistance to this sensitivity has manifested in my choreography. Through this process, challenges were to find moments of pause and attention that I would not have managed in the past.

As a quiet observer, more at ease in the shadows than the spotlight, dance has instilled a sense of trust in my voice, fueling my courage and opening doors to evolving as a leader in my community. In any avenue, we are all performers, we are all artists, and we all have audiences

observing us critically or empathetically. Dance urges us to connect with those audiences, leading to a powerful way to communicate with humanity. As a performer, I bring my audience along on a journey. Creativity shifts the way we see the world. Art is not the opposite of reality ~ it flips reality upside down, requiring a distant but fully immersed perspective.

I dared to meet eyes with the audience, although it was challenging to keep my movement organic; still, as I became more accurate, the movement flowed more naturally and genuinely. As I discovered when I connected to my friends, we must live in the world, not just our own, like we as dancers must relate to an audience, exposing our deepest roots.







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Contributing writers or their institutions submitted all photos unless otherwise noted.



Write About What You Learn!

***Dance Arts Now!* is the official newsletter of the
National Society for Dance Arts™ (NHSDA)
Junior and Secondary Programs.
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