Dance Arts Now!
The official Junior/Secondary NHSDA Newsletter
Summer Edition 2023
Dance Art

Now!

Welcome Summer, when we enroll in dance intensives, exploring unique styles! We appreciate the gifts of many new people, as colorful as garden flowers, all sharing our Love of Dance!

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Flowing, graceful art.
Telling breathtaking stories
With precise movements.
An Open Letter to Dance
By: Katrina Schneider (Graduate)
Ridge High School

Dear Dance,

Once a performance is over and my fellow dancers have vacated, I walk to the center of the stage and gaze into the empty theater, mesmerized at how distant the last row feels. I portray every movement with emotion in the experience you have given me. If not perfect, the audience remains ambiguous, unaware of the artistry in pursuing a masterpiece. It is a big stage, but my movement must be strong.

All my life, acquaintances have labeled me an introvert. Lovely, they say, but more on the shy side. When I was younger, the utterance "shy" offended me — as if that only defined me. A convinced, shy girl leaves no impact on her world; no one would ever bother watching or listening. This concern was before realizing the key to escaping this mindset had already accompanied me for fifteen years. You embraced me as I struggled for liberation and gave me an out and the chance of Expression I have searched for endlessly.

I now speak through those grandiose movements and no longer feel overlooked in other life paths. After incorporating my emotions into my dancing, others noticed, but you helped me realize what others think of me should not infiltrate my emotions. You absolved the notion that I leave no impact. I now grasp empowerment while performing and implement the same feelings into my life offstage, just as you taught me. This second family supports me and sees through the stigma associated with the word "shy," which no longer can claim power over me. How you made me strong and confident comforted me. I want others to relish the gifts you give, and I will help them grasp the confidence you muster by sharing my experience.

You pushed me to reach the team captain position in my final high school year and connected me to the dancers with mental challenges I assist in a way words never could. As a substitute teacher for younger dancers and an assistant to social skills classes, I will further show appreciation for what you do for my community. As a potential psychology and biology major in college, I will take your lessons and transform them into life advice for others.

Take what you have and run with it; I now tell my friends that the opinions of others are irrelevant if they hurt your mental Health. I apply you to aspects of my life I never thought could connect, for instance, the field of physical and psychological therapy, which I intend to pursue. If words fail me, you are there to explain. Now, it is my turn to acknowledge your unwavering support, and all I can say is this: Thank You.

Sincerely,
Katrina Schneider
Dance has been a second language to me from a young age. While others studied how to write vocabulary, decipher math problems, or memorize the periodic table, I learned the physics of a plié and the anatomy of a développé. When others played hopscotch outside, I explored the art of movement in the studio. Dance has impacted my life to the fullest extent, from changing my outlook on life to giving me what will always ground me in stressful times.

I started dancing when I was seven years old, through the exposure of my sister, a dancer. One of my earliest memories is of her performing on stage and pushing me onto the dance floor after rehearsals and dancing together. From that moment on, I realized I meant to dance.

Jumping to the Present, Dance has given me much joy and structure throughout my journey. From the constant changing of life to the reluctant bullies on the playground, Dance has always kept me grounded in who I am, and I want to share this feeling of comfort and security. Through the choreographic process, I will profoundly connect to the audience with inspiration and guidance.

Dance has impacted my life by allowing me to give back to those around me. For example, my high school dance program partnered with a local retirement home to produce a "Dance-Along" with the senior citizens. We brought pep back into their steps, bringing joy into all our lives.

In addition, I helped with our senior and junior prom fashion show. Seventy-five juniors and seniors who had never danced before took up the challenge of dancing in front of the whole school. Which seemed daunting, but ultimately, the prom committee and I produced an entertaining show that all participants loved! This result was what I was hoping to accomplish at school for my senior year, giving my classmates something fun and exciting to do through Dance. At my school, Dance is not the most "popular" topic, but now that more people appreciate the art form, they realize how fun it is for me.

Connecting with many types of people from diverse backgrounds and passions through Dance is what I hope my future has in store. I will take all opportunities I can achieve and engage in them fully. And give back to those around me, wherever I might be, and show them what I felt for the first time so long ago—the ever-growing passion for Dance surrounds me constantly.
During my early dancing career, I struggled with intense obsessive-compulsive disorder, but thankfully my instructor encouraged me to maintain my dance lessons to stay strong. She knew the therapeutic effects they would have on my life. And yes, Dance has positively influenced me so drastically that I cannot imagine myself without it.

Since the age of three, my passion has continued to develop. Over the years, I have taken ballet, tap, jazz, pointe, hip hop, contemporary, modern, and Scottish Highland dancing. What started as an enjoyable after-school activity is my most extraordinary self-expression and a significant emotional outlet. While growing as a dancer, I am now comfortable in my skin as I explore new styles and push myself in challenging classes. I learned the importance of being dedicated and applying myself to realize progress, practicing discipline regardless of outside circumstances or distractions to become the best dancer possible. My confidence increased throughout the interactions with my peers sharing similar goals. They are my second family, and our friendships are beautiful gifts that will last long after I graduate. The relationships with dancers strengthened my leadership skills as I am privileged to have held positions in my Performing Ensemble, especially as its President. Because of this experience, I have learned to ensure all members possess a strong voice, respectfully heard. I have also instructed beginning students to share my love of Dance and influence them positively.

Being fortunate to perform and study across North America with master teachers engaging in unique genres has expanded my appreciation for diverse cultures.

We must remember self-awareness, leadership, and passion are vital in providing the next generation with a positive outlet for Expression. In this process, speech therapy with a dance focus aids in children’s early development.
Advocate for Quality Dance Education & Healthy Lifestyles!

Vital Reasons to Support Dance & All the Arts

- Arts Unify Communities & Make a Positive Social Impact
- Arts Improve Well-Being
- Arts Strengthen Mental & Physical Healthcare
- Arts Improve Academic Performance
- Arts Spark Creativity & Innovation
- Arts Drive Revenue to Local Businesses & the Economy
- Arts Support for our Military
- Arts Unite the World as an International Language

The Arts create belonging, joy, and hope. ~ Americans for the Arts (Americans for the Arts)

The Priorities for Dance Education guidelines provide a framework for NDEO's and NHSDA's programs, services, and governance. Calling our members to Action, we must all advocate for building quality dance education. Go to the NDEO website for complete information.
Note: This report highlights: news, teacher stories, National Honor Society for Dance Arts Helps Teachers Advocate for Dance Education in Schools and Studios Everywhere Dance-Teacher.com

"The Honor Society is a great way for our students to connect over this greater picture of what dance can be." – Mary Gorder, NHSDA Advisor/Sponsor, All That Dance

Check out Dance-Teacher.com for the article highlighting NHSDA, with insightful sponsors' and students' interviews!

Proclaims Katie Rochleau-Rice, recent NHSDA chapter president for All That Dance, that the honor society is a tool for personal growth and skills "in the studio and how I apply them outside." Katie's mentor, Ms. Mary Gorder, stresses that the NHSDA initiatives expand her students' well-rounded education as "a great confidence booster for kids struggling in a technical environment."

Many NHSDA members are devoted to service, opening their hearts and training for all ages and abilities. Ms. Julie O'Neill, now Dance Director and sponsor at Our Lady of Mercy Academy, was an NHSDA member in high school and college - all focused on "performing and enhancing the talent of the students, branching into the community."
Dance for All ~
Diversiform Dance Project!

2nd Street Studio of Dance created the Diversiform Dance Project for artists of all sizes, ages, and levels to share an eclectic repertoire for the community.

In the first season, the company performed at the Detroit Dance Race and continues to entertain at local events with its sparkling showcases. The members’ dedication is evident, and they have an ever-present eye on future endeavors. They love all things Dance, which is apparent in every performance.
Cheers to "Cat-tastic" Cat Taryn!

Dance Academy of Loudoun (DAL) NHSDA chapter advisor, Elizabeth Rotsch Boehnlain, beamed:

"This spring, we visited Washington, DC, to see our favorite Cat on stage! We are so proud of our Taryn Smithson for accomplishing her dream in the national tour of Andrew Lloyd Webber's fantastic Musical. We closed the studio for one night so we could all applaud and cry many happy tears as she brought down the Kennedy Center house with her electrifying performance!"

Instructor Geralyn Ward reiterated:

"Amazing night, Taryn. You encompass a beautiful dancer, singer, and entertainer. Cat-tastic!!"

And on her Facebook page, Taryn sent accolades to her beloved DAL, which "makes my heart melt and soar...I will carry the memories and [my dance] family to last a lifetime!"

DAL offers fun Musical Theatre classes throughout the year.
Dancing at a Museum ~ Making a Difference

Kudos to Ballet Rincon Academy of Dance for making a big difference with their performance supporting Rare Disease Day. The Children’s Museum in Tucson held this event amid its exhibits, outdoor courtyard, and plenty of space to play and imagine. The dancers’ theme celebrating diversity included choreography and teaching an adaptive class for every child wanting to move creatively.

This dance family participates in community events annually, "striving to inspire young dancers to become informed, productive good citizens and joyful ambassadors through the profoundly beautiful world of classical dance."
Imagine those exquisite dancers that artist Edgar Degas immortalized, inspiring what would become the Dance Educators of GA Society, Inc. The name appeared to a member in a dream during an NDEO conference. This vision is for all Georgia residents to have access to quality dance education, which includes opportunities for its statewide NHSDA members.

With bold and delicate brushstrokes, DEGAS, Inc. emphasizes its Core Values with the mission to serve as the Georgia affiliate for NDEO, dedicated to its educators and students. Objectives include:

- Offering professional development and resources for PreK-12 schools, studios, and higher education institutions,
- Promoting the art as healthy learning,
- Fostering a community of educators invested in the growth of Georgia dance,
- Cultivating engagement in dance experiences.

Of particular note are the Digital Dance Resources that DEGAS, Inc. presents online, with such topics as:

- Back to School: Dancing Digitally and In-person
- Professional Development
- Learning Labs
- Online Learning Platform Tutorials
- Virtual Dance Lesson Plans

Learn more: [https://www.degasteachers.org/](https://www.degasteachers.org/)
"Hope when you take that jump, 
You don't fear the fall."
~ from the song "I Lived," OneRepublic

For my senior year in high school, I had the opportunity to choreograph my competition solos. My choices dealt with: the song, the costume, edits, and the intent to share with my audience. Great emotion poured into this work, with fulfilling results.

I chose a tap solo titled "I Lived." Every lyric in the accompanying song by OneRepublic has always touched my heart, but more than ever this past year – especially reminiscing about my studio family. Much inspiration came from my individual experiences. This song talked about living one's life to the fullest and, ultimately, being able to say, "I did it all." Another concept involved advice for those following in another's footsteps, hoping they take every opportunity to the fullest. I tried to convey the emotions tied to the song's concepts, with incredible "lessons learned" producing unforeseen challenges.

My daily life has been a big part of my life since I was born, considering my mom owns a dance studio. Dance is often seen as fun, even a temporary hobby ~ but not to me. Dancing is a lifestyle that builds confidence, which improved my life in just 15 years!

Dance is such a passion in my family. My mom and I have danced our whole lives and are equally enthusiastic, and I connect with her in ways most people are unable because of this great love. Dance has made us strong in difficult times, and we have had careers in Dance at a young age.

Dancing has given me a much-needed social outlet, with lifelong friendships and a positive connection alongside people with whom I might have nothing else in common. Being on a team also taught me the true meaning of camaraderie and integrity. Many emotions are unspoken, but without Dance, they would stay unresolved. Dance has helped me discover emotions I did not know I had. I am vulnerable and can get my feelings out, which lets me speak without ever saying a word while interpreting the singer's feelings. I am thankful to teach and choreograph for others like my mentors who have taught me.

Choreographing myself has challenged me in many ways. I have set expectations creatively, physically, and emotionally in self-composition. In the studio, I have admired more experienced dancers hoping to be just like them one day. I have also watched younger dancers in awe of their growth and passion and sitting on the edge of my seat, my peers in their raw passion when they perform. In the studio, I witness progress and endure the pain to achieve my goals.
Through Dance, I hope to inspire others to pursue their dreams. I hope to further quality dance education, touching hearts in the process. I thank Dance for my skills, lessons, connections, and experiences. Dance has helped me discover my true self, given me confidence, and helped me earn success in and out of the studio.

Dancing is physically taxing, but I love how the biggest challenge is also the biggest motivator in my creative process. In certain moments my perfectionism might keep me from progressing for fear of failure, but just as well, it drives me to achieve my vision.

Seeing my choreography to fruition makes me proud but humbled, epitomized by "soaking it all in" for my senior solo.

Thank you, Dance, for making me strong!
I often felt like such an island alone in my practice, and now I am thankful to NDEO for assembling dance educators to inspire, share, and learn from each other, guiding us through programs that enrich our teachers and pupils.

My students have strong intuitive voices, yet social media often exposes this generation to disturbing images. Rather than ignoring or accepting these negative aspects, we educators should help our youth articulate their thoughts and emotions toward positive outcomes. They long to be active and find their roles in their communities. Therefore, please give them the tools to achieve their high expectations, hold them accountable to be part of a family, and communicate creatively, academically, and nonviolently. Then they will grow as true artists and leaders, fulfilling their legacy.

In this process, Dance inspires ~

An example of how Dance helps my students realize their value is in an exercise we do in the fall as part of "Love Your Body Week." The dancers all gather in a circle, taking turns in the center; the ones on the perimeter note something positive about their friend: they may describe a physical or emotional attribute or one's role in our dancing family. Placing the notes in the center, the student showers them with positivity. These tributes are all saved, they often inserted them into their journals, faithfully recording their 7th to 12th-grade reflections. As they flip through the pages, they see these reminders that somebody respects, loves, and appreciates them.

Now, does "Hot Cocoa Nutty Nutcracker" sound delicious? Audiences applaud, "Yes!" Despite our Hot Springs Junior Academy and World-Class High School not having the resources to produce a classical version, our fresh interpretation highlights all abilities and experience levels. The story follows the traditional narrative, but our original choices make it a little nutty and much more accessible to our students and families.

After intensive fundraising, my students journeyed to Europe, where they performed seven shows in five European cities over 12 days as part of the "Stars of Tomorrow" tour. This experience took us to the next level as they demonstrated quality technique, understood professional etiquette, and earned $50,000 to attend the program.

These achievements represent what any educator should strive for, demonstrating to our young people that they can succeed in this world, whatever their circumstances.
Showing our students that when we define our goals, working consistently through dedication and passion, we can do anything – the Sky's the Limit!
Passion for the interdisciplinary study of Dance benefits us all, especially the most vulnerable, and improvisation plays an essential role in this quest. ~ Tyler

Over the years, I have grown particularly fond of improvisation, or "improv." I utilize this method for artistic growth, collecting my thoughts and emotions, especially in its potential healing benefits for medical patients. As an artist, improv expands my creative boundaries in conceptualizing movement and life.

One specific way I experience the benefits of improv is through an exercise I call "Object Analysis." When practicing, I glance around any space surrounding me, choose the first object that catches my eye, and commit to it. I examine the object's physical features, reflecting upon them through improvised movement. Then I dive deeper, taking a more abstract approach, often unearthing movement patterns and choreographic concepts I could never imagine.

This exploration is beneficial in my pursuit of interdisciplinary research with compelling societal implications. Related research surrounds therapy and creative practices that are especially helpful for neurodegenerative disease patients.

Improv acts as a therapy allowing us to feel and embrace our emotions rather than dismissing them. This method introduces us to exploration as a guiding principle within artistry and life, guiding us physically, mentally, holistically, and positively.
We, the North Little Rock High School Dance Troupe dancers, are published authors @studenttreasures_publishers! As an ensemble, we wrote the book titled:

#DanceMatters-The Impact of Dance Education!

The publisher welcomed the excitement of "creating memories and cherished keepsakes," emphasizing how the "real value of student publishing goes far beyond the book itself."

We agree this adventure involved "teamwork, the writing process, and the reward of giving our best effort with confidence and love for learning ~ long after the books arrive."
As we leaped into writing and illustrating the book, we examined the following:

- A slide show and storyboards,
- Lesson plans,
- Chapter choices,
- Printable templates with a cover, title, dedication, and author pages.

Our advisor noted: "We are so proud of these talented dancers who share their memories and reasons for why they dance in this book we all treasure!" Thank you to our teachers for mentoring us in this creative, holistic process.

"This ceaseless dedication resulted in pages and pages of text and pictures" ~

We are published authors!

Stay tuned for more News about our NHSDA chapter!
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in "Are You in Your Feelings?" Photo by Paul Kolnik

Feature

Alvin Ailey Performance Review ~ "Are You in Your Feelings?"
By: Gabby Hudson
Woodland High School Dancing Wildcats/2nd Block Dance
Advisor/Sponsor: Tiffany Tindall

"…A celebration of culture, music, and the youthful spirit that perseveres in us all. Scored to a 'mixtape' of soul, hip-hop, and R&B, [the Dance] explores the connections among music, communication, and personal memory." ~ Alvin Ailey Press Release

Throughout time and history, Dance has allowed all to express their thoughts and feelings about any topic. An example of this is the performance "Are You in Your Feelings?," presented by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Atlanta, Georgia, on February 17th, 2023. This piece, choreographed by Kyle Abraham, was first produced and performed in 2022. "Are You in Your Feelings?" tells the story of life as we know it, moving through different times and relationships, falling in and out of love, and being affected by outside technological forces.
To express this message, Abraham opened his work with a cycle of fast, repetitious movements in synchronization, showing how people are used to the quick pace of life, with all the gentle taps and hard blows it brings them. At one point, the dancers broke out of this cycle, spreading through the space around them to flow in their large, individual movements and amid pairs.

Viewers may interpret what is happening in multiple ways. One is how humans eventually split apart from what they know to explore and meet others, which could signify developing intimate relationships.

Later, these same dancers mingle with other couples, ending in a disturbing debate where everyone is at war. However, the couples drift back together in similar movements. This episode shows that everyone can make peace with others and how healing and forgiving are better than fuming or staying agitated.

"Are You in Your Feelings?" properly shows how people can move through different eras and relationships while staying true to themselves and others. This piece helped to show how the art of Dance has and should be applied to illustrate stories for years to come.
Hello, this is Izabell Sanchez! As a junior high school dance major, I have been a student at Idaho Fine Arts Academy for six years. Our school’s mission: “Building lives through artistic, scholastic, and civic excellence,” includes our shared values in the slogan:

**U-CREATE ~**

- Unity, Compassion,
- Respect, Expression,
- Acceptance, Trust, &
- Excellence.

From painting fences and pulling weeds to cleaning cemetery headstones, we students go to the community to complete acts of service on our **Annual Service Day**. At our annual assembly this year, our guest, Mayor Robert Simison, spoke about how he advocates for everyone to take our lead to help our community, and as a thank you, he presented the “Mayor’s Awards to Youth.” Our principal, Mr. Chris Housel, announced: “The hard-working student winners who have achieved much in this effort.” I was happy hearing eighth grader Tristen Rodino’s name but shocked as he...
stated, “Izabell Sanchez” ~ I was so honored and humbled to win!

Mr. Housel remarked, “Izabell is a contemporary dance major at the Idaho Fine Arts Academy. Izabell’s unwavering determination, strength of character, and willingness to be a part of the school community make her the perfect candidate for the Mayor’s Award. Despite facing some life obstacles, Izabell attends school daily with a positive attitude and demonstrates resiliency in her academic and personal pursuits. She is the ultimate team player and uses her moral compass to guide and uplift others. She not only advocates for herself in times of hardship but recognizes and chooses to help those around her in times of need, which is a testament to her strength of character. She shows us that anything is possible through hard work and determination.”

After the service day assembly, we broke into mixed-age groups for team-building exercises focused on Excellence as the theme. For guidance, we watched Simone Sinek’s short films “What are YOU doing to HELP the PERSON Next to YOU?” and “How to Master the Art of Consistency ~ Leadership Lessons.” Then we answered questions related to our goals, with one student noting impressively, “Consistency builds habits, and habits build character.” With this in mind, everyone had a deeper understanding of what we could do to help build the community into a better place ~ and this would be a good NHSDA Dance-A-Difference Project.

This year, my group members Jeronimo, Giovanni, and I went to Husky Park, where we collected trash scattered around the trail. Once we completed this assignment, we gathered shovels to help our friends distribute mulch bark. This fun moment was also a significant learning experience to improve our leadership and communication skills while working together outdoors in the clear, healthy air!
How do we create what feels like our deepest selves when we do not know who we are entirely? In response, my piece, "Upbringing," is about how it is okay to grow new branches from established roots and still return to their source.

I grew up on complex beats and innate rhythms in my Haitian family. In contrast, ballet has always been a love, but it has never quite been a home. In all its teachings about appearing weightless, I have lost some of my ability to be grounded.

I have had two dance upbringings, one through the rhythms of kitchen dance parties, the other with my hand at the barre. While choreographing, I wanted to learn from the passions that grew from those experiences amid my discovery of Modern Dance.

Through the process of:

- Center-of-the-room musings,
- Frantic images,
- Tiptoeing ballet, and
- Exhausted self-assurance,
- All set to music with sharp contrasts,

I wanted to portray how our experience sometimes feels sinuous but never comfortable or smooth. Moving with the music, I intentionally created ways to understand that the mind can be quiet while the body is not, and vice versa.

My formal dance education began like many little kids with the classic ballet-tap combination class, but my interests quickly shifted beyond just Dance and into creation. I created story ballets through stock songs on the keyboard in the living room. I forced my younger sisters into self-choreographed full-length Nutcrackers every December. Trips to the grocery store meant nearly knocking over boxes while inventing phrases.

I immediately saw Dance's potential as a mental and physical activity, consuming me from all angles. This love grew with discovering modern and contemporary forms, which felt more intuitive to my physical body. Possibilities arose with movement that felt less discriminatory to my less-than-perfect turnout. But this realization was starting to stress me out. As I grew, I noticed it might not match the ideal model. I receded into my mind; maybe implicitly, I decided that ballet, while my first love, never really loved me back enough.

My school, California School of the Arts-San Gabriel Valley, reignited my love for ballet in a space that allowed me to create. Finding Black companies like the Ailey School and Alonzo King LINES Ballet awakened me to dance in whatever body, as more than enough and of great power. Choreographing formally, with the support of affirming teachers did wonders for my doubting brain, ensuring I would return home.
The most fantastic testament Dance has given me is seeing the world through multiple lenses, and I will bring this multifaceted understanding to more people. Psychology fascinates me, and with my background, I am interested in how Dance affects the dancer's brain. There is an intrinsic link between moving our bodies creatively; how can this apply as a therapeutic modality? After examining Katherine Dunham's work, I wonder what the arts say about interactions between cultures.

I also want to explore the intersection between artists' and scientists' brains, which are not all that different. Dance allows me to think unconventionally, and I will apply this creativity wired into me. My mind sharpens into a problem solver, a creator, a leader, and ultimately, a profound thinker. I will give others the gift of Dance and all the beautiful gifts it catalyzes.

How does training set people up for life beyond Dance? I may not yet know who I am; however, movement allows me to explore infinite avenues and meanings. Dance has been my biggest lesson and teacher, and my piece "Upbringing" transforms into an ode to a cultural journey through multicultural Dance ~ which will always feel like home.
Congratulations to All Our Graduates, Past & Present, Dancing along Exciting New Trails!
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Be a Published Writer!

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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 ~
A wide range of topics is welcome. Learn more:
National Honors Society of Dance Arts > Dance Arts Now (ndeo.org)

PC California School of the Performing Arts ~ San Gabriel Valley