Dance Arts

Now!

The official Junior/Secondary NHSDA Newsletter
Spring 2022 Edition
Let us leap into Spring, awakening our creativity!

And within these pages, discover our artist/scholars’ poetic expressions filled with compassion and healing.

PC Mia Zhang

CONTENTS
NHSDA Award Essay
Poetry
Viewpoints
News
Writing Assignments & Choreography Analyses
The title, “Are U There?” is the literal question that inspired my choreography developed six months into the pandemic that plagued 2020.

Although stemming from terrible circumstances, lockdown allowed me to explore my thoughts while alone in my room. One rough evening, I questioned: “Without school, dance practice, or peer-interaction, what is my identity? If I am not a student or performer, then who am I?” This piece represented that search for “myself.”

Amid whirls of brainstorming, I choreographed with evolving energy amid rigid, angular-contained movement precisely on the beat, demonstrating my prior fixed mindset. Then building momentum musically, broader fluid motions juxtaposed those staccato actions. Up to the song’s powerful climax, I thoroughly let loose the compositional elements of:

- Levels change from lofty jumps to floor work,
- *Energy transitioned from direct to indirect quality,
- *Following a high-pitched shrill melody that vibrated the background, rather than the steady beat danced before.

At that moment, the music engulfed me. I was happily grooving, forgetting any worries ~ until the notes stopped ‘mid-clap.’ I now realize “Who are you?” has no simple answer, but a beautiful blend of our many passions and experience.
Dance has opened my world to countless opportunities, memories, and experiences I will cherish, forever.

I love to dance because it brings so much joy into my everyday life and allows me to forget all the problems happening around me.

Dance is an escape from reality.

I love walking into the studio, for all my stress from the day leaves my mind.

Others surrounded me, All in the same frame of mind.

Dance has helped me grow into the person I am today. I have met so many incredible, inspiring teachers who have not only taught me how to dance but have given so many lessons and excellent advice.

I could not be more thankful for my lifelong friendships, with other dancers and my teachers.

There is no grander feeling than moving to a piece of music, and letting the rest of the world disappear.

I could not imagine my life without dance. It is my passion and the most significant aspect that has changed my life, for the greater good.
Dance like you are the main character under the luminous lights
Smile like you have just heard the greatest news ever disclosed
Look up like you heard a plane plowing through the bright blue sky
Leap higher than the oak trees outside

Jump like you are aiming for the moon
Spin like you are the Gravitron ride
Yet, have enough control like the figure skaters being televised
Stretch like you are more malleable than a flexible rubber band
Condition like you are stronger than the strongest man

Balance like you are an Olympic gymnast stationed on the beam
Count like you never learned the any numbers following eight
Reveal a story like you are an award-winning author

Hit every count like you are being judged by professionals
Practice like there is no more room for criticism
Dance like you will never get the opportunity to dance again
Early in my studies, I was often uncertain about why I danced, until one performance:

“As the lights faded, I ran off stage to the dressing room. I was in tears, ashamed. Just then, I heard a knock on the door, and Ms. Cathie Kasch entered before I could wipe the smeared makeup from my cheeks. Unexpectedly, she gave me a kind hug, disregarding the mascara ruining her white sweater. ‘Asth, I know that wasn’t your best performance,’ she said, ‘but I am proud of your courage. It is not easy being vulnerable; that is why we live for dance.’”

At this moment, my high school dance teacher, Ms. Kasch, helped me understand why dance is meaningful. Her words illuminated a passion for expression within movement. While perfection is ideal, real art demands risks, exposing vulnerability toward fulfillment. She later described how she transitioned from training under Erick Hawkins to pursuing another path, a calling. Her risk ~ the freedom to choreograph her own dances, which I believe are masterpieces.

Ms. Kasch relayed that, reflective upon her own experience, we must be open to constructive criticism. I find a supportive environment in Terpsichord, my modern dance company, to help me strive in this process. We are not just girls who dance individually; we build upon each other’s creativity in a tight-knit, safe community. We are not afraid to offer and accept constructive criticism that will help us all grow holistically.

When we traveled with our teacher to the world's dance capital, New York City, we met her expanded community, who shared her ideology. They, in turn, reinforced this aesthetic to persevere in expressing our love of dance while honoring humanity.

With gratitude to Ms. Kasch and my other mentors, including our NHSDA sponsor Ms. Laurel Zahrobsky, vulnerability has taken "center stage" for composing meaningful movement. In my contemporary dance inspired by artist Barbara Kruger's work that critiqued female societal standards, I too dared to explore this subject. My Terpsichord dancers and I melded theatre with visual arts through novel choreography titled “Make Your Move.” Our purpose was to express frustrations with present-day social constructs and remove ourselves from those distorted gendered expectations.

As a choreographer, I will empower my dancers to push themselves to experience the artistic growth that my mentors taught me: Lean toward vulnerability rather than chase perfection. Unlock your artistic potential to achieve excellence ~ Be Fearless.
Without dance, I would not be the confident person I am today. It has kept me physically active and involved ~ giving me more life lessons than any other activity.

I once struggled with emotions because I was afraid of being wrong about everything. I thought people would judge or think less of me based on my opinions ~ but thankfully, dance has reversed this negativity. It is okay to be different, and I now express myself with confidence, and I am no longer afraid to share my beliefs. When I consider dance’s impact on my life, I wish to share this optimistic feeling with all ages and abilities.

I give back to the community through NHSDA. I love to help others as a substitute dance teacher. I arrange younger dancers’ hair and makeup at recitals, contribute performance donations for those in need during the holidays, and host movie nights for families and friends. Through these events, I engage others, and they, in turn, support the arts throughout my community.

These realizations influence my dreams and goals. I plan to become a physical therapist or athletic trainer specifically for dancers, plus become a dance teacher. Dancers often get injured and require therapy and recovery training, and it is crucial that whoever cares for them clearly understands and communicates these demands of their lives.
“Normal function” means something different to dancers, and unfortunately, many health professionals do not understand this issue. When I had two knee surgeries, I became frustrated because my doctors could not realize that I had to dance as part of healing, and this desire left me feeling defeated because I could not return to my schedule as early as hoped. For this reason, I understand dancers’ needs and plan to study how to tailor their treatment individually to provide the healing they need without making them feel held back or out of control.

Indeed, dance is demanding on the body and mind, and often students do not realize how much damage they may inflict upon themselves if they do not take proper precautions. Along with respect, accountability, and perseverance, I will teach young dancers how to take care of their bodies before damage occurs; I will train them in proper nutrition, exercise, and mental health.

As a dance teacher and therapist, I will share my knowledge to relay all the positive lessons dance has taught me. Furthermore, I have acquired perseverance toward every challenge to work productively.

These factors will help my students and patients because I love dancing to live wholly and healthfully.
Bronx Envision Academy empowers students through a challenging arts-rich curriculum and offers internships with community organizations. Hip Hop, Tap, Jazz, Ballet, and Modern/Contemporary courses help prepare them for the New York City Department of Education’s Commencement Examination in Dance, leading to success in The Chancellor’s Arts Endorsed Regents Diploma.

Imagination is vital ~ Of particular note, students compose dances by applying skills and techniques that explore original movement concepts rooted in the foundation of Laban Movement Analysis.

Academics, athletics, counseling, and extra-curricular activities round out the liberal arts program.
Mindful Ways on a Global Scale

The Gulliver Preparatory Dance Department initiates mindful ways for students to develop well-rounded skills by working independently and in collaborative groups. Each level delves into culture and time-capsules based upon terminology, genres, and practical applications.

The Dance Club and Sundancer Team participate in competitive venues, with members Morgan Funari and Gabriela Machado receiving Florida State awards for artistic merit and leadership. On innovative Professional Exposure Day, the groups meet professional dancers and instructors who discuss how to plan a successful career in the arts.

In 2019, the dance and drama divisions traveled to New York City to experience live theatre. And during the 2020 pandemic, they had an international experience through the IB Dance program. * Captains from the Broadway shows: On Your Feet, Swing, Moulin Rouge, and Hamilton presented virtual workshops for young dancers to share from the United States to Ecuador.

These Gulliver Prep arts ambassadors reach out to the community, mounting presentations for special audiences, including senior citizens, plus offering classes and movement attire for children who love to dance but are in need. Thank you, students, for your service!

*The International Baccalaureate (IB) Dance program offers a comprehensive approach with creative, analytical skills that range from writing papers to composing/performing choreography. Learn more: Study dance | Diploma | International Baccalaureate® - International Baccalaureate® (ibo.org)
Callling All Graduating Seniors!

NHSDA Senior Slideshow Contributions Due: May 27th, 2022!

This online “yearbook” showcases our graduating members and chapters with engaging photos, music, and more.

The slideshow posts in honor of NHSDA Recognition Day, June 9th, 2022!

Learn more:
National Honors Society of Dance Arts > Events > NHSDA Day of Recognition (ndeo.org)
Equal Opportunity in Quality Dance Education!

Belletete Ballet Studio believes we should all get a chance to dance! The Adaptive Dance program launched in 2016 and, within its first year, the team incorporated the specialized RHYTHM WORKS Integrative Dance as part of its curriculum. A Hip-Hop focus helps students achieve the five crucial developmental domains:

1. Physical
2. Social
3. Cognitive
4. Communicative
5. Adaptive

A Testimonial

“I know the Belletete staff cares about all the dancers and treats them with love and respect. I know this is an environment in which the teachers encourage the children by giving them a chance to shine regardless of ability. In short, we love your classes. because you care personally about our families, so it is truly a joy to attend every week.” ~ Belletete Parent

All PCE Belletete Ballet studio
Mark Your Calendar!

- **Dance A Difference Week**, March 6th ~ 12th
- **Thank A Dance Teacher Day**, May 5th
- **Senior Day of Recognition**, June 9th

Learn more about these events on the NDEO website!

---

**Welcoming Our School Children into the Magical World of Dance!**

*Ballet Wichita opens its theatre doors sharing memorable performances for local school children! Colorful sets, stunning costumes, and beautiful dancing delight all ~ including a multitude of families who attend the holiday matinees! This community-sharing shines in the company’s *Nutcracker*, in collaboration with the Ballet Wichita Orchestra.*
How Does Idaho Fine Arts Academy (IFAA) Differ from Traditional Schools?

*Idaho Fine Arts Academy* is a small, community-oriented school centered on the rich and diverse arts and core academic content. Students work in one focus area based on their audition in dance, instrumental music, vocal music, theater, or visual arts. They then collaborate with professionals in their chosen artistic field and participate in elective courses in other majors.

Within its goals, the Dance Department staff helps students:

- Become well-rounded, healthy, emotionally intelligent, creative, and knowledgeable artists.
- Train as technicians, performers, improvisational/movement makers, choreographers, and critical thinkers.
- Prepare to be college dance majors and professional artists; and
- Build dance literacy and advocacy for school and community enrichment.

IFAA was the first school in the state to establish both Junior and Senior NHSDA chapters, with the support of the Idaho Dance Education Organization.

*IFAA Dance Formula*

Body + Energy + Space + Time = Elements of Dance
Writing Assignment: Why Should We Study Multicultural Dance?
North Atlanta High School
Advisor/Sponsor: Tamara Irving

“There are many ways to understand others’ lives, but dance makes that experience all the more emotional by truly touching the soul.” ~ Kennedy Isom

Juliet Joyce
“Learning about cultures is an enriching experience because we should all have respect and understanding of all people.”

Ava Geller
“I think we should study multicultural dance because the most integral characteristic of a dancer is to be well-rounded. This idea means not just mastering a favorite style but pushing out of one’s comfort zone to appreciate what is not familiar. Every style builds upon different sets of techniques and traditions, so not only does it make us stronger technically, but each method helps our personal development.”

Riley Martin
“Studying multicultural dance is important. Being able to represent diverse cultures through the arts makes dancers more open-minded and knowledgeable to forms of dance that are, at first, unfamiliar. Dances like Bali, tangos, and folk are not as common to contemporary American dancers. Being more well-rounded in multicultural dance allows students to learn movement faster and more efficiently.”

Kennedy Isom
“Dance is an art form appreciated and practiced across the globe, and it has created a means of communication that transcends beyond speech and language. Dance is not just a reflection or preservation of multiple cultures but a universal aesthetic. There are many ways to understand others’ lives, but dance makes that experience all the more emotional by truly touching the soul. We study multicultural dance to understand the traditional clothing, music, and styles, therefore understanding these people. This perspective allows us to respect those different from us and appreciate the cultures for all that they are.

I enjoy learning about cultures from across the globe, and I find them intricate and beautiful in unique ways. Dance is a lens through which anyone can familiarize themselves with another culture and open the door to understanding. From Mexican ‘Jarabe Tapatio’ to Japanese ‘Kabuki,’ culture is visible through performances. I am fascinated with ‘Jarabe Tapatio.’ Although I have never seen it in real life, it is incredible to watch videos of how the women dance so effortlessly with their huge skirts in a flowing manner.”
Similarly, watching Kabuki for the first time showed me a side of Japanese culture I had not known before. With ‘Jarabe Tapatio’ and ‘Kabuki,’ I became even more enthralled about the culture to better respect and understand the people. Dance is essential, and as dancers, we must see people for who they are, regarding their cultures. We must learn and respect them via their cultural dances, and to do that, we must study them.”

**Brooke Walker**
“Learning dance fundamentals teaches an individual the basis of what it will take to learn assorted styles. As s dancers develop, they will either come to know only a limited number of styles and specialize in those or branch out and discover multiple versions of the multicultural dance. The ladder is integral to understanding certain aspects of a group of people or their entire society, for that matter.

Multicultural dance engages everyone to gain experience about other cultures in a highly personal, interpretive way. It offers relativist aspects not experienced in the typical classroom setting or textbook descriptions. Multicultural dance also allows a dancer to feel the movements of others and move in new ways that could change their perspective on themselves. For example, last year, I learned a style called ‘Garba.’ It originated from Gujarat, India, and was a fun, upbeat routine. Because this art form was new to me, I researched the technique that supports it. In this way, I could understand how multicultural dance offers a vehicle for enhancing our knowledge of the world and its diverse cultures.

In addition, when I traveled to the Caribbean, I experienced the traditions in Jamaica. More than just entertaining, these images spoke of the music we are likely to hear, the clothes people often wear, and even the role of women around the island.

**In retrospect, studying multicultural dance gives us a broader perspective and more relativist knowledge about rich ways of life.**
Solo: Surrender to Chaos
By: Aaliyah Graham
2021 NHSDA Honors Award, Finalist
Governor’s School for the Arts
Sponsor/Advisor: Deborah Thorpe

With the recent acknowledgment of the BLACK LIVES MATTER movement, I began my choreographic journey specifically focused on black women. This work, “Surrender to the Chaos,” depicts the process of picking and choosing one’s battles.

To avoid common stereotypes, I believe I, as a black woman, have been forced to assimilate heavily into Euro-American culture. By adopting their standards, I thought I would be more included and valued as a human being.

Even in this way of living, the racist acts/tendencies did not stop. I have learned that power resides in the way I responded to these situations, and I transferred this all into my work.

The biggest challenge I faced when applying this experience to my piece was what movement could show the manipulation, I put myself. The use of small arm gestures shows the frequent changes I made to myself, to create a more “appropriate” version for others to see, while the bigger arm gestures simply show me releasing this immense amount of pressure.

Another element I wanted to bring to the piece was the feeling of instability, believing I was not firm in who I was as a person or an artist. This conflict influenced my incorporating movement that would take me off-balance throughout the piece.

Overall, the time I spent on this solo enabled me to present my art form as a glimpse into my struggle.
My solo intended to portray the feeling of learning in school, then having a sudden disruption. Manipulating space and time relayed this theme in my choreography "March 17th" (Music: Anne & Joachim, song titled “Guillaume Ferron”).

The pandemic altered everything.

Virtual learning was challenging for a dance student moving in a small space at home. One day scrolling through TikTok, I encountered a video with a man analyzing how we would be on Lockdown for about three weeks in March 2020. He then fast-forwarded, but we were still on Lockdown. This observation inspired me to make the dance portray the struggles learning in an unnatural environment.

Making this piece was challenging at first, especially figuring out variations in movement that would express intent. Applying Laban's Effort Actions allowed me to think clearly.

I contrasted two effort actions within Weight, Time, and Energy. First, “Float” represented the times students had to adjust to happenings in the world. Second, “Slash” interpreted the problems they faced learning virtually.

I knew dance would help us race through our obstacles ~ to win in this creative process.

PC Dominic Roberts
My intent for this piece was to honor the memory of Jared Crippin, a boy I went to school with before he tragically took his own life. The dance depicts the struggles of waking up that day after hearing the news and the uneasiness of living with the fact he was gone.

I entitled the piece “Waking up” not only because of my rising helplessly that morning but because I realized many people struggle internally with issues – but sadly never acknowledge this or seek help until too late.

My costume, an oversized black shirt covering black tights, relayed the dark place that trapped me, consumed by these awful thoughts. In the end, I removed the shirt to reveal a blue leotard underneath. This action represented how I was still upset but accepted what had happened. I had climbed out of that completely dark place.

It was stressful to re-access those sad memories to create the piece with justice to Jared. I wondered if he would be proud of me for honoring his memory. And in the end, I knew this tribute was not only going to make him proud but also allow me to let go of all that pain once bottled up.

PC Emma Casertano
Standing still, I close my eyes. Take a deep inhale. Adrenaline rushes through my body, yet I feel calm. I turn around to an abyss of strangers, watching me, only me. Thoughts run through my mind as the music begins. My body takes over, creating a graceful flow of exquisite shapes. As I continue to move, the world around me stops. Nothing but the music and myself. No more audience. No more thoughts. I am finally free.

As my body slows and the music fades, I leisurly make my way to my feet to take a bow. The crowd cheers as if it is in slow motion. They are no longer strangers; they now understand who I am. I awake no longer on stage but in my bed. I no longer hear music but my alarm clock. I no longer have an audience but my stuffed animals. Where did everything go? Am I lost?

Without dance, where would I be?

Lost

This problem reflects our younger generations, whereby with social media and an “easy tap of the switch,” we disconnect from others. And so, the inspiration for my solo titled “More” is the scenario where we cannot talk to those whom we need the most. The accompanying song came out about a year ago, and I immediately felt a strong connection to the lyrics, inspiring fluid movement to come quickly.

But what in “More” was I chasing?

I started dancing at age three and have never stopped. This love has helped me through rough times and is always there, even when nothing else. Dance is my escape from reality in which I express my emotions without judgment. Dance is constant in my life, and I can always rely upon it. Life skills learned throughout my dance years have helped shape my growth.

At age five, “discipline” was not a word that naturally came to mind ~ I was too young to comprehend its meaning. By age ten, I learned to listen to my parents and teachers. By age fifteen, I correctly cared for my body and thanked those dedicated to helping me improve my performance.

I now hold myself accountable and manage my time wisely, for there are consequences to adverse actions; I am respectful and wish to cooperate. Yet, with new lessons uncovered, lofty standards keep me focused on achieving rather than settling with mediocrity:

- Passion about my choreography,
- Blending the steps with the music,
- Exploring the chords behind the singer’s vocals.

I discovered ways to connect the beats and tune with the movement. I built phrases for a three-dimensional effect. I reached with longing movements toward what I was chasing. The artistry proved that no matter how we attempt to erase people from our minds, we need and must embrace them.
After facing challenges to my solo, I built immense confidence. I am eager to show the world who I am through my whole heart and teach others how to put their anxieties aside and let go.

To be free ~ Not Lost.

All PC Quincy Hines
The goal of my original choreography, “In Control,” was to show how we can redirect ourselves even when there appears to be no solution. If we focus on pulling together, everything will make sense. For the audience to clearly understand my message, forces must initiate any isolated movements into blending a whole piece.

Challenges during the choreographic process were creating unique, grounded movements with seamless transitions while showing my technical skills. I overcame these issues by filming myself and analyzing them to discover unusual steps and cleaner changes.

In retrospect to my solo, my personal story reveals my difficulties in expressing myself. Being young and shy, I have tended to be quiet while internally processing others’ words. This feeling has made me appear strikingly timid, which would be a concern in the dance world. Yet, as a novice studying in high school, I dedicated immense hours perfecting my technique with a strong stage presence ~ but I still lacked confidence and crucial social skills. How would I finally “break out of this shell?”

Dance would play a considerable role in countering this obstacle. Not long ago, both my grandmothers passed within two months of each other, so dancing was a comfort when I felt down. I danced every quarantine day to keep traveling the right path for success. And most importantly, it has been the main component diminishing my shy characteristics. Through these experiences, I now see that dance is crucial in developing my strong-willed personality, persistence, and confidence more than simply technique. It has taught me the significance of persevering to reach goals.

Gratefully, I am now in touch with my more extroverted self, that slowly but surely has overcome my shyness through creative movement as communication. Dance serves as the primary happiness and crucial aspect lifting me through hardships. When I dance, my mind throws out negativity and sorrow, focusing on positivity.

Looking toward the future, I will help young dancers build their confidence and acceptance of others while encouraging them to overcome any challenges with seamless transitions.
More than anything, I hope dance will continually enlighten me with valuable lessons about myself and the world, so to be “In Control.”
“Intentions” is the title of the dance I am sharing here. I love choreographing just for fun and sometimes without setting it on the stage. “Intentions” is one of those dances. Loving a particular song, I casually explored movement to accompany it. After producing the first few steps, I rolled with it into a combo about thirty seconds long. A few months later, I decided to compete in a virtual competition, surprisingly adapting my piece for presentation.

For background, here is a bit about me. When I was little, my mom wanted to get us both out of the house. So, she enlisted us in a “Mommy and Me Ballet” class. And I have not stopped dancing since! Every year I begged to add more classes; my parents agreed. When I headed for high school, I prayed to go to a Performing Arts Magnet; my parents agreed.

I am happiest on stage ~ from small-scale community events to studio recitals to professional shows with my Tap company! I choreograph groups and solos at school, collaborating with other artists to unite many ideas into one vision. I love every second of teaching at my studio, and I have worked backstage at a professional show. While being an extra in a short film was eye-opening. A favorite time was being a dance convention assistant. These experiences led me to direct a dance showcase for my High School Senior Project.

Dance allows us to bring our thoughts and senses to life. We can listen to uninspired lectures all day and not hear a single word, but experiencing music, pictures, or dances can open our minds to new ways of thinking.

I want to create pieces that inspire dancers and non-dancers to get up and move to music they enjoy and make the audience think about and feel the stories I am telling on or off stage. I want to create works from the easy, happy feeling of flowers blooming in the Spring to complex emotional subjects like gender equality. Most of my choreographing experience is in Contemporary and Jazz, so creating a tap piece was challenging.

In reflection, we should choreograph to spark the imagination and make people think about social issues. We are responsible for the content. Whatever side of life’s spectrum a story may fall ~ intense, tragic, or uplifting, fun ~ we create all in pure movement.

After iterations, I finally completed the composition that best defined my intention. I am excited to share this piece, and I hope you enjoy it!
Art creates limitless opportunities for us to present social issues in beneficial ways, the best part of this belief is that there is no language barrier. Art is universal; we find it everywhere, speaking to all cultures. Art allows us to share our views and present a new perspective on what is essential and relevant.
Dance Arts Now!

Editorial Staff
Susan McGreevy-Nichols,
NDEO Executive Director
Colleen Hearn Dean,
Senior Editor
Melissa Greenblatt,
Managing Director
Kari Schrade,
Program Coordinator
Kaitlynn Schultz,
Administrative Assistant

Dance Arts Now! is a publication of the
National Dance Education Organization (NDEO)
8609 2nd Avenue, Suite 203-B Silver Spring, MD 20910 301.585.2880

©National Dance Education Organization, 2022, All Rights Reserved

Disclaimer:
The National Honor Society for Dance Arts (NHSDA) recognizes the outstanding achievements of dance students in both the public and private sectors. To foster this true art form, we respect and encourage freedom of expression and speech with respect for philosophical, cultural, and religious beliefs. All opinions and beliefs articulated in this newsletter are those of the article authors. Reference herein to any specific religious beliefs or practices does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by NHSDA or the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO). The views and opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily state or reflect those of the National Honor Society for Dance Arts or NDEO.

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

NHSDA Members ~ We Welcome You to be Published!

Dance Arts Now! is the official Junior/Secondary NHSDA newsletter. Our Editorial Staff invites our inductees and sponsors to contribute creative works for our future editions! Learn more:
nhsda-ndeo.org/danceartsnow

PC Anna Hendricks