



NEWS

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Dance New York News V1N1

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To be profiled in the
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or leave a note
at the front desk.

Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of the Dance New York News. Our objective is to celebrate the stories and accomplishments of Dance New York teachers and students. Dance New York is more than just floor boards. Dance New York is a large community of talented people. If you only attend Saturday socials, or if you only take private lessons at 8 PM on Wednesdays, you probably only know a small slice of this community. Hopefully, by mapping the terrain of this community, this newsletter will give each of us greater ability to enhance that community. And even if it doesn't create world peace, you might learn a little more about a teacher whose class you have been thinking of attending.

This newsletter will have five main features: teacher profiles, student profiles, reports on Dance New York events, news items about Dance New Yorkers, and assorted lighter articles. The newsletter is currently planned to be a monthly publication of about two pages. It is intended as a print publication, but will also be accessible through both www.DanceNewYork.com, and www.ExploreDance.com.

Student Profile: Robert Abrams

My parents made me take dance lessons when I was in Grade school. For about a year I went to the Knickerbocker ballroom once per week. Boy and girls would sit in a line of chairs around the edge of the floor that was organized into sets of four chairs facing each other. I think the idea was to force boys and girls to talk

to each other. Most of the girls wore little white gloves. To the best of my recollection, we learned the box step, the Hustle, the Charleston, and the Mexican Hat Dance. We probably learned other dances. I did win a Charleston competition. Outside of dance class, trying to find a dance partner at student dances was

difficult, so I didn't get much practice.

My current passion for dance started shortly after I arrived in Santa Cruz, CA to work as a post doctorate educational researcher in 1996. My mother had recently passed away after a long illness, so I was looking for something to do in the evenings to keep busy and keep the pain at bay. I found a group called the Swinging Slugs that offered free lessons twice a week on the UC-Santa Cruz campus where I worked, followed by a couple of hours of general dancing. A banana slug, in case you were wondering, is a slimy, oblong creature that grows to about four inches in length, is bright yellow, and scavenges detritus on the floor of the redwood forest, in which UC-Santa Cruz is situated. UC-Santa Cruz students adopted the banana slug as the university mascot over the protests of the administrators who wanted to be sea lions.

I fell in with a bunch of Swinging Slugs who took their dancing seriously. On New Year's Eve I discovered the newly opened Palomar Ballroom in downtown Santa Cruz. I started taking group classes and going to parties there. Eventually I was convinced to start taking private lessons. Soon this was no longer enough. My hands would start shaking if I didn't dance at least two or three nights per week. I started driving over the hill (AKA San Jose) to take group classes there. Eventually I was taking private lessons at the Palomar in Santa Cruz and at Dance Spectrum in the San Jose area. Coincidentally, both of my teachers were named Rebecca.

Originally I was working only in California, mostly studying technology use in schools. Then,

through a twist of fate, I ended up working on projects in both California and New York. One weekend night in New York I was looking for some place to go out dancing. I looked in the white pages under "dance" and found Dance New York. I knew New Yorkers do not entirely fit the stereotype of being unfriendly since I am a New Yorker myself, but Dance New York was certainly proof that the stereotype was false.

For a while I was fully bicoastal. It sounds glamorous but I do not recommend it. When the privilege of standing in a special line to check in for a flight starts to seem precious, even when that line sometimes moves slower than the regular line, you know you fly too much. Eventually, though, the work in California came to an end. I found that I was flying back to California for no other reason than to take dance lessons.

I asked Roberta Sun, who I knew from Dance Spectrum, to recommend a dance teacher in New York. She said that I had to take lessons from Michelle Officer at Dance New York. I found a competition program lying around the Palomar that had a picture of Michelle in it. She had a very straight leg line. Perhaps Roberta was right.

I called Michelle. She agreed to take me on as a student. The rest is history (or prologue).

My lessons in California helped to prepare me for Michelle. She is a superb dancer and a perceptive teacher. We have competed once and performed in Dance New York showcases several times. When I started dancing with Michelle I was in

fairly solid shape because Steve Hughes (the owner of the Palomar) and his teachers insisted that dance instruction begin with technique, not just steps. Michelle has helped me to take my dancing to a still higher level.

For this I owe her the kind of debt one owes any great teacher: the kind of debt that one can return, but never repay.



Robert Abrams, Michelle Officer, Christina and Vernon Duckett after performing at Dance New York's Showcase of the Stars #3 (8/4/2000)

Teacher Profile: Anya

Robert: How did you start dancing?

Anya: When I was about 5 years old, I used to dance around the house. My mom saw this and decided to enroll me in a ballet class. The ballet school was a few blocks from my house in Berkeley, California. I continued to study there until I was about 17. I went to a regular grammar school and high school. After school I would run to the ballet school. When I was

younger I took classes two or three times per week. When I was 14-17 years old, I took classes everyday. On weekends I would rehearse for productions.

At 17 I left ballet school to go to college. In college I explored other styles of dancing, including lots of social dancing. I kept trying to get away from dance, but kept coming back to it. I toured Europe, and the

Caribbean as a dancer. I was offered experiences I wouldn't have had otherwise. This was how I made the transition from ballet to ballroom. Recently I have been involved in the competitive arena and will start competing in 2001.

Robert: What inspires you to keep dancing?

Anya: Dance is a part of my life, like sleeping. Even when I try to get away from it, in college, a period of time when I stepped away - I always came back. I went out social dancing. Dance is my time to get away and lose myself. It is therapeutic. If I have problems, I take a dance class or go out dancing. I find joy again, find a reason to keep going. I am inspired by dance, but it is also something that I have to do.

When I see really incredible dancers or performances, I think "This is why I am living." I want to be like that: to inspire others like that person just inspired me.

Dance is the one place where I find my own freedom, to be myself. A feeling of freedom that is difficult to compare to anything else. It is like flying.

Robert: What do you teach?

Anya: What ever is necessary. Ballet, Jazz, Latin, Swing, Salsa, Brazilian. I have more experience in the Latin dances, and in Ballet and Jazz. I teach both group classes and private lessons.

Robert: What else would you like students to know about you?

Anya: One reason why I do what I do: it is fun for me, of all of the careers one can have. Also I hope I can offer



Anya

people the same gift of dancing that I have been given. To offer what other people have offered to me in the past. Especially in this country, we don't always take the time out to enjoy ourselves, and move our own bodies and get in touch with moving our own bodies. In partner dancing, there is a different kind of experience that you can't find in other sports or dance styles.

I feel like I am creating a project or a child with my own dancing. I want to be able to help other people create that for themselves, whatever that means to them. Often times we communicate with words in our pastimes. Communication with movement is often forgotten, unlike in other countries: during special occasions there is always lots of dancing. We have somehow lost track of that.

If you would like to contact Anya about her private lessons or classes, please email her at Anya_VividExpressions@hotmail.com or call her at 917-570-5440.



The DNY Holiday Ball 2000

The Dance New York Holiday Ball 2000, held on 15 December 2000, was an elegant affair. There was a plentitude of food suitable for both carnivores and vegetarians. Many DNY students and teachers attended, as well as a few guests - some from as far away as Japan. This was also the first studio outing for Tristan Phillips with his "big brother" Dillon. Ed Simon and Michelle Officer performed several numbers to the very appreciate gathering. The entire staff thanked the students for their support during the year - in song no less. Ed Simon and Lori Brizzi performed a Christmas Hustle. Nancy Brown and David Endicott performed the now legendary "Grandma got run over by a reindeer." The show ended with an all-staff kick line. Everyone danced until the early morning. All in all, the Holiday Ball was a superb event. 



Dimitrios Damalas leads Anya into a turn.

Snapshot:

Showcase of the Stars #5

– November 10, 2000

Judith Nichols, Wendy Sherman, and Liane Onish convince Ed Simon that even if he has retired from competition, he had better keep dancing.

For more on the Showcase of the Stars # 5, go to:
www.exploredance.com/dnyshowcase5.html

**Class & party schedules? go to
www.DanceNewYork.com**



Fav Dance Tunes:

Patricia Dates O'Brien

Patricia is a teacher at Dance New York. She kindly agreed to suggest a few of her favorite dance tunes.

1. "Gotitas De Miel"

- by Pandora
- from "the Ultimate...Latin Album 2" presented by Greg De Wet, Worldwide Music Company, England, 2000
- Dance: International Rumba/ American Bolero
- this is a great, uplifting Latin song with fabulous female vocals!

2. "Starve A Fever"

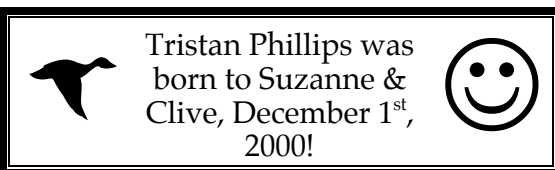
- by The Atomic Fireballs
- from "Torch This Place," produced by Bruce Fairbairn, Atlantic Recording Corp, 1998/99
- Dance: Slow Foxtrot; can be sped up for American Foxtrot
- the singer's low, raspy vocals are the BEST -- this CD also has many great swing tracks, including "Caviar & Chitlins" and "Drink, drank, drunk."

3. "We The Boys Will Rock Ya"

- by The Big Six
- from the CD "Swing This, Baby," Slimstyle Recording Corp, 1998
- Dance: Swing ••• this is FAST -- excellent for hard-core Lindy Hoppers. Lots of breaks--good for advanced styling. The Big Six have a great rockabilly sound.

For the more of Patricia's favorite dance tunes, go to:

www.exploredance.com/favdancetunes.html



News Request:

Competitions

DNY News is putting together a summary of Dance New Yorkers who participated in competitions during the year 2000. If you would like to be included, please contact Robert Abrams. If you are a teacher, please tell us the name of each comp you entered as a professional, as well as part of a pro-am couple. If you are a student, please note the name of your teacher and then list the comps in which you competed, both pro-am and amateur. Also, please note any special accomplishments you achieved during 2000.

Thanks in advance.

If you are new to Dance New York, consider our new special offers:

* The DNY Sampler

- 1 group orientation class and 1 half hour private lesson
- for only \$20

* The Monthly Combo

- 2 private lessons (55 minutes each) and 1 group class
- One person - only \$180
- A couple - only \$240
- (One time only)

Remember: If you would like to be profiled for the Dance New York News, or would like to write an article, please contact the editor at DNYnews@ExploreDance.com, or leave a note at the front desk.