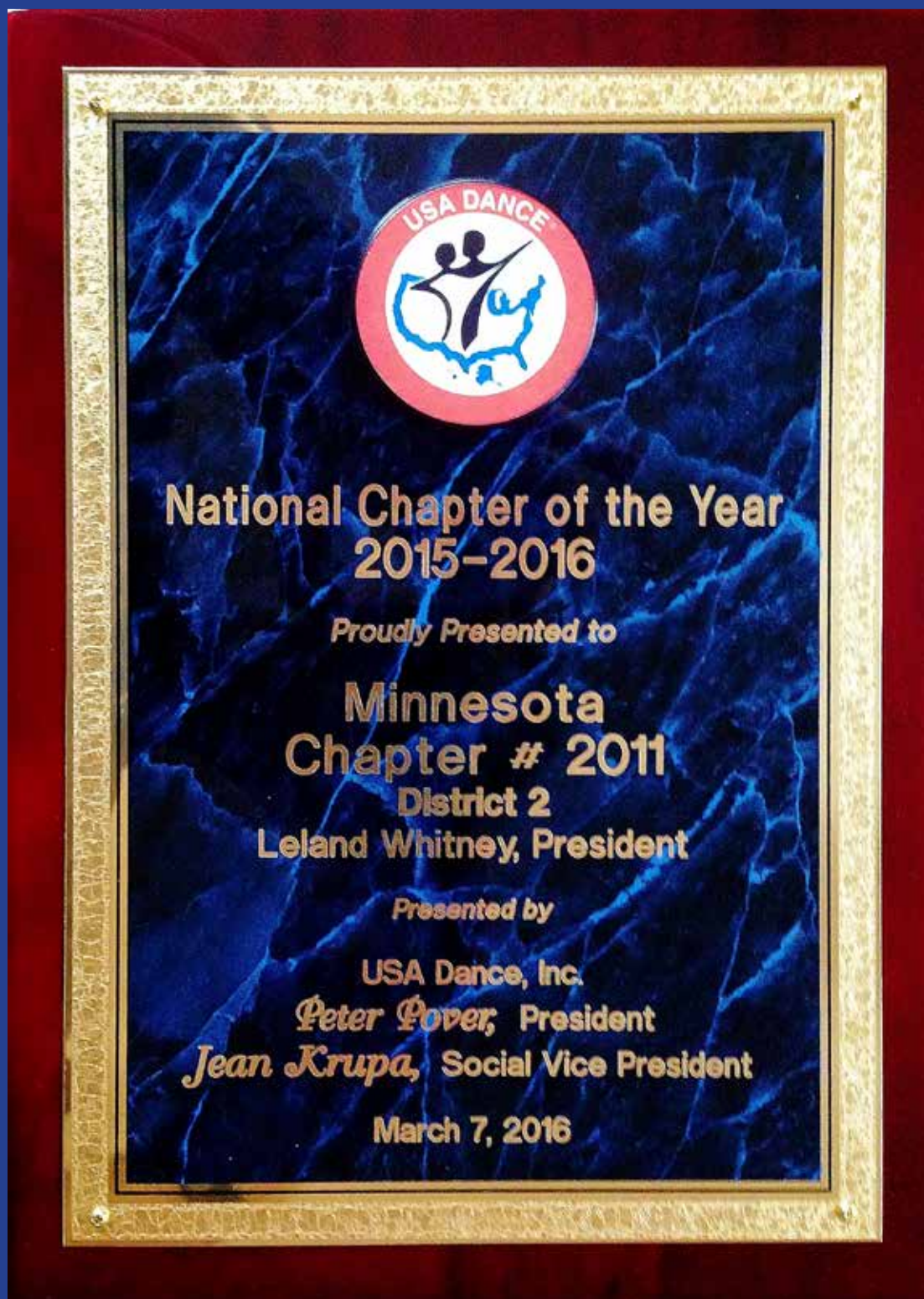


MINNESOTA

# DANCER

April 2016





## *CELEBRATE SPRING*

*JOIN US*

*2016*

*TEA DANCE*

*2016 Tea Dance & Brunch  
At the Beautiful Lafayette Country Club*

*Sunday, May 1, 2016 11 AM - 4 PM*

Lafayette Country Club  
2800 Northview Road  
Wayzata, Minnesota 55361



**BRUNCH AND DANCING  
11AM - 4PM**

**Early Bird Discount through  
April 15, 2016**

ADULTS \$35  
STUDENTS \$30

**Prices After April 15, 2016**

ADULTS \$40  
STUDENTS \$35

**Dance Only 1PM - 4 PM**

ADULTS \$25  
STUDENTS \$20

For brunch reservations, send a check by April 26  
with your phone number or email address to:

USA Dance Minnesota #2011  
Tea Dance c/o Sharon Kennedy  
4347 Abbott Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55410



Sponsored by USA Dance  
Minnesota Chapter #2011

For information: 612-308-9022 or [sk.dance8@gmail.com](mailto:sk.dance8@gmail.com)

# DANCER

An Official Publication of  
USA Dance-Minnesota Chapter #2011



## USA Dance: Who Are We?

We are a nonprofit organization that promotes ballroom dancing. The USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011 was formed in 1991. Membership in USA Dance is open to dancers of all levels. USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011 sponsors monthly dances and other special dance events. Members receive discounts on admission to monthly dances, as well as other benefits.

The Minnesota Dancer is published monthly by the USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011, to provide information and news about ballroom dancing.

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Assistant Editor: Leland Whitney  
Advertising: Tom Crable

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## USA CHAPTER MONTHLY DANCES

**April**  
**Saturday, April 16**

Cinema Ballroom  
1560 St. Clair Ave, St Paul

7-8 pm lesson—Tango  
Instructor: Martin Pickering  
8-11 pm Variety Dance Music

**June**  
**Saturday, June 18**

DanceLife Ballroom  
6015 Lyndale S., Mpls, MN

7-8 pm lesson - E. C. Swing  
Instructor: Shinya McHenry  
8-11 pm Variety Dance Music

**May**  
**Saturday, May 21**

DanceLife Ballroom  
6015 Lyndale S., Mpls, MN

7-8 pm lesson—Mambo  
Instructor: Shinya McHenry  
8-11 pm Variety Dance Music

\$ 5 Students under 25 with ID  
\$10 USA Dance Members  
\$15 Non-Members





# Beginner American Foxtrot

Sunday, April 3rd — 2:00 pm  
Sunday, April 10th — 2:00 pm  
Sunday, April 17th — 2:00 pm  
Sunday, April 24th — 2:00 pm

Classes with Elena Bersten at



10 Southdale Center  
Edina, MN 55435  
(Bottom floor near JC Penny & Gordman's)  
612.564.5483



[www.usadance-minnesota.org](http://www.usadance-minnesota.org)  
[info@usadance-minnesota.org](mailto:info@usadance-minnesota.org)

**USA Dance offers dance instruction to members for \$3. Members who joined for the first time in 2015 attend free up to their 2016 membership expiration date, after that they pay \$3. Non-members pay \$8.** Become a member of USA Dance at [membership.usadance.org](http://membership.usadance.org). A different professional instructor teaches a new dance at a different location every month.

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## USA Dance-MN Chapter #2011 Board Minutes

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Submitted by Leslie Whitney.

MEETING WAS CANCELLED DUE TO WINTER STORM AND DANGEROUS DRIVING CONDITIONS.

February 16th, 2016 Lee Whitney, President sent an email to all board members requesting a vote on the following three motions:

Vote 1: Approve an online vote concerning authorizing the Tea Dance budget.

Vote 2: Approve a Tea Dance budget of the same cost as approved in 2015.

Vote 3: Approve funds of \$360.00 from USADance Chapter #2011 for 12 student dance/brunch (scholarship) tickets. This approval is on the condition that any outside/individual ticket donations will be deducted from this amount and that the chapter funds would cover the remaining cost of scholarships.

All 3 votes passed unanimously with all 9 board members voting.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 1, 2016

6:00 p.m.

Location: TBD

### Student Sponsorships For Tea Dance

Support a College Student to  
attend the Tea Dance on May 1  
for brunch and dance

Cost is \$30 per student

Contact [skdance8@gmail.com](mailto:skdance8@gmail.com)  
or call 612-308-9022 to purchase  
sponsorships

Thanks for supporting  
our dancing college students

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# DANCER'S NIGHT OUT

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## USA DANCE

**USA Dance – Monthly**, 3rd Saturday Variety Dance, April 16, at Cinema Ballroom, lesson 7-8 pm and dance 8-11 pm. Lesson - Tango. Instructor: Martin Pickering.

**Project Dance**, Sunday, 2-3 pm, April 3, 10, 17 and 24 , lesson is Beginner American Foxtrot . Instructor Elena Bersten at Dance With Us America, Southdale Center.

## WEEKLY DANCES

**Cinema Ballroom** – Wednesdays, Practice Party, 8 – 9 pm.

**Costa Rica Ballroom** – Wednesdays, Practice Party, 9 – 9:45 pm.

**Dancers Studio** – Wednesdays, West Coast Swing, dance 8 - 9 pm.

**Dancers Studio** – Thursday, Variety Dance, dance 8- 9 pm.

**DanceLife** – Fridays, Variety Dance, lesson 7-8 pm and dance 8-9:30 pm.

**American Classic** - Fridays, Dinner and Dance Potluck Variety Dance Party, 8 - 10 pm.

**Ballroom & Latin Dance Club** - Fridays, lesson 7-8 pm and dance 8-10 pm.

## OTHER WEEKLY DANCES

**American Classic** – Sunday Pizza Practice Parties, April 10 and 24, 7 – 9 pm.

**Café Bailer Dance Club** – Saturday Variety Party – April 9 and 23 at Costa Rica Ballroom, lesson 7:30 – 8:30 pm and dance 8:30 - 11 pm.

**Cinema Ballroom** – Variety Dance, April 1 and 15, lesson 7 – 8 pm and dance 8 – 11 pm.

**Cinema Ballroom** - Sunday Night Dancing with The Jerry O'Hagan Orchestra, April 10 and 24, 6:15 to 10 pm.

**DanceLife Ballroom** - 1st Saturday, April 2, lesson 7 - 8 pm and dance 8 - 10 pm.

**Tapestry** – Variety Dances, 1st and 3rd Sundays, dance 7 – 9:30 pm.

**Twin Cities Rebels** – WCS and Variety Dance, April 3 and 17, at DanceLife Ballroom, 7 – 11 pm.

## OTHER DANCES

**American Classic Ballroom**, Winter Showcase, April 16, 5 - 11 pm.

**Linden Hills Dancing Club**, April 16, at DanceLife Ballroom, lesson 7:15 - 8:15 pm and dance 8:30 - 10:30 pm.

**Tea Dance & Brunch**, May 1, at Lafayette Club, brunch 11 am - 12:30 pm and dance 1 - 4 pm.

**Minnesota Star Ball Dance Challenge**, May 15, at Double Tree by Hilton Bloomington, 7800 Normandale Blvd, Bloomington, Minnesota 55439, 8 am - 11 pm.

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# DANCE CONTACTS

If you would be liked to be listed on this page, send your contact information to [tcrable3s@gmail.com](mailto:tcrable3s@gmail.com)

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## STUDIOS

AMERICAN CLASSIC BALLROOM  
550 Market Street, Chanhassen  
952.934.0900  
[www.acballroom.com](http://www.acballroom.com)

ARTHUR MURRAY DANCE STUDIO  
534 Selby Avenue, St. Paul  
651.227.3200

BALLROOM & LATIN DANCE CLUB  
1103 W. Burnsville Pkwy, Burnsville  
952.292.0524  
[www.ballroom-club.com](http://www.ballroom-club.com)

BLUE MOON BALLROOM  
2030 Hwy 14 E, Rochester  
507.288.0556  
[www.BlueMoonBallroom.com](http://www.BlueMoonBallroom.com)

CINEMA BALLROOM  
1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul  
651.699.5910  
[www.cinemaballroom.com](http://www.cinemaballroom.com)

COSTA RICA BALLROOM DANCE  
STUDIOS  
816 Mainstreet, Hopkins  
952.303.3339  
[www.costaricaballroom.com](http://www.costaricaballroom.com)

DAHL DANCE CENTER  
4204 North Hwy 52, Rochester  
507.252.1848  
[www.dahldance.com](http://www.dahldance.com)

DANCE AND ENTERTAINMENT  
3701 W. Old Shakopee Rd., Bloomington  
651.605.5784  
[tricia@danceandentertainment.com](mailto:tricia@danceandentertainment.com)  
[www.danceandentertainment.com](http://www.danceandentertainment.com)

DANCE WITH US AMERICA  
10 Southdale Center, Edina  
612-564-5483  
[www.dancewithusamerica.com](http://www.dancewithusamerica.com)

DANCELIFE BALLROOM  
6015 Lyndale Ave S, Minneapolis  
612.345.4219, [www.dancelifeballroom.com](http://www.dancelifeballroom.com)

DANCERS STUDIO  
415 Pascal Street N, Saint Paul  
651.641.0777  
[www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com)

FOUR SEASONS DANCE STUDIO  
1637 Hennepin Ave S, Minneapolis  
612.342.0902  
[www.fourseasonsdance.com](http://www.fourseasonsdance.com)

FRED ASTAIRE DANCE STUDIO  
1975 Seneca Road, Eagan, MN  
651.451.6300  
[www.FredAstaireMN.com](http://www.FredAstaireMN.com)

MILL CITY BALLROOM  
[www.millcityballroom.com](http://www.millcityballroom.com)

NORTH STAR DANCE STUDIO  
Bloomington, MN  
612.799.4147  
[Facebook.com/northstar.dancestudio](https://Facebook.com/northstar.dancestudio)

RENDEZVOUS DANCE STUDIO  
Minneapolis  
612.872.1562  
[www.theplacetodance.com](http://www.theplacetodance.com)

STUDIOJEFF  
701 St. Germain St W, Suite 201,  
St. Cloud  
320.266.4137  
[www.studiojeff.com](http://www.studiojeff.com)

## CLUBS

AQUA GLIDERS DANCE CLUB  
612.869.3062

Café BAILAR  
[www.cafebailar.com](http://www.cafebailar.com)

COTILLION DANCE CLUB OF  
STILLWATER  
[stillwatercotillion@gmail.com](mailto:stillwatercotillion@gmail.com)  
651/238-7636  
Contacts: Patty & Stephen Ogborn

LADANZA DANCE CLUB  
Stillwater, MN  
651.439.3152  
[Facebook.com/LaDanzaDanceClub](https://Facebook.com/LaDanzaDanceClub)  
Contacts: Mark and Wanda Bierbrauer

LAKESIDE DANCE CLUB  
320.763.6432  
[danceclub@lakesideballroom.org](mailto:danceclub@lakesideballroom.org)  
[www.lakesideballroom.org](http://www.lakesideballroom.org)

LINDEN HILLS DANCING CLUB  
[www.lindenhillsdancingclub.org](http://www.lindenhillsdancingclub.org)

MN WEST COAST SWING DANCE CLUB  
763.442.1618  
[www.mnwestcoastswingdanceclub.com](http://www.mnwestcoastswingdanceclub.com)

REBELS SWING DANCE CLUB  
952.941.0906  
[www.tcrebels.com](http://www.tcrebels.com)

SOCIAL DANCE CLUB  
952-475-0586, [billcarlson@usinternet.com](mailto:billcarlson@usinternet.com)

STARDUST DANCE CLUB  
[stardustdanceclub@gmail.com](mailto:stardustdanceclub@gmail.com)

SUBURBAN-WINTERSET DANCE CLUB  
Woman's Club of Minneapolis,  
410 Oak Grove Street, Minneapolis  
952.894.1412  
[www.suburbanwinterset.com](http://www.suburbanwinterset.com)

TANGO SOCIETY OF MINNESOTA  
612.224.2905  
[www.mntango.org](http://www.mntango.org)

TAPESTRY FOLKDANCE CENTER  
3748 Minnehaha Ave, Minneapolis  
612.722.2914  
[www.tapestryfolkdance.org](http://www.tapestryfolkdance.org)

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
BALLROOM DANCE CLUB  
[bdc@umn.edu](mailto:bdc@umn.edu)  
[ls.gd/umnbdc](http://ls.gd/umnbdc)

USA DANCE, MINNESOTA  
CHAPTER 2011  
[info@usadance-minnesota.org](mailto:info@usadance-minnesota.org)  
[www.usadance-minnesota.org](http://www.usadance-minnesota.org)

## DANCE INSTRUCTORS

|                      |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Scott Anderson       | 612.816.4446 |
| Wanda Bierbrauer     | 651.439.3152 |
| Rachel Damiani       | 612.718.6823 |
| Nathan Daniels       | 763.464.1021 |
| Jennelle Donnay      | 651.357.2060 |
| Julie Delene         | 612.598.5355 |
| Donna Edelstein      | 612.910.2690 |
| Jennifer Foster      | 952.922.8316 |
| Robert Foster        | 952.922.8316 |
| Esther Granbois      | 612.872.1562 |
| Lindsey Rebecca Hall | 612.940.9546 |
| Bonnie Inveen        | 612.978.9371 |
| Julie Jacobson       | 651.261.6442 |
| Lukas Klotzsche      | 561.502.2822 |
| Jay Larson           | 651.387.3886 |
| Kristina Lee         | 715.821.9039 |
| Deanne Michael       | 612.508.9255 |
| Monica Mohn          | 612.874.0747 |
| Mariusz Olszewski    | 612.242.5159 |
| Mary Rosenstiel      | 612.720.2584 |
| Char Torkelson       | 612.709.6399 |
| Lisa Vogel           | 651.208.0818 |
| James Wood           | 651.242.2421 |

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# COMPETITION CALENDAR

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April 1-3, 2016

**USA Dance 2016 National DanceSport Championships**

Hosted by USA Dance, Baltimore, MD

May 13-14, 2016

**New England DanceSport Championships – 2017 NQE**

Hosted by MASSabba Chapter #3002, Waltham, MA

May 15, 2016

**Minnesota Star Ball Dance Challenge**

Double Tree by Hilton Bloomington Minneapolis South  
7800 Normandale Blvd, Bloomington, MN 55439

June 11-12, 2016

**NJ DanceSport Classic Summer Sizzler – 2017 NQE**

Hosted by Mario Battista & Wendi Davies, Hackensack, NJ

June 24-26, 2016

**Gumbo DanceSport Championships—2017 NQE**

Hosted by Louisiana Gumbo Chapter #5031, Baton Rouge, LA

July 6-9, 2016

**Twin Cities Open Ballroom Championships**

Hosted by Scott and Amy Anderson, Hyatt Regency in Minneapolis, MN

Sep 10, 2016

**Kansas City Dance Classic**

Organized by Matt & Ellen Pansing, Overland Park, KS

Sept. 30 – Oct. 2, 2016

**Carolina Fall Classic – 2017 NQE**

Organized by Wayne & Marie Crowder, Charlotte, NC

***LYNNE'S DANCE NEWS***

*Dance events for every day of the week.*

*Updated daily.*

<http://www.organizeronduty.com/testimonials.html>

*Dance address book also on the website*



# DanceLife Ballroom

*Dance is life • health • happiness*

*The Dance Mecca of the Twin Cities!!*

*Call for a complimentary private lesson • 612-345-4219*

*Please check us out at [dancelifeballroom.com](http://dancelifeballroom.com)*

## Regular programming continues:

- Sundays - The Twin Cities Rebels
- Mondays- Salsa with *Keri Simonson & Scott Anderson's Group Class*
- Tuesdays - West Coast Swing with *Todd Paulus*
- Wednesdays - Argentine Tango with *Sabine Ibes & Diana Devi*
- Wednesdays - Level 1 & 2 group classes with *Jay Larson & Donna Edelstein*
- Thursdays - Bachata with *Keri Simonson*
- Fridays - DLB Variety Dance Party with *Shinya McHenry*
- Fridays - Salsa Variety Dance Party with *Keri Simonson*
- Saturdays - Argentine Tango with *Sabine Ibes &*

## New at DanceLife Ballroom!

Book a private lesson and get all the DLB weeknight and weekend group classes for FREE!!  
SAMBA group class with Modie and Janie every Thursday at 7pm!  
Fun, social group classes offered every weekday at 11am and 12pm. Please check our website for details.

New group classes every weeknight and Saturdays!

## April Highlights!

- 2nd- DLB 1st Saturday of the month Dance Party
- 23th - Argentine Tango 4th Saturday Milonga 9:30pm-1:00am
- Please join us for our Legendary Friday Night Dance Party held EVERY Friday night from 7-9:30pm. Only \$10

Please join us this month for our progressive Beginner Foxtrot class every Monday evening at 7:00pm. taught by Rhett Romsaas.



Rhett Romsaas, Instructor



# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

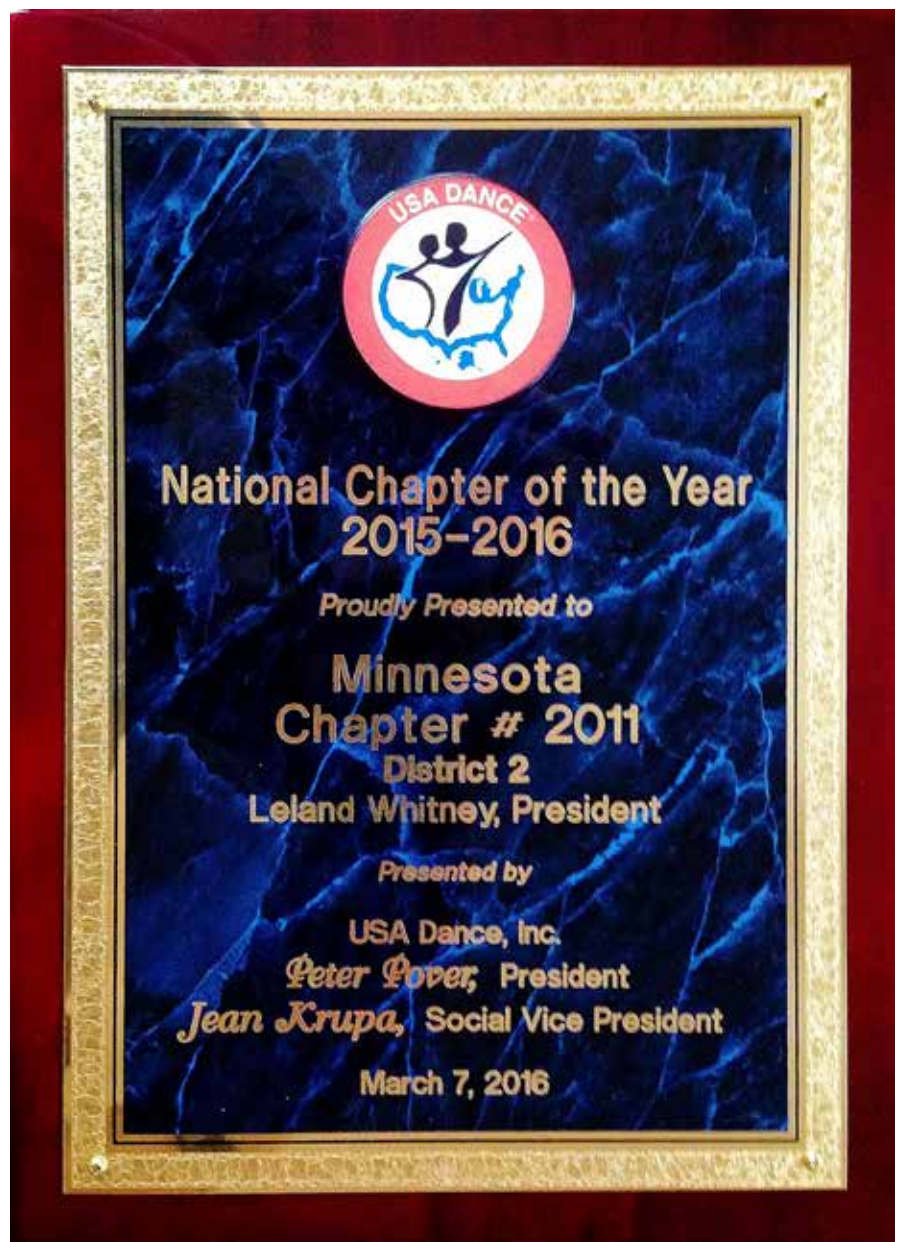
*Leland and Leslie Whitney plan to compete at the USA Dance National DanceSport Championships Apr 1-3 in Baltimore. They have qualified to compete in six events in the Senior II and Senior III age categories.*

By Leland Whitney, President,  
USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011

Our local USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011, out of roughly 160 chapters nationwide, has been named USA Dance's Chapter of the Year 2015! The Chapter received a commemoration plaque that was presented at our monthly dance in March. Congratulations to all members of our Chapter for this national honor.

As a member of USA Dance, you are eligible to access special benefits and discounts as listed below that may be found at <http://usadance.org/extra/membership-value/>:

- Insurance
- Hotels/Motels
- Car rentals
- Cruise Agencies
- Vacations
- Office Depot / Office Max
- Online shopping mall
- Free Prescriptions Savings Card





Lee Whitney and Joyce Thompson announcing the award at the March 2016 USA Monthly Dance.

Photo by Tom Crable



March 2016 USA Dance at Dancers Studio with the National Chapter of the Year Plaque

Photo by Tom Crable





*Author Suzi Blumberg is an avid social dancer and frequent contributor to Minnesota Dancer. She works in Sales for a digital forensic company. She's active in her church including dancing with a Hebrew worship dance team, gardening and walking her two bichons.*

# Minnesota USA Dance Chapter #2011 Wins National Chapter of the Year Award

by Suzi Blumberg

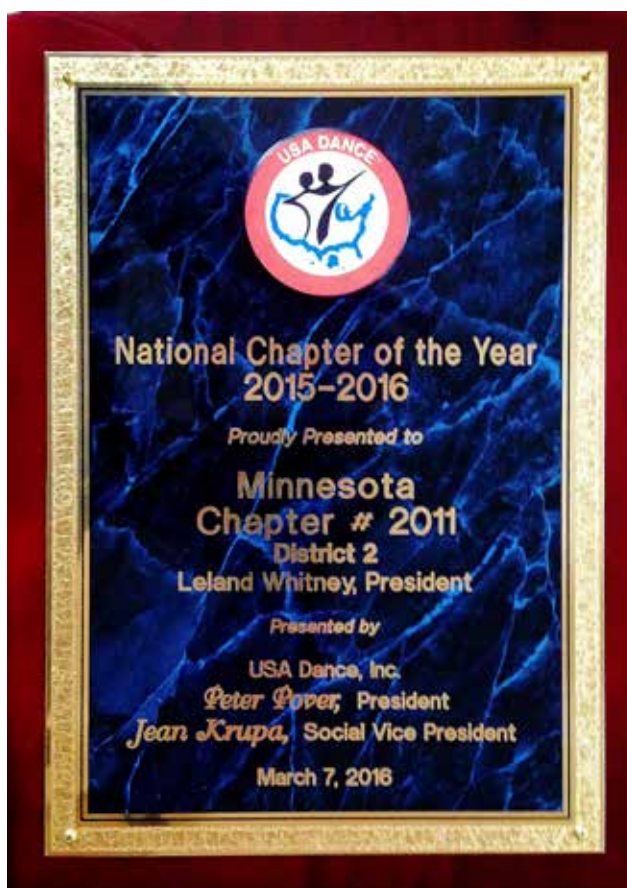
Our local USA Dance MN Chapter #2011 just won the coveted national award of National Chapter of the Year for 2015-2016. It took President Lee Whitney all of October to fill out the eight-pages of questions that covered the time period of October 1, 2014 thru September 30, 2015. Some of the questions and answers were as follows:

*What do you attribute your Chapter's growth or lack of growth?* USA Dance MN had experienced a decline in members from 2012 to 2014 until the Board embarked on a membership recruitment program. Membership was promoted in the monthly newsletter, monthly dances and weekly Project Dance events. Non-members were consistently asked to join. All this effort brought a 76% increase in membership in 2015! In September 2014, total membership was 216. Total membership one year later grew to 381.

Many other USA Dance chapters were having trouble maintaining their numbers.

Lee explained that the real key was that the Board made mem-

bership growth a top priority. Up until then, the quantity of membership had never been a concern, but rather they were trying to increase the quantity and quality of dancing in our area.



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*What category best describes your Chapter, social or competitive?* We are a social and competitive-dance community.

*How many regular chapter dances in a year?* 12 dances per year.

*Average number of attendance?* Low numbers ranged from 40 to 54. 71 was the average number. In February 2015, attendance shot up to 73. Why? Because membership had increased.

*Did your chapter sponsor beginner dance lessons?* Project Dance offered beginner dance lessons on Sunday afternoons. Over 40 lessons were offered that were free to members and \$5 to non-members. The people who attended these lessons also came to the monthly dances.

Also, the music that Joyce Thompson made available has been a great improvement. The music had been edited to the proper tempo, non-danceable sections removed, length of each song was controlled, and a variety of artists is played.

It was decided that the monthly dances would begin with 45 minutes specific for bronze level dance tempos and a very clear beat. After that, there's a mixer. The remaining dance music becomes more advanced with more silver level tempos. Lee feels that this is an important part of improving the dances.

Regular posters were printed that

talked about the value of membership – by paying a \$35 membership fee, you get \$5 off each monthly dance (total annual savings of \$60) and if you attend the Sunday dances (free to members) you save \$200 in a year! That more than justifies the \$35 membership fee!

Another wonderful highlight is our annual Tea Dance in the beautiful Lafayette Country Club. Last year we saw 125 sign up for the brunch and 28 came just to dance. Scholarships were provided to students attending the University of Minnesota, University of Minnesota-Rochester and Carltons. The Tea Dance also schedules different groups to perform during the afternoon break.

*Did your chapter conduct outreach events?* Yes, the Chapter did many outreach events during the last year. We had dance performances at the Mall of America, Rosedale Shopping Center, Maplewood Mall, the St. Cloud Minnesota Art Crawl and at several nursing care centers for the residents.

*Did your chapter receive any grant money?* Yes, we did and put it in conjunction with the Mall of America and Minnesota Institute of Art Habsburg Exhibition. A surprise event to celebrate the Habsburg Art Exhibition had our people materializing out of the crowd of shoppers at the Mall of America that began dancing a beautiful choreographed Viennese Waltz number.

Lee also printed all twelve of our MINNESOTA DANCER issue covers and explained in detail how we put them together.

Several questions dealt with our website and our social media effort. We have a Facebook page (if you haven't 'Liked' it, please do!). Constant Contact is used to maintain contact with our members. Another section dealt with youth and college involvement. We support existing college clubs and supported and coordinated the start of Heart of Dance Minnesota with Dancing Classrooms by sponsoring a fundraiser and volunteers as classroom assistants. We also provided funds to college students to attend competition events.

Our Chapter received a plaque that was presented at the March dance. Lee is emphatic that the plaque honors the entire USA Dance MN community. 2015 was a great year for the Chapter and 2016 is a very important year to our organization because it is the 25th anniversary of USA Dance MN Chapter 2011. There will be special events this fall to celebrate!

Dance has been both social and competitive for Leslie and Lee. They are happy to be working as President and Secretary of USA Dance MN Chapter 2011.





Project Dance March 2016 at DanceLife Ballroom with the National Chapter of the Year Plaque

Photo by Leland Whitney



USA Dance Chapter #2011 Board Members from Left to Right:  
Dan Fitzgerald, Karen Maldonado, Lee Whitney, Leslie Whitney, Ed  
Soltis, Carol Post, Jane Phipps, Joyce Thompson and Tom Crable

Photo by David Chin Photography.

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# A Surprise Miracle

by Jackie Dalton

This past fall, I scheduled a trip to Los Angeles to visit family. Since I would be in L.A., I wrote for tickets to “Dancing With the Stars”. I had no idea how difficult it would be to get just one ticket, but expected that maybe I could get lucky. I received a reply early on, telling me that I was on a waiting list. I was now preparing to fly to L.A., wondering how I could get in to see the show. I knew that the possibility was so slim, it was almost unreasonable to think that I could get a chance to see the show. I am never that lucky!

Well, I arrived in L.A., and spent a few days with family, when the day finally came for the taping of the show. Although I called the studio, I got the same answer. No cancellations! Check-in time was in the morning; I just had to get in!

At that moment, I decided to call Gene Bersten in Minnesota, and ask his advice, since it was his brother Alan I was hoping to see perform in the show. Gene told me that Alan had eight numbers during the production and he encouraged me to go and try to “Standby”. I thanked him and he wished me luck. After all, you can standby to get on an airplane, if it was overbooked. How was



this any different?

My son-in-law drove me to the studio. That took only about 15 minutes and I was dropped off at the front gate, with him telling me that he would wait around the corner. If I did not get in, he would pick me back up. And if I DID get in, I would call him and tell him to go home, because after all, the show was going to be several hours of taping and another hour, at least, of waiting in more lines.

I got in line, and a nice woman was in my corner because she told me to follow her. I did as she said. I was the very LAST PERSON, yet I did not feel lonely or isolated. I was “pumped”. This could be my truly lucky day!

And it happened. The last ten of us were lined up and led into a dark hallway, told to be very quiet as we started to mount some heavy bleacher type stairs. Finally I was directed with others to the first balcony area, right above the 3 judges, Carrie Ann Inaba, Bruno Tomioli and Len Goodman. What a view! I felt like I hit the jackpot. Although we were told we would have to stand for the entire show, I did get a chance to sit for a few minutes during the breaks because the man next to me allowed me to share his chair. It was a perfect view of Tom Bergeron on the dance floor and I could see across the ballroom balcony to the area where the stars gathered and were interviewed before getting their scores. Jumbo screens above my head and to the left of me allowed me to see other action that was taking place if the sets were being moved and blocking our view. It was all perfect.

Seeing how DWTS changes scenes within minutes was amaz-



ing. Talk about professionalism in set design and movement and how everyone knew what to do was astonishing. It all ran so smoothly. There were more set changes than I could count, on every angle of the dance floor and cameramen everywhere.

The greatest thing for me was to see our very own Alan Bersten, from “Dance With Us America” (located at Southdale Mall), on the dance floor in so many numbers, displaying the artistry that all of us dream of having. The entire dance troop was amazing to watch in person and the spectacular colors and music was truly over the top.

During intermission there was an MC who talked to the crowd and engaged whomever he could. And when he asked if anyone brought along a good luck charm or something significant, I held out my ‘mirror-ball keychain’ and to my surprise, the MC yelled up from the dance floor, “What’s your name?” Needless to say, I immediately responded “Jackie from Minnesota”. When I told him that it was my birthday, he yelled “Happy Birthday Jackie”. That was like extra topping on a birthday cake.

As I left, I spoke to a very serious security officer. I asked him how I could get to Alan Bersten, to say hello. There was an “after-party”, but I had only heard hints about it. This man told me that he could not tell me where the party was, but he gave me some hints as to



how to find the location.

When I found my way there, a man put out his hands forbidding me entrance and told me that this was a “Private Party” and I told him I knew that. I was there to see someone at the party. Then I told the lady at the entrance with him that I was there to see Alan Bersten, who was a dancer in the show, and asked her if she would just go upstairs and tell Alan my name (and that I was there), and he would surely come down. She just looked at me. I reassured her that he knew me. And knowing how wonderful Alan is, (and his brother Gene), I truly thought

when Alan knew someone from Minneapolis was there, he would show his face.

Apparently I convinced her, so up the stairs she went to fetch Alan. And wouldn’t you know it, down the stairs comes Alan Bersten. He was as surprised to see me as I was to see him. He gave me the biggest hug I could ever want. He did not know that I attended the show but was thrilled when I told him that I got in because I called his brother Gene who told me to go standby. I told Alan how impressed I was with his fantastic dancing and with the entire production of the show. It was all that I could have asked for.

I truly think Alan will be one of the leading pros on DWTS sometime soon. We took some photos, but I did not impose on Alan to take me up the stairs to join the party. After all, my son-in-law, was waiting for a phone call to pick me up. What I missed out on was meeting the pros in person and maybe some of the judges. That would have been more icing on the truly incredible evening I just had.

I bid Alan farewell and told him how great it was to see him in the show. It is a lesson to my friends. If you don’t try, it won’t happen. Be daring!

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# A Legacy to Cherish

by Kathy Kaufmann

I grew up in a very musical family. My grandfather had his own dance band and my mom's family had a dance floor in their home, with lots of dancing. When my parents met, they quickly started to dance and spent their 50+ years of marriage dancing, including ballroom dancing, until my Dad passed away of cancer in 2006. My parents always encouraged me, for years, to learn "their" style of dance, but I really didn't warm up to it. You know that foxtrot, waltz, etc stuff. Before my Dad passed away of cancer, he once again, expressed how I should learn to ballroom dance. I didn't know it was something that younger people did and I didn't know that there were many options out there for learning. Well, one weekend evening, I really wanted to go out dancing, my style of dancing of course, but I didn't have anyone to join me. Jan 2011 rolls around and I was at my workout club and saw a sign for a 10-week dance series of Foxtrot & East Coast Swing classes. The famous saying "Just Do It", "It's Time", came to mind and I signed up. Long story short, in the following few years I took



*Kathy Kaufmann's Mother and Father dressed for a special ballroom dancing event.*

many private lessons and group classes and fell in love with the art and sport of ballroom dance.

Fast forward to now. My Mom is living in a memory care assisted living and still had really never seen me "Dance", certainly not ballroom dancing. My wish had always been to share their gift and love of dance that I received from them and have her see me

ballroom dance before she passes away someday or perhaps not recognize me anymore. Because it would be difficult for her to come to a large dance production outside of her home, I decided to bring my dancing to her current home. The leadership where she lives was excellent in helping with the details to make this "Wish" come true for all of us. We set up the "Ballroom Dance Performance" during an activity time. My mom was so excited for this and talked about this special event the whole week before the event. I had kept it a secret that I would be one of the dancers. I wanted to surprise her! There were two of us couples that donned our full ballroom smooth and rhythm attire for this event and danced in the facility dining room for my Mom and the residents for an hour. Yes, I danced waltz and foxtrot and more for my mom and the others, with tunes that they would recognize and perhaps have danced to themselves in years past, before their illness. My Mom was so surprised to see me as one of the dancers; she was delighted! She said, "You are a terrific dancer". One of the residents with more

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advanced illness said about the performance, “it was like a breath of fresh air”.

Music is such an important therapeutic tool used with people challenged with dementia-related illnesses. When other faculties have faded away for them, music somehow magically touches them and perhaps brings back fond memories to them.

I am touched and blessed to walk this journey with my Mom and her friends.

I am forever grateful to my friends that supported and helped me make this happen.

Let us all share the gift of our music and dance with those around us always!



Kathy Kaufmann in her ballroom costume at a ballroom dance showcase.



Scot Gore, Myself, Leslie and Leland Whitney dressed for the rhythm portion of the dance performance at Mom's place.



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# Mid-Atlantic Championships at Bethesda, Maryland

## by Leslie Whitney

On February 18, 2016, Leland and I traveled to Bethesda, Maryland to compete in the Mid-Atlantic Championships to defend our Senior IV National title in American Smooth and Rhythm. We were thrilled to win the titles last June at the Gumbo Competition in Baton Rouge, but defending the position seemed even more daunting.

We arrived on Thursday and didn't dance until Saturday morning, so we had time to walk around the area, practice and visit with good friends. Perhaps it is our age, but we couples in the Senior IV age group are not so much pitted against each other by the competition of performing; we are united by our love of dance and delight in being able to dance and share it with each other and those who watch us perform.

By late Friday afternoon the dance floor was installed in a lovely ballroom and dozens of couples were practicing their routines. In an effort to dance their best, one can hear some spicy words between

couples. Lee and I try to keep the words from our coach/marriage counselor Nathan Daniels foremost in our heads, "It's not world peace!"

Lee and I competed in 10 events: Senior II, III, and IV Rhythm and Senior III and IV in Smooth, dancing 12 rounds in total. We are very happy to report that we remain National Champions in Senior IV Rhythm and Smooth, and therefore Nine Dance too. We thanked Marcy McHenry, Nathan Daniels and Mariusz Olszewski in helping us to achieve our goal.

Our good friends Jill Smith and Greg Warner are pictured with us in a photo taken by Yang Chen.

Jill writes:

This was the first time we have competed at the Mid-Atlantic Championships. The competition is well run and the ballroom is very nice. We went primarily for the Senior IV National Championships but also competed in Senior II and III at the Silver level

in Smooth and Rhythm and the Bronze level in Standard. We were pleased with our results, particularly in Senior IV. We are Senior IV national champions in both silver Smooth and Rhythm and we placed second in bronze Standard.

We credit our coach, Nathan Daniels, for our success. We plan to keep competing and hope that eventually there will be a Senior V division!



Lee and Leslie Whitney, Jill Smith and Greg Warner

Photo by Yang Chen

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# New Four Seasons Dancers

By Sidney Pudwill, Dance Specialist,  
Four Seasons A+ Elementary School, St. Paul

It's tough to find anyone more blunt than a fifth grade boy. I recently sat down with some fifth graders at my school, Four Seasons A+ Elementary, to talk about their experiences with Dancing Classrooms, a ballroom dance curriculum created by Pierre DuLaine in 1994. When asked about his first reaction to the news that his class would participate, Angelo said, "I thought it would be horrible...I thought it'd be something like, come on, here we go again, something stupid." Not exactly giddy with anticipation, my student Angelo.

Many of his classmates echoed his sentiments when asked about their initial feelings. Emilia said, "I really thought it would be really bad and I thought I would hate it, and I wouldn't want to do it ever." Don't even get me started on their first reactions when they found out they would have to touch a person of the opposite gender!

When I got an email last spring about the Minnesota nonprofit Heart of Dance bringing Dancing Classrooms to Minnesota, I jumped at the chance. I had seen the 2005 documentary *Mad Hot Ballroom* and loved it, but the program wasn't yet available in

our state. Our school signed up and Dancing Classrooms came to St. Paul.

Now, less than a year later, I was listening to these kids reminisce about their experiences. Angelo admitted, "...but then, as it progressed, I got into it, and I liked it more than any other kind of dancing, because I found out I was better than I thought I'd be." Emilia agreed, "When we started I found out that I really liked it and I was good at it."

All of the students, without exception, dreaded the physical contact. One expectation of the program is that students walk in "escort position" in the school hallway. The first few times, this did not go well, to say the least. This surprised me, because these kids have been dancing together for years, doing folk dances and playing dance games in class.

Once the initial "eeeww" factor of touching a boy or girl passed, they enjoyed the challenge of learning steps and moving in a different way. Over the next ten weeks, the words merengue, foxtrot, rumba, tango, waltz, and swing entered the fifth grade vocabulary, as they learned how to "shake their buttons." Da'Vion liked "...

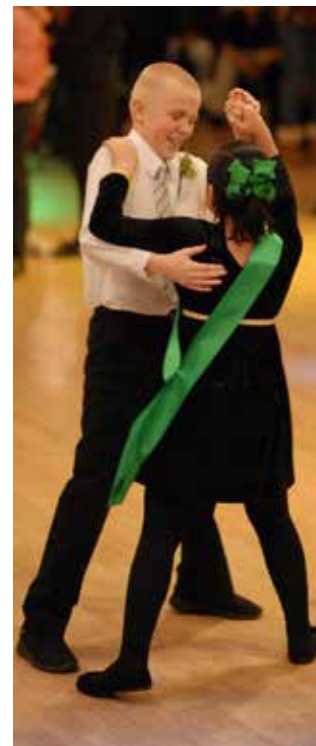
learning more dance moves" that he could use when he grows up. When they found out there was a competition involved, that took things to a new level. Now things got serious.

The ten-week Dancing Classrooms program ends with a competition between participating schools. This first Minnesota cohort included a team from each classroom, so Four Seasons sent two teams, one from each fifth grade classroom. As we got closer to competition, we were still short one boy, so I made a desperate plea, literally from my knees. Up went a hand in the back of the classroom. When I saw who it belonged to I was shocked!! This was a boy who I had struggled with in the past--he was definitely not one who danced in class willingly. I constantly had to prod him into moving at all, let alone with a partner! He joined the team and has been a different kid ever since. He sees himself as a dancer now, which he hadn't before.

The day of the competition was so exciting. The practice room vibrated with excitement as dancers grabbed the closest classmate to review their steps and practice their hold. "I felt like a real ball-

room dancer girl!” Jenny said when I asked what she remembered about that day. However, one dancer stood nervously in the corner and wouldn’t move. I tried, but I didn’t have the right words to help him find his courage. Fortunately our music teacher was there, and he knew just what to say. Gradually the boy moved toward his partner and soon he was dancing. Melt-down averted!

As the competition began, the fifth graders heartily cheered each other on, only needing a few reminders that cheering too loudly wasn’t helping the rhythm of their team dancers on the floor! All their practice was paying off and they looked wonderful. Then, after rounds and rounds of tango, merengue and all the other dances, it was time. When the awards for first and second place went to Four Seasons A+, there weren’t two teams, but one big team of gloriously happy kids. Kids who weren’t afraid to touch each other, lead or follow each other, or shake their buttons. Kids who were confident in their dancing and were happy to show it. Kids who will remember their Dancing Classrooms experience for the rest of their lives, and smile when they think of it!



Four Seasons students from Colors of the Rainbow. They were the red and green teams.  
Photos from C. J. Hurst.

Q

We have heard coaches and top competitors say it is not only important to “dance well” in a competition, but it is important to also “compete well”. What do they mean? What are some tips you might share with competition dancers to help them? The USA Dance National Amateur Competition is in April and we want to maximize our chances of doing well.



Donna Says:

Competing well assumes that you are dancing well, but there is more. When coaching, I work on the characteristics that influence me when I am judging:

1. Your look – how you and your partner are groomed, the way you interact with each other and the audience, and the image that you project.

2. How and where you position yourselves on the floor; how you use floor craft; are you skilled enough to avoid others while still dancing; do you start dancing when the music begins or wait?

3. Projection and feeling – is your dancing more than technique? Are you bringing the audience into the meaning of your movements? Does your choreography attract attention because it is exciting, interesting or moving?

4. Musicality – adapting your choreography to what you are hearing/ drawing out legato portions of the music; waiting to hit a highlight, and so forth. Dancing to the mood and not just the beats.

5. Characterization – are you demonstrating the unique character of each dance?

6. Does your partnership come across as genuine and unaffected?

7. Various judges have different ‘hot buttons’, but in order to be a great competitor you have to have that ‘something special’ that jumps off the floor and onto the page. Good luck with your competing!



Paul Says:

Dancing well and competing well are indeed two different aspects of the art of ballroom dancing. It is understood that in order to do well in a competition, you have to dance well. In a final round in Blackpool for instance, everyone, without question dances well. The winners though are also the best competitors. They convinced the judges that they deserve to win by paying attention to every detail and by being the most consistent competitors on the floor.

Some of those details include grooming, musicality, confidence and a solid grasp of what you are trying to accomplish. It is not enough to be able to dance your choreography faultlessly. Do you have an escape plan for when you get in trouble? (And you will, mark my words.) do you listen, really listen to the music? It is



astonishing how many competitors don't. Do you compete, or just participate? The aura that you project as a competitor who wants to win is vastly different than that of a participant. Compete like you are the winners, even if you are not.

Many a competition has been lost due to a bad costume. It should not matter, but it does! It goes under the heading of "distractions".

Learn to prioritize issues in your dancing. That trick that you are doing may only be seen by the judge directly in front of you; is it visible across the floor? Do your coaches harp about your posture? Well maybe if you improve your movement across the floor, your posture will be the lesser evil. Posture is shaped over many hours of practice and coaching and does not change overnight. Improve other areas and your results will change for the better.

Finally, you become a better dancer by practicing and consistent coaching, but the only way to become a better competitor is by competing. That means FLOOR-TIME WITH OTHER COMPETITORS! Good luck to everyone competing at USA Dance Nationals!

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For more information, email Tom Crable at [tcrable3s@gmail.com](mailto:tcrable3s@gmail.com).







# Learning to Lead Social Dance

by Bob Anholt

*I have been dancing since 2000, first folkdance and all of the country dance forms done at Tapestry. Classes with Cindy and Terry are what eventually led me away from folk dance forms and down the variety ballroom path.*

Most dancers spend much time in group classes of which there are two kinds:

- Classes directed by a teacher who cues students through a sequence then repeats after a change in partners.
- Classes that do some of this but also provide free time for students to repeat the action as much as they want on their own. Examples: Scott Anderson's Monday night classes, Keri's and Erika's DanceLife Ballroom classes and Larry Ablin's Medina Saturday lessons.

The latter type of class is rarer than the former, but is the best type of class for leaders to learn to lead and for followers to learn to follow; in the former type of class, both leaders and followers are dancing to the teacher's cues and are memorizing a sequence, often quickly forgotten. Leads in the latter type of class can learn

to do the figure with a partner without listening to the instructor. With plenty of "do it on your own" free time, after both succeed in doing the figure, leads can mix up the sequence a bit so that she is following you, instead of a memorized pattern. If more than one figure is taught, lead a previous one and maybe learn to string the figures together.

Most pre-dance group classes taught at USA Dance, Tapestry, Café Bailar and some studio parties are the former type of class. You should "use it or lose it" in the subsequent social dance for that is your main chance to actually lead the figure that was taught. Learn to string the figure together with other figures you know or try the movement out in different rhythms. For example slow quick quick foxtrot figures translate easily into waltz. Cha Cha figures translate to rumba figures when you remove two steps on every bar of music.

If you take private lessons, one thing you can do with your teacher is to try to lead her through a figure learned elsewhere without telling her what you are trying to lead. If she doesn't get it, discuss why and how you can lead it better. Some intermediate group classes at competition dance studios teach long sequences designed for pro-am competitions. If the sequence requires the follower to do fakes and other things that can't be led, pick a unique lead-able figure out of the sequence and learn how to get into and out of it more simply in your private lesson.

Learning in private lessons can sometimes not succeed, because the teacher knows what her pattern needs to be. She should not be back leading, but your lead can be pretty weak and the figure will still succeed with her. If you are taking a lesson as a couple, you can test your lead with your partner. Otherwise when learn-

ing from a pro, you need to try the figure(s) out at a social dance as soon as possible, and if the followers don't get it, go back to your teacher and discuss why not.

At one point in my career I found myself trying to remember enough about a figure taught the previous week, but I couldn't describe it well enough that my teacher could recognize what I wanted to review. At that point, I started a choreography book: writing down the figure, some name of the figure, date taught and the teacher's name in an idiosyncratic notation. Usually I did this after the class or next day which helps to keep the figure in my memory, as well as providing a useful reference weeks or months later. This is a "words" method of memory. Videos are useful if the teacher provides review time for

you to shoot video, but you also have to review the videos and not just let them accumulate on your iphone.

A lot of this is about building a choreography toolbox. It is a small part of everything any dancer needs to learn: timing, posture, footwork, characteristics of the dance to quote Kate Bratt's pyramid. In social dance, a full toolbox allows the lead to seamlessly react. For example, if leading a zig, she zags, you can finish the zag figure without her being aware. You can weave a crowded dance floor by choosing figures that take you to where there is space or around slow pokes, instead of trying to run a memorized choreography that requires continuous runs down the long walls and corners at particular places in the sequence. It also al-

lows you to create on the dance floor, picking figures best suited to nuances in the music.

In deploying creativity, one needs to read what the follow wants. It is easy to read the follow's ability: start out at a silver level and if she clunks through it, has a weak frame or fuzzy footwork, dial back to bronze. More difficult is to read whether your follow wants to be challenged and try out new things or whether she wants to do what she knows and just look good. About the only way you know she's in the former camp is by smiles, laughter, or sometimes "oh, do that again." Fortunately, most social dancers are there for the joy of the dance instead of pleasing the judges, therefore doing new things pretty well, though not perfect, is fun.



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*Deborah J. Nelson is the founder, President, and head designer of Satin Stitches Ltd.*

# Using Rhinestones

by Deborah J. Nelson/Satin Stitches Ltd.

## ***What rhinestones should I use?***

If you find the prospect of having to embellish your own costume, or help with embellishing costumes for an entire group, a daunting task, and wonder just what is the best way to go about it, read on! Some people LOVE to rhinestone and others aren't so sure! Adding glitz to a costume can truly take the costume to the next level, or if done poorly, it can detract from the overall look of the costume, NOT what you are trying to achieve.

First of all, you need to decide what type of rhinestones to use for your dance costume embellishment project. There are many different styles, qualities and colors. The best, most brilliant, highest quality and yes, most expensive are Swarovski rhinestones – made in Austria, and Czechoslovakian rhinestones. There are several qualities of Czech stones and several rhinestone web sites that help to inform you on what makes a better stone. Do some re-

search to learn more. The lesser expensive, Korean rhinestones, are a much lower quality of rhinestone. The ones that I've seen are not nearly as brilliant, especially the colors, but they are still much better than Acrylic rhinestones. Acrylics are plastic and look plastic, and generally should not be used.

## ***Should I set, sew, glue or 'hot fix' my rhinestones?***

Many larger rhinestones are only available to sew or glue on. But most of the flat-back rhinestones that are more commonly used for embellishing dance costumes can be set, sewn or glued. Be aware that it is harder to permanently apply rhinestones to any surface-printed spandex. This finish makes the fabric very slick, and stones will not stick as easily as to any other type of spandex or costume fabric.

Old-school costume embellishers generally have stuck with gluing or setting their rhinestones. Set-

ting stones has always been problematic with the metal prongs that are used. These prongs can easily shred chiffon or spandex unless there is extra care to cover each prong with a dab of glue to protect it. Seems like wasted time to me. I am not a fan of gluing or setting stones.

My preference is always 'hot fix'. Why? There are many reasons. They stay on better when properly applied, you do not run the risk of dropping a spot of glue on your costume, they can be washed or dry-cleaned, and they set immediately without any waiting. We have been using 'hot fix' stones for many, many years.

## ***What is a 'hot fix' rhinestone?***

'Hot fix' rhinestones have glue on the back and heat is used to permanently apply them to all types of fabrics. There are many techniques and tools that may be used. Hot fix wands and various tools are available Online from many different sources. If you ha-

ven't tried this type of rhinestone, you should! They are the same quality stones as those with the plain back, and if heat cannot be used, you may still use your favorite glue on these.

### ***What color and what size rhinestones should I use?***

In my experience, you get the most 'bang for your buck' with the plain crystal-colored rhinestone. It shines and glitters the most. Second choice would be Aurora Borealis, if it coordinates with the color fabrics you are using. Third would be the jewel-toned colors, followed by pastel and various other colors. Last would be jet (black) or the really dark colored stones. These dark stones just do not show as much as all the other choices.

What you need to do is visualize your choice of rhinestone from "performance distance", when deciding what size stone to use. At Satin Stitches, we have found that for an allover scattered effect, we think that the size 20 works the best. If you are looking for a more subtle effect, then size 16 is a good choice (but the smaller the stone, the more difficult they are to apply). When you go larger, the stones start to look more like polka dots, unless the color matches the fabric exactly. For outlining effects on costumes, we have found that the size 30 and size 34 work the best - if you can afford the cost of the larger stones. Cost is also influenced by how far apart you space

your stones.

Of course, the cost increases with the increase in the size of the rhinestones. Rhinestones are generally sold according to how the rhinestone manufacturer packages the stones, usually by the gross (a gross is 144). The smaller stones come in 10-gross packages, size 30 stones come in a 2 or 2.5-gross package, and size 34 stones come in one-gross per package. You will find that most rhinestone retailers offer discounts when you purchase in these amounts, because they don't have to repackage for smaller quantities.

### ***What pattern should I use to trim my costume?***

Generally, there are three styles of applying rhinestones:

1. Outlining
2. Scattered
3. Precise pattern, based on a geometric or free-form design

### ***How do I determine how many stones I will need?***

Math! If you are outlining design features on your costume, simply measure all the lines that you wish to outline. Then determine how many stones per inch, you will want to use. Then multiply to see how many gross you will need, and then round UP. If you are scattering your stones, you will need to place your scattered pattern in a 6 inch square, then count them up and multi-

ply how many 6 inch squares you wish to cover with your rhinestones. When you are working with a precise pattern of stoning, you will need to count how many stones are used in one pattern, determine how many patterns you will use and multiply. If you find you do not have enough stones, or do not wish to use that many stones, you will be able to rework your plan before you start.

### ***How do I know how long my project will take, and what if I do not have enough time?***

Math! Calculate how long it will take you to do one yard, or one section or one precise pattern and multiply to see how many hours it will take. If you know you do not have enough time, then edit your design, or start with one part of your plan.

Never stone one area of a costume heavily, first, unless you have calculated that you have enough time AND enough stones. Always embellish lightly, all over your costume, first, in case you run out of time or stones, that way you will be able to wear it, and take the time to add more later, for your next performance.

### ***What if I do not know exactly how I want to stone my costume?***

Start simple, see if you like it, then stop if you do! It is always easy to add more and more stones. It is very difficult to remove any stones, especially if you put them

on correctly!

### *How should we work on ston- ing a group of costumes?*

For a group, the most important thing to remember is that you want them all to turn out the same! You achieve this by working as a team, not individually. NEVER let everyone do their own costume because they will all turn out differently, even with specific directions. Everyone interprets the directions differently! Have one person do the same section of the predetermined design, so that they all look alike. Work together, so every one can see what the plan is, and how it is going.

Most importantly, if there is a predetermined amount of rhinestones available for the project, stick religiously to the plan so you don't run out. Has anyone had to find more rhinestones at the last minute to complete a project? Avoid this by keeping track of how many stones are needed, after ordering a few more than you expect you will need.

Something else to think about, is what you do with the back of a costume. If you have no limit on the amount of stones or the time it takes to apply them, remember that dance is a 3-D performance, so add them to the back of your costume, too. But if you are limited as to how many stones you can use, put more on the front of

your costume. You are facing the front more often than the back, and most of your pictures will be focused on the front. Put your glitziest face forward!

### *What if I can't do it on my own?*

If applying your own rhinestones seems overwhelming, you can always hand the task to a professional instead.

This is taken from my "Rhinestoning 101" blog that was first posted in January 2008, and can be found in our archived blogs at [www.satinstitches.com](http://www.satinstitches.com). Also click on our Satin Stitches September 2012 e-News, for helpful tips on replacing rhinestones on your costumes.



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*Paul Stachour works in software quality assurance for life critical systems. He is a social dancer with bronze-level competition experience. He was trained by Harry Benson in the 'Learning to be a Dance Teacher' classes, and has taught dance part-time for five years. He is also DVI-DA certified to teach American Style Waltz at the associate (bronze) level.*

# Characteristics of a Good Dance Band Part 1 of 2

By Paul Stachour

I have danced many places, with many different dance-bands and dance DJs. The suitability of the dance music varied significantly, at least to my perception. I started asking myself questions such as “What makes a good dance-band?”, “Can I characterize a good dance-band?” and “Can I measure the characteristics?”.

An internet search gave little meaningful data. A typical answer was “One where lots of people are dancing.” Unfortunately, answers such as this give us few clues as to what actually makes a good dance band, or how to guide a good show or concert or exhibition band into becoming a

good dance band. It is somewhat like saying “Try to set a building on fire, and if it does not burn, then it was designed for good fire protection.” A better way would be to enumerate the material in the building as wood, stone, steel, etc, and the fire-resistant characteristics of each of those materials.

In this article, I'll provide a number of measurable characteristics that might be meaningful in determining the suitability of a dance band. I'll discuss each characteristic, and indicate to you why I feel that a band that measures well on those characteristics is a good

dance band.

Before I provide and discuss the list, it is important to say that there is one key thing that affects the success of a dance band more than any other, because it is what drives the characteristics that we see. It is the band leader. The band leader is the one who “knows” (or does not know) what is happening, whether it is good or not, and what to do if adverse effects are observed. Often this knowledge of the good songs for dancing comes from years of experience handed down from the older generation. One would think that a band leader would know and handle the characteris-

tics appropriately; indeed that is true when there is a good dance band leader. I noticed that being a good band leader for some other kind of band (such as John Philip Sousa for a marching band; or someone as a band leader for a concert band, or jazz band, or bar band) does not necessarily make that person a good dance band leader. I've observed that most dance bands don't usually start out as dance bands. They then adapt their playlists, once dancers tell them what is danceable.

The audience for this article is threefold:

1. A band leader who does not have the years of experience playing in a dance band described above and who would profit from knowing some definitive, measurable, characteristics.
2. A band scheduler, who schedules dance bands for dance venues, who has a choice of which band to hire, and is looking for some way to measure the goodness of the possible choices.
3. A dancer who has the choice of several dance venues to attend, where there are bands that they are not familiar with, and is looking for a good way to make a decision as to where to dance.

The characteristics which I have identified are:

1. Loudness
2. Variety of dances
3. Indication of dance kind

4. Proper tempo
5. Duration of dance
6. Decade music created
7. Regularity of music timing
8. Vocalist synchronization
9. Flexibility in mapping dances to audience
10. Challenging the audience
11. Mapping dances to dance venues
12. Variety of songs

Characteristic #1 is loudness. The dance band needs to be loud enough to be easily heard on the dance floor while being soft enough so that those not dancing may converse in a normal tone. One might need to do a special setup of where the band is in relation to the dance floor and the seating area, or how the electronic amplification and speakers (if any) are placed. However, the most important loudness item is that it be soft enough that no ear damage is caused by the music. As the foundation for doctors is the Hippocratic Oath of "do no damage", so should it be for dance bands. According to [dangerousdecibels.org](http://dangerousdecibels.org), this is 85 db (db = decibels) (busy city traffic) for 8 hours. Unfortunately, many people and many bands associate loudness with goodness, and thus wind up destroying hearing. Since hearing loss is cumulative over a lifetime, it is important that the db level be low enough. A New York City band musician told me that venue owners told him that one of the reasons they were replacing dance bands with dance DJs is that the bands were too loud, and kept being too loud

even after being warned. Bands should allow time for a sound check, and define a protocol to be used to tell them if they become too loud. An appropriate measure might be that the db level never ever goes over 94 db, and that the percentage over 80 db is less than 20% of the time.

Characteristic #2 is the variety of dances that are played. It should be obvious to all that not everyone is equally competent in all of the dances. Nor does everyone want to do the same kind of dances. The best dance band leaders will know their clientele personally and thus know what mix to select. A band that plays only one kind of dance, say foxtrot, will seldom be able to get everyone up on the floor to dance, even over the course of the total dance event. Except in the special cases where a dance event is focused on one particular kind of dance or the style is paired items, one kind of dance should hardly ever be played twice in a row. An appropriate measure might be how many different kinds of dances are played at a given dance event. Another measure might be how many different dances are played before the same kind of dance is repeated.

Characteristic #3 is an indication by the dance band of the kind of dance that is being played. Not all dancers, and especially beginning dancers, are capable of recognizing in a short time period what kind of dance

is playing. If they don't know which dance it is, it is unlikely that they will attempt to dance. This indication could be done by a printed program, by announcements by the band leader or band vocalist, or by showing titles/artists/dance kinds on a screen, or any similar mechanism. An appropriate measure might be the percentage of dances which are properly identified as to their kind.

Characteristic #4 is proper tempo. A variety of dance-organizations (e.g., USADANCE) publish lists of what is the "proper" tempo (for exhibitions and competitions) [usually in measures/minute or beats/minute] for each kind of dance. We know that a tempo that is too-fast or too-slow makes a particular dance harder to do. An appropriate measure might be what percentage of dances are played within that proper tempo range, or very close to it, since the guidelines for social partner dancing can be less strict than that for competitions.

Characteristic #5 is duration of dance. If one looks at the professionally-prepared CDs, such as those from DVIDA in the USA or Germany's "Studio Tanz Orchestra", one observes that more than 3/4 of the tracks have a duration of between 2 and 3 minutes. Consider the tasks necessary for a dance: a) recognize what the dance is, b) think about one's own proficiency in that dance, c) decide who to ask, d) ask them [hopefully getting a "Yes"], e) go to the dance floor, f) do the dance. The duration needs to be long enough for all of the tasks, but not so long that one does all of the patterns one knows several times, or one starts to get somewhat tired, and still the dance continues. Note that this characteristic also interacts with #1, variety. If a typical dance duration averages 6 minutes, then there would be only 10 dances in an hour. If it averages 3 minutes, there would be around 20 dances in that same 1 hour period. This would allow for much greater variety. If someone at a dance does

not dance for 10 to 15 minutes, they are very likely to leave, or to tune out. Short dance durations mean more dances in a given time period, and thus less likely that someone will leave. An appropriate measure might be what percentage of the dances has a duration of between 2 and 3 minutes.

Characteristic #6 is old versus new (decades). This is when the music/song was written or was popular. Having nothing but 1930's big band music is probably wrong, as would be having nothing but songs popular in the 2010's decade. Unless a dance event is designed to feature only one era of music, (as might be true for a particular clientele subset), an appropriate measure might be to place each song into a decade-box, and then calculate the closeness to a uniform [also called rectangular] statistical distribution measure.

Part 2 of 2 will be published in the May issue of Minnesota Dancer.



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# USA Dance Membership Application

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|----------------|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Name           |  | Date of Birth (required for ALL Athlete members & for Social Youth members) |                                 |
| 1.             |  | Male <input type="checkbox"/>   | Female <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.             |  | Male <input type="checkbox"/>   | Female <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Street Address |  | Apt. #  | City                            |
|                |  |   |                                 |
| Home Phone     |  | Work Phone  | Cell Phone                      |
| 1.             |  |   |                                 |
| 2.             |  |   |                                 |
| Email Address  |  |   |                                 |
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Is this a renewal application? ☐ Yes ☐ No If Yes, Member # \_\_\_\_\_, # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of USA Dance Chapter I wish to be affiliated with: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of College or Youth Club you are affiliated with (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

| MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY                  |      |    | ADDITIONAL INFORMATION   |
|--------------------------------------|------|----|--|
| Recreational: Social Ballroom Dancer | \$45 | \$ | Dances for enjoyment and works to improve but <b>does not compete</b> . May include retired DS Athlete.  |
| Recreational: Social Adult Dancer    | \$35 | \$ | Enjoys and appreciates the physical, mental, and social benefits of social dancing.  |
| Recreational: Social Youth Dancer    | \$10 | \$ | A social dancer under the age of 19. Often a family member or friend of adult member.  |
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| DanceSport: Adult Athlete*           | \$70 | \$ | A competitive dancer who is age 19 or above.   |
| DanceSport: Student Athlete*         | \$25 | \$ | A competitive dancer age of 19 or above but below age 35 and is enrolled in school full time.  |
| DanceSport: Minor Athlete*           | \$20 | \$ | A competitive dancer who is below the age of 19.   |
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| DanceSport: Special Olympics Athlete | \$10 | \$ | Qualifies for participating in Special Olympics competitions only.   |
| DanceSport: Unified Sports ® Partner | \$25 | \$ | Dance Partner of Special Olympics Athlete -for participating in Special Olympics only.   |
| DanceSport Supporter*                | \$40 | \$ | This category of membership is designed for those who are not active competing athletes but who want to show support for the DanceSport initiatives of USA Dance. This would include former athletes, parents or other family members of athletes, and general supporters who would like their voice counted on DanceSport matters.  |
| Other Misc. Fees                     | \$   | \$ | This space for upgrades, and other miscellaneous fees.   |
| Total Membership Fees                | \$   | \$ |  |
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