

MINNESOTA

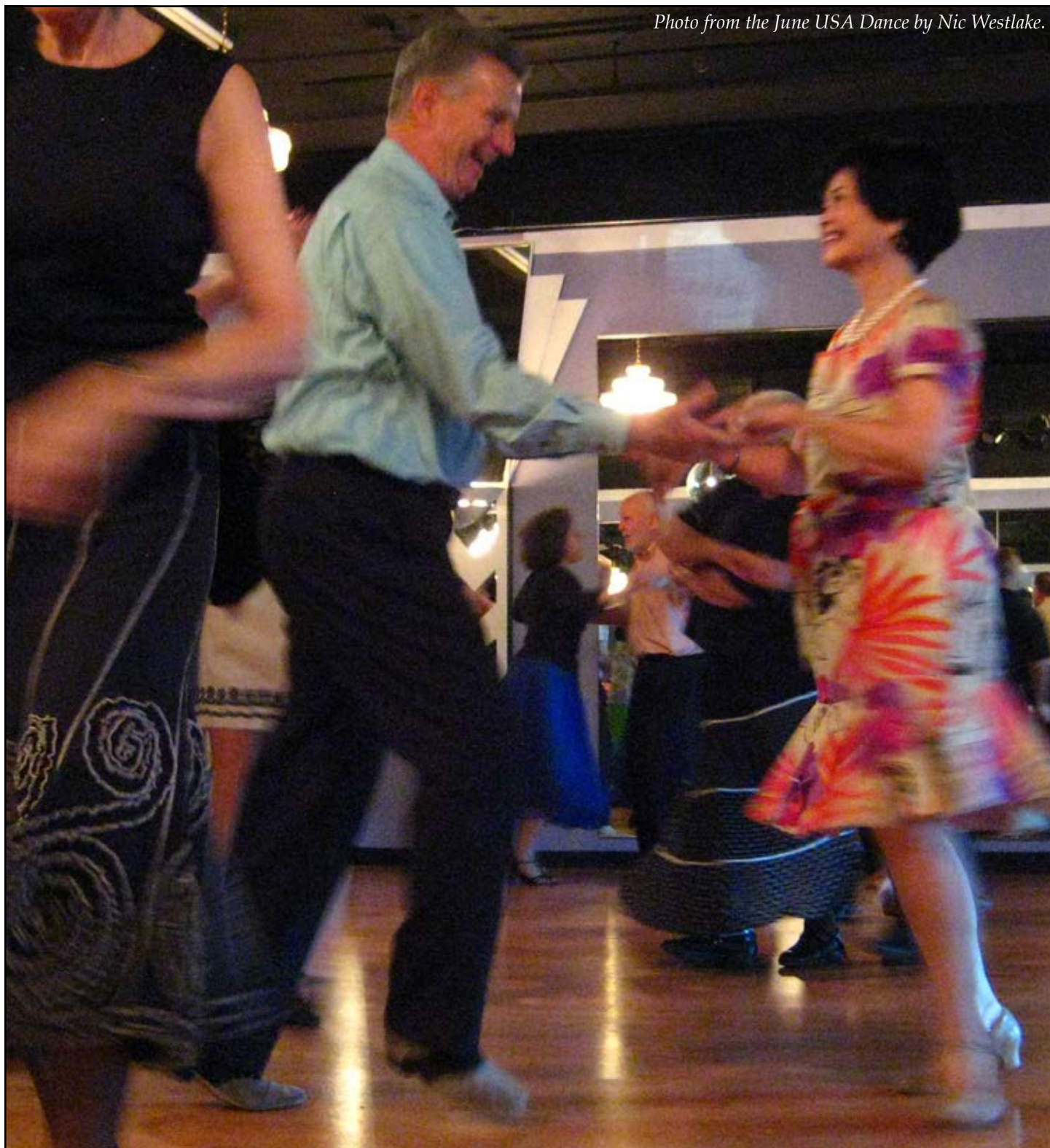
# DANCING TIMES

A publication of the Minnesota Chapter 2011 of USA Dance

July 2013



*Photo from the June USA Dance by Nic Westlake.*



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**COMPETITION TIPS, DANCE NETWORKING, DANCING IN FORMATION, AND MORE!**

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## July

Saturday, July 20th

**7-8 pm Rumba Lesson**

**Instructor:** Eliecer Ramirez Vargas

**8-11 pm Variety Dance**

**Music DJ:** Eliecer Ramirez Vargas

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**\$10 Non-members**

## E.R.V Dance Studios

816 Mainstreet  
Hopkins, MN 55343

## August

Saturday, August 17th

**7-8 pm Quickstep Lesson**

**Instructor:** Jeff Nehrbass

**8-11 pm Variety Dance**

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# DANCERS' NIGHT OUT

Want to dance? Dancers' Night Out lists social dance events in Minnesota. Want to see your dance listed here? Email the details to [newsletter@usadance-mn.org](mailto:newsletter@usadance-mn.org).

Mon 7/1 - Rhythm Junction; Four Seasons Dance Studio, 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; Swing Dance; 8-11; \$5; 612 342 0902 or [www.fourseasonsdance.com](http://www.fourseasonsdance.com)

Wed 7/3 - West Coast Swing Dance Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; \$5; 651 641 0777 or [www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com)

Sun 7/7 - **FREE Beginner Salsa Class; Tapestry Folkdance Center, 3748 Minnehaha Ave, Minneapolis; 1:30-3:00; instructor Kate Bratt; 612 722 2914**

Sun 7/7 - Salsa Dance Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 7-7:50; \$5; 651 641 0777 or [www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com)

Mon 7/8 - Rhythm Junction; Four Seasons Dance Studio, 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; Swing Dance; 8-11; \$5; 612 342 0902 or [www.fourseasonsdance.com](http://www.fourseasonsdance.com)

Wed 7/10 - West Coast Swing Dance Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; \$5; 651 641 0777 or [www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com)

Sun 7/14 - **FREE Beginner Salsa Class; Tapestry Folkdance Center, 3748 Minnehaha Ave, Minneapolis; 1:30-3:00; instructor Kate Bratt; 612 722 2914**

Sun 7/14 - Salsa Dance Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 7-7:50; \$5; 651 641 0777 or [www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com)

Mon 7/15 - Rhythm Junction; Four Seasons Dance Studio, 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; Swing Dance; 8-11; \$5; 612 342 0902 or [www.fourseasonsdance.com](http://www.fourseasonsdance.com)

Tue 7/16 - Free Ballroom Dance; Ojibway Park Bandshell, 2695 Ojibway Drive, Woodbury; Foxtrot lesson at 6:30, dancing to Tim Patrick and His Blue Eyes Band 7-9; rain location: Central Park indoor amphitheater; [www.danceandentertainment.com](http://www.danceandentertainment.com)

Wed 7/17 - West Coast Swing Dance Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; \$5; 651 641 0777 or [www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com)

Sat 7/20 - **USA Dance; E.R.V. Dance Studios, 816 Mainstreet, Hopkins; Rumba lesson at 7, dance 8-11; \$10, \$7 USA Dance members**

Sun 7/21 - **FREE Beginner Salsa Class; Tapestry Folkdance Center, 3748 Minnehaha Ave, Minneapolis; 1:30-3:00; instructor Kate Bratt; 612 722 2914**

Sun 7/21 - Salsa Dance Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 7-7:50; \$5; 651 641 0777 or [www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com)

Mon 7/22 - Rhythm Junction; Four Seasons Dance Studio, 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; Swing Dance; 8-11; \$5; 612 342 0902 or [www.fourseasonsdance.com](http://www.fourseasonsdance.com)

Tue 7/23 - Free Country Dance; Ojibway Park Bandshell, 2695 Ojibway Drive, Woodbury; Country two-step lesson at 6:30, dancing to Dixie Hicks Band 7-9; rain location: Central Park indoor amphitheater; [www.danceandentertainment.com](http://www.danceandentertainment.com)

Wed 7/24 - West Coast Swing Dance Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; \$5; 651 641 0777 or [www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com)

Fri 7/26 - Tim Patrick and His Blue Eyes Band; Minnesota Lakes Maritime Museum, 205 3rd Ave W, Alexandria; Music in the Gardens; 6:30-9:30; [www.timpatrickmusic.com](http://www.timpatrickmusic.com)

Sun 7/28 - **FREE Beginner Salsa Class; Tapestry Folkdance Center, 3748 Minnehaha Ave, Minneapolis; 1:30-3:00; instructor Kate Bratt; 612 722 2914**

Sun 7/28 - Salsa Dance Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 7-7:50; \$5; 651 641 0777 or [www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com)

Mon 7/29 - Rhythm Junction; Four Seasons Dance Studio, 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; Swing Dance; 8-11; \$5; 612 342 0902 or [www.fourseasonsdance.com](http://www.fourseasonsdance.com)

Tue 7/30 - Free Swing Dance; Ojibway Park Bandshell, 2695 Ojibway Drive, Woodbury; Swing lesson at 6:30, dancing to Red Rock Swing Band 7-9; rain location: Central Park indoor amphitheater; [www.danceandentertainment.com](http://www.danceandentertainment.com)

Wed 7/31 - West Coast Swing Dance Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; \$5; 651 641 0777 or [www.dancersstudio.com](http://www.dancersstudio.com) ■



# USA Dance – MN Chapter #2011 Board Minutes

Tuesday, June 4th, 2013

Submitted by Leslie Whitney

In attendance: Pete Westlake (President), Cathy Dessert (Vice President), Jane Phipps (Treasurer), Leslie Whitney (Secretary), Zhuojing Liu, Bonnie Burton, Marty Faeh, Tracy Frazee, Daniel O'Connell, Karen Maldonado

Location: Quixotic Coffee, 769 Cleveland Ave South, St. Paul, MN

Call to Order: Quorum established. Agenda approved. May minutes amended and approved.

## ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

### Treasurer's Report

- Jane submitted a current report as of May 31, 2013.
- The treasurer's report approved.
- Jane submitted Chapter #2011's Tea Dance income and expense report.

### Brief Area Reports

#### Leslie - Secretary, Dancing Times Reviewer

- Taking notes at the board meetings and converting these into minutes for the *Dancing Times* and the following month's board meeting
- Previewing the *Dancing Times*
- Arranging time and place for board meetings
- Inventory of items stored by the chapter

#### Marty - Social Media and Facilities

- Continue to explore and learn to administer the Social MeetUp and Facebook sites
- Collect information about the items stored by Chapter #2011

### Pete - President

- Identify board members' individual roles, administer tasks, and monitor their completion
- Focus energy on getting younger dancers to events and into membership
- Cathy will liaison between Yvonne and Dan Viehman and the board.

## PROJECTS

### Project Dance Minnesota

- Karen distributed a report detailing the budget for July through December 2013.
- A motion was made and approved to pass this budget.

### Business Cards

- Marty distributed sample business cards for board approval. Suggestions for changing the wording were made, and these will be posted shortly via email for final approval.
- A motion was made and approved to budget for the business cards.

### Hunting and Storing our "Stuff"

- Leslie will inventory.
- We will discuss the final resting place at next month's board meeting.

### Coordinating Floor Volunteers for TCO

- Cathy will post on Facebook asking for volunteers.
- Daniel will speak with U of MN students.

### Discuss Goals/Vision for Chapter #2011

- Focus on participation and membership of younger dancers by updating music, using social media, and personally inviting young adults to the monthly dances.

### Leadership Transition

- A motion was made and approved to add Karen Maldonado to the board, filling the vacancy left by Pete Westlake's resignation.
- A motion was made and approved to place Daniel O'Connell as president, replacing Pete.

### Permanent Name Tags

- A motion was made and approved to budget for permanent name tags identifying board members.

### Future Events

- Minnesota Ballroom Blast - October 13, 2013
- Tea Dance - May 4, 2014

### Next Meeting:

Tuesday, August 6, 2013

5:30 p.m.

Quixotic Coffee

769 Cleveland Avenue South ■



Photo from Project Dance Minnesota at  
Cheek to Cheek by Karen Maldonado

## USA Dance: Who Are We?

We are a nonprofit organization formed to preserve and promote ballroom dancing, both as an art and a healthful sport. The Minnesota chapter, USA Dance MN, was formed in 1991.

Membership in USA Dance is open to dancers of all levels. There are several categories to choose from: Social, Competitor, Junior (17 and under), Collegiate, and Associate (professional/instructor).

USA Dance MN sponsors monthly dances and other special dance events. Members are entitled to discounts on admission to the monthly dances, as well as access to a great network for meeting other dancers.

As a member, you'll have fun dancing and meeting many new friends. For more information, call the USA Dance MN HOTLINE: 651-483-5467.

The Minnesota Dancing Times is published monthly by the members of the Minnesota Chapter of USA Dance, providing information and news of ballroom dancing to members and friends.

Editor: Mary Beth Beckman (612) 424-2228  
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Mailing: Committee member

Contributors: Scott Anderson, Mary Beth Beckman, Paul Botes, Bonnie Burton, Cathy Dessert, Elizabeth Dickinson, Donna Edelstein, Marty Faeh, Karen Maldonado, Jack Munday, Deborah J. Nelson, Daniel O'Connell, Chris Trask, Nic Westlake, Peter Westlake

Contributions: Articles submitted may be edited for length, clarity, and content. Photos should be high-resolution jpg, png, or pdf files. Email submissions to: newsletter@usadance-mn.org.

Subscriptions: \$22/year. Make checks payable to USA Dance MN and send to Theresa Kimler, 7050 49th St. N, St. Paul, MN 55128 ■

## Advertising

DISPLAY ADS: To advertise your event or professional service, submit a digital file (300 dpi pdf or jpeg format ONLY) or camera-ready artwork to bonnieburton@comcast.net (952.454.4620), along with payment to USA Dance MN. Advertising for charge cards, insurance, or travel cannot be accepted. Payment to accompany ad.

Full page	7.5" wide x 10" high	\$130
Half page	7.5" wide x 4.75" high	\$80
	OR 3.5" wide x 9.5" high	
Qtr. page	3.5" wide x 4.75" high	\$60
Business Card	3 consecutive months	\$50

SWAPLINE ADS: Free 3-line ad in Swaplines available to subscribers (dance merchandise only). Send to: newsletter@usadance-mn.org

DEADLINE FOR ALL MATERIALS:  
10th OF EACH MONTH

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To solicit Mary Beth's editing services, ask questions about the newsletter, or submit content, contact her at [newsletter@usadance-mn.org](mailto:newsletter@usadance-mn.org).

## FROM THE EDITOR

By Mary Beth Beckman

**A**s I write this, I'm sitting in my dark apartment using up my laptop battery. The coffee shops have closed, taking their electrical outlets and free wifi with them. I've been without power at home for about forty-three hours, and it is not fun. Also, my house appears to be a Verizon 3G dead zone, and my phone loses 10% of its battery charge every hour trying to find a signal. This is the bad news.

The good news is that last month's "From the Editor" sparked great discussion, both in person and in writing, across the Minnesota dance community. I can't put into words how pleased I am that the *Dancing Times* was able to bring about such important reflection and consideration in our community members. Karen Maldonado and Daniel O'Connell in particular responded with thoughtful letters to the editor about why they dance and compete. I hope this is a discussion you've all been having amongst yourselves, because it's a fabulously rich and important topic.

In the past few months, many events and interactions have indicated to me that a significant number of *Dancing Times* readers aren't sure of what my role is as editor. I'd like to spend some time this month outlining my duties in hopes of putting to rest some misconceptions and filling in those knowledge gaps.

New Oxford American defines an editor as "a person who is in charge of and determines the final content of a text, particularly a newspaper or magazine." My primary function is to assess submissions' suitability for publication—in other words, accept or reject them. There has only been one article submission since I've been editor that has been rejected, and I made the reasons for rejection clear to the writer and even suggested how they

could edit or rewrite their submission and see it published. I was subsequently accused of censorship and of overstepping my bounds, but as an editor, rejecting submissions is a core element of my job description.

We have a policy of only publishing articles geared towards productive, or at least encouraging, discussion of ballroom dance. When engaging in critical discourse with another individual, the stakes of an article become much higher, as we have to respect the USA Dance charter's harassment policies. To ensure that discourse remains respectful and goal-oriented, I assess articles of this variety based on the following scale of productive discourse (ordered from least favorable to most favorable): name-calling, ad hominem, responding to tone, contradiction, counterargument, refutation, refuting the central point. Anything that falls below contradiction on this scale will not be published—though you may notice I've made a small exception this month that falls into the "responding to tone" category. If you would like clarification of what each level entails, please email me, as I want everyone to feel comfortable submitting content, even when engaging in a potentially controversial discussion.

Which brings me to my next point, starting with the definition of the word *editorial*: "a newspaper article written by or on behalf of an editor that gives an opinion on a topical issue." "From the Editor" is my monthly editorial. Some months, I only comment on the content of the current issue, and other months I write about issues facing the dance community. But inherent in an editorial is the informed opinion of the editor. There is no imperative for readers to take my word at face value; in fact, I consistently encourage people to explore every topic I raise for themselves and

discover their own positions. My goal is to spark discussion and encourage thoughtfulness, which I've certainly accomplished the past few months.

With those clarifications out of the way, I'll outline the basic steps I go through each month to get a new issue out to the community:

- Request submissions from members of the dance community via email, Facebook, and other methods when necessary. This includes selecting and confirming a Dance Medic.
- Gather and organize submissions and other materials for the newsletter.
- Edit each submitted piece of writing for mechanical accuracy, clarity, *Dancing Times* style, and appropriateness to USA Dance Minnesota's mission of improving the quality and quantity of ballroom dance.
- Answer questions about the newsletter and communicate with other volunteers about

organizational and practical matters affecting publication.

- Update the calendar at [www.usadance-mn.org](http://www.usadance-mn.org) with the social dance events submitted to me by members of the dance community. This calendar is then used to create "Dancers' Night Out."
- Update the competition calendar based on the listing at [www.usadance.org](http://www.usadance.org) and additional competitions submitted by dance community members.
- Write one editorial per month and compose tag lines, photo captions, additional articles, and other blocks of text as necessary.
- Upload articles and photos for publication on [www.usadance-mn.org](http://www.usadance-mn.org) and ensure all files are accessible to Nic Westlake, the volunteer responsible for layout and design of the newsletter.
- Proofread the digital version of the newsletter before printing and distribution.
- Distribute the final digital version to an email list and on Facebook.

- Additional tasks that arise over the course of the publication schedule.

I volunteer well over a dozen hours every month ensuring that the final product is something that USA Dance Minnesota will be proud of. My first responsibility is to USA Dance's mission statement, something I take very seriously and tailor all my editorial decisions towards. I keep communication open with the *Dancing Times* board liaison, Bonnie Burton, and with the board president, now Daniel O'Connell, to ensure that the *Dancing Times* continues to be true to dance and especially to the experience of amateur dancers, whose role in the dance community is often tenuous and unrecognized, much like that of volunteers.

But we'll save discussion of volunteers for next month's editorial. For now, I conserve my laptop battery and encourage you all to continue (or start) sending us great material. Without your contributions, there is no *Dancing Times*. ■




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*Peter Westlake is the former president of USA Dance Minnesota. He is also an accomplished competitive dancer with his partner, Sehyun Oh.*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### The Next Song

*By Peter Westlake*

There is a moment when one song has faded and the next one has almost begun and everything is in transition. The entire ballroom scrambles to politely separate from their current partners and seek out a new connection. It is moment full of hope and excitement—excitement about the next song, the next partner, the next dance. Excitement about the future. In much the same way, I'm excited about this moment for our chapter of USA Dance.

Sadly, the latest song has faded out, and it has very quickly come time for me to leave my position as the president of USA Dance Minnesota. Life has carried me off to New York, where I will be unable to effectively serve the chapter. I am very proud of some of the things we've accomplished over the previous months, including burgeoning attendance at Project Dance Minnesota, a raucous Star of the North DanceSport Classic, expanding newsletter readership, and continued improvements to our monthly dances. These are just a few of the many positive things this organization brings to the community through the tireless contributions of its volunteers, and I'm very grateful to have had an opportunity to contribute among them. But even as our partnership dissolves in this moment, I'm enthusiastic about the coming prospects that have already begun.

As of June, our board of directors has appointed two bright new faces to carry the tune. Karen Maldonado will be taking over Project Dance Minnesota for Corissa Ranum, who

has also been lured to the east coast. Karen is an enthusiastic, hard-working student at the University of Minnesota. She has been contributing to Project Dance Minnesota for months and is in an ideal position to continue and further expand this initiative. Another new board member, Daniel O'Connell, has worked closely with the board in recent months to help strengthen and refine our outreach to non-dancers and has contributed significantly to Star of the North and Minnesota Ballroom Blast over the past year. His experience managing a small business and as a leader in the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club has positioned him very nicely to take over as our new president. I'm very happy the board has appointed these two individuals to fill the remainder of this term, and I am certain they will be fantastic partners for the organization.

Lastly, I'm excited about the new enthusiasm in our organization to invite younger generations to participate in the many events we host. Our new board members will undoubtedly contribute to this vision and bring a new vibrance and vitality to our already excellent events. This will help ensure dancing in Minnesota has a long and persistent future.

With that, I'll offer one more thank you to our membership for this lovely dance we've performed since December. It's been my pleasure. Get going, or you'll miss the next song. I know it's a good one. ■



*Daniel O'Connell is the president of USA Dance Minnesota and competes nationwide with his amateur partner, Rosemary O'Connell. He likes candlelit dinners and long walks on the beach.*

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## Signing On

By Daniel O'Connell

**G**reetings and salutations! I'm Daniel O'Connell, and I will be the new president of the USA Dance Minnesota board.

I started social dancing seven years ago as an undergraduate student at Carleton College in Northfield, MN. One year later, I competed at Star of the North DanceSport Classic and became hooked on competitive dancing. At Carleton, I was a founding officer of the Carleton Competitive Ballroom Dance Team. In the past, I have worked on logistics and marketing for both Minnesota Ballroom Blast and Star of the North. I have also jointly managed Project Dance Minnesota with Corissa Ranum and Karen Maldonado.

As president, it is my intent to continue expanding and growing the many wonderful initiatives we have here in Minnesota. The free Sunday dance classes are bringing new dancers into our great community. As always, the board will do what it can to draw new attendees into the monthly variety dances, and consider how we can make these experiences better for everyone involved. Minnesota Ballroom Blast is a perfect companion event to Star of the North, and I would encourage anyone who desires feedback on their dancing to consider attending.

However, none of the above really tells you much about who I am, so

I've compiled a list of ten random facts about me to give you a better idea. Without further ado:

1. I love ice cream. A lot.
2. I'm originally from New Jersey, but I'm not from the Jersey Shore (I swear).
3. My degrees are in mathematics.
4. Sorry, I don't watch *Game of Thrones*.
5. I pronounce syrup as "sear-up," not "sir-up". See #2.
6. Sometimes I'll have a beard; sometimes I won't. You can see from my picture that this month, I have a beard.
7. My dance partner is Rosemary O'Connell. Anyone who knows us both will tell you she is my better half.
8. I have an evil twin, William. Goatee and everything.
9. I am a big fan of useless trivia.
10. I promise I'm funnier in person than this list would lead you to believe.

You'll find me at most of the monthly dances and most Sundays at the free classes held under the Project Dance initiative. Feel free to stop by, say hello, and ask any questions you might have. Have a happy July! ■

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Stop Worrying and Love the Competition

By Daniel O'Connell

I'm an amateur competitor who has been competing for the last six years. In June's "From the Editor," the editor posed a discussion topic that struck a chord with me:

"If judges' marks aren't a clear, consistent measurement of success, why compete? [...] We'd love to hear about what inspires you to dance and what you gain from your competition experiences."

First, I don't believe judges' marks should be regarded as a clear, consistent measurement of success. This isn't so much a result of the judges themselves but rather of the structural limitations of the format. What happens if you (or another competitor) have the flu that day and don't dance your best? What if a judge is unable to catch your number? What if, by random chance, a judge catches your worst dancing and another couple's best dancing in a heat? What if you've danced twenty heats already when another couple is fresh? Fundamentally, there is a lot of "stuff happens" that winds up being baked into the marks. In reality, the marks are an approximation to how well a very specific ninety seconds of your dancing compares to a very specific ninety seconds of dancing from a very specific set of

competitors. Change the day, change the competitors, and the outcome can be very different.

Personally, I find this knowledge to be quite liberating. Instead of focusing on the marks or worrying about what the judges think of me, I instead focus on having fun and doing my best dancing. Having fun should be the only reason any amateur competes and the only metric for success. It can be fun to place well, it can be fun to expand one's boundaries, it can be fun to see friendly faces, and it can be fun to watch really great dancing. If you had fun, who cares how you placed?

To this day, I've never forgotten the first time I went to Star of the North DanceSport Classic. Competing at Star of the North is how I met my wife. Every time I go out and compete, I learn something new about dance and about myself. If making great friends, finding the love of your life, and becoming a better person aren't all valid reasons to view competing as highly successful and fun, sign me up for failure. There were honestly times I had so much fun at a competition that I forgot my marks (including when I've come in first place). I mean, have you seen the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Team dance to

"Gangnam Style?" You'd forget your marks, too.

Now, don't get me wrong—winning is nice. But winning is something we never have control over. Instead of focusing on winning, I suggest reviewing footage from one year ago and comparing the dancer you were to the dancer you are now. Far too often, people get bogged down with the negative when reviewing footage, so I advocate this for keeping a proper perspective on your dancing.

In addition to reviewing older footage, I would make sure to remember what inspires you to dance. For me, much of my decision to devote countless hours to dancesport points back to Star of the North. I remember the first time I saw the evening show at Star of the North and watched some of the amazing dancers we have right here in the Twin Cities. Though I now dance for many reasons, I remain inspired by the dancers we have here and continue to aspire to dance at the highest levels.

To those of you who are considering competitive ballroom dancing, I would give it a shot. If you go into it with a strongly positive attitude and a desire to have fun, I think you will find it extremely rewarding. I know I did. ■



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## Personal Disclaimer

By Leland and Leslie Whitney

**A**s the couple that qualified for and competed in more events at the 2013 National Championships than any other Minnesota amateur

couple, we reject the tone and the comments made by the editor in the last two issues of the *Minnesota Dancing Times*. ■

## The People Make the Sport

By Karen Maldonado

**L**ast month, the editor posed the question to the general public as to what inspires them to dance, especially at competitions. I have been dancing for only two years with the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club, but I never stopped to ask myself the question as to why I did it. This seemed rather important.

On a very superficial level, the answer is quite simple: I enjoy dancing. I enjoy competitions. Enjoyment, for me, is the culmination of many factors that make all the work I do worthwhile. If I didn't find ballroom dance fun, I simply would have gone to join some other student group. But I digress.

What I really cherish about ballroom are the people.

I get such a sense of fulfillment out of ballroom dance because the people involved

in my dancing are some of the most wondrous individuals I could possibly know. The University of Minnesota instructors hold a very dear place in my heart. I look up to my instructors and upperclassmen of the team, and I respect them like no other. The best part about ballroom dance is that it is partner dance. Partners are the best thing ever. It is they who make dance fun.

So when competition time rolls around, I still enjoy it despite the difficulties. First off, competitions give me a goal to strive for. They become measurements of how much I have improved. If I feel like my marks were all over the place or if I made a million mistakes, you know what? My partners and team are there to remind me that it's okay. The amount of support we all give each other is what makes competing—and dancing—worthwhile. ■



**Like it Hot, Hot, Hot?**  
Come and join the Rebels for some spicy summer dancing!

**Classes and Dances on Sundays at Social Dance Studio**

### Classes

**Sundays, 5:00-7:00 p.m. at Social Dance Studio.\***

**\$15 for members & students w/ID; \$20 guests**

**July 7:** Walking with your West Coast II with Liz Hanson and Hieu Le (no need to have taken Walking with your West Coast I to take this class)

**July 14:** Cha Cha Basics with Kathy Compo, assisted by Ann Albrecht

**July 28:** Intermediate Cha Cha with Kathy Compo, assisted by Ann Albrecht

**August 4:** Advanced Cha Cha with Kathy Compo, assisted by Ann Albrecht

**August 18:** West Coast Swing: Lead and Follow Styling with Lynette Mahowald and Tim Eide

**August 25:** Country 2-Step with Caroline Olson and Loel Brandstrom

**July 21: Short Patterns from a Tall Man-- West Coast Swing with Pro Jason Barnes!**

5:45-6:45 p.m. at Social Dance Studio; \$12 for members and students w/ID; \$15 for guests

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**Sundays, 7:00 – 10:30 p.m. at Social Dance Studio.\***

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**July 7:** West Coast Swing and Variety Dance

**July 21:** West Coast Swing and Variety Dance

**August 4:** West Coast Swing and Variety Dance

**August 18:** West Coast Swing and Variety Dance

**September 1:** West Coast Swing and Variety Dance

\*Social Dance Studio is located at 3742-23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55407.



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Elizabeth Dickinson is a life/executive coach and amateur ballroom dancer. If you enjoy her writing and would like to receive her weekly emailed coaching newsletter, please go to [www.pursueyourpath.com](http://www.pursueyourpath.com) and sign up.

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# THE DANCING LIFE

## That Which Has No Name

By Elizabeth Dickinson

"Name it to tame it" is a kind of psychological motto. If you can define something that bothers you (for example, a fear or bad habit), you may be better able to overcome it or its negative effects.

Recently, I visited my dad to celebrate his eightieth birthday. While in Massachusetts, I took Dan Radler's silver- and gold-level international standard classes at Ballroom New England. I was definitely at a disadvantage, since the attendees were a good month or more into the routines and gold was beyond me.

Many students carried a printed paper folded into thirds on which they were taking notes as steps and techniques were explained. One student asked me how I could possibly learn the routines without having the steps written down. She offered me the handout I had seen other students use with the steps and timing for the silver waltz, silver tango, and gold waltz routines that were being taught over the six weeks. (I wish that were done here in some group classes.) Naming the steps was helpful in taming my anxiety. At least I now knew what I didn't know.

Unfortunately, in American smooth at the higher levels, it's really hard learning new steps, because many of the steps actually don't have names. When I experience trouble learning my new routine, I find it helpful to come

up with my own description of the steps until I can get them into body memory.

Similarly, in life coaching, clients sometimes have powerful distractors in their lives that prevent them from achieving their goals. It's sometimes helpful to give those distractors a name and an identity. One of my clients felt troubled by a part of her that would never let her rest, that was always pushing her to feel that what she did was never enough. She called it her Tasmanian devil. It felt easier to use that imagery and imagine taming the Tasmanian devil and thus her racing thoughts.

Working with my own life coach, I identified a part of me that's always worried things might not work out. I call him George (okay, not as imaginative as a Tasmanian devil). All George wants to do is be in nature and not worry. My life coach asked me what I wanted to tell George. For months, I had a 3x5 card taped to my computer that just said, "It's gonna work out."

If you can name something that's confusing, bothering, or upsetting you, whether it's something personal or something as simple as steps that have no name, you can begin to shift the situation. In life or in dance, name it to tame it. ■

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Deborah J. Nelson is the founder, president, and head designer of Satin Stitches Ltd. See more costuming tips at [www.satinstitches.com](http://www.satinstitches.com).

# LOOK YOUR BEST

## Nude Fabrics and Elastics in Ballroom Costumes

By Deborah J. Nelson

I have been blogging on many subjects having to do with dance costumes for years. One of my favorite blogs was called “The Scoop on Nude: How to Be Tastefully Nude,” which I posted on February 2, 2010. If you have been reading my Costume Critiques from all of the *Dancing with the Stars* episodes over the years, you know that I have some issues with nude fabrics and nude elastics.

Nude-looking fabric is very useful in costume design. It is one of the many tools in the designer’s toolbox for creating beautiful costumes, but as with other design tools, this tool must be used wisely.

Most often, the nude-looking fabric is a four-way stretch, nude-toned spandex mesh. This mesh is generally used two ways. One use is to creatively cover an area of the body in order to slenderize or camouflage an area rather than allowing wrinkles in the skin or slight lumps and bumps of the body to show through, as a tight, stretchy spandex mesh fabric can act as a girdle (or body shaper, in current terminology). It is, oh, so helpful for tightening up the skin while maintaining a skimpy-looking design.

Colored mesh can work similarly. With nude-looking mesh fabric, you need to find (or dye) this fabric to a color that matches your skin tone, whether it is natural or spray-tanned—you need to match or coordinate with your performance skin tone.

Another use is to make costumes fit correctly on a body without gaping open, allowing for possible defying of gravity or physics. You want to be

visually tricked into thinking that the wearer has nothing on or that the costume is see-through. Costumes with nude-toned mesh sometimes trick you into thinking the wearer is totally nude in certain areas, except for lace appliqués or rhinestoned motifs.

Costuming uses this art of illusion. Whenever you are contemplating the use of nude-toned spandex as part of your costuming, keep in mind how it really looks onstage. Be aware of the illusion. Whether you are actually covered or not, does it give the illusion that you are uncovered in the wrong places? There should be strategic placements of appliqués (lace or fabric) and/or patches of solid rhinestoning.

If your costume gives the illusion that you are covered in the most important parts, you will appear to be modestly (well, sort of) dressed. If there is something covering these parts but, from performance distance, if it appears that you are not covered in these areas, some people in your audience, if not all, are going to be uncomfortable, and you will be thought to be wearing an immodest costume.

If you are an exotic dancer, this may be your intention, but if you are not, then rethink and rework your costume so that modesty takes precedence. In “The Scoop on Nude,” I talk about and show how a costume can oscillate between looking modest or scandalous with some tweaking of the placement of lace, other fabric, or trimming that *is* shown on a costume when using nude mesh.

Then there are those pesky nude elastic straps that are seen everywhere, especially on skimpy Latin costumes. Yes, they have a function. Are they overused? In my opinion, yes, totally. If you are reading my *Dancing with the Stars* blogs, then you know that I dislike when nude elastic straps cause the illusion of a floating costume piece, such as bra cups on the front with nothing on the back or a middle-connect dress (this phrase is talked about and explained in my *Dancing with the Stars* blogs) that has a pointed side feature and nothing connecting one side to the other.

Yes, I've heard all the discussions of: "Oh, what a pretty, open back." I

agree; open backs can be very pretty, but not to the detriment of the design. And not to the detriment of keeping the costume anchored in place so that you don't have to worry about your dance moves. You should be able to move your body in any way you choose, and your costume should stay anchored in place. Unobtrusive straps across the top of the shoulders work well to keep sleeves up and in place rather than a single strap across the back. And if you think that those shiny, clear straps are invisible, think again. They pick up the light and reflect it and are actually more visible than a matte-finished nude-colored elastic or nude-colored fabric strap.

Extra thought might need to go into the design of a costume to incorporate decorative and functional straps into the design without interfering with the visual flow of a garment, but it is worth it. Also consider using nude mesh in place of elastic straps for a prettier effect while maintaining your skimpy look.

I have always believed that, in general, rules can be set aside, but the general principle of considering how your ballroom dance costume looks to others is important. So the next time you are designing a new costume, think about the use of nude-toned elastics and fabric, and use these features responsibly. ■

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# DANCE NETWORKING WITH FACEBOOK

By Marty Faeh



*Marty Faeh is a member of the USA Dance Minnesota board.*

**F**acebook: you either love it or hate it. I must confess, I love Facebook. I have found it to be a great networking tool and an easy method to communicate and network with others involved in dance around the world. This past winter, with a couple of feet of snow on the ground, I found myself daydreaming about being on a beach vacation somewhere warm and sunny. I was talking with a few friends I had met on Facebook down in Florida and thought of what fun it would be to go down there for a visit to enjoy some long overdue R&R.

I contacted my friends Zhanna Kens and Cathy Nelson in the Tampa, Florida, area and told them I was planning a vacation and would enjoy meeting and visiting with them while I was down there. Both Zhanna and Cathy have been Facebook buddies of mine for a few years now. Zhanna is a successful artist and fashion designer, designing custom-made ballroom and Latin costumes, free-flowing and

comfortable figure-skating dresses for champions, and original couture evening gowns. For many years, Zhanna has passionately created a style that is uniquely her own, and the public loves it. In 2012, my pro partner at that time wore one of Zhanna's beautiful standard ballroom gowns, called Living Waters. In 2013, Zhanna created a beautiful rhythm dress for my pro rhythm partner, Kate Bratt. Cathy Nelson is owner of Dance Forever in Serendipity Plaza, Clearwater, Florida. Cathy let me know what activities were going on at her beautiful ballroom the week I was vacationing in the Tampa area. She also suggested that I take a lesson with her pro, Oleksandra Ponomarova, while I was in town. Zhanna and Cathy were very helpful in my vacation planning, all via Facebook.

April 2013: Florida, here I come! Great friends, the beach, and an awesome ballroom to practice in just down the street. It gets no better than that. My first two days were cool, breezy, and misty. The locals kept asking me if I was from Canada, as I was shirtless and they were all wearing jackets on the beach. I think it was around sixty-five degrees that day. I took advantage of the rainy time by heading to Dance Forever. It was awesome to finally meet Cathy Nelson. She warmly greeted me with a big smile, told me all about her ballroom, and introduced me to her studio pros. I warmed up a bit in front of the mirrors and quickly felt at home. Oleksandra and I met, discussed our backgrounds, and started our lesson. I have worked with a lot of pros and coaches, but her approach was very different from that of anyone I had worked with in the past. I was ready for my second shirt in about ten minutes; she had me sweating before I took my first rumba step. We laughed as she worked my butt off for the next hour. We had great chemistry. I learned so much and had a wonderful

time. I setup two more lessons during the week and told them I would be in to practice from time to time.

Zhanna showed me around her lovely community: the best places to eat, the beach. She introduced me to everyone from the fire chief to the mailman. I felt at home instantly. Zhanna educated me on dressmaking, the runway shows, her background in becoming a fashion designer, etc. One evening, we went to St. Petersburg Nights, a wonderful Russian restaurant with a dance floor. We ordered a variety of Russian dishes, she taught me some of the Russian language, and then the music started. It was all Russian, and she asked me to dance. I said okay, even though I was thinking, "How do I dance to Russian music? Yikes!" I soon discovered that it didn't matter; the beat was waltz, cha cha, tango, even quickstep, and we stayed on the dance floor the rest of the night. Even after the music stopped, we kept dancing. Zhanna was interested in quickstep, so around and around that little dance floor we went. What a wonderful time. Finally, the restaurant owner shut off the lights and said to come back the next day. We laughed as we headed out the door.

Dance has given me so much. I am in much better physical and mental shape, having lost around ninety pounds since I started. Dance has blessed me with friends from all around the world, like Zhanna, Cathy, and Oleksandra, and has really enriched my quality of life. I wrote this article to give a snapshot of what dance has done for me and how Facebook can be a useful social medium to connect with others. And yes, I am planning another trip to Florida in August or September, as I am considering making Florida my new home. ■



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# FORMATIONS: FUN? FAD? FORGET IT?

By Bonnie Burton

Anyone who has been to a dance competition or a showcase knows what a formation group is. Some audience members love to watch them; others make a point of saving their restroom breaks for the formation portion of the competition. Wikipedia tells us that formation dancing originated in 1932 in London's Astoria Ballroom. A lady named Olive Ripman introduced it under the name *pattern dancing*. Soon it became a competitive dance form, peaking in popularity in the 1960s. There are specific formation competitions, where teams from all over the world compete against each other.

A formation dance is usually a partnered dance that consists of a circular or linear arrangement of couples who perform a choreographed routine as part of a larger team, often wearing costumes that are identical or very similar. This routine is often based upon a dance style—jive, cha cha, or tango, for instance. Sometimes a pot-pourri routine is performed, which involves a mixture of dance styles from a single dance category, such as the rhythm dances. This is an especially popular format for ballroom formation team competitions.

Formation groups are popular here in the Twin Cities dance community. Some groups exist on their own and

have done so for decades; others are studio-based, short-term, and frequently have musical themes, such as music by Prince or Michael Jackson. Some groups are formed for the purpose of performing for a single event like a studio showcase or a local competition.

There is a learning curve involved in understanding how to dance in unison and synchronize movements. In theory, formation dance allows the individual couples to demonstrate their prowess through their own technique, as well as through their ability to move seamlessly as a team. However, the reality is that there is an urge to have all members be identical, and the dancing is sometimes reduced to the lowest common denominator.

There may be a trend toward all-female formation groups. Perhaps the males aren't as interested in this form of dance, which, according to formation competition official rules, should be comprised of six to eight *couples*. As one audience member commented while watching an all-female paso doble group recently, "How can you have a paso without the bull?"

In my opinion, it seems that the formation groups that are more interesting to watch are the ones that tell a story or have a theme rather than just a group of people dancing.

Dancers participate in formation groups for different reasons. I recently threw the following topic out to local dancers: "Dancers! Have you ever danced on a formation team? Did you enjoy it? Hate it? What was it like for you?" Here are their responses, lightly edited for grammar and clarity:

My first formation was at Dancers Studio in 1988. It was a mambo formation by Shinya McHenry, and my partner was Donna Edelstein. Since then, I've been in at least thirty of them. It is a great way to learn new ballroom dance steps/technique at a low cost and also make friends.

—Jeffrey A Chinn

I tried a formation team once, and it is just not my cup of tea. One partner is enough for me to handle.

—Yeun Chou

I enjoy dancing in formations! I must add that at one point Tom and I were on three different formations simultaneously. There are some pluses and minuses to be prepared for. The positives include meeting and becoming friends with other dancers, working on something bigger than your own dancing (after all, this is a formation), and working with different coaches and learning fun choreography. The possible negatives: if you have a team that changes partners, be prepared to

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dance with someone other than your partner. Also, formations are supposed to blend, so look for a team that fits your ability level or even stretches it a bit.

—Anne LaTourelle

I danced in three formation teams. Julie Jacobson choreographed them. They were great fun.

—Gary Narducci

Dancing in formation is both great fun and quite challenging. Not only do you have the usual aspects of dance to consider (choreography, partnering, and connecting with the audience) but you must also be aware of your team members. When dancing as a couple, if you get off the music, it is far less noticeable than if you are doing something quite different from the other ten people on the floor. Also, you share the floor, eternally trying to stay equally distanced from other moving bodies. All of us can tell you stories of bumping or crashing at some point. Despite the challenges, however,

dancing as a group enables you to tell a story to music that no single couple could convey. It can be very powerful. It is also great fun to work and dance as a group. Many strong and wonderful friendships have resulted from our involvement in formation.

—Cheri Rolnick

I never planned to be a formation team member. It was one of the best decisions I ever made. The teamwork, synchronicity, and choreography make me a better solo partner. Besides having a fantastic choreographer, Elena Bersten, it is just fun!

—Julie Ann Greif Schmidt

I did the Michael Jackson formation at Cinema Ballroom. It took me back in time to when I did dances to Michael Jackson songs for recitals when growing up.

—Heather Smith

In my experience, studio formation dancers tend to be less proficient, and formations can take time away from

your personal dance goals. It's fun to meet new people, though. Why do the costumes always seem so bad?

—Ed Soltis

I have danced in many formations, some good, others not. If the dancers are of the same commitment (attendance) and dance level, it can be very fun. Without the commitment, it seems like things never progress.

—Mark Tepley

During my thirty years of ballroom dancing and competing, I have danced in quite a few formations, either at dance studios or with USABDA/USA Dance-related groups. I always love it, as it gives me the opportunity to interact through teamwork with other couples aside from my partner. Actually, all team members become my partners.

—Ha Tuong ■



Photo from Project Dance Minnesota at Cheek to Cheek by Karen Maldonado



# C-O-M-P-E-T-E

By Scott Anderson

**T**aking your dancing to the next level—that of competitive dancing—can be a daunting decision. Here are a few simple tips for professionals and students to keep in mind to avoid losing their minds along the way.

## C - Confidence

You want to show confidence when you walk onto the floor, that you are mentally and physically ready to be your best. Confidence comes through preparation and planning, peaking at the right time, and having rehearsed and polished routines, whether they are bronze freestyles or open-level advanced.

You should have confidence in that, from head to toe, you look like a champion. No matter what someone's budget is, they can still come out onto the floor like a champion with a clean hairstyle and careful grooming. Even if you've had a bad morning, you're nervous, or have a sore left knee, no one knows that. You have to put it behind you once you take the floor.

Go through one door and then close it behind you. You want to be confident without being arrogant.

## O - Organized

You should be organized in your weekly lesson and practice time, taking notes and reviewing your skills. If you are a newcomer student, make sure you come to your lesson the week before an event with a list of questions. If you are the teacher of a newcomer, don't assume that your student is set with extra items like hose and shoes.

Once you're at the competition, you need to organize each day by having proper rest, warm-up time, and meditation. Make sure your hair and makeup appointments have enough time to adapt to any schedule changes, etc. A top competitor will have everything in place to keep from scrambling around in case they lose a button or need superglue. It is also important to make sure you know who is responsible for picking up your tickets, packages, and heat sheets. Check your heat

sheet carefully. Students, don't assume your teacher has checked to make sure you're scheduled for all the dances you signed up for.

## M - Make Believe

Each dance should tell a story, and you can make believe you are telling the story through your performance. This may be a bit harder for newer students, but once you can get in that mindset, it makes performing easier. Here are a few fun tips:

- Make believe you absolutely love the song being played, even if you don't.
- Make believe your feet feel great, even if your shoes aren't totally broken in.
- Make believe you hear the two in mambo, even though you want to dance on the one.

## P - Practice

All the best dancers have regular practice time. You need to do more than just practice your choreography;



*Photos from the June USA Dance by Nic Westlake.*

dancing proper technique, timing, and arm styling is a must. Not only should you practice with your partner, but you should be able to practice on your own. Most likely, your teacher or coach will give you certain exercises or combinations that will develop your quality of movement, swing, sway, latin motion, forward poise, etc. At competitions, I see many top competitors warming up by themselves, with or without music, getting ready to hit the floor. Remember, once you're on that floor, it's not practice anymore; it's performance!

### **E - Enjoy**

Enjoy the whole process! Try to laugh at your lessons or practice time—no one is perfect. Take time at the event to get outside the venue. Sometimes a walk, a visit to a nearby restaurant, or doing some sightseeing will rejuvenate your spirit and clear your head of the stress of competing. The hard work, the sweat, the blisters, the muscle soreness, the wins, the losses—they are all a part of the commitment

to competing. But how you'll enjoy that massage when it's over!

And one last thing: don't forget to enjoy watching and cheering on your friends and fellow competitors. You always dance well when you have a crowd behind you, so remember to return the favor.

### **T -Tell Me**

Tell me, the judge, that you deserve my mark by proving that you have that total package. A few things that will stand out before you even take a step are grooming and the correct choice of costume that is age-appropriate and flattering for your body type. These things could make or break a mark. Don't forget that the judges are watching you as you walk out onto the floor. Are you smiling with confidence? Are your shoulders pulled back? Believe me, we want to mark you—don't blow it before you've even danced a step! Get the audience behind you when you dance. Don't focus on impressing the judges by catching their eye or dancing close to them. The

total package you present on the floor will stand out on its own.

### **E - Effort**

All of the above takes great effort. Not only does it mean effort at your lesson but also taking extra time to study DVDs and to attend seminars. It's also a good idea to watch and study performances of renowned dancers; many performances are available on DVD through Dance Vision and are an excellent source of inspiration.

Your journey of competitive dancing will most likely follow a normal learning curve. There will be good days of practice and not-so-good ones. There will be good performances on the floor, but sometimes your mind may go blank. Remember, there is only one first place that can be awarded, but if, along the way, you are developing great skills and making friendships, you will always enjoy it.

*This is an edited version of the article originally printed in the May 2013 Emerald Ball News Magazine. ■*





# PROJECT DANCE MINNESOTA

## Get Involved!

By Karen Maldonado

**H**ello, everyone! I am the newest member of the USA Dance Minnesota board. I wanted to introduce myself to the community at large and tell everyone about what an amazing and rewarding experience it has been so far.

I first got into ballroom dance two years ago as an incoming freshman to the University of Minnesota. After my first group lesson with the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club, I knew I wanted to stay. However, it wasn't until I attended Star of the North DanceSport Classic that I realized ballroom dance could be more than just social dancing. I had so much fun watching everything—performances, people getting ready, cheering for the team matches—that I knew I wanted to be part of it, even if I had no idea as to what was going on. When I did start competing, I felt like I had finally found my niche in this wonderful community. Soon after, I got involved with USA Dance when

I began to assist Corissa with Project Dance Minnesota.

Project Dance Minnesota is a fantastic opportunity hosted by USA Dance Minnesota. If you haven't already heard about it, it's an initiative to promote ballroom dance to the general public by offering free beginner ballroom group classes. Project Dance is important because it's a very welcoming gateway for beginners to try their hand at dance and get a taste of each style and different types of instructors. Since it's a weekly event, it means that those who attend the classes are getting a good amount of exposure to ballroom. And what better way to show someone how riveting dance can be than a free group lesson?

The best part about Project Dance is that the location of the classes rotates each month. So, for example, in the month of June, we had rumba over at Cheek to Cheek with Harry Benson, and this month, we have salsa with

Kate Bratt at 1:30 p.m. over at the Tapestry Folkdance Center. This allows the opportunity to explore the various studios and instructors we have around the Twin Cities. That in itself holds merit for everyone, because it provides the chance for beginning and advanced dancers alike to go to a studio, receive a lesson from a top instructor, and decide whether they want to continue their ballroom education there or not. It's the perfect occasion to find the right fit for you.

So tell your friends about Project Dance, whether they dance or not. Spreading the word is the best thing you can do to help. Letting others know is a great way to pull your non-dancing friends into ballroom, and it's a great way to let your dancing friends know about this wonderful opportunity. There are great instructors lined up until the end of the year for Project Dance, so I hope to see you there! ■

*Photos from Project Dance Minnesota at Cheek to Cheek by Karen Maldonado*





# DANCE COMPETITION THEMES

## TCO's Lady Legends

By Bonnie Burton

**T**he Twin Cities Open Ballroom Championships (TCO), under the organization of Amy and Scott Anderson, will be held this year July 11-13 in Minneapolis. Each year, TCO has a theme for its Saturday evening show, and this year's theme is Lady Legends. The show will feature music from all different genres of female singers from different decades and will incorporate big screens to add to the entertainment. Several top pros are coming to compete, so not only will the show be entertaining, but the open professional events will be exciting to watch as well.

I was curious about past themes and how dance competitions became themed events. Amy Anderson told me that not all ballroom competitions have a theme. For that matter, the TCO theme is not really a theme for the competition but rather for the Saturday evening show. She says it seems that if a competition has a theme for their show, people really look forward to it and the theme can be carried through with advertising and promotion.

The Andersons started running TCO in 1990, and their first theme was Prince. Since then, various years'

themes have included the music of the Beatles and Michael Jackson, and last year it was That's Entertainment, music from the movies. In 1998 and 1999, the Saturday evening portion of TCO was held at the Target Center. That event was called Worldance and was a benefit for Fraser Community Services here in Minnesota. The evening consisted of a beautiful dinner, and afterward, the public came into the arena (8,000 strong) and watched the finals of all styles, as well as special performances. Amy said that when they first started doing the show, they looked for themes based on something unique to Minneapolis. Nowadays, they search for what would make for entertaining and interesting show music.

One thing Amy has particularly wanted to show was how ballroom and Latin dances can be interpreted through nontraditional music—for example, a bolero danced to "Purple Rain," a tango to "Eleanor Rigby," or a foxtrot danced to "Rock With You." She explained that most of the winning couples in the show are not decided until after the open professional events, which take place only an hour before the Saturday night show

begins. So the pro couples give their own interpretation of the dance to music that has been preselected by Amy.

"Because they are seasoned pros, I never worry about the quality of their performance. In fact, there have been performances by the pros that originated at TCO which they continue to use in their own shows," Amy says. Some examples are André and Natalié Paramonov's dance to "Something" from the Beatles, Felipe and Carolina Telona's number to "Purple Rain," and Mazen Hamza's and Izabella Jundzill's choreography to "Thriller." These performances all originated at TCO.

I wondered if there ever had been a theme bloop. Amy mentioned that since they've been using the big screens and incorporating them into the show, sometimes there are computer glitches. "Each year, we learn from them. More importantly, as far as the themes themselves, it seems they have all gone over well with the audiences."

If you're interested in attending this year's TCO, you can find more information at [www.twincitiesopen.com](http://www.twincitiesopen.com). ■



# LOCAL DANCERS AUDITION FOR "SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE"

By Cathy Dessert

The Bersten family, including Alan, Elena, and Gene, all travelled to Boston to audition for the reality TV show *So You Think You Can Dance*. They prepared for the audition not only by getting audition routines in tip-top shape but also by working on other styles that the show uses, including ballroom. Elena and Gene are professional Latin partners, husband and wife, and own a dance studio locally. Alan competes in amateur Latin with his partner, Emilia Kokoszka.

I have been a faithful viewer of this show for several years, and I so enjoy the changes in the dancers as the show progresses. If you don't know how it works, potential dancers travel to

different cities and perform for the judges. They are able to choose and/or choreograph their audition pieces. If the judges like them, they get an automatic ticket to Las Vegas, or they have to compete in a choreography round in which they dance choreography that they have to learn at the audition. Some make it. Others don't.

Following these auditions, the chosen group moves on to Las Vegas. There, they winnow down the field even further. The goal at the end of the Las Vegas event is to select twenty dancers who will compete on the show: ten females and ten males. The top twenty then dance choreography given to them by top pros in the represented category of dance. Then viewers, as

well as the judges, decide if they are eliminated or go on to the next week of competition.

This year, all three Berstens got tickets to Las Vegas. Elena was eliminated first. Gene and Alan danced in a group contemporary dance based on the good works of people after the Boston Marathon bombing. As of the writing of this article, Gene has also been eliminated after making the top thirty-three in Las Vegas. Alan is ready to go on to Hollywood, with filming to continue in the coming weeks. Good luck, Alan!

Now you're up to date on the events so far. Don't forget to tune in and vote—for Alan, if you like him! ■

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# MEETING NEW FRIENDS AT THE 2013 TEA DANCE

By Chris Trask

**T**his May 5th, I was finally able to overlook the many gray days and patches of snow. Going through my closet, I decided that I would welcome a spring day of sunshine by wearing a yellow evening gown to celebrate spring at the Tea Dance, which was held at the elegant Lafayette Country Club, overlooking the serene, picturesque Lake Minnetonka.

I attended the ball without a prince charming, so I was not sure how many dances I would enjoy. I was greeted by great friends that I have acquired throughout my years of social dancing, so I was happy with my decision to attend. The DJ played a wide range of ballroom music that created a fun, festive atmosphere.

I also made new friends at the event by dancing with many students from the University of Minnesota. Their posture, etiquette, and knowledge of many ballroom dance steps amazed me. Thinking I was dancing with another university student, I couldn't resist asking a cute, dimpled young man that danced with me and a beautiful lady next to him the question, "Can I interview both of you for the July issue of the *Dancing Times*?"

After interviewing Eddie Curran, I discovered that he was not a University of Minnesota student but a graduate from Bethel University and is currently a sixth-grade teacher. He is a social dancer that started out like most of us, shy and afraid to dance in front of others.

Eddie started dancing in 2010 because most of his friends were married with children and he wanted to find new ways to socialize. He started dancing at a salsa nightclub and then proceeded to take group classes at Social Dance Studio. Salsa is still one of his favorite dances. In 2011, he bought a package of lessons at Retro Ballroom, where he discovered USA Dance during one of their monthly dances. He enjoyed it so much that now he attends most of the USA Dances and became a USA Dance member in 2012.

In 2012, he had a dance partner who was also his girlfriend at the time. Social dances and weekly lessons provided an activity they enjoyed doing together. Michael Bang and Laia



Photo from the 2013 Tea Dance by Chris Trask

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Olivier of North Star Dance Studio were their teachers.

In 2013, he entered a new phase of his dance career. He started taking lessons at Dancers Studio with Bonnie Inveen and performed his first showcase in American smooth in March. He learned that having a performance goal helped him focus his efforts and forced him to grow.

In his career as a schoolteacher, he has learned that a lot of his students are self-conscious, just as he was before he started dancing. He began incorporating dance into his classes by teaching salsa and cha cha as stretch breaks in the middle of long class periods. He also performed a tango with a history teacher at his school's winter dance. Today, he encourages his friends and

students to take dance lessons because it is fun, builds confidence, and provides great exercise.

The beautiful lady in the picture with Eddie is Naomi Ochoa. She is a second-year student at the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota, majoring in marketing with design as a minor. Naomi joined the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club her freshman year. She tried a few lessons, realized she wanted to commit time to dancing, and was welcomed to the competition team.

Her mentors are many advanced club members. Dance has given Naomi confidence in interacting and communicating with people at many different levels of experience. She is currently working on getting her friends to join

the dance community with her and plans to continue dance as a part of her life after she graduates.

The Tea Dance is one of the many social events sponsored by USA Dance Minnesota where I can meet new friends that have the same dance passion as I do. My gratitude goes to all past and present USA Dance Minnesota board members and to Theresa Kimler and Nels Petersen for all the hard work and dedication they provide in helping to preserve and promote ballroom dancing both as an art and a healthful sport.

If you are interested in becoming a USA Dance member, please call the hotline at (651) 483-5467. ■

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## DANCE SOUP

Join Dance and Entertainment for the second annual free outdoor summer dance series! Each Tuesday in July, meet at the Ojibway Park bandshell at 2695 Ojibway Drive in Woodbury for free outdoor dancing to live music. In case of rain, meet at the Central Park indoor amphitheater.

### **Tuesday, July 2 - Ballroom & Latin Night**

6:30 p.m. - Cha Cha Lesson by James & Tricia Wood  
7 - 9 p.m. - Dancing to Pizzazz Jazz Band

### **Tuesday, July 9 - Old-Time Night**

6:30 p.m. - Polka Lesson by James & Tricia Wood  
7 - 9 p.m. - Dancing to the Hank Thunander Band

### **Tuesday, July 16 - Ballroom Night**

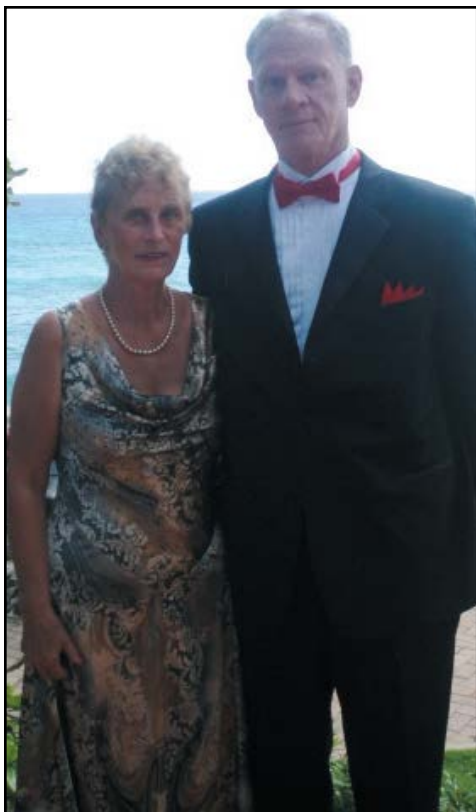
6:30 p.m. - Foxtrot Lesson by James & Tricia Wood  
7 - 9 p.m. - Dancing to Tim Patrick and His Blue Eyes Band

### **Tuesday, July 23 - Country Night**

6:30 p.m. - Country Two-Step Lesson  
by James & Tricia Wood  
7 - 9 p.m. - Dancing to the Dixie Hicks Band

### **Tuesday, July 30 - Swing Night**

6:30 p.m. - Swing Lesson by James & Tricia Wood  
7 - 9 p.m. - Dancing to the Red Rock Swing Band



*John S. Munday is a writer and lawyer who lives in Isanti County, Minnesota, with his wife, Fran. Together, they found ballroom dancing at Cheek to Cheek Studio, where Jack takes lessons with Monica Mohn. Jack's book, *Beauty in Partnership, A Memoir of Ballroom Dancing*, is available at [www.johnsmunday.com](http://www.johnsmunday.com) and several dance studios.*

## GENTLEMEN LEAD

By Jack Munday

**B**ack in April, Harry Benson's Cheek to Cheek Studio held its Spring Showcase, and the smooth formation team, coached by Monica Mohn, was finally able to perform. The rhythm team also performed, but that's another story. You may wonder why I'm writing about it now. If you were one of my children, I would say, "Because I can." The real reason is that I wanted to reflect on the performance and on formation teams in general. To start, I will say that we had a lot of fun dancing our Viennese waltz to flamenco music.

I first wrote about this choreography in the fall of 2011, and almost a year and a half later, we performed as a team. Almost. Monica paired the ladies with the gentlemen by height. Jim Tomlin and Mary Brusven were the shortest (or least tall), David Brusven and Irene Erickson were in the middle, and I was paired with Julie Elholm. The ascent in dancer height fit nicely with the diagonal lines and triangles we formed.

There have been a number of reasons we haven't performed before this showcase, most of them to do with health. My neck surgery is one example. This time, Julie injured her foot (and has now recovered). The injury prevented her from being part of this performance. Fortunately, Julie will be back with us at our performance at the Twin Cities Open in July.

So I was saddled with Monica. I'm being funny. Actually, I had the honor of having Monica as my partner. We three couples gathered with genuine excitement as the music started. Off we went, and we had a ton of fun. At the end, as we walked off to very nice applause, we wore the smiles of dancers feeling good about their dancing.

When I looked at the photos Fran took of our performance, I made several interesting observations. Firstly,

costumes count! The ladies' dresses were so mesmerizing that the first time they wore them, we guys were spellbound and stopped dancing. The ladies took to wearing them at practice so we could adjust to seeing their flamboyant movement. The photos showed how the dresses could draw the audience's attention to them and away from the gentlemen. Who knew that a gown could (and should) be such a powerful tool in the performance?

I now understand even more clearly how Monica could win three national championships. In every photo, she had the posture and position of a top performer, but it was her expression that drew me in. Monica is always coaching us that dancing comes from the inner core. I now understand how that applies to expression, too. You connect to the inner core of the soul when you perform your dance. We did the right leads and steps and kept with the rhythm of the music, finishing as the last note sounded. We gentlemen focused on the movement of the dance patterns, so our expressions reflected concentration rather than passion. I look forward to our next performance, where the men will stand taller and dance bigger, giving the gowns a run for their money, and replacing the expression of concentration with the macho passion that I know is in my dancing soul. We hope to have the ladies so overwhelmed that they throw themselves at our feet.

Is it worth it to dance in formation? For me, the answer is a very certain, "Yes!" Getting to know and dance with others who have the same appreciation of dancing as you do is a delight. So is performing, and while we don't actually compete with other teams, we do get to be center stage for our moment in the sun. We'll perform this specific dance for a while, then maybe something new. ■



# COMPETITION CALENDAR

Jul 11-13, 2013

## **Twin Cities Open Ballroom Championships**

Hosted by Scott & Amy Anderson at the Minneapolis Marriott City Center. Visit [www.twincitiesopen.com](http://www.twincitiesopen.com) or email [megamarc@frontiernet.net](mailto:megamarc@frontiernet.net).

Jul 27, 2013

## **Southern Star Mid-Summer Classic**

Hosted by Southern Star USA Dance Chapter #6038 in Tampa, FL. Will not accrue proficiency points and may not follow all rules in the rulebook.

Aug 10 - 11, 2013

## **2013 Heartland Classic - NOE**

Hosted by Heartland, IN USA Dance Chapter #2022. Qualifying Event for 2014 Nationals.

Sep 7, 2013

## **Kansas City Dance Classic**

Organized by Matt & Ellen Pansing in Overland Park, KS. Will not accrue proficiency points and may not follow all rules in the rulebook.

Sep 28, 2013

## **New England DanceSport Championships - NOE**

Hosted by MASSabba USA Dance Chapter #3002 in Danvers, MA. Qualifying event for 2014 Nationals.

Oct 4 - 6, 2013

## **Carolina Fall Classic - NOE**

Organized by Wayne & Marie Crowder in Charlotte, NC. Qualifying event for 2014 Nationals.

Oct 12 - 13, 2013

## **Northwest DanceSport Championships - NOE**

Hosted by Portland USA Dance Chapter #1006. Qualifying event for 2014 Nationals.

Nov 1 - 3, 2013

## **Chicago DanceSport Challenge - NOE**

Hosted by Chicagoland USA Dance Chapter #2001. Qualifying event for 2014 Nationals.

Feb 15 - 16, 2014

## **Mid-Atlantic Championships - NOE**

Hosted by Mid-Eastern USA Dance Chapter #6001 in Bethesda, MD. Qualifying event for 2014 Nationals.

Mar 28 - 30, 2014

## **2014 National DanceSport Championships.**

To be held in Baltimore, MD.

Aug 1 - 3, 2014

## **Derby City DanceSport Championships - NOE**

Sponsored by Greater Louisville USA Dance Chapter #2021 in Louisville, KY. Qualifying event for 2015 Nationals.

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# ASK DR. DANCE

Submit your questions to Dr. Dance: [newsletter@usadance-mn.org](mailto:newsletter@usadance-mn.org).

**Q:** I'm shopping for a new dress—open standard for now, but I'll probably be looking for a new rhythm dress soon, too. I'm no expert, but sometimes \$5,000 dresses look cheaply made to me. When I'm looking for a dress that will wow the judges, what are some things I should be sure to look for? And are there certain questions I should ask?

## Donna Said:

Great costumes enhance your figure, disguise flaws in your technique, help further the image that you want to portray as a dancer, and attract attention by being beautiful or striking. Judges are wowed by the whole package: dancing, performance, and visual appeal. When your look and your dancing are in harmony and create a picture of class, elegance, beauty, or glamour, you are on the right track.

The biggest costuming mistakes that I notice when judging are dancers wearing costumes that are too tight and show bits and bulges; wearing exposed styles made for young, athletically toned dancers when it would be more flattering to be covered; and wearing nude dance pants that draw our attention away from your dancing and make us worry that part of your costume is missing.

Looking great does not have to cost \$5,000. If you have a good figure and do lovely dancing, sometimes a simple, elegant style with fabulous jewelry and professionally done hair and makeup can look great. You

should also always compete in clean satin dance shoes. Once they are dirty or worn, they need to be used as practice shoes.

Ask your teacher or coach and dressmaker what advice they have for your next costume. Because styles change all the time, make sure you are informed about what's being worn now. If you are shopping for a standard gown, check out pictures of the recent Blackpool professional finalists, as those dancers will be the style-setters.

Ultimately, you have to look good and feel comfortable in whatever costume you purchase. You'll never please 100% of the judges with your costume choice, so make sure that you love what you buy.

## Paul Said:

I think that no dress will make you win a competition, but a bad dress can certainly lose a competition for you. If you're constantly adjusting a strap or pulling down a skirt that is too tight, you are certainly drawing the judges' attention for the wrong reasons.

Make sure you deal with a reputable dressmaker. If this is your first dress from that company or designer, make sure you practice all your dances in the dress to eliminate future issues. If a dress looks weirdly multicolored but kind of cool, resist the impulse to be quite so different. Ask your teacher for his or her opinion. Above all, trust your own instincts. Good luck!

## The Dance Medic Said:

Fit is the critical thing, and *fit* means many different things. Here are some useful questions, as requested.

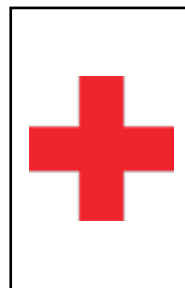
First does the gown fit your body, flatter it, and move easily with you? When you try on a gown, take your dance position and do a little shaping. Does the gown shape with you? Does it reveal anything you are not comfortable with? Is it appropriate to the condition and age of your body? Are design lines placed well on your body? If your legs are short and your body long, does the gown help you look like a standard dancer or tell the judges you might be better suited to Latin? If your bust is big and your



*Donna Edelstein is a coach, judge, and organizer of the Snow Ball DanceSport Competition. [donnawrites@msn.com](mailto:donnawrites@msn.com) 763-557-6006*



*Paul Botes is a dance instructor, coach, choreographer, and judge. He is an owner of American Classic Ballroom, located in Chanhassen, MN.*



*The Dance Medic is a member of the Minnesota dance community chosen each month based on his or her unique insight on the question.*

shoulders wide, does the gown provide balance for those features elsewhere? And then, if alterations will be done, will they be done well and in a timely fashion? If it still does not fit after the alterations, then what is your recourse? And for standard, is it the right length, or will you fall to the floor when you catch your heel after you lower and reach back?

Next, does the gown fit your dancing? You do not mention a level, so your could be dancing open bronze, silver, gold, or you might be trying to win at championship level. Your gown should not make any promises about you that your dancing cannot keep. If you look like a *wow*, then you had best actually be a *wow*. Does it have hem details that call attention to your footwork? Then your footwork must be spot on. Does it show lots of back? Then your musculature had better be correctly active. Was it actually designed for your style (in your case, standard) and hence have detail and focus that shows best in hold, since you will not be doing open work? It obviously needs to look wonderful

when you are breathing between dances, away from your partner, but \$1,000 spent on stoning for the front of the gown is not money well spent for your purpose.

And then, does the gown fit your personality? Sometimes dancers allow well-meaning advisors to drag them well outside their personal comfort zone in the quest for a "better" look on the floor. Often, those dancers simply cannot carry off the image that others believe they need, and nothing looks worse than feeling like you do not belong in what you are wearing. Choose something that promotes who you are. You might get a little boost toward something to which you aspire from a gown, but integrity is visible to judges, and most would rather see a realistic presentation than a clash of values.

Next, does the gown fit your purposes? Do you plan to wear it for one event, one season, one year, or keep it for a long time? Is it super trendy or more classic? What kind of resale value do you want it to have when you sell it? Does the seller have a

buyback program, and what does that entail? Some take your gown on consignment, and some buy back at half the original value toward another gown from their company. Some require prodding to pay you when your gown does sell. Find out what commitment you are making when you buy. And here is where the "cheaply made" consideration comes into play. Does it have sharp embellishment that will rip your partner's tail suit to shreds? Will the feathers, rhinestones, and beads stay on? Is it alterable for the next buyer?

Finally, does the gown fit your budget? \$5,000 is a substantial investment. Will you still be able to afford coaching, travel, and entry fees? Does the price reflect what you have to spend? Because not all gowns cost \$5,000. Appropriate costuming can help you on the floor, but no gown can win for you. You say you want to wow the judges. Do that with your dancing, and be sure your gown supports your efforts with a perfect fit. ■



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➤ **Contact Anne 612.280.7818**

Contact for photos.

**Size 6-10: White Smooth Gown with Gold and Turquoise Accents**

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➤ **Contact Cheri 763.544.6724 [artncheri@aol.com](mailto:artncheri@aol.com)**

Contact for details and photos.

**Size 2-6: American Smooth Gowns**

\$500-\$700.

➤ **Contact Janie 763.797.5230 [janienordberg@comcast.net](mailto:janienordberg@comcast.net)**

Contact for photos. More gowns available to purchase and rent. Payment plans accepted.

**Size 2-8: Gorgeous Peach Championship Gown**

One of a kind! Beautiful open back, stretch satin skirt with godets add fullness to movement. Fully stoned bodice and elegant gloves to match! Like new! Made by Marsha Wiest-Hines. \$1200.

**Size 2-8: Beautiful Pink/Metallic Gold Smooth Gown**

Very feminine look with lace trim on neckline, bodice, long sleeves and hems. Full coverage in AB multicolor stones! Like new—worn only twice! \$1100.

**Size 2-8: Elegant Black Championship Gown**

Luxurious maribu boa on hem and neckline. Beautifully designed with open back and long sleeves. Shows off curves. Covered in AB multicolor stones. \$1100 OBO.

**Size 2-8: Black Gown with Hot Orange & Yellow Accents**

Stunning gown has fiery orange and yellow accents, drapes on long sleeves, bodice, and chiffon layers of skirt. Sexy slit shows off legs. Beautiful color rhinestones. \$800 OBO.

**Size 2-8: Sexy Pink & White Rhythm Dress**

This stunning dress has tons of stones, beautiful pearl beading, and flirty skirt! Bracelets, necklace, and accessories included. A showstopper! \$700.

➤ **Contact Bernice 952.936.2185 or 952.545.2989**

**Size 7 ½ to 8N: Ladies' Smooth Capezio Dance Shoes**

Closed-toe pumps. Flesh-colored. Worn once. \$50.

➤ **Contact Theresa Kimler 612.414.3099 [theresakimler@yahoo.com](mailto:theresakimler@yahoo.com)**

Most dresses also for rent for \$250-\$300. Photos and more information: [www.narrowcouture.com/#!/users/tkm/items](http://www.narrowcouture.com/#!/users/tkm/items)

**Size 2-8: Marilyn Monroe-Inspired Ballgown**

White gown with gold waist accent shaped perfectly to create a slim silhouette. Silk skirt, slit on right leg, mid-height backline. Made by Doré. \$2800.

**Size 2-6: Trendy Gold Ballgown**

Super-shiny with rhinestone accent design to complement any figure. Best on someone who wants to stand out in a crowd. Classic design meets the latest trend in fabrics! Includes super-sparkly armbands. \$2800.

**Size 2-8: White & Black Couture Ballgown**

Designed by Chanel, brought to life by Jordy. Look for the signature crossing-C design. Black sheer over nude top with full rhinestones, long sleeves, white skirt. Mid-height backline. Great for standard or smooth. \$2400.

**Size 2-8: 2 Elegant Smooth Gowns with Long Sleeves and Fox-Fur Cuff**

1) Black mesh peeks through an intricate velvet pattern overlay. Cobalt blue rhinestones. Made by Doré. \$2000.

2) Gorgeous sheer navy blue with rhinestones from top to bottom. Made by Randall Designs. \$2000.

**Size 2-8: The Ultimate White Designs to Shine Gown**

Multiple blue-shaded stone pattern. 3-layer skirt, armbands, amazing necklace, hair accessory. Must-see. Worn twice. \$4000.

**Size 2-8: Latin/Rhythm Dress - Black with Red Scarves**

Jet stones, silk chiffon skirt, 3/4-length sleeves, sweetheart neckline, bracelet, earrings, hair decoration. Made by Doré. \$1000.

**Size 2-8: Latin/Rhythm Gown**

Black stretch velvet bodice. Multi-layered silk skirt that ends at knees when still. A great dress for the classic, movie-star type dancer. Effortless wear. Made by Doré. \$1000.

**Size 35.5 (US 6.5): Dance Naturals Tan Satin Latin/Rhythm Shoes**  
2-1/2" heel. Brand-new. \$75.

**Size 5EU (US 7 to 7.5): Supadance 1026 Beige Leather Practice Shoe**  
Worn once. \$75.

➤ **Contact Gail 651.387.0885 [gailmulcahey@yahoo.com](mailto:gailmulcahey@yahoo.com)**

**Size 5: Elegance Shoe Company Ladies Open-Toe Shoes**

2 1/2 inch heel. Flesh-colored. Great quality; no longer fit due to pregnancy. \$45.

# DANCE PARTNER WANTED ADS

Looking for a practice partner? Compose an ad letting potential partners know what you're looking for and how to contact you. Submit ads of a maximum of three lines to [newsletter@usadance-mn.org](mailto:newsletter@usadance-mn.org). Please include area code with any phone number.

➤ **Vee Hammond 651.206.9890 [vee.hammond@comcast.net](mailto:vee.hammond@comcast.net)**

Follow, 5' 2", seeks practice partner for bronze/some silver-level Latin and smooth styles. Takes private lessons periodically. Loves to perform. Possible lesson sharing, showcases, or competitions.

➤ **Marty Faeh 952.220.1851**

**[marty\\_faeh@yahoo.com](mailto:marty_faeh@yahoo.com)**

Lead, 5'11", 51, seeks practice partner for bronze competition-level standard, smooth,

and rhythm. 3 years' dance experience. Takes lessons weekly. Will provide floor time. St. Paul.

➤ **Jane Phipps 612.859.5245**

**[janep1951@gmail.com](mailto:janep1951@gmail.com)**

Follow, 5'5", seeks practice partner for bronze/silver competition-level smooth and rhythm. 3 years' dance experience. Takes lessons regularly. Any practice location okay.

➤ **Justin Sundberg 612.964.1741**

**[justin@jdsundberg.com](mailto:justin@jdsundberg.com)**

Lead, 5'10", 28, seeks practice partner for smooth, rhythm, and WCS. Open to all styles and possible lessons or competition. 3 years' experience. Will provide floor time at a major studio.

# DANCE CONTACTS

A collection of businesses and clubs of interest to Minnesota dancers. If you'd like to be listed on this page, send your contact information to [newsletter@usadance-mn.org](mailto:newsletter@usadance-mn.org).

## STUDIOS

**AMERICAN CLASSIC BALLROOM**  
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952.934.0900  
[www.acballroom.com](http://www.acballroom.com)

*Instructors:*  
Natalie Palmer Botes, Paul Botes

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

**BALANCE POINTE STUDIOS**  
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