

MINNESOTA

DANCING TIMES

A publication of the Minnesota Chapter 2011 of USA Dance

November 2013



Photo from Minnesota Ballroom Blast by Karin Lynn Photography



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

MINNESOTA BALLROOM BLAST, USA DANCE MINNESOTA BOARD TRIVIA, AND MORE!

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Upcoming Dances

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 Web: www.usadance-mn.org

November

Saturday, November 16th

**6:30 pm USA Dance Minnesota
 Annual Meeting** - Free admission
 to the dance and giveaways!

7-8 pm Bolero Lesson
Instructor: Jonathan Chen

8-11 pm Variety Dance
Music DJ: Jonathan Chen

\$7 USA Dance members
\$10 Non-members

Cinema Ballroom
 1560 St. Clair Avenue
 St. Paul, MN 55105

December

Saturday, December 21st

7-8 pm Waltz Lesson
Instructor: Jeff Nehrbass

8-11 pm Variety Dance

\$7 USA Dance members
\$10 Non-members

Balance Pointe Studios
 5808 West 36th Street
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USA Dance MN HOTLINE
(651) 483-5467
www.usadance-mn.org

Call for information on dance events.
 Leave a message for membership information.

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.

Fri 11/1 - Tim Patrick and His Blue Eyes
 Band; Eagles, 2507 E 25th St,
 Minneapolis; CD Release Party;
 lesson at 7, full band 8-11:30;
 \$12; 612 724 9714 or www.timpatrickmusic.com

Sun 11/3 - TC Rebels Variety Dance;
 Social Dance Studio, 3742 23rd
 Ave S, Minneapolis; 7-10:30; \$11,
 \$7 members; 952 941 0906, info@tcrebels.com, or www.tcrebels.com

Mon 11/4 - Rhythm Junction; Four Seasons
 Dance Studio, 1637 Hennepin Ave S,
 Mpls; Swing Dance; 8-11; \$5; 612 342
 0902 or www.fourseasonsdance.com

Wed 11/6 - West Coast Swing Dance Party;
 Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N,
 St. Paul; 9-10; 651 641 0777 or www.dancersstudio.com

Thu 11/7 - Variety Dance; Lenox
 Community Center, 6715
 Minnetonka Blvd, St. Louis Park;
 Live music by the Dick Macko Band;
 1-3:30 p.m.; \$7, \$5 Lenox members;
 contact Sheldon at 763 226 8447 or
sdabma@aol.com

Thu 11/7 - Variety Dance; Dancers Studio,
 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; 651
 641 0777 or www.dancersstudio.com

Sat 11/9 - Free Dance Party and Book
 Launch; Tula Yoga and Wellness,
 99 Snelling Ave N, St. Paul; Launch
 party for "Moved to Create" by
 Julie Delene: free dance lessons,
 performances, and variety dance;
 7-10 p.m.; 612 598 5355, julie@movedtocreate.com, or www.movedtocreate.com

Sat 11/9 - Tango Society of Minnesota
 Milonga; SOKOL Hall, 2nd floor,
 383 Michigan Street, St. Paul; Live
 music sets by Alejandro Ziegler
 Tango Quartet from Buenos Aires;
 lesson at 8:30, dance 9:30-12:30; \$25,
 \$20 members; 612 224 2905 or www.mntango.org

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

Wed 11/13 - West Coast Swing Dance
 Party; Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal
 St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; 651 641 0777 or
www.dancersstudio.com

Thu 11/14 - Variety Dance; Dancers Studio,
 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; 651
 641 0777 or www.dancersstudio.com

Sat 11/16 - Aqua Gliders Dance Club;
 Social Hall, St. Richard's Catholic
 Church, 7540 Penn Ave S, Richfield;
 Quickstep lesson at 7:30, dancing
 8:45-11; partner required; 612 869
 3062

Sat 11/16 - USA Dance; Cinema Ballroom,
 1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul; Bolero
 lesson at 7, dance 8-11; \$10, \$7 USA
 Dance members

Sun 11/17 - FREE Beginner West Coast
 Swing Class; Dancers Studio, 415
 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 2:00-3:30;
 instructor Etta Berkland; 651 641
 0777

Sun 11/17 - TC Rebels Variety Dance;
 Social Dance Studio, 3742 23rd
 Ave S, Minneapolis; 7-10:30; \$11,
 \$7 members, \$1 off with food shelf
 donation; 952 941 0906, info@tcrebels.com, or www.tcrebels.com

Mon 11/18 - Rhythm Junction; Four Seasons
 Dance Studio, 1637 Hennepin Ave S,
 Mpls; Swing Dance; 8-11; \$5; 612 342
 0902 or www.fourseasonsdance.com

Tue 11/19 - Tim Patrick and His Blue Eyes
 Band; Skateville, 201 S River Ridge
 Circle, Burnsville; Lesson at 6, full
 band 7-10; \$12; 952 890 0988 or
www.timpatrickmusic.com

Wed 11/20 - West Coast Swing Dance Party;
 Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N,
 St. Paul; 9-10; 651 641 0777 or www.dancersstudio.com

Thu 11/21 - Variety Dance; Dancers Studio,
 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; 651
 641 0777 or www.dancersstudio.com

Sun 11/24 - Dance Demo; Rosedale Mall;
 1-1:30, 2-2:30 p.m.; contact Yvonne
 Viehman at (763) 553-1202 or
danvman@aol.com to participate

Sun 11/24 - FREE Beginner West Coast
 Swing Class; Dancers Studio, 415
 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 2:00-3:30;
 instructor Etta Berkland; 651 641
 0777

Mon 11/25 - Rhythm Junction; Four Seasons
 Dance Studio, 1637 Hennepin Ave S,
 Mpls; Swing Dance; 8-11; \$5; 612 342
 0902 or www.fourseasonsdance.com

Wed 11/27 - West Coast Swing Dance Party;
 Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal St. N,
 St. Paul; 9-10; 651 641 0777 or www.dancersstudio.com

Thu 11/28 - Variety Dance; Dancers Studio,
 415 Pascal St. N, St. Paul; 9-10; 651
 641 0777 or www.dancersstudio.com ■

USA Dance – MN Chapter #2011 Board Minutes

Tuesday, October 8th, 2013

Submitted by Karen Maldonado

In attendance: Daniel O'Connell (President), Cathy Dessert (Vice President), Jane Phipps (Treasurer), Zhuojing Liu, Marty Faeh, Tracy Frazee, Karen Maldonado

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

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

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Treasurer's Report

- Jane submitted a current report.
- The treasurer's report approved.

Brief Area Reports

Karen — Project Dance

- Karen submitted a plan for next year's free Sunday classes.
- The board approved going forward, including funding for January and February.
- Karen requested more volunteers to help run the classes.

Marty — Social Media and Facilities

- Marty is working with Tracy on finding storage space.
- Marty is active with social media such as Facebook and MeetUp.

Daniel — President

- Facilitate positive interactions.
- Checks in with each board member every two months.

PROJECTS

Hunting and Storing Our "Stuff"

- Tracy did research on finding the best storage unit.
- Marty on point for securing the space.
- E-mail to follow up on discussion.

Star of the North Kickoff Meeting

- Tracy, Marty, Jane, Cathy, and Karen attended.
- Informational and gave good insight into the core volunteer mindset.

Lamberton, MN Outreach

- Board approved to give away four tickets to the next monthly variety dance.

Blast Update

- Everything in order.
- Cathy will continue working on finding vendors for the event.
- Zhuojing, Cathy, Jane, Karen, and Daniel will be there to volunteer.

November Chapter Meeting

- Meeting will be held before the third Saturday of the month dance in November at Cinema.
- Jane and Cathy will be making the necessary arrangements.

Mall of America Demos

- Discussion was had about participation eligibility for the upcoming demos.

Volunteers and Sponsors

- The board discussed the contributions of our many volunteers and sponsors.

Pro and Pro/Am Outreach

- The board discussed ways to build a good relationship with the pros and pro/ams of the community.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, November 5th, 2013 - 5:30 p.m.

Quixotic Coffee, 769 Cleveland Avenue South ■



Photo from Minnesota Ballroom Blast
by Karin Lynn Photography

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
Design/Layout: Nic Westlake (612) 412-1112
Advertising: Bonnie Burton (952) 454-4620
Mailing: Committee member

Contributors: Mary Beth Beckman, Paul Botes, Tyler Bridges, Bonnie Burton, Cathy Dessert, Elizabeth Dickinson, Donna Edelstein, Marty Faeh, Karin Lynn Photography, Michael Kasinkas, Jack Munday, Deborah J. Nelson, Daniel O'Connell, Maggie Paynter, Lesley Schneider, Chris Trask, Kevin Viratysin

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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FROM THE EDITOR

By Mary Beth Beckman



I'm writing this from DanceLife Ballroom's Grand Opening. I also did all of my editing here, so please excuse any errors in this issue. Loud music and excited, chatting people aren't exactly a meditative environment where confusing sentences and misplaced modifiers jump out at me.

"Mary Beth," you might ask, "why are you sitting on your computer editing at a social dance?" If you want me to be honest with you, I feel hopelessly awkward at these things, and social anxiety is a fierce adversary. But I like being surrounded by people enjoying dance while I get work done, so everyone wins. (I'm sure some of you are saying, "Oh, *that* was Mary Beth? I thought she was that woman in the blue dress." Nope. That was Talia again.)

I'm also a bit behind because Minnesota Ballroom Blast was this

past weekend, so I extended the deadline in hopes of getting lots of exciting content. I was in the Great Hall at Coffman Memorial Union from about 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., and the main thing I noticed was how different this event is from Star of the North. The core elements are the same, of course—ballroom dance, fancy costumes, registration packets, numbers on gentlemen's backs—but the atmosphere is just very relaxed. It really is the perfect preparatory event for Star. It gives people the opportunity to get their feet wet so they're prepared for when they're being judged against their peers and not just themselves. Both events are full of excitement, fun, and valuable learning experiences, but Blast has the warm, safe feeling of a rehearsal, where Star has the charged tension of a performance. They're both wonderful experiences, and they're each made better by being experienced in tandem.

Preparation for the 2014 Star of the North is already underway, and you might be starting to think about how you'd like to be involved this year. Are you competing? Spectating? Volunteering? I'll certainly be volunteering again, and maybe this year I'll get back on the floor for a mixed proficiency event or two.

Be sure to check out the great photos Karin Lynn Photography shared with us from Blast, and get your submissions for the December issue to me by November 10th. And if you're curious, the baby in my photo this month is my newborn nephew, Malcolm, named after Captain Malcolm Reynolds. The nerdblood runs deep in my family.

To solicit Mary Beth's editing services, ask questions about the newsletter, or submit content, contact her at newsletter@usadance-mn.org. ■



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Daniel O'Connell

*Daniel O'Connell is the president of USA Dance Minnesota and competes nationwide with his amateur partner, Rosemary O'Connell. How about some math this month? According to Wikipedia, the interesting number paradox is as follows: If there exists a non-empty set of uninteresting numbers, there would be a *smallest* uninteresting number. However, the smallest uninteresting number is itself interesting *because* it is the smallest uninteresting number. Therefore, we have a contradiction and all natural numbers are inherently interesting.*

This month, USA Dance Minnesota will be holding its annual members' meeting. We'll be meeting before the monthly variety dance at Cinema Ballroom from 6:30 - 7:00 p.m., after which the dance will occur as normal. Entry to the dance is free for those who attend the meeting. We also plan to give away two tickets to the Tea Dance and four spectator tickets for Star of the North. Refreshments and snacks will also be served.

Star of the North is March 1st and 2nd at the Crowne Plaza - St. Paul Riverfront. We're anticipating about four hundred competitors and over five hundred spectators this year, so it should be a great event. If you have any questions, please feel free to check out the website at www.sotncomp.com or email us at sotn@usadance-mn.org.

Minnesota Ballroom Blast was a *huge* success this year. We doubled the size of the event, and we're now up to over 330 participants from the community. We had participation from ages eight to eighty-five, from Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and the Dakotas. I think it speaks to the strength of the event that we reach such a diverse audience.

You'll find wonderful articles and pictures in this issue, and I think they're worth a look.

I'd like to thank the folks who showed up to participate, watch, or volunteer at Blast. There are far too many of you to name, but I hope you found the experience rewarding and fun. I'd also like to thank our wonderful judges, Elena Bersten, Julie Jacobson, Cynthia Lehew-Nehrbass, Mariusz Olszewski, and Lisa Vogel; our MC, Shinya McHenry; and our DJ, Chris Kempainen. Every participant I spoke with was thrilled with the feedback, music, and games. Thank you for taking time out of your busy lives to help make the event a success.

If you have any feedback about the Blast, please drop us a note at blast@usadance-mn.org. We put this event on for you guys, so we take your feedback to heart. Next year's event will be October 25th (a Saturday, huzzah!) at the North Star Ballroom on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul Campus. This is where April's monthly variety dance is held, for those of you who have attended.

Have a wonderful November, everyone! ■

www.tcrebels.com

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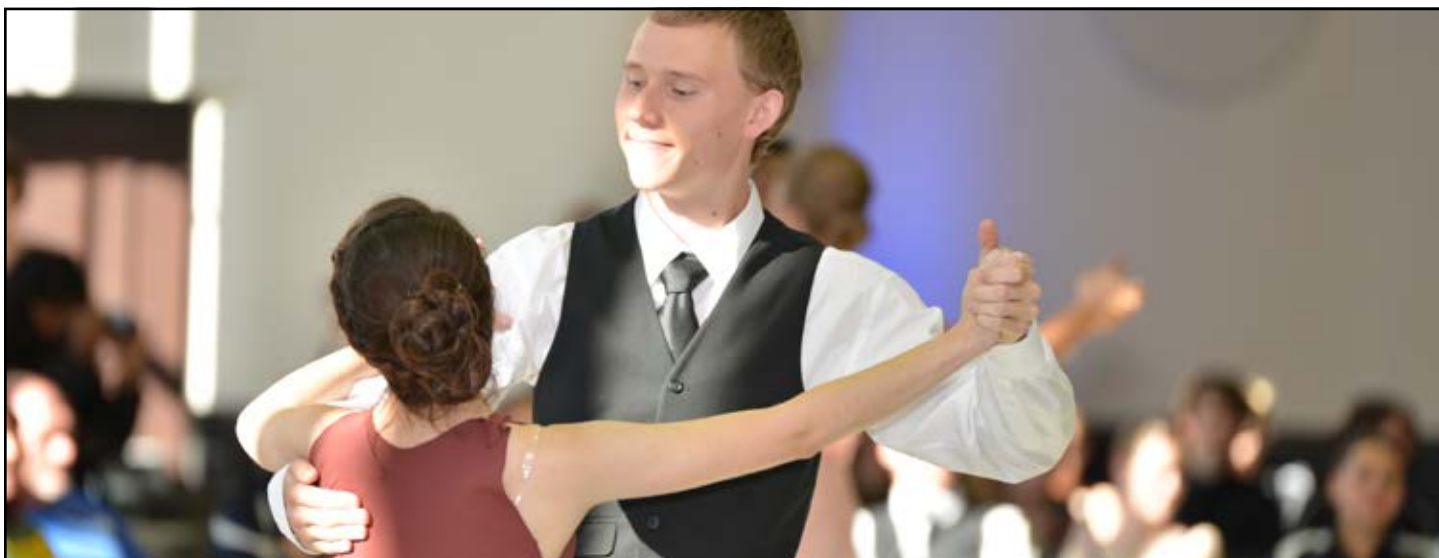
By Tyler Bridges

The second annual Minnesota Ballroom Blast was held on Sunday, October 13th, and it truly was a blast. The event was hosted at the University of Minnesota, in the Coffman Memorial Union. Several schools came out to dance, and there was a large audience to watch the proceedings all day long. All four categories of competitive ballroom (rhythm, Latin, smooth, and standard) were displayed during the day session.

There was a panel of judges writing critiques for the dancers, as this was more of an exhibition than a competition. I enjoyed that aspect of the event, as it took off all the stress of a competition but left the fun elements. Shinya McHenry was present again as the Master of Ceremonies, and he led the dancers in a few fun games as well. I have to say, the disco line dance was especially entertaining.

The night session is where the stars came to shine. We saw performances

from the likes of Andy and Janie Norberg, Gene and Elena Bersten, and Nels Petersen and Theresa Kimler. It was awe-inspiring and fantastic to witness. Sprinkled in among the wonderful performances were some general dances, which allowed us to mingle with the dancers from other schools. It was a long day but a fun one, and it was one of the best times I've had in my time as a ballroom dancer. ■



Photos from Minnesota Ballroom Blast by Karin Lynn Photography



UPCOMING DANCE DEMOS

If you're looking for a non-competitive opportunity to showcase your talent, how about joining a dance demo sponsored by USA Dance? We're always looking for silver- to open-level dancers to entertain the crowds at local malls. Grab a dance partner or your formation team and dance your hearts out!

If you'd like to participate, please contact Yvonne Viehman at (763) 553-1202 or danvman@aol.com for more information. All formation team routines will be previewed. Appropriate costuming is always appreciated, as we put on family-friendly shows. Join the fun!

SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, November 24 — 1-1:30, 2-2:30 p.m.

Rosedale Mall

Sunday, December 1st — 1-1:30, 2-2:30 p.m.

Rosedale Mall

THE VALUE OF MINNESOTA BALLROOM BLAST

By Michael Kasinkas

This was the second installment of Minnesota Ballroom Blast, with 2012 being its inaugural year, and it was fantastic! We introduced eighty-five new people to ballroom dancing in a way that they will never forget. While acquainting eighty-five complete strangers with ballroom dance, we also increased adult participation sixfold and at least doubled the participation of collegiate entries by bringing in students from Luther College, University of Minnesota - Rochester, University of Northern Iowa, and Carleton College. As chair, I was very pleased that my team was able to bring in participants from over three hours away. Overall, we saw 330 participants at Minnesota Ballroom Blast, with more than 165 competitors and over 160 spectators.

There are too many people to thank in this article who made this year's

Minnesota Ballroom Blast a huge success, but I wanted to thank some of its biggest contributors.

A big thank you to this year's board: Daniel O'Connell, who did a wonderful job bringing in collegiate participants; Mary Beth Beckman, without whom there would be no registration; Nic Westlake, who made all the graphics and organized all the heats; Jane Phipps, who made sure all things money were under control; Karen Maldonado, who made sure we had the correct venue layout as well as securing Blast's 2014 date, Saturday, October 25th; Katarina Karlen, who designed the wonderful decoration scheme; and Brian Folger, who organized volunteers. Thank you to our wonderful on-deck captains, Zhuojing Liu and Len Ferrington, who managed to get all the participants on the floor for their dancing on time with

no holdups. A very special thank you to Cathy Dessert, who did anything and everything to help make Blast run smoothly on the day of the event. I also wanted to thank Bill Dessert at Rapit Printing for printing such amazing tickets and programs. My thanks and gratitude go out to the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club for their key volunteerism and participation. Their support is what made Minnesota Ballroom Blast possible in the first place. Lastly and most importantly, I want to thank our judges, Elena Bersten, Julie Jacobson, Cynthia Lehew-Nehrbass, Mariusz Olszewski, and Lisa Vogel; our wonderful MC, Shinya McHenry; our DJ, Chris Kempainen; and all of our night show performers. Their investment in the future of dance will go a long way in enhancing the ballroom dance community.



Photo from Minnesota Ballroom Blast by Karin Lynn Photography

All those wonderful things aside, there is still something that bothers me in today's ballroom dance community. I've only danced for three years and have only recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics, mathematics, and statistics, so I'll admit I'm still learning how the ballroom dancing market functions here in Minnesota. But I don't fully comprehend why there are not more pros in this market like those who most graciously supported Blast this year, or why more pros don't eagerly support events like Blast and Star of the North.

In spring of 2012 I saw a sizable market of amateur and collegiate dancers in the Twin Cities and around the Midwest that were not given ample opportunities to participate in low-cost events giving them outlets to test out their own dancing. They didn't have access to the best professional

dancers in the Midwest for review and coaching. I decided to create an event with the help and support of the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club and the local USA Dance Minnesota chapter.

My first attempt to pair with the pro community failed because they said it was not in their best interest. On the contrary, I propose that introducing as many as eighty-five new people to dance each year is a boon to everyone. Giving both newcomers and returning dancers opportunities to interact with amazing professional dancers through getting their critiques, watching their performances, and being able to approach them for paid coaching is in the interest of every pro and amateur alike. If we say eighty-five dancers a year each purchase at least one coaching lesson at a median of \$60 a lesson, that equates to an additional \$5,100

for the professional community. If we multiply that by a modest two lessons a month over a span of a year, we see that Minnesota Ballroom Blast has the potential to bring in \$122,400 to local professionals. I understand that a lot of participants are not wealthy now, but most are scheduled to be quite well off within four years.

As Blast chair I am very thankful for all the support Blast has received from local professionals as well as many amateur and collegiate organizations. I hope that providing clearer numbers will encourage further support for events like Minnesota Ballroom Blast and Star of the North, as these events will maximize output for both professional and amateur markets alike. I can safely say that no one is adverse to making more money by providing a little more joy in the world through a Pareto-optimal situation. ■



USA Dance Minnesota board president Daniel O'Connell presents a scholarship check to Luther College's ballroom team, making dancing more accessible to more people. Photo by Cathy Dessert.

GETTING YOUR DANCE MOJO BACK

By Maggie Paynter

"The Great Band Era was a huge and marvelous musical bazaar—a bubbling, exciting mixture of places, names, melodies, and events. They were immediately and exhilaratingly real, but at the same time they were part of the fabric of dream-world fantasy. For anyone who was part of that era ... the sound of a particular band, the memory of a passage in a song can light up the whole picture again in glowing colors."

- John S. Wilson, "The Story of the Great Bands," *Readers Digest*

The great days of the bands might be over, but countless dance clubs across

Minnesota create that magic each time they gather to dance, eat, and enjoy the late-night air filled with music. Many of the Twin Cities dance clubs offer a social evening of cocktails and dinner served at a table set with a white, starched tablecloth, napkins, crystal glassware, and fine china. The fantasy continues as the band strikes up the music and we step into this era dancing to Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, David Rose, and many more. We might even nudge out of retirement a vintage piece of jewelry, an old fur, a doubled-breasted suit, or a top hat. Then the night turns into illusion and we dance!

If you have never danced in a dance club, it is a unique experience, as you share the floor with dancers who understand dance etiquette and offer a friendly and supportive environment. We invite you to look at dance clubs to not only get your love of dancing back, but as a way to live in the memories of another era—a way to safeguard ballroom dancing and big band music.

Maggie Paynter is a member of the Cotillion Dance Club. For more information on the club, contact paynter@charter.net. ■

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STOP BULLYING

Start the Movement of Dance

By Chris Trask

Some people believe that each of our days were planned, divinely ordered, before we were born. A higher power, they say, planned exactly what was to transpire. Others suggest we choose and plan our lives. Whatever our philosophy, our interpretation can be similar: our past is neither an accident nor a mistake. We have been where we needed to be, with the necessary people. This past October, which happens to be National Bullying Prevention Month, I

met Rick, a gentle man and the loving father of Rachel Ehmke.

Rick described his daughter Rachel as a beautiful, fawn-like, brown-eyed, blond-haired, thirteen-year-old girl, blessed with a fun-loving personality and a talent for art and dance. I felt Rick's overwhelming sorrow when he shared the story of Rachel committing suicide in April 2012 due to being bullied in school. I had to fight back the tears when he said he held her until her heart stopped beating in the hospital. I understood his grief. I lost my husband to a car accident and my girlfriend to cancer all within the same year.

I know that computers and smart-phones have helped us work smarter, but I also think that they have created an impersonal environment for all

of us, especially our children. I think that introducing dance into the school system would help our children. Dance is a healthy sport that is good for our minds, bodies, and spirits. Most of all, dance helps us connect and build healthy relationships with others. I speak from experience, since dance has not only allowed me to cope with the loss of my husband but has opened up a social life of great dance friends.

I am reaching out to you, fellow dance readers, to help prevent bullying by starting the dance movement. Each of us can make a huge difference in a child's or friend's life by introducing them to the healthy sport of dance.

Spread the word, stop bullying, and start the dance movement. ■



Photo from Minnesota Ballroom Blast by Karin Lynn Photography

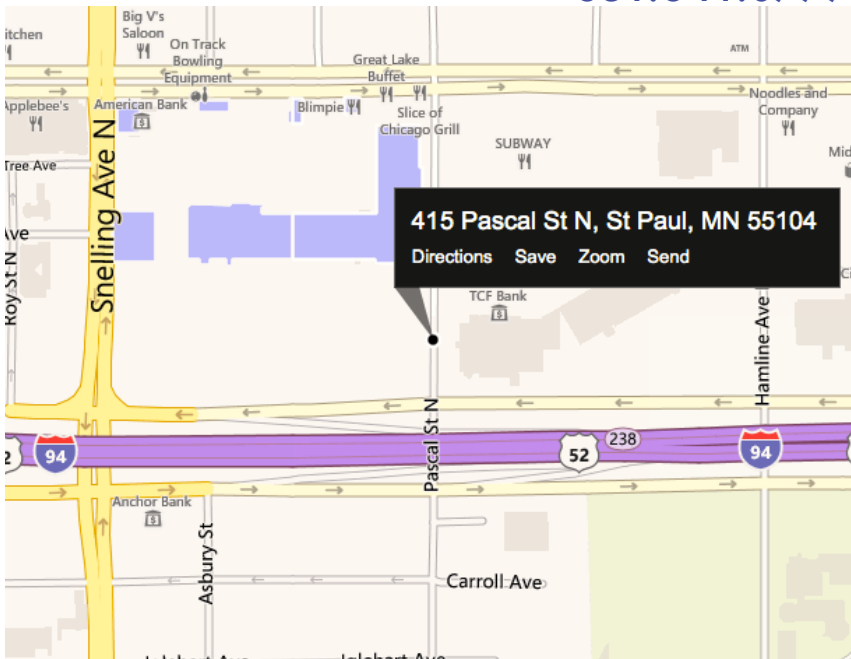


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Sunday, Nov. 24 – 2:00 pm
Sunday, Dec. 1 – 2:00 pm
Sunday, Dec. 8 – 2:00 pm



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USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011

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Photo by Diestler Photography



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TRIVIA TIDBITS

Get to Know the USA Dance Minnesota Board Members

By Bonnie Burton

The thing about dancing is that people from all backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and political leanings come together for their shared common interest. Dancers dance, and it really doesn't matter what one does for a living or what their hobbies and interests are. Perhaps I'm careless about getting to know my fellow dancers better. Sometimes, by chance, I may learn a dancer is also a screenwriter or doctor or unemployed, or that they drive up from Iowa for lessons twice a month. It's charming to learn trivia tidbits about other dancers. For example, my coach loves to fish for muskies and will often go after the big one on a Saturday morning prior to teaching lessons.

Sometimes when an expert is needed quickly, one may wish they knew more about the resources within the dance community. For example, when we recently had a flooded basement episode, we desperately needed a carpet cleaning and restoration person. We turned to the dance community, looking for an expert in this area, and hired Dan Fitzgerald, a social dancer we've known for years.

This month, we're sharing fun but little-known facts about our board members. See if you can match the factoids to the correct board member. Good luck!

1. This dancer has a master's degree in chemistry, is a chemist for 3M, and lived in South Dakota for thirteen years, having come to the United States in their twenties as a first-generation immigrant. They first started ballroom dancing at the age of sixteen and love to play badminton and volleyball.
2. This board member farmed six hundred acres of corn and wheat, raised one thousand head of cattle, and is an avid fisher, fishing everywhere from southern Minnesota to Canada. Another interest is martial arts, including International Tae Kwon Do (Korean), Ashihara Karate (Japanese Fighting), and Chung Moo Doe (traditional Korean and Chinese martial arts). They entered two giant pumpkins from their suburban backyard to the Minnesota State Fair, winning third place with a 356-pound pumpkin and fifth place with a 180-pounder!
3. This dancer has an accounting degree and, in addition to dancing, likes to sing, "mostly in the shower or in the car these days." This person sang a solo at their high school graduation: "Climb Every Mountain" from *The Sound of Music*. They recently lived everyone's nightmare of being stuck in an elevator for two hours without a cell phone.
4. This board member has an MBA in finance and has been an air traffic controller (fired by President Reagan in the 1981 PATCO strike), a social worker, a private investigator, a real estate agent, and a finance director. This person is also a certified scuba diver, has two Birman kitties, and can get a little too passionate about politics. Baking and entering baking contests is a passion: this person has won blue ribbons at the State Fair, including the King Arthur Great Cake contest!
5. This dancer has a mathematics degree and is a twin. As small children, they were avid climbers capable of climbing over the child-proof gates. Incredibly, this person got to see the inside of a Concorde cockpit, the supersonic aircraft that is an aviation icon, while it was in the air! This board member also loves ice cream.
6. This dancer curled, the sport that originated in Scotland and is played on ice with rocks and brooms, for twenty years before they started dancing. This person played mixed teams of two men and two women with their significant other, and also became very active in the organization and volunteer aspects of the club as well.
7. This dancing board member and their spouse eloped in 1976. They were married at the Little Brown Church in the Vale, and as of October 2013, they are still married and going strong! They enjoy dancing together and are very successful competitors in amateur USA Dance competitions.
8. This dancer is a native Spanish speaker (parents are from Chile) and was involved with theater before going into ballroom. This person is a self-described "huge video game nerd." Other hobbies include singing along to music and having movie marathons with friends. They have two cats, are trying to adopt a third, and want to specialize in an area of surgical nursing. Batman is this dancer's hero!
9. This dancer is a successful real estate agent, in addition to being a certified mediator who met their spouse while dancing, and who has been happily married a little over a year. This person used to be a kick-boxer and now is a huge Jane Austen fan and a member of the Jane Austen Society of North America.

Turn the page to see the answers!

MIXED PROFICIENCY MADNESS

By Lesley Schneider

Photo from Minnesota Ballroom Blast by Karin Lynn Photography



The auditorium was dark, filled with chatty parents holding bouquets of carnations in one hand and cameras in the other. The spotlight hit the red velvet curtain as it began to open, and suddenly Lesley Gore's "It's My Party" was blaring through the loudspeakers onstage. After a couple counts of five-six-seven-eight, fourteen little girls in pink and green sequined tutus began to shake to the beat—well, all except for that little brunette one who was crying on the back right. That one was me, of course.

As a child, I did not have good experiences with dance class. In fact, there were few things I enjoyed less. I was an exceptionally sensitive five-year-old who hated being ordered to keep her hair back in a bun while being criticized for not pointing her toes, sashaying well, or spotting while doing turns. I could not do the middle splits, nor could I properly leap across the floor, I hated tights and leotards, and

frankly, I was the most awkward-looking dancer in my entire class, and my teacher made a point to let me know.

The shame of my childhood dance disasters followed me from kindergarten to senior prom. I quit dance in seventh grade to pursue martial arts after begging my mother to let me switch and from then on refused to dance at all costs. The days in gym class where we were forced to square dance, waltz, and swing, I went to the nurse's office or skipped class. For my first high school homecoming, I went to the post-football game dance and watched my friends jump around and grind the night away, having the time of their lives, while I stood around awkwardly hoping no one would notice me. I continued to live this way through every single dance I attended throughout high school, much to the chagrin of all of my formal dates and to the amusement of my parents.

Whether my extreme level of discomfort with dancing came from bad

childhood memories or my complete lack of self-confidence (mix glasses, braces, frizzy hair, and lanky, angular limbs with no butt or boobs to be seen to form Lesley Schneider aged eleven to eighteen), it crippled any desire I had to attend parties or functions that included any form of dancing.

Fast-forward to October of 2012: I am now a freshman at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. I have finally found a friend group at the university, mostly composed of people I had met on the eighth floor of Middlebrook Hall. One Tuesday in late September, I walked into the dorm of my good friends and saw that a group was getting ready to go out somewhere.

"Hey, guys, where are you headed?" I asked.

"We're going to ballroom dance club to get a free lesson in swing dance. Do you want to come?" someone answered. I swear I felt my stomach fall

through the floor as I processed this answer.

I refused that day, as I did each time they invited me for the rest of the year. I'd watch my friends as they dressed in dancing shoes and cute outfits, saying how much homework I had, occasionally fessing up to my dislike of dancing. For an entire year, I denied myself a fun social activity because I could not handle how awkward I felt about dancing—really, how awkward I felt about myself.

It dawned on me each week as my friends left to go dance that a little part of me *did* want to go with them. I wanted to twirl around the floor and flirt with boys like the rest of my friends, but I was anxious about how I'd look moving my hips, worrying if my partners would judge me if I missed a step. What would happen if I stepped on someone's toes? Would people make fun of me for looking like a fool? I couldn't bear the thought of embarrassing myself in front of a bunch of strangers or giving my friends another thing to rag on me for. There was no way I was ever going to dance.

There was no way that I was going to dance, that is, until I learned that the ballroom dance club put on an event, Minnesota Ballroom Blast, that had something called mixed proficiency, wherein a competition team member

was paired with a newbie to teach them a dance and then get critiqued on it. My good friend Joel pressured me into doing a dance with him of my choosing. I had always loved watching people waltz, and here was a clear opportunity to learn, but still I felt the old anxiety creep into my body as I considered his proposition. It occurred to me, as I ruminated over whether I wanted to participate in mixed proficiency, that if I didn't learn to dance soon, I probably never would—I could go my entire life missing out on fun opportunities because of my pride—so after much thought, I agreed to learn to waltz.

Joel and I spent about six hours practicing for the event: learning to butterfly, underarm turn, zigzag, and chassé. I initially felt clumsy and ungraceful as we drilled basic moves, and dreaded attending the basic waltz lesson. I was afraid I'd waste the members' time and disappoint Joel, who was putting a lot of effort and patience into teaching me, but through attending the lessons and general dance with the ballroom club members, I realized the most vital reason people dance: it was *fun*. Even when I was stepping all over someone, red in the face with embarrassment, I enjoyed what I was doing, and I felt a little freer each time I danced. All the years of disdain for an entire art form melted away as I flew across the floor on Tuesday nights, and it felt fantastic.

After a couple of weeks, the day of mixed proficiency was upon me. I arrived at promptly 2:00 in a beautiful skirt and top borrowed from Libby, Joel's girlfriend. My hair was smoothed back, I had way too much eye makeup on, and I was feeling something I had not anticipated: excitement. Watching the more proficient couples glide around the Great Hall in Coffman Memorial Union—the ladies decked out in lovely dresses, their hair pinned with glittery barrettes and flowers, the men looking suave in dress shirts and ironed pants—I actually wanted my turn to come so I could be part of it too.

At 3:05 p.m., the time arrived for Joel and me to waltz. He led me onto the floor—I am pretty sure my hands could have passed for a water fountain—and we started to dance. Even with thirty people watching me, I felt smooth and elegant as we drifted around the other couples. I messed up my footwork a couple of times, but I didn't even care, because I was having fun, and I was happy.

Mixed proficiency was a memory that I'll always remember fondly. It was so much more than I expected. It was not just fun, but made me realize that I can dance. I can move my body and not feel awkward, I can learn steps and be led, and I can do it with a smile on my face. Here's to many decades of dance to come! ■

Trivia Tidbits Answers

1. Zhuojing Liu
2. Marty Faeh
3. Jane Phipps
4. Bonnie Burton
5. Daniel O'Connell
6. Cathy Dessert
7. Leslie Whitney
8. Karen Maldonado
9. Tracy Frazee

DANCE SOUP

Alan Bersten Update

By Cathy Dessert

Since *So You Think You Can Dance* ended, Alan and the rest of the top twenty were invited to join the SYTYCD tour. Rehearsals lasted for two weeks, and there are forty-seven numbers in the show, including some already performed from the TV series and some new numbers. Alan says it is an amazing experience. The closet two cities the tour makes stops in are Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Wichita, Kansas. Wishing Alan all the best!

All other photos used by Tony Eng
Dance Photography



Photo Karin Lynn
Photography

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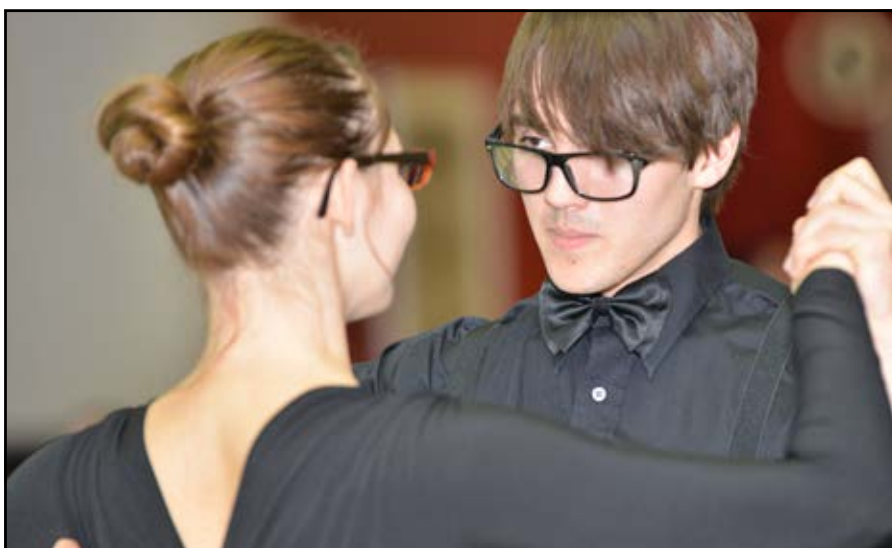
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FALL SHOWCASES

An Amateur's Perspective

By Marty Faeh

Fall is in the air: studio showcases, the Production, social dancing, and more. I have been blessed to participate in and spectate at three dance studio events in the month of September. Such a wonderful time of year as I feel the season changing to the next phase just like dancing does. From an amateur's perspective, studio showcases provide students an opportunity to practice and demonstrate their dancing in front of an audience. This dancing may take the form of social dancing, competitive routines, or even artistic performances to music, perhaps with themes. It is a wonderful

opportunity for amateurs to explore the boundaries of their dancing while learning to manage the stress of performing live in front of an audience. I was once told that performing in a showcase is the equivalent to a minimum of ten private lessons. For me, it is more like a twenty or thirty. Usually, the amateur walks away with new confidence, wisdom, floor craft, and stress management skills, and a sense of fulfillment that is priceless and enhances their journey in the world of dance advancement.

On September 13th, Dancers Studio presented their Fall Showcase. They had a fabulous spread of hors d'oeuvres, beverages, and hospitality. Marcy McHenry greeted me with a Hollywood smile and a hug. I felt right at home as I found a seat, eager for their showcase to begin. The night began with American smooth, an international Latin round by David Zaleske and independent Instructor Kristina Lee, and American rhythm. Of course, there was some nightclub two-step and west coast swing as well. Marcy's team (Chris Kempainen, Jeff Halverson, Bonnie Inveen, Troy Lerum, Neli Petkova, and

Nic Westlake) made the night special, showcasing their students' mastery of dance and providing an enjoyable evening for the audience. At the break, there was a Jack and Jill competition, where a person gets paired up randomly with another partner and competes against other couples, with judges making the final determination. This night, it was two rounds of rumba and two rounds of tango. For the tango rounds, I was paired up with Buffy Effinger. We had never met before, but I pulled out all the stops and she moved like a pro, making it very fun for me as a lead. Buffy and I won the tango Jack and Jill, and it was fun and challenging at the same time. Not long after, the audience watched some fabulous international standard, and the evening finished with an outstanding performance by Nels Petersen and Theresa Kimler. I will definitely come back for another showcase at Dancers Studio.

On September 20th and 21st, Cinema Ballroom delivered their fifth season of the Production. This is a bit different from the traditional ballroom showcase. It is an opportunity for amateur dancers to pick music,



Photos from the October USA Dance by Kevin Viratyosin

dances, and choreography with professional instructors and perform for a live audience. This year's theme was TV shows, and there were over thirty performances each evening. Fabulous costumes, music themes we all know, and the commercials—so funny. Michelle Hudson and Scott Skinner's Nair performance makes me chuckle each time I think about it. The evenings also had some wonderful formations. Some were all professional dancers, while others were a blend of amateurs and pros. The choreography was created by the Cinema Ballroom professional staff along with superstars Stephen Knight, Wendy Johnson, Scott Anderson, Eric Luna, Rufus Dustin, Jonathon Roberts, Tony Meredith, Eric Hudson, and of course Michelle Haley Hudson. They put together such a special evening, words will never do it justice. It is an event you just have to sit down and take in. Cinema Ballroom also provides a VIP pass for some extra goodies to enjoy, but I am not going to tell you the details. You will just have to get your ticket for season six next fall. And the after-party—so much fun. The laughter, the costumes, the social

dancing—it is just a blast that lasts for several hours. Cinema Ballroom has a robust group of talented pros that bring diversity and dance for all and did an awesome job: Kayla Casciano, Jon Chen, Dustin Donelan, Kristen McCloskey, Nadine Messenger, Shane Meuwissen, Martin Pickering, Nicole Piechowski, Dipendra Thakur, and Doug Wallock.

On September 27th, E.R.V. Dance Studios had their Fall Showcase. I liked the studio's opening statement: "Couples or individuals dance for their own pleasure in a highly supportive environment. There are usually no judges and no scores. The nature of the choreography is usually left open to the dancers, which can often be a less formal format than a competition." E.R.V. had an interesting approach I had not seen before and rather enjoyed. Their dance categories were lead and follow, work in progress, and final performance. Typically, the amateur and their pro would be the only ones on the dance floor at a time, so the entire audience was focused on each dancer. It was such an inviting, friendly, and supportive

environment, I couldn't help but cheer and clap loudly as they performed one by one. E.R.V. had a table full of goodies and beverages, along with some very fun social dancing. It is always a treat to get a salsa dance or two with Rebecca and Eliecer. From 9-10 p.m., E.R.V. put on an awesome pro show. It was inspiring to watch Michael D. Bang, Rachelika Baruch, Sayoni Haldar, Aiden Mamedov, Rebecca Rae Ramirez, and Eliecer Ramirez Vargas inspire us all.

Three different ballrooms, three different approaches, three different philosophies, but they all have the same goal: to educate and further the advancement of dance in the Twin Cities. I encourage all of you to visit different ballrooms around town, dance with their pros, attend their events, explore the possibilities, and seek to find the best fit for your dancing needs, for you are the customer, and we are blessed to have so much ballroom talent within our grasp right here in the Twin Cities.

What's next for me? Argentine tango. Let the journey begin. ■





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 and sign up.

THE DANCING LIFE

Could Dancing Be Lifestyle Medicine?

By Elizabeth Dickinson

Did you know 80% of chronic disease and premature death is preventable by lifestyle changes?

- 80% of heart disease cases are preventable through lifestyle changes
- 90% of diabetes cases are preventable through lifestyle changes
- Up to 60% of all cancers are preventable through lifestyle changes

According to Dr. David Katz, founding director of Yale University's Prevention Research Center and president-elect of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine, you are 80% less likely to develop any chronic disease if you don't smoke, aren't overweight, and do eat well and exercise. He calls this short list of lifestyle choices we control the fingers, fork, and feet factors. Virtually all the diseases that plague us can be mitigated or eliminated by attending to fingers (tobacco use), forks (food), and feet (exercise).

Whether nature or nurture causes disease is a false choice. We can nurture nature. There are not isolated genes that cause disease. In one study, men with early-stage prostate cancer (not needing immediate treatment) were treated

with lifestyle medicine (attention to feet, forks, fingers, sleep, stress, and love). Over months, they studied these men's genes. Five hundred cancer-promoting genes were down-regulated, and at least fifty cancer-preventing genes were turned on with this lifestyle medicine.

As ballroom dancers, we know the benefits of social dancing. Many of us have lost weight, made friends, and adopted a healthier lifestyle simply due to learning to dance. Dancing is lifestyle medicine. One lovely dancer in her eighties said to me, "Can you imagine life without dancing?" We both agreed we couldn't. I've always joked that dancing is my personal insurance against needing a nursing home.

Is there someone you care about who may be lifestyle-challenged by his or her fingers, fork, or feet? We can't ever force people to adopt healthy habits, but we can encourage them. I encourage you, in the months ahead, to invite a lifestyle-challenged friend to one of the numerous free opportunities to learn to dance in the Twin Cities, whether it's through the free Sunday group lessons hosted by USA Dance Minnesota or at one of the studios' newcomer nights. Who knows? You may nurture their nature and start them dancing the path of good health. ■



KARIN *lynn*

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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.

LOOK YOUR BEST

Fringe Fantasies

By Deborah J. Nelson

Fringe is always a favorite and currently a much-preferred trim for ballroom dance costumes, especially for Latin. There are many types of fringe. The most suitable for dance costumes are:

Chainette fringe (Rayon is the most common, but other thread contents such as polyester are available), Looped fringe, Ball fringe, Tassel or Bullion fringe, Beadette Metallic fringe, Faux Leather or Leather fringe, and Beaded fringe. Beaded fringe includes all types and colors of glass or plastic beads in straight or zigzag patterns, in a single color or a kaleidoscope of colors in one trim. And right now, there are Ribbon fringes, Paillette fringes. Fringes made out raw, cut sheer fabrics and even chains are currently available.

The most inexpensive and readily available is a Rayon Chainette fringe. It is soft, very fluid, and moves well. This fringe comes in many colors and in many lengths, although it might be difficult to find an exact length and color. Many times, the extravagantly thick fringe you see on professional ballroom costumes is made up of several rows of this fringe. You can create very unique color effects by layering different colors together or even dip-dyeing rows of this fringe to create an ombré effect.

Rayon Chainette fringe can be problematic if you need to wash it. Dry-cleaning is a better option, providing that the other fabrics and trims that make up your costume are also dry-cleanable. If you are able to use polyester or looped Rayon fringe, you won't see the frayed look that Rayon Chainette fringe acquires when it is washed. Of course, for most performance costumes these days that are made up of many types of fragile (at least for washing) fabrics, it is best to simply spot-clean and air out.

Most fringe trims don't stretch, so when constructing a tight-fitting costume, stretch needs to be sewn into the fringe to accommodate movement. We have just started buying a relatively new fringe trim that stretches and are just starting to work with it. It is not a stock item, so I need to custom-order it per order. I am excited to begin working with this fringe, as I'm also expecting a smoother fit than with non-stretch fringe. By the time this article is published, I will know if this product is a truly wonderful innovation or not.

The most common fringe lengths are 3", 4", 6", 9", and 12". You might be able to find other lengths but generally not in a brick-and-mortar store. Online searches will be your best option for finding your fringe.

I'm sure you have noticed on many professional Latin costumes that the fringe may not be the standard length, or you may have noticed that some costumes have fringe that starts out narrow and gets longer and longer. No, it isn't purchased like this. The costume maker has trimmed the fringe to his desired length. For those of you who have trimmed hair—especially the currently popular bangs—you will understand when I say that trimming fringe is very difficult to do. It wiggles and moves even more than hair, and a misplaced snip with the scissors can spell doom for the fringe. One quick snip can ruin the fringe line.

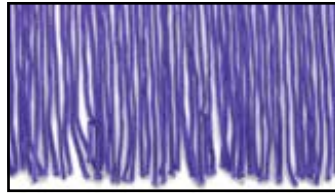
Looped fringe, Ball fringe, Tassel fringe, and Bullion fringe can't be cut off. Faux Leather and Leather fringe can. Beadette/Metallic fringe can be trimmed, but it's even more difficult than trimming Chainette fringe, so I wouldn't recommend it. Beaded fringe, of course, cannot be trimmed.

If you want to work with varying lengths of fringe, your best bet is probably to choose Rayon Chainette fringe. If you

Beaded fringe



Chainette fringe



Organza fringe



Ultra-suede fringe



want glitz, then you need to look for beaded fringe options. You can find various styles and colors on eBay and in the drapery trim department of your fabric store if there aren't enough options in the clothing trim section. Many online trim merchants will sell small yardages. If you are looking for specific patterns, colors, and lengths, you may be in for some extended searching time. None of this type of fringe is manufactured in the USA, whereas Chainette fringe could possibly be, or at least it is more readily available.

Working with beaded fringe can be more time-consuming because the individual beads are threaded onto a string. If and when this string is cut, all your beads can come off. Beaded

fringe is generally not available with stretch, so you will need to predetermine how much length of fringe you will need for a location on your costume. You will then need to cut it, allowing enough of an area to tie off this string that you have cut in order not to have all the beads come undone. Then some glue can be helpful in securing the cut after hand-sewing it. But with glue, keep in mind that it could become very messy and permanent.

Beaded fringe can also get caught on itself, tangle, and then rip and break the string that holds the strand of beads together, causing your fringe to unravel. This can be a disaster. It is difficult to replace fringe sections that have unraveled, if not impossible. But beaded fringe can look incredible if

done well and without any unlucky tangling.

Many times, little tufts of beaded fringe are applied to dance costumes, and it's a similar effect to little tufts of feathers. These are all hand-placed. They may be hand-sewn (tying off the strings/strands) and then most likely super-glued in place. A nice completion of either the feather or fringe tufts is to add a rhinestone over the hand-tacked (sewn) point. The same thing could be done with Chainette fringe, but it isn't as showy as beaded fringe.

I hope you enjoyed learning about fringe this month. And if you haven't made or purchased a fringed costume, maybe knowing more about the pros and cons of different types of fringe will inspire you to do so! ■



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*John S. Munday is a writer who lives in Isanti County, Minnesota, with his wife, Fran. Together, they found ballroom dancing at Cheek to Cheek Studio. Jack is a student of Monica Mohn, and his book, *Beauty in Partnership, A Memoir of Ballroom Dancing*, is available at www.johnsmunday.com and several dance studios.*

GENTLEMEN LEAD

By Jack Munday

What do social ballroom dancers do in a foreign country? Dance, of course.

Several years ago on a dance cruise, Fran and I were on an island that had a Jimmy Buffet bar and grill. When they played "Margaritaville," we danced a cha cha. The other tourists in the bar applauded us.

This past September, we were in Sorrento, Italy, for a week with a group tour. We hoped to find a place to dance, bearing in mind there weren't many free evenings. Well, we were foreigners and found a place called the Foreigners' Club. The Foreigners' Club was established after WWII to give a place of refuge to foreigners who remained in Sorrento—we could see why they didn't want to leave. The Foreigners' Club is in the Circolo die Foerstieri, a larger building that had other businesses as well. We found the Foreigners' Club without difficulty during an afternoon walk. It had a sign that proclaimed, "With 35 years of music experience, you are guaranteed a time to remember." Of course we decided to have dinner and dance that evening.

We were led to the patio, which has a beautiful view of the bay of Naples. The patio was open with white canopies overhead. The end of the patio that faced the bay had a railing with glass windows that gave us the view without the sea breeze.

The dining tables were close to the railing, and across the dance floor, a musician played on his

keyboard and sang. A guitar player joined him. The music was nice. We enjoyed listening to them as we ate a nice Italian dinner.

A bearded gentleman in a striped shirt smiled at us as we went to the dance floor. I had seen him dancing earlier, though I didn't recognize the patterns. He did cover most of the dance floor. The musicians began to play (and sing) "Mona Lisa" and we danced a pleasant rumba. At the end of the song, the guitar player said a kind word about our rumba, but the bearded gentleman did not smile when we passed by him. Still, we had found our dance floor. Later we danced salsa to some lovely Italian folk music and had a great time. We even forgot we weren't in the Twin Cities!

Dancing is almost always on our minds. At a dinner with the rest of the tour group, a lady said she did not know how to follow. I took her hand, led her into our joined frame, and we danced. I led. She followed.

I am so grateful to Fran, who introduced me to ballroom dancing, and to Monica, who patiently taught me so much. At a lesson before we went to Italy, she gave Fran and me some new patterns for salsa. We put them to good use at the Foreigners' Club.

Dancing defies the barriers of language. In Sorrento, when we danced, we were communicating our mutual relationship as dancers. Hopefully everyone watching got it. ■

COMPETITION CALENDAR

Nov 1 - 3, 2013

Chicago DanceSport Challenge - NOE

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

Nov 9, 2013

California State DanceSport Competition - NOE

Hosted by NorCal USA Dance Chapter #4004 in
Emeryville, CA. Qualifying event for 2014 Nationals.

Jan 11 - 12, 2014

The Snow Ball

Hosted by Donna Edelstein at the Hilton Minneapolis/
St. Paul Mall of America. Contact Donna at 612 910-2690.
www.thesnowballcomp.com

Jan 17 - 19, 2014

Manhattan Amateur Classic - MAC - NOE

Hosted by Greater New York USA Dance Chapter #3004
at Manhattan Center. Qualifying event for 2014 Nationals.

Jan 25, 2014

Winter Frolic

Hosted by the Royal Palm USA Dance Chapter #6016 in
Coconut Creek, FL. This event will not accrue proficiency
points and may not follow all rules in the rulebook.

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 1 - 2, 2014

Star of the North DanceSport Classic

Hosted by USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011 at the
Crowne Plaza Hotel in St. Paul, MN. www.sotncomp.com

Mar 28 - 30, 2014

2014 National DanceSport Championships.

To be held in Baltimore, MD.

May 18, 2014

Minnesota Star Ball DanceSport Competition

Hosted at the Medina Ballroom in Medina, MN.
www.MNstarball.com

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.

Oct 31 - Nov 2, 2014

Chicago DanceSport Challenge - NOE

Hosted by Chicagoland USA Dance Chapter #2001.
Qualifying event for 2015 Nationals.

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ASK DR. DANCE

Submit your questions to Dr. Dance: newsletter@usadance-mn.org.

Q:

I'll be dancing at Minnesota Ballroom Blast in October. I've done critique-style events before, and I really like them because they're lower stress than actual competitions. My problem is that sometimes, I'm not really sure how to interpret the critique I receive and incorporate it into my dancing. Any advice for how to get the most out of the judges' critiques?

Donna Said:

When you receive your written critiques and are not sure how to interpret them, the most productive course of action is to bring the critiques to your next lesson and have your instructor go over them with you. Generally, critiques are highlighting the elements that your teacher is currently focusing on or likely to be highlighting next in your dancing. Sometimes your teacher may disagree with a comment and will explain why they see things differently.

Just one point of clarification: you mentioned judges' comments. Official judges are only allowed to judge NDCA-sanctioned events like Twin Cities Open, The Snow Ball, and Minnesota Star Ball. Non-NDCA-sanctioned events like Minnesota Ballroom Blast may apply for permission to use NDCA judges at their event by writing the NDCA Ballroom Director, Lee Wakefield.

Paul Said:

It can be difficult to interpret what someone else observes about your dancing. My suggestion is that you take those comments to your teacher for interpretation. A typical comment might be to make sure you don't miss a heel lead in the waltz. Your teacher might understand that it really is the lowering action before the step that needs to be addressed. Oftentimes, comments address the result rather than the cause of

an action. This is not because the judges don't know the difference; rather, it is because they have so little time, and analyzing the *why* is not really an option. There are also differences of opinion between judges concerning aspects of technique, for example, the use of contra body movement or the use of the standing leg. Your teacher will be able to help you sort out what works best for you. Good luck.

The Dance Medic Said:

Having been on both sides of this situation as both a professional dancer receiving critiques of my students' performances and as a judge writing the feedback, I can say from experience that there are many things to take into account when reading critiques from a competition.

First of all, there's one vitally important factor to consider when reading a critique: the judges have a very limited amount of time to watch each couple, and they are often writing critiques for one to four couples (or more!) for every dance. At a conventional competition, it can be a challenging enough job to rank competitors on the floor and give them a first through sixth placement, having only about twenty seconds to consider each couple. When writing a critique, and often multiple critiques per dance, the judge has to identify each couple, consider what advice to write, and then

put pen to paper with head down and frantically scribble away—and then onto couples two, three, and sometimes four in that same song! If only there were some way to stop time when a judge is trying to speedily jot down his or her comments. Many a time have we begged the DJ to play the song longer, and longer still.

None of this is to say, "Woe is me, the suffering judge," or to imply that critiques are done so quickly that they have little value—quite the contrary: it is only to lay part of the foundation of how one should go about interpreting critiques and to help competitors everywhere understand why it's sometimes more difficult to read a critique than an incoherently written doctor's prescription. Do your best to interpret the scrawled shorthand that surely led to some judge's carpal tunnel syndrome, and let's look at how you can make the most of the comments you've received.

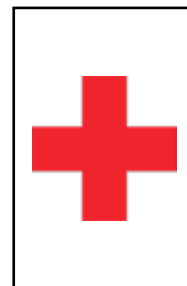
First, and perhaps most obviously, if you danced more than once and several of your critiques bear the same advice, then take heed! When one judge tells you several times or many judges tell you to work on posture or your frame, for example, then you should be getting a clear signal that there is a consensus afoot and get to work on that aspect of your dancing. The dance universe has sent you a message! Conversely, it can be equally enlightening to read a lone



Donna Edelstein is a coach, judge, and organizer of the Snow Ball DanceSport Competition. 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.

unique remark that you hadn't heard before about your dancing. It could shed light on a weak area of your dancing that you hadn't previously considered.

Secondly, seek clarification and edification about the advice you have been given. Find an outside party (a teacher, mentor, or coach) who can help explain the critiques, watch your dancing, and help you apply the information to your dancing needs. After all, most of us have heard, "Stand up taller," a thousand times, but I'm pretty sure no one goes out onto the competition floor with lousy posture on purpose—we all go out there and try to do our best. So if the majority of your critiques come back to you with comments about your posture, it's time to find someone who can watch you from the outside and help. There are countless ways a dancer can work on posture alone, and every dancer on the floor may have to do something slightly different to his or her posture to improve it. The judge does not have the time to write down every specific detail about *how* you should fix your posture woes; they just have time to tell you to get to work on it! So once you get the message

about what general problem you need to work on, you need the specifics about how to fix that area.

Another way to consider the advice given in the critiques is to have someone videotape you and your partner soon after the event doing the same dances you performed. Then watch the video with the fresh advice in mind. You might see your dancing or aspects of it in a whole new light when you have the judges' critiques in mind.

Also make sure to go back and reread the comments periodically. When I've worked from critique sheets with my students, we usually only work on a few elements at a time. After you've made some progress on those first few items, it's time to go back and see what else remains on your to-do list. Sometimes it's easy to forget that there was a much bigger laundry list of things to accomplish, and it can be like getting a second round of coaching to be reminded of a few more things to tackle.

Don't worry about small mistakes that you might have made while performing. Unless it was a consistent or glaring

problem (being off time for most of the dance, for example), the judges are not concerned with an occasional mistake, especially if you efficiently corrected it or moved past it and continued to perform strongly. If it was a mistake you seemed unaware of ("Take correct heel leads") or couldn't resolve, then a judge might point that out in the written feedback.

Lastly, be sure to bask in the glow of positive comments as well! Because the nature of writing and then reading a critique is to improve a dancer's dancing, it is natural to be focused on what needs to be better, what needs work, what *just isn't right*. However, it's equally important to realize where you've made strides in your dancing, especially if it reflects hard work you've dedicated to improving specific aspects of your dancing. After all, judges have just a few precious moments to write each critique. If they're taking a moment to commend you on something instead of tearing apart your rise and fall, take notice and enjoy the moment.

Good luck making the most of your dance critiques and gaining as much from them as you can! ■



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Black. Very good condition. \$50.

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1-1/2" heel. Split flex T-strap. Worn once. \$84 new. \$49.

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➤ **Contact Janie 763.797.5230** janienordberg@comcast.net

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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**

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

➤ **Contact Theresa Kimler 612.414.3099** theresakimler@yahoo.com

Most dresses also for rent for \$250-\$300. Photos and more information: www.narrowc couture.com/#!/users/tkm/items

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2-1/2" heel. Brand-new. \$75.

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➤ **Contact Gail 651.387.0885** 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.

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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. Please include area code with any phone number.

➤ **Vee Hammond 651.206.9890** 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.

➤ **Jane Phipps 612.859.5245**

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

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.

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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.

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