

SHEER DANCE

A monthly publication to engage the dance community. Learn. Discuss. Contribute. Enjoy.

1 DEC 2015

SHEERDANCE.COM



*A graceful moment from the 2015 Harvest Moon Ball.
Photo by Dan Hecker.*

Twin Cities Dance Events

December 1 • Tuesday

WCS Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11 p.m.; \$5
Tango Party - 3142 1st Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11:30 p.m.; \$5; 21+

December 2 • Wednesday

WCS Dance Party - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 8 p.m.; \$5
Practice Party - Cinema Ballroom; 1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul; 8 - 9 p.m.; \$6
Swing Night - Lee's Liquor Lounge; 101 Glenwood Ave, Mpls; 8:00 lesson, live music 9 - 11:30 p.m.
Practice Party - Costa Rica Ballroom; 816 Mainstreet, Hopkins; 9 - 9:45 p.m.
Milonga - Krungthep Thai Cuisine; 2523 Nicollet Ave S, Mpls; \$5, free for students

December 3 • Thursday

Late Night Swing - 301 Main St NE, Mpls; 10 p.m. - 1:30 a.m.; \$6, \$4 students
Variety Dance - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 7:30 p.m.; \$5
Bachata Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 10 p.m.; \$5
Blues Practice - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; 10 - 11 p.m.; \$3

December 4 • Friday

Variety Dance - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 8 - 9:30 p.m.; \$10
Variety Dance - Cinema Ballroom; 1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul; 7:00 lesson, dance 8 - 11 p.m.; \$10

December 5 • Saturday

Tango Practice Party - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.; \$5
Milonga en el Alma - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; 9 p.m. - 1 a.m.; \$10, \$5 students
Variety Dance - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 7:00 lesson, dance 8 - 10 p.m.; \$10
Swing Dance - 301 Main St NE, Mpls; 7:30 p.m. - 12:30 a.m.

December 6 • Sunday

UTango Open Practica - 1219 University Ave SE, Mpls; 6 - 7 p.m.; \$3
Rogue Tango - Loring Pasta Bar; 327 14th Ave SE, Mpls; 6 - 10 p.m.
Patty & The Buttons Live Jazz - 125 Main St SE, Mpls; 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.; free
TC Rebels WCS Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 7 - 10:30 p.m.; \$11, \$7 students
Ballroom Dance Party - Tapestry; 3748 Minnehaha Ave, Mpls; 6:00 lesson, dance 7 - 9:30 p.m.; \$10, \$7 students

December 7 • Monday

Tango Desperados Practica - 2507 E 25th St, Mpls; 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.; \$5
Rhythm Junction Lindy Hop - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave, Mpls; 8 - 11 p.m.
Salsa Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9:30 - 11 p.m.; \$5

December 8 • Tuesday

WCS Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11 p.m.; \$5

Tango Party - 3142 1st Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11:30 p.m.; \$5; 21+

December 9 • Wednesday

WCS Dance Party - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 8 p.m.; \$5
Practice Party - Cinema Ballroom; 1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul; 8 - 9 p.m.; \$6
Swing Night - Lee's Liquor Lounge; 101 Glenwood Ave, Mpls; 8:00 lesson, live music 9 - 11:30 p.m.
Practice Party - Costa Rica Ballroom; 816 Mainstreet, Hopkins; 9 - 9:45 p.m.

December 10 • Thursday

Late Night Swing - 301 Main St NE, Mpls; 10 p.m. - 1:30 a.m.; \$6, \$4 students
Variety Dance - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 7:30 p.m.; \$5
Bachata Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 10 p.m.; \$5
Blues Practice - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; 10 - 11 p.m.; \$3

December 11 • Friday

Variety Dance - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 8 - 9:30 p.m.; \$10
WCS Dance Club - 2100 Dale St N, Roseville; 7:30 lesson, dance 8:30 p.m. - 12 a.m.
Milonga Flor de Luna - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; 9:30 p.m.; \$7, \$4 students

December 12 • Saturday

Tango Practice Party - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.; \$5
Milonga - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; 8:30 lesson, dance 9:30 p.m. - 1 a.m.; \$14, \$7 students

December 13 • Sunday

UTango Open Practica - 1219 University Ave SE, Mpls; 6 - 7 p.m.; \$3
Rogue Tango - Loring Pasta Bar; 327 14th Ave SE, Mpls; 6 - 10 p.m.
Patty & The Buttons Live Jazz - 125 Main St SE, Mpls; 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.; free

December 14 • Monday

Tango Desperados Practica - 2507 E 25th St, Mpls; 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.; \$5
Rhythm Junction Lindy Hop - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave, Mpls; 8 - 11 p.m.
Salsa Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9:30 - 11 p.m.; \$5

December 15 • Tuesday

WCS Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11 p.m.; \$5
Tango Party - 3142 1st Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11:30 p.m.; \$5; 21+

December 16 • Wednesday

WCS Dance Party - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 8 p.m.; \$5
Practice Party - Cinema Ballroom; 1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul; 8 - 9 p.m.; \$6
Swing Night - Lee's Liquor Lounge; 101 Glenwood Ave, Mpls; 8:00 lesson, live music 9 - 11:30 p.m.

Practice Party - Costa Rica Ballroom; 816 Mainstreet, Hopkins; 9 - 9:45 p.m.

December 17 • Thursday

Late Night Swing - 301 Main St NE, Mpls; 10 p.m. - 1:30 a.m.; \$6, \$4 students
Variety Dance - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 7:30 p.m.; \$5
Bachata Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 10 p.m.; \$5
Blues Practice - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; 10 - 11 p.m.; \$3

December 18 • Friday

Variety Dance - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 8 - 9:30 p.m.; \$10
Variety Dance - Cinema Ballroom; 1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul; 7:00 lesson, dance 8 - 11 p.m.; \$10

December 19 • Saturday

Tango Practice Party - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.; \$5
Variety Dance - Phipps Art Center; 109 Locust St, Hudson, WI; 7:00 lesson, dance 8 - 10 p.m.; \$12

December 20 • Sunday

UTango Open Practica - 1219 University Ave SE, Mpls; 6 - 7 p.m.; \$3
Rogue Tango - Loring Pasta Bar; 327 14th Ave SE, Mpls; 6 - 10 p.m.
Patty & The Buttons Live Jazz - 125 Main St SE, Mpls; 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.; free
TC Rebels WCS Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 7 - 10:30 p.m.; \$11, \$7 students
Ballroom Dance Party - Tapestry; 3748 Minnehaha Ave, Mpls; 6:00 lesson, dance 7 - 9:30 p.m.; \$10, \$7 students

December 21 • Monday

Tango Desperados Practica - 2507 E 25th St, Mpls; 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.; \$5
Rhythm Junction Lindy Hop - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave, Mpls; 8 - 11 p.m.
Salsa Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9:30 - 11 p.m.; \$5

December 22 • Tuesday

WCS Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11 p.m.; \$5
Tango Party - 3142 1st Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11:30 p.m.; \$5; 21+

December 23 • Wednesday

WCS Dance Party - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 8 p.m.; \$5
Practice Party - Cinema Ballroom; 1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul; 8 - 9 p.m.; \$6
Swing Night - Lee's Liquor Lounge; 101 Glenwood Ave, Mpls; 8:00 lesson, live music 9 - 11:30 p.m.
Practice Party - Costa Rica Ballroom; 816 Mainstreet, Hopkins; 9 - 9:45 p.m.

December 24 • Thursday

Late Night Swing - 301 Main St NE, Mpls; 10 p.m. - 1:30 a.m.; \$6, \$4 students

Twin Cities Dance Contacts

Variety Dance - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 7:30 p.m.; \$5

Bachata Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 10 p.m.; \$5

Blues Practice - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; 10 - 11 p.m.; \$3

December 26 • Saturday

Cafe Bailar - Costa Rica Ballroom; 816 Mainstreet, Hopkins; 7:30 lesson, dance 8:30 - 11:30 p.m.; \$10

Milonga: Tango Fusion - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 p.m. - 1 a.m.; \$10, \$5 students

December 27 • Sunday

UTango Open Practica - 1219 University Ave SE, Mpls; 6 - 7 p.m.; \$3

Rogue Tango - Loring Pasta Bar; 327 14th Ave SE, Mpls; 6 - 10 p.m.

Patty & The Buttons Live Jazz - 125 Main St SE, Mpls; 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.; free

December 28 • Monday

Tango Desperados Practica - 2507 E 25th St, Mpls; 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.; \$5

Rhythm Junction Lindy Hop - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave, Mpls; 8 - 11 p.m.

Salsa Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9:30 - 11 p.m.; \$5

December 29 • Tuesday

WCS Social - DanceLife; 6015 Lyndale Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11 p.m.; \$5

Tango Party - 3142 1st Ave S, Mpls; 9 - 11:30 p.m.; \$5; 21+

December 30 • Wednesday

WCS Dance Party - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 8 p.m.; \$5

Practice Party - Cinema Ballroom; 1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul; 8 - 9 p.m.; \$6

Swing Night - Lee's Liquor Lounge; 101 Glenwood Ave, Mpls; 8:00 lesson, live music 9 - 11:30 p.m.

Practice Party - Costa Rica Ballroom; 816 Mainstreet, Hopkins; 9 - 9:45 p.m.

December 31 • Thursday

Late Night Swing - 301 Main St NE, Mpls; 10 p.m. - 1:30 a.m.; \$6, \$4 students

Variety Dance - Dancers Studio; 415 Pascal St N, St. Paul; 7:30 p.m.; \$5

Blues Practice - Four Seasons; 1637 Hennepin Ave S, Mpls; 10 - 11 p.m.; \$3 **E**

Studios

American Classic Ballroom .. 952.934.0900

550 Market Street, Chanhassen
www.acballroom.com

Balance Pointe Studios 952.922.8612

5808R W 36th Street, St. Louis Park
www.balancepointestudios.com

Ballroom & Latin

Dance Club 952.292.0524

1103 W Burnsville Pkwy, Burnsville
www.ballroom-club.com

Ballroom & Wedding

Dance Studio 612.371.0300

2717 42nd Street E, Minneapolis
www.myballroomdancestudio.com

Blue Moon Ballroom 507.288.0556

2030 Highway 14 E, Rochester
www.BlueMoonBallroom.com

Cinema Ballroom 651.699.5910

1560 St. Clair Ave, St. Paul
www.cinemaballroom.com

Costa Rica Ballroom

Dance Studios 952.303.3339

816 Mainstreet, Hopkins
www.costaricaballroom.com

Dahl Dance Center 507.252.1848

4204 North Highway 52, Rochester
www.dahldance.com

Dance and Entertainment 651.605.5784

www.danceandentertainment.com

Dance with Us America 612.564.5483

10 Southdale Center, Edina
www.dancewithusamerica.com

DanceLife Ballroom 612.345.4219

6015 Lyndale Ave S, Minneapolis
www.dancelifeballroom.com

Dancers Studio 651.641.0777

415 Pascal Street N, St. Paul
www.dancersstudio.com

Four Seasons Dance Studio .. 612.342.0902

1637 Hennepin Ave S, Minneapolis
www.fourseasonsdance.com

Latin Mambo 612.558.7190

2948 Chicago Ave S #308, Mpls
www.latinmambodancestudio.com

Mill City Ballroom 612.562.2733

www.millcityballroom.com

Rendezvous Dance Studio .. 612.872.1562

711 W Lake Street, Suite B, Minneapolis
www.theplacetodance.com

StudioJeff 320.266.4137

701 St. Germain Street W, Suite 201,
St. Cloud
www.studiojeff.com

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lmvogel27@gmail.com

Clubs

Aqua Gliders Dance Club 612.869.3062

Café Bailar

www.cafebailar.com

Cotillion Dance

Club of Stillwater 651.388.1231

paynter@charter.net

LaDanza Dance Club 651.439.3152

facebook.com/LaDanzaDanceClub

Lakeside Dance Club 320.763.6432

danceclub@lakesideballroom.org
www.lakesideballroom.org

Linden Hills Dancing Club

www.lindenhillsdancingclub.org

MN West Coast Swing

Dance Club 763.442.1618

mnwestcoastswingdanceclub.com

REBELS Swing Dance Club .. 952.941.0906

www.tcrebels.com

Stardust Dance Club

stardustdanceclub@gmail.com

Suburban-Winterset

Dance Club 952.894.1412

www.suburbanwinterset.com

Tango Society

of Minnesota 612.224.2905

www.mntango.org

Tapestry Folkdance Center .. 612.722.2914

www.tapestryfolkdance.org

TC Swing 651.558.0562

info@tcswing.com

www.tcswing.com

University of Minnesota

Ballroom Dance Club

bdc@umn.edu

umnbdc.com

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uptownswinglessons@gmail.com

www.uptownswing.net

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Photo from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson

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Photographers

Erik Anderson, Dan Hecker

Writers

Ligaya Carlos, Eric Dahlman, Elizabeth Dickinson, Christina Kylo, Rochelle Lockridge, Ember Reichgott Junge, Thomas Stastny, Christine Trask, Joel Torgeson, Chelsea Visser

Sections

Discussion

This is a forum where people are invited to express their true feelings about issues in the dance community (while still adhering to our submission guidelines) and propose solutions to the problems we often face. Statements made in the Discussion section do not necessarily reflect the views of *Sheer Dance*, even when written by one of our volunteer staff.

From the Community

Unlike the other sections, there is no cohesive theme to From the Community; it is a catch-all for the unique gems that are submitted by people like you. Here you'll find contributions like event recaps, interviews, tales from a far-off competition, and photos from a local dance event.

Recurring Columns

We have a handful of generous writers who contribute regularly. Each explores a unique, overarching theme of their choice. Each month, in a volunteer report, one of our volunteers fills you in on what they've been doing to make the dance community a better place.

Special Features

Some issues focus on a particular event or theme, and all content relevant to that theme belongs to the Special Features section. **E**

2016 Competitions

Events labeled NQE are qualifying events for the USA Dance National DanceSport Championships.

Snow Ball January 8 - 10
Minneapolis, MN; thesnowballcomp.com

Manhattan Amateur Classic - NQE January 15 - 17
New York, NY; macnyusadance.org

Mid-Atlantic Championship - NQE February 20 - 21
Bethesda, MD; usadancedc.org

Dance Fest March 5 - 6
St. Paul, MN; udancefest.com

2016 National DanceSport Championships April 1 - 3
Baltimore, MD; usadancenationals.org

New England DanceSport Championships - NQE May 13 - 14
Waltham, MA; nedancesport.org

NJ DanceSport Classic Summer Sizzler - NQE June 11 - 12
Hackensack, NJ; njdancesportclassic.com

Gumbo DanceSport Championships - NQE June 24 - 26
Baton Rouge, LA; gumboofballroom.org

Carolina Fall Classic - NQE .. September 30 - October 2
Charlotte, NC; carolinafallclassic.com

Naples Star Ball October 16
Naples, FL; naplesstarball.com

Chicago DanceSport Challenge - NQE October 28 - 30
Chicago, IL; usadancechicago.org **E**

Volunteer Openings

Assignment Photographer

If you love taking photos and exploring the partner-dancing world, throw in your hat to become an official *Sheer Dance* photographer! This volunteer will be provided topics and events to cover with action-packed shots.

Assignment Writer

Love writing but never sure what to write about? We supply the topics every month; you supply the articles. Excited, passionate writers with a thirst for exploration are encouraged to consider volunteering for this position.

Columnist

We're always looking for more people to commit to writing an article every month that addresses a particular idea or theme relevant to partner dancing. You choose the topic!

Copy Editor

We're looking for a highly skilled linguist with an intimate understanding of American English spelling, punctuation, and grammar to do the first pass of line editing on all articles. This is a very involved role that provides excellent experience for anyone considering a career in publishing.

Your Contribution Here

Have an idea of how you could add value to *Sheer Dance* that we haven't thought of? Let us know! **E**

About Us

Sheer Dance is a monthly independent publication that presents news and information relevant to the partner-dancing community in the central United States and the nation at large. It is intended to be an accessible outlet for members of the community to discuss their experiences and opinions in a public forum. Published monthly, *Sheer Dance* is run by a group of skilled volunteers with extensive experience in creating and distributing successful partner-dance publications.

This magazine is meant to serve the community as a positive and unifying force by addressing the needs and desires of all groups within the community. *Sheer Dance*:

- Provides amateurs with a convenient way to share their dance experiences, seek advice from experts, and learn about events, services, and other opportunities in the wider ballroom community;
- Provides professionals with direct access to their target audience, spreading awareness of their expertise, events, and services; and
- Provides the entire community with a forum for discussion, cooperation, and problem-solving.

Sheer Dance is made possible by the generous contributions of members of the community. If you enjoy reading this publication, please consider contributing an article or photos, making a donation, subscribing, or volunteering your time and skills.

The staff of *Sheer Dance* can be reached at info@sheerdance.com. We hope to hear from you! **E**

Contribute

Submission Guidelines

Submissions are due to submissions@sheerdance.com by the 10th of the month prior to publication. Submissions received after the deadline may be used in the upcoming issue or may be saved for a later month. You may request a two-day extension if you include information regarding your topic.

Content is published at the discretion of *Sheer Dance* based on the policies outlined below. It is our goal to publish all of the content submitted to us in the issue for which it was submitted. Any rejected advertisement or article will come with communication on how it could be edited to be appropriate for publication, with a deadline extension when possible to allow time to effect the necessary alterations.

Advertisements

We print at 300 dpi and accept PDF, PNG, and JPEG file types. When buying a larger advertising package, you may swap in a different ad for each month at no additional fee. The chart below features our introductory rates, which are subject to change as the publication grows. Contact ads@sheerdance.com for more information.

Layout	Dimensions (width x height)	Price Per Ad	Price for 12 Consecutive Months
Full Page	7.5" x 10"	\$120	\$1200
Half Page	7.5" x 4.75"	\$75	\$750
Quarter Page	3.5" x 4.75"	\$50	\$500
Business Card	3.5" x 2"	\$15	\$150

Photos

When selecting photos to include in the magazine, we try to feature different dancers in each picture, when possible. We look for photos with good lighting, a clear focus, and smiling dancers who are actively dancing.

Articles

All articles must be clearly relevant to partner dancing. There are no length requirements or limits, but *Sheer Dance* may break up longer articles across multiple issues when appropriate. While articles may promote

specific events, that cannot be their primary function; they must have a broader applicability to enlightening the dance community. Articles must be respectful and productive. Harassment of any kind will not be published, nor will articles that fall below Contradiction on the scale of productive argumentation.

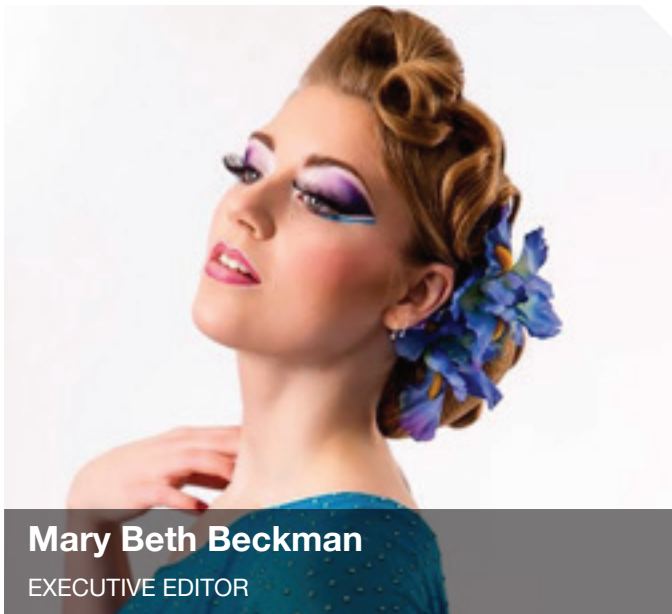
Refuting the Central Point	Explicitly refutes the central point
Refutation	Finds the mistake and explains why it's mistaken using quotes
Counterargument	Contradicts and then backs it up with reasoning and/or supporting evidence
Contradiction	States the opposing case with little or no supporting evidence
Responding to Tone	Criticizes the tone of the writing without addressing the substance of the argument
Ad Hominem	Attacks the characteristics or authority of the writer without addressing the substance of the argument
Name-calling	Discourse like "The writer is an imbecile"

Editing Policy

Content submitted to *Sheer Dance* will be edited for spelling, grammar, sentence structure, style, and appropriateness of content.

Any kind of bigotry, inappropriate religious or political statements, name-calling, verifiably untrue statements, unreasonable and unverifiable claims, and unpaid content that only serves to advertise goods or services are all subject to removal. Content that serves no appropriate purpose will not be published.

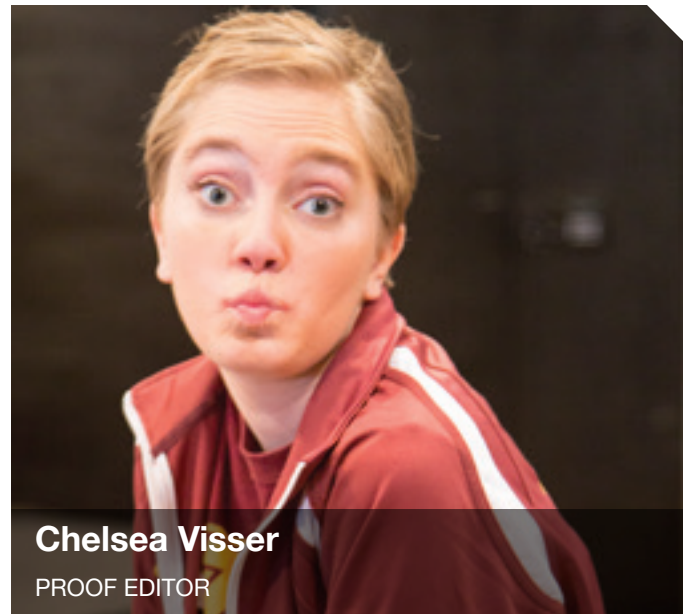
If you are dissatisfied with any edits made by *Sheer Dance*, you are welcome and encouraged to compose a Letter to the Editor, which, so long as it meets the submission guidelines, will be posted in the Discussion section of the subsequent issue with a response from *Sheer Dance*. *Sheer Dance* retains the right to discontinue public editorial discussions when they no longer add value for the dance community at large, though private exchanges may still be relevant. **E**



Mary Beth Beckman

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

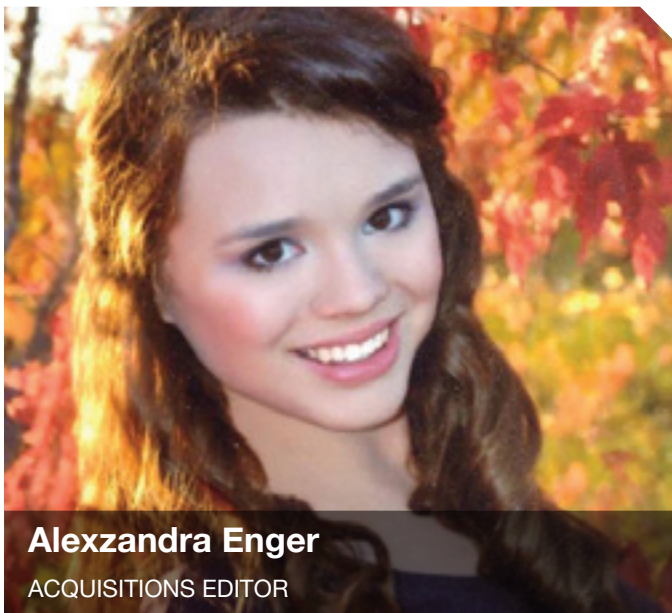
Mary Beth Beckman is the fearless leader of the Sheer Dance team, guiding the vision and scope of the magazine as well as editing the content to ensure its consistency with Sheer Dance's official style. She has been volunteering in the partner-dancing community for over five years and prides herself on being an excellent communicator and organizer of tiny scraps of data. Mary Beth can typically be found drinking buckets of coffee, engaging in fandom, improving her physical fitness, or watching sci-fi. She welcomes your questions and feedback at info@sheerdance.com.



Chelsea Visser

PROOF EDITOR

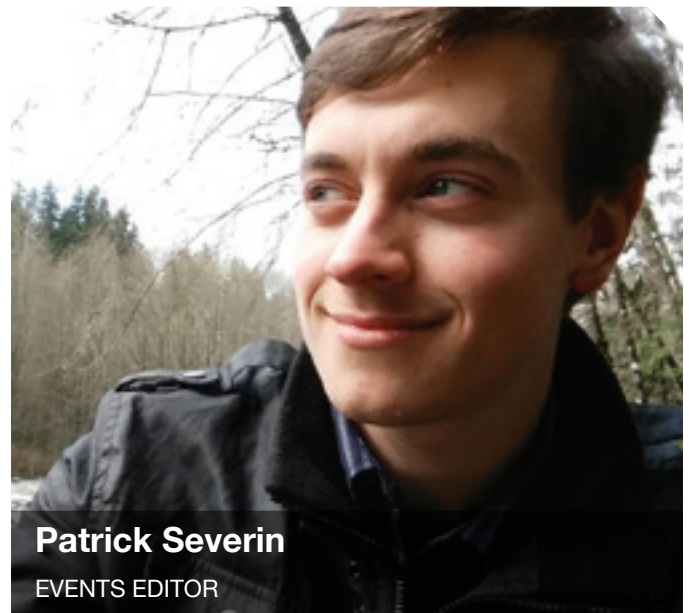
Chelsea Visser is an English and journalism student at the University of Minnesota who enjoys social dancing with friends when not reading, writing, or drinking too much coffee. As Sheer Dance's Proof Editor, Chelsea reads each issue cover to cover to ensure all the finer details are exactly as they should be. Questions, comments, and concerns can be sent to visse017@umn.edu.



Alexzandra Enger

ACQUISITIONS EDITOR

Alexzandra Enger is treasurer of the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club and a member of the competition team. When she's not busy dancing, volunteering, or studying, Alex will likely be found—coffee in hand—spending time with her friends, conquering video games, discovering new music, and whipping up delicious meals and desserts. She wants to travel the world, dance as often as she can, and be happy. As Acquisitions Editor of Sheer Dance, Alex is responsible for gathering all content for the magazine. If you've got articles or photos to share, send them to Alexzandra at submissions@sheerdance.com.



Patrick Severin

EVENTS EDITOR

Patrick Severin tried ballroom once, and it quickly became their favorite hobby. As Events Editor, they ensure dancers in the Twin Cities can always make it out to a social dance, because nothing makes Patrick smile like a floor full of happy dancers. When the dancing shoes are off, Patrick is developing software for hospitals and nonprofits, paddling a kayak in Lake Monona, commuting by bicycle, or hammering out letters on their Remington typewriter. They do freelance software consulting and enjoy philosophical chats; if either of those things interest you, feel free to email them at sever408@umn.edu.



Nicholas Westlake

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

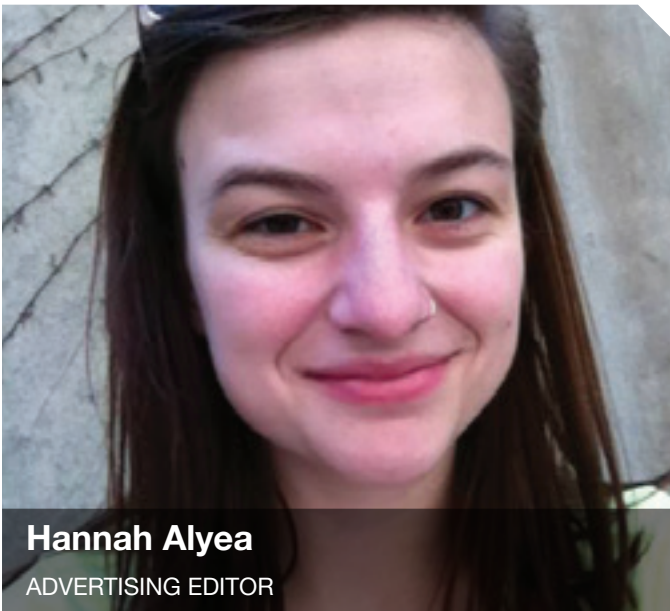
Nicholas Westlake crafts the look and feel of Sheer Dance. He oversees our design and publishing teams, building impactful visuals while ensuring each aspect of the publication complements the image and style you know and love. In the wild, he's also a passionate ballroom competitor, an avid dance instructor, and a no-nonsense system designer.



Julie Johnston

DESIGNER

Julie Johnston is, by day, a senior digital production specialist in the field of educational ebooks for iPads, etc. She has spent her entire career in print publications from catalogs to textbooks and is responsible for the layout of Sheer Dance. Julie has participated in Israeli dance and is in the beginning stages of learning the joys of partner dancing.



Hannah Alyea

ADVERTISING EDITOR

Hannah Alyea is rarely seen without a smile on her face and loves to spread the good news of ballroom dance. Originally from South Dakota, she has recently become the vice president of the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club and is a member of the competitive ballroom team. Her favorite styles of dance are American rhythm and smooth and international standard. As Advertising Editor, Hannah is responsible for ensuring that Sheer Dance readers can connect with the vendors, products, and events of interest to them. If you're interested in advertising with Sheer Dance, email Hannah at ads@sheerdance.com.



Theresa Kimler

SUBSCRIPTION & MAILING COORDINATOR

Theresa Kimler has been an active member of the dance community for over twenty years. A seven-time USA Dance open smooth champion, nine-time rhythm champion, and four-time nine-dance champion, Theresa is an undisputed, long-standing champion of dance. Mechanical engineer by education, black-belt project manager, owner of Total Project Consulting, and lover of quadrupeds, Theresa graciously lends her expertise to Sheer Dance for the betterment of the dance community as our Subscription & Mailing Coordinator. Subscribe today to receive a gorgeous magazine in your mailbox every month, courtesy of Theresa's work.

Volunteer Report

Ballroom Blast 2015

BY THE BALLROOM BLAST TEAM

THIS PAST OCTOBER 24TH was a blast! We introduced nearly one hundred fifty new people to ballroom dancing in a way they will never forget. We also increased the participation of adults and collegiate students alike. We had over two hundred sixty registrants in all, plus over two hundred fifty spectators—more than double last year's number. We're most proud of the incredible expansion of mixed proficiency; with over twice as many participants, MP has become a staple

used by college groups and adults alike to expose their friends and family to the world of dancesport.

Ballroom Blast has grown greatly in the four years since its inception. Initially conceived as a way to target new collegiate markets for participation in ballroom dance, the program has expanded to include workshops and lectures, a social dinner to promote interaction among the diverse groups in our community, and a Halloween Ball to cement those wonderful

new ties. In future years, we hope to develop a strong adult-mixed-proficiency program and provide adults with new opportunities to participate and explore the wonderful world of ballroom dance in a low-stress and fun environment.

There are too many people to thank in this article who made this year's Ballroom Blast a huge success, but we wanted to thank some of its biggest contributors.

First, a big thank you to our participants and spectators. We continue to be inspired by your love and enthusiasm for dance, as well as your kindness and sportsmanship.

Thank you to this year's core Blast volunteer team: Daniel O'Connell, who did a wonderful job bringing in collegiate participants; Rosemary



Photos from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson

O'Connell, without whom there would be no registration or competitor packets; Nic Westlake, who organized all the heats; Craig Hagensick and Alexzandra Enger, who managed all things money; Karen Maldonado, who designed the wonderful decoration scheme; Olivia Wicker, for her tremendous job designing the graphics and our program; Elizabeth Wanninger, responsible for our fantastic Halloween Ball; Rachel Marusinec, for designing the layout as well as securing Blast's 2016 date: Saturday, October 22nd; Taylor Wall, for securing our wonderful volunteers; Jackson Fossen, for making sure the DJ had everything he needed to make the music happen; Neli Petkova, for keeping everyone updated on Facebook; and Theresa Kimler, who made sure we stayed organized and

on track. Thank you to our wonderful on-deck personnel, Cathy Dessert, Len Farrington, Bridget Knickerbocker, and Jeff Knickerbocker, who managed to get all the participants on the floor for their dancing on time with no holdups. Last but not least, thank you to Maria Russett for being the best scrutineer's assistant we could ever hope for.

This year was also made possible by some very generous sponsorship and grants. The University of Minnesota Student Union Activities Board, Coca Cola, and U Partner Dance, Inc., provided significant financial assistance to help make this event a reality. Without the assistance of these wonderful organizations, we could not have provided this opportunity at all, let alone so affordably.

We also want to thank Bill Dessert and his team at Rapit Printing for printing such amazing banners and programs. Our thanks go out to the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club for their key volunteerism and participation. Their support is what made Ballroom Blast possible in the first place.

Most importantly, we want to thank our critiquing professionals, Elena Bersten, Kate Bratt, Jennifer Foster, Eric Hudson, Jeff Nehrbass, Cynthia Nehrbass, and Mariusz Olszewski; our wonderful MC, Gene Bersten; our DJ, Shane Meuwissen; and all of our evening show performers. Their investment in the future of partner dancing will go a long way toward enhancing the ballroom dance community. **E**



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Middle-Aged Moves Facing Fluffy Full On

BY ROCHELLE LOCKRIDGE

LAST MONTH, MY PRIVATE instructor showed me more than a proper tango corté. “Here,” he said. “Look in the mirror.”

A surprised, “Is that really me?”

“Yes. See what I mean? See that nice line?”

Tears welling with a gentle awe, “I’m beautiful.”

I am simply amazed how my teacher can show me what a line is, make a minor (or not-so-minor) adjustment to the way I am holding myself, and this beautiful, elegant woman emerges. It’s as if my body falls into place the way it was designed to. *Where did she come from? Has she really been here all along?* Yes, she has ... just hidden, afraid to express her full, fluffy self to the world.

With a body mass index of twenty-nine, I’d need to lose thirty pounds to move out of the overweight category and into the normal, healthy weight range. I’d like to say my weight and body shape don’t matter, but that

would be a lie. I struggle with body image, and the majority of the dance community doesn’t look like me.

You’ve got to be kidding. You think I can squeeze into that? We’re gonna need two size eights to fit this full-figured gal.

I’m slowly coming to terms with the body I have to work with today. With group classes, dance parties, lessons, practicing, and an exercise regime recommended by my instructors (I keep a twelve-pound dumbbell on my bathroom counter to remind me to get in my thirty reps during the day), people are surprised when I say I’ve only lost maybe a pound or two. What they are really noticing is that my body shape, how I hold myself, and how I move in the world are all changing.

I’m sure I’m not alone in confessing how uncomfortable it is to see our bodies in the mirror or on video. But lately I’ve come to understand and appreciate why dancers are always looking at themselves. It’s not because they’re



Rochelle Lockridge is a knowledge management specialist in the research and development labs at 3M. She enjoyed dancing disco, English country, and ballroom in high school and college. Thirty years later, the sweet siren song of partner dance has once again ensnared her. She’s looking forward to sharing her dance journey from a middle-aged perspective. @Rockylou22

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vain; it's because we want to see what we're doing. (Did you catch the pronoun switch there? I've been recently reminded, "You're a dancer now.")

It was quite a shocker when I watched my reflection dancing west coast swing in my living room window for the first time.

Is that really me? Oh, my, I don't like how that looks. I wonder if I can adjust the way I'm moving so that I like what I see? There, you go. That's better. Hey, just for fun, let's take a look from the side now. Oh, no, what happened? I looked just fine facing forward You mean I have to look at myself from all angles? Okay, then, if that's what it takes Let's try it again.

But there are also practical, scientific principles when one is facing Fluffy full on that can't be dismissed lightly. As a new dancer and a scientist by training, Newton's laws of motion

are not lost on me, especially when it comes to successfully executing spins.

Law #1: A body at rest stays at rest, and a body in motion stays in motion, unless acted on by an external force.

Law #2: Force = Mass × Acceleration

Or in layman's terms: it's going to take more force to get my mass moving and more force to get me to stop once I'm in motion. So spins continue to be difficult.

When I first started out, I actually thought I was going to have to give up on my country two-step class unless there was a flailing figure that Troy just hadn't taught us yet. Practicing didn't seem to be making much of a difference. As a last resort, I decided to see if real dancing shoes (as opposed to my rubber-soled running shoes) would make things easier.

I hypothesized that if I could reduce the friction between Fluffy and the floor, it would reduce the force needed to at least start and control a spin. *It worked!* Much to my classmates' and teacher's delight, there was no containing my joy when I was finally able to complete a three-hundred-sixty-degree traveling turn without falling off balance, which was soon followed by the successful execution of a double outside turn from closed position to a side-by-side promenade. *Yippee!*

I joined the ballroom dance community looking for a way to exercise that I could stick with. I've found that and so much more. But coming to terms with my body and witnessing a butterfly emerge from her cocoon was something I wasn't expecting at all. What a lovely gift. **E**



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, visit www.pursueyourpath.com and sign up.

Life Through Dance Your Dance Presence

BY ELIZABETH DICKINSON

ONE DEFINITION of *presence* is the ability to project a sense of ease, poise, or self-assurance, especially before an audience. Another definition of *presence* is a person or thing that exists or is present in a place but is not seen. In dance competitions or even on the social floor, presence is something that is felt even more than it is seen.

There are visible, physical ways to enhance presence (standing up straight, smiling, etc.). These are valuable because neuroscience suggests that a positive physical change to our posture also improves our emotional and mental state.

The reason we want to watch some dance couples more than others, or we are drawn to dance with one person

more than another, sometimes comes down to the presence they project and their enjoyment in dancing.

Cultivating the sense that you belong somewhere, that you have a right to be there, and that you are enjoying what you're doing all contributes to the presence you project.

When I was an actor, the expression for establishing presence was "taking stage." *Taking stage* meant walking on as if you belonged, as if it was natural that people would approve of you, and with a sense that what was to come would be worth watching.

May we pursue our paths on and off the dance floor with a sense of confidence that we belong. **E**

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Gaining Perspective Elephant Dances

BY JOEL TORGESON



Photo from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson

Joel Torgeson is president of the University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club and enjoys dancing both socially and competitively. If you have feedback for Joel or would like to pitch an article idea, email him at joeltorgeson@yahoo.com.

WHEN I DANCE, I'M USUALLY not alone.

You may not find that surprising, given that ballroom generally involves two people, but I'm talking about something else: a sometimes comforting, sometimes obnoxious little presence that I've become acquainted with. Let us, for sake of narrative, call it an elephant.

Have you ever tried dancing with an elephant on the floor? I don't remember the first time I noticed it, but I suspect it hung around in my periphery before I perceived it. At first mostly a nuisance, I danced around it, a different kind of floor craft. As time wore on, however, I got used to its presence—liked it, almost. There was something not quite friendly but welcoming in its demeanor. The floor seemed plenty big enough for the two of us, and so we waltzed.

Elephants are distracting, though. Every time you catch one peeking over your shoulder, you can't help but

think. You take your eye off the ball-of-foot balance needed to execute that turn, or cut your natural a little short to avoid its hairy flank. And sometimes it seems that damned elephant has its trunk wrapped around your waist, holding you back. When you turn around, though, it's across the floor, blinking patiently back. Mine sometimes likes to sit with me in my armchair, unwittingly crushing me further into the cushions.

Some of my friends have elephants too. When I look back, I've known about the elephants for a long time. It's hard to not notice when your friend is overshadowed by a gargantuan pachyderm. Though not always out in the open air, their footprints appear on the bodies and faces of those around me. Some try to hide their elephants from sight, while others deny they have one even as it bears witness at their shoulder. Studies show that their incidence is nearly one in five in the population.

The elephant in the room is mental health. My particular elephant happens to be depression.

The social and internal taboos surrounding this subject are strong, hence the initial abstraction. The everyday language of mental health teaches us that these problems are personal, perhaps implying that nobody wants to hear or see them, and that we can simply think our way out of them. The reality is that, while personal in manifestation, these are problems that millions of people deal with on a daily basis.

More insidious, the idea that somebody can just think themselves out of it tells us that the problem needs only a simple recipe to be fixed. "Follow X routine, think Y happy thoughts, and

don't do Z anymore, and you'll be good as new!"

In reality, mental health is so directly integrated into a person's identity, relationships, and world view that changes are hard to achieve on the timeline that most well-intended advice assumes. If my knee hurts when I do bolero, there's a fairly straightforward sequence to ameliorating the problem, usually beginning with taking a break from dancing bolero. If my self hurts when I feel like a missed opportunity deep in my past has doomed my future, there is no such formula for making me feel better; I cannot simply stop thinking.

I've been lucky to fall towards the mild end of the spectrum, in that it tends to be episodic instead of chronic.

When I hurt my knee, it needs ice and rest. When I hurt my mind, what can help?

I don't have all the answers. The best I can suggest is to be willing to talk about your elephant, your problems, and be willing to listen in return. It's difficult to be vulnerable and let someone take a peek at the inner workings of your mind, but that can help open the doors to more conversations and more understanding. Reach out and touch another's life, not with the intent to save or fix but to help. Know that seeking help is not a sign of weakness but one of strength.

To all those with elephants out there, I salute you with a mighty trumpet. **E**

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 3rd (of 4) - Amateur Adult Championship Smooth
 1st (of 2) - Amateur Senior I Championship Smooth
 1st (of 8) - Amateur Adult Gold Standard
 2nd (of 4) - Amateur Senior I Gold Standard
 6th (of 7) - Amateur Adult Novice Standard
 3rd (of 5) - Amateur Senior I Novice Standard

Gregory Bajer and Ligaya Carlos

2nd (of 13) - Amateur Adult Bronze Standard
 1st (of 3) - Amateur Senior I Bronze Standard
 2nd (of 4) - Amateur Adult Silver Standard
 1st (of 4) - Amateur Senior I Silver Standard

Tyler Bridges and Andrea Wynn

3rd (of 12) - Amateur Adult Silver Rhythm
 3rd (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth

Josh Dowell and Audrey Haugen

3rd (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Rhythm
 10th (of 13) - Amateur Adult Silver Rhythm
 5th (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Smooth
 11th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth
 7th (of 13) - Amateur Adult Bronze Standard

Wyatt Gifford and Samantha Johnson

1st (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Smooth
 4th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth
 3rd (of 13) - Amateur Adult Bronze Standard
 5th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Standard

David Huang and Veronica Quinones

3rd (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Latin
 5th (of 8) - Amateur Adult Silver Latin
 2nd (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Rhythm
 6th (of 12) - Amateur Adult Silver Rhythm

John Hinks and Rachel Marusinec

6th (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Rhythm
 8th (of 12) - Amateur Adult Silver Rhythm

John Hinks and McKenzie van Der Hagen

2nd (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Smooth
 10th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth
 9th (of 13) - Amateur Adult Bronze Standard

C.J. Hurst and Lorie Hurst

1st (of 8) - Amateur Adult Gold Smooth
 1st (of 5) - Amateur Senior I Gold Smooth

Results from Around the Country Chicago DanceSport Challenge



Photo from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson

1st (of 6) - Amateur Adult Novice Smooth
 1st (of 3) - Amateur Senior I Novice Smooth
 2nd (of 8) - Amateur Adult Gold Standard
 1st (of 4) - Amateur Senior I Gold Standard
 5th (of 7) - Amateur Adult Novice Standard
 1st (of 5) - Amateur Senior I Novice Standard
 1st (of 7) - Amateur Adult Open Syllabus International Viennese Waltz
 1st (of 2) - Amateur Senior I Open Syllabus International Viennese Waltz

Michael Kasinkas and Taylor Wall

6th (of 7) - Amateur Adult Pre-Champ Rhythm
 3rd (of 3) - Amateur Adult Championship Rhythm
 5th (of 7) - Amateur Adult Pre-Champ Smooth
 4th (of 4) - Amateur Adult Championship Smooth
 3rd (of 8) - Amateur Adult Gold Standard
 3rd (of 7) - Amateur Adult Novice Standard

David Molstad and Allison Lund

4th (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Rhythm
 10th (of 12) - Amateur Adult Silver Rhythm
 7th (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Smooth
 11th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth
 13th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Standard

Daniel O'Connell and Rosemary O'Connell

3rd (of 4) - Amateur Adult Novice Rhythm
 5th (of 7) - Amateur Adult Pre-Champ Rhythm
 8th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth
 6th (of 8) - Amateur Adult Gold Smooth
 6th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Standard



Photos from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson



Would you like to see your results or your studio's results at an event here? Email us at info@sheerdance.com with the name of the event, some pictures, and your results, and we'll be sure to include them!

Dom Pandy and Anjelica Montano

- 2nd (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Latin
- 4th (of 8) - Amateur Adult Silver Latin
- 5th (of 12) - Amateur Adult Silver Rhythm
- 2nd (of 3) - Amateur Adult Gold Rhythm
- 3rd (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Smooth
- 7th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth
- 5th (of 13) - Amateur Adult Bronze Standard
- 10th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Standard

Gregory Prasch and Susan Prasch

- 1st (of 5) - Amateur Senior II Novice Smooth
- 1st (of 4) - Amateur Senior III Novice Smooth
- 1st (of 5) - Amateur Senior II Pre-Champ Smooth
- 1st (of 6) - Amateur Senior III Pre-Champ Smooth
- 4th (of 8) - Amateur Senior II Novice Standard
- 2nd (of 8) - Amateur Senior III Novice Standard
- 2nd (of 9) - Amateur Senior II Pre-Champ Standard
- 2nd (of 11) - Amateur Senior III Pre-Champ Standard
- 1st (of 7) - Amateur Senior III Open Syllabus International Viennese Waltz
- 1st (of 6) - Amateur Senior II Open Syllabus International Viennese Waltz

Thomas Stasny and Christina Kylo

- 5th (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Rhythm
- 9th (of 12) - Amateur Adult Silver Rhythm
- 6th (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Smooth
- 11th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth
- 4th (of 13) - Amateur Adult Bronze Standard
- 9th (of 13) - Amateur Adult Silver Standard

Joel Torgeson and Tijen Petersen

- 1st (of 3) - Amateur Adult Gold Rhythm
- 2nd (of 8) - Amateur Adult Gold Smooth
- 3rd (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Standard
- 5th (of 8) - Amateur Adult Gold Standard

Joel Torgeson and Lizzie Weaver

- 1st (of 12) - Amateur Adult Silver Rhythm
- 1st (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth

Kevin Viratyosin and Karen Maldonado

- 3rd (of 8) - Amateur Adult Gold Smooth
- 4th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Standard
- 4th (of 8) - Amateur Adult Gold Standard

Kevin Viratyosin and Rachel Marusinec

- 5th (of 10) - Amateur Adult Bronze Latin
- 3rd (of 8) - Amateur Adult Silver Latin
- 5th (of 14) - Amateur Adult Silver Smooth

Greg Warner and Jill Smith

- 10th (of 19) - Amateur Senior II Silver Smooth
- 6th (of 17) - Amateur Senior III Silver Smooth

Nicholas Westlake and Neli Petkova

- 3rd (of 4) - Amateur Adult Championship Standard **E**

Entering the World of Amateur Comps

The Chicago DanceSport Challenge

BY CHRISTINA KYLLO



HALLOWEEN PLANS: CHECK.

Halloween candy: check.

Halloween costume: uh, does ballroom dancer count?

Halloween weekend, my partner and I competed in the 2015 Chicago DanceSport Challenge, our first amateur competition. While practicing and preparing for the weekend, we agreed that it would, at the very least, be a great chance to warm up on the competition floor before Collegiate Nationals later in November, but we got much more out of the experience. To start off the weekend, six of us from the University of Minnesota competitive ballroom team packed up a minivan and journeyed to Chicago, where we

met up with many more teammates at the competition. My partner and I competed in the smooth events on Saturday morning and got our first qualification for USA Dance Nationals. Not a bad start.

After our team finished our events early in the day on Saturday, some of us ventured to downtown Chicago to do some sightseeing. After all, if you didn't take a selfie at the Bean, did you really go to Chicago? I considered staying in costume in the spirit of Halloween—fake eyelashes, ballroom makeup, hair flower, and all—but decided to tone it down a bit for strolling Michigan Avenue. Rainy weather forced us to be creative with our group photos at the

Bean, and we enjoyed ourselves despite the dreary weather. It was beneficial to get a change of scenery, and we came back to the competition venue with a renewed energy for our dancing.

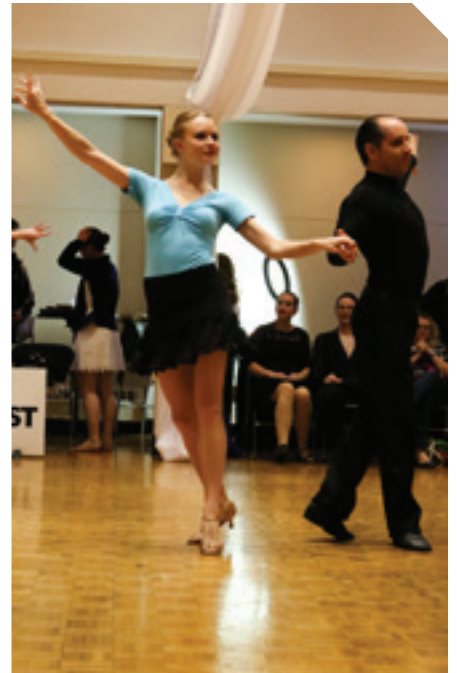
That Saturday evening we got to watch some of our teammates compete in the open events. As the largest group of collegiate dancers at the competition, the University of Minnesota team cheered loudly and had a great time livening up the competition atmosphere well into the night. But wait—dancers scheduled to compete at 11:30 p.m.? I had no idea amateur competitions were scheduled that late. Since the heats were running ahead of schedule, our team stuck around to watch the championship standard events, and it was one of the best decisions of the weekend. We were fortunate to see some amazing dancers, and we had a great time cheering on our favorite couples. A few social dances (“Thriller” included) also made for a great Halloween night.

Sunday, my partner and I competed in our rhythm and standard events. Having eliminated some of the initial jitters the day before, our dancing improved throughout our events, and it showed in our placements in our dances. When our team's events concluded for the day, I felt that typical pang of disappointment that another competition had come to an end.

The intensified team camaraderie that follows a competition was present during the car ride home, and we arrived back at the University of Minnesota campus happily exhausted and satisfied with the many successes of the weekend. For many of us, those successes included several qualifications for Nationals, a new excitement for amateur competitions, and a whole new set of fun memories that come from being part of a group of talented, supportive, and enthusiastic dancers. **E**



Photos from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson



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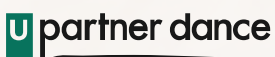


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THIS FALL, INSTEAD OF PREPARING my six-acre, three-level, country home of thirty years for the cold snowy winter in Minnesota, I am enjoying the sunny, warm weather of Florida in my new one-level home where I no longer have to do yard work.

Except for my family pictures and favorite artwork, I sold everything and made the leap of faith to make the move four months ago. I felt settled and restless all at the same time. There was a void in my life. Missing my Minnesota dance friends, I needed to connect with fun, energetic people who had the same passion I do: dance.

Checking the internet on my phone, I came up with a list of dance studios to explore. After the second week of searching in the month of September, I walked into Arthur Murray and sensed right away that it was going to be my home away from home.

Andrea Marta, a young, talented Italian, was introduced to me as my new instructor. At five years old in Due Leoni, Rome, Andrea started ballroom dancing at his Uncle Maurizio's dance studio and had a successful career in youth amateur. Coming from a family of dance performers, his parents made it to the senior gold level finals in the

Bravissimo! Learning from Andrea Marta

BY CHRISTINE TRASK

Italian Championship, and his older brother still lives in Rome and teaches dance.

Andrea's past awards include first place, Italian Championships, 1998 and 2012; finalist, Italian Championships, 2008; first place, South European Championships, 2013; and semifinalist and finalist in WDSF (international division) in Spain, France, Thailand, and Italy. In Cyprus, a country close to Greece, Andrea taught dance for a teacher at the Olga Dance Academy in 2013 and performed in a Christmas show at Hotel Intercontinental.

Andrea met Anastasia Kazmina, franchise owner of Arthur Murray in Naples, Florida, during a competition. In 2014 at age twenty-four, Andrea came to the United States to work for Anastasia and also be her professional partner.

On my first day of class, I noticed Andrea's astonishingly perfect frame and his natural talent for creating

and teaching innovative dance moves. I went to the open dance events on Wednesday and found the fun, energetic dance family that I was missing.

Naples Star Ball was coming up in the month of October, and of course I decided to participate in the competition. Five other female friends also decided to compete. There was little time for me to prepare for the competition, so I took private lessons twice a week. With sport tape wrapped around my knees and tired, swollen feet, Andrea began teaching me a routine for the silver open and full foxtrot, Viennese waltz, and waltz.

"You know this, Chris, so just do it," Andrea said.

After the fifth lesson, Andrea and I danced effortlessly

"*Bravissima!*" Andrea shouted, lifting me into the air. It was pure joy! I felt ready for the competition.

On competition day, all six of us women celebrated our achievements



together. I thought it important to interview the women and find out why they think Andrea is such an excellent teacher in general and, specifically, for preparing them for the competition.

Deb Mackerwicz: When I was at my lowest point physically, having been away from dance for many years, it was difficult for me to even walk into the studio for the first time. Slowly and gently, Andrea lifted me up mentally to realize that I was still a dancer and that, yes, of course I could compete with just six weeks of lessons! The encouragement and support he gave me was crucial at that vulnerable point in my life. I am sure he doesn't even realize how much more he did for me than teach dance. He helped me believe in myself again.

Connie Fetterman: Andrea, as a teacher and competitor, can tell you what to expect and what the judges look for. He patiently tells you not just what you're doing wrong but how it should be and the difference it makes in your body line or entry into the following step. "Vie," he would say, meaning, "Go!" When you get it right, he compliments you by saying, "Bravissima!" As a first-time competitor,

I was shocked when they announced that I came in first in all five standard open silver dances and first in the two dance challenges. I lived my Cinderella dream.

Shirley Cen: Andrea is the best teacher and greatest professional dancer that I know. He knows my weaknesses and strengths in ballroom dance. He encouraged me to participate in the competition. With his strict training and great sense of humor, he helped me correct my weaknesses to bring out the best in me. Feeling no pressure and enjoying the dance during the competition, I was surprised when I won first place in the closed bronze ballroom multi-dancing challenge.

Nicole Perrotta: I have danced off and on for the past fifteen years. I've never really had the confidence to think I was able to do anything with my dancing except to have fun. I even had one instructor at a different studio tell me that I should not continue to learn international-style ballroom (my favorite style of dance) and that I should learn smooth because it would be easier for me. When I met Andrea, I noticed he was able to teach me in a way that I was able to understand. In

a few short weeks, I saw my dancing improve, and I decided to challenge myself and enter the competition.

Leiza Kennedy: Andrea prepared me both mentally and technically so I could perform five dances across several competitive brackets. His charm and sense of humor helped make the challenging process of learning to dance fun. I felt secure under his expert partnering throughout each dance. Winning first and third place in two of the competition brackets, I have a wonderful dance experience to remember and to build upon.

Bravissimo, Andrea Marta. Thank you for being such a great teacher. We all look forward to the next Naples Star Ball on October 16, 2016, at the Hilton Naples.

A special thanks to Eva Gomez, patron of the arts, and to Deb Mackerwicz, editor.

Buone feste, meaning *happy holidays*, from the team at Arthur Murray in Naples, Roman Gomez, Anastasia Kazmina, and Andrea Marta. **E**

Christine Trask is an avid social dancer who loves to go new places and meet new people. Email her at traskca@yahoo.com if you'd like to do some dancing in Naples, Florida.

I HAVE A CONFESSION. It's something I have known all along, but the rest of my dance team does not seem to notice. Sure, it's only my first year dancing; that does not make the fact any less true. Any way I look at it, I still come to the same conclusion: I am the worst dancer in the studio.

Now, I know that if I were ever to say this out loud, any of my partners would immediately try to dismiss me. They just want to make me feel better. I appreciate their efforts, but no matter how hard I try, I cannot help but feel that as a beginner, I can only bring other dancers down.

We have to face the music. No matter how much we hate to say it, we have all had this toxic way of thinking. We all feel a little inadequate when we try something new in a competitive setting. However, self-incriminating mindsets do not advance us either as dancers or as people. For all of those beginners out there, I hope reading this will help you get out of your rut and back to the dance floor. To the seasoned dancers, read this as well. We all know you sometimes still feel the same way.

I believe one of the most inhibiting things we do as dancers, and as a society in general, is compare ourselves. I am sure many of you have heard this argument before. However, ballroom dance is a sport of comparisons. You cannot really compete nor improve unless you compare yourself to the other dancers. However, comparison does, in many ways, help us as dancers. It lets us know what we should strive to be, what our strengths are, and if we are improving. All of these are great things to know, so I would not recommend stopping comparison altogether if you are a beginning dancer. In reality, it is not comparison itself that discourages us but rather how comparison



Photo from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson

Taking the First Step Confronting a Self-Conscious Mindset

BY ERIC DAHLMAN

creates false realities that make us feel disillusioned.

We, as humans, are only able to see from our own perspectives, but we also have an amazing ability to notice the strengths of others. We especially notice others' strengths when we do not have a firm grasp on our own abilities. Because of this, people trick themselves into thinking they are worth a lot less than they really are. After all, how clumsy do you feel trying to learn the basics of a dance only to have your instructor demonstrate with flawless ease? You have not seen how long it took your coaches and teammates to be able to learn the basics, but if you ask them, their story will probably be similar to yours. Beginners are not bad dancers; beginners are dancers who

have the most potential. There is no need to worry how far along the other dancers you see are. Just know that if you keep practicing, you will eventually be at that level. All things take time.

One way I am able to immediately notice that I'm feeling anxious about my dancing is when I start to guess what my partners think of me. When we feel low about ourselves, we make ourselves believe others look at us the same way. This is detrimental to our learning, and we need to quickly readjust our way of thinking. An example of this is when I think too much about my mistakes rather than focus on how I am improving. I tend to visualize my partners speaking to me in one of two ways: either that they dread



Photos from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson



dancing with me because of my utter lack of skill or that they treat me as if I had a debilitating, chronic illness, and they just want to baby me because I am talentless and clearly in pain. Thinking this way blocks me from becoming a better dancer. Besides, dance partners will never actually think of you in these ways; I can guarantee it. I would also be willing to bet that your partners probably are thinking the exact same thing as you are. We all feel insecure.

This is why I believe that complimenting each other is another one of the most valuable skills in dancing. No one is able to assess their own performance with complete honesty. We carry too many biases for ourselves, good and bad. That makes genuinely complimenting each other important. It offers an additional level of communication between partners and keeps people from becoming disheartened. It releases us from being trapped in our own negative thoughts and supports what we are doing well. I promise that if you compliment a partner on something they truly improved on or

executed with pride, they will not only be much happier dancing with you but will also continue to perform the step the way that made you give them praise.

A talented dancer uses complimenting to their advantage. People enjoy helping people that they like. If you compliment an expert dancer, they will be more supportive of you in return. The compliment could even open new connections to perfect your own steps from the advice they give you. Next time you're having trouble with your own partner, rather than attacking them for making the same mistake again, tell them what they did better. Sometimes that is all a dancer needs to fix a common mistake. Trust me, if someone has already been called out on a mistake, they will not forget it. We all know the feeling. However, if they feel confident that they are improving, they will succeed with the step. This will make dancing fun again while still improving for the next competition.

My final piece of advice for beginners is one we have already heard

many times: smile! Although it can be hard, especially when you feel you just are not making enough progress, make yourself smile. If you are not having fun doing something, you will never truly master it. Dancing is no exception. The best thing about a smile is that, even if we fake it, the effects still appear. If you pretend to be cheerful, you will find yourself actually being cheerful. Keep this in mind as you continue learning to dance. Even if it does not actually help you feel better, both the judges and your partner will appreciate the effort. You will be amazed how far a smile can take you.

Beginning dance is both a stressful and a rewarding experience. You do not always see how well you are doing, and that can be frustrating. With dancing, you just have to take things one step at a time, and eventually you will see your improvement. We are never truly the worst dancer on the team that we picture ourselves to be. It takes time until we feel confident, so we might as well have fun along the way. **E**



Bringing Ballroom to Twin Cities Classrooms

BY EMBER REICHGOTT JUNGE

“OUT TO THE CHEESE, JUMP-JUMP; back to the crust, jump-jump; under the bridge, jump-jump; under the bridge, jump-jump.”

That was chanted by a fifth-grade dance couple practicing their new swing steps (on a giant imaginary pizza) during recess at Benjamin E. Mays IB World School in St. Paul. And they were good. You should have seen their boogie walks!

They and over two hundred fifty fifth graders in eleven classrooms in the Twin Cities are getting ready for their finale of Dancing Classrooms, the new Minnesota program bringing the benefits of ballroom dance to fifth graders. With specially trained teaching artists hired by the nonprofit Heart of Dance, students are checking their dance positions for crispy chicken

wings (elbows) and sticky peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches (forearms).

Take a look at the tango that students from Friendship Academy of the Arts, Minneapolis, and Four Seasons A+ Elementary, St. Paul, performed recently after only eleven lessons on www.HeartofDanceMN.org or Facebook. Adorable! The fifth graders will be even more energetic when they perform their new dances for their parents and schoolmates at their school culminating events at Friendship (December 1st); Athlos Leadership Academy, Brooklyn Park (December 2nd); Four Seasons (December 3rd); and Benjamin Mays (December 4th). The events will also feature student expression around dance, including essays and poems, artwork, and research into cultural origins of each dance.

We at Heart of Dance could not be more pleased with the progress of our students over the ten-week Dancing Classrooms fall residency and the excitement of their school leaders about the program. This is not just about learning dance steps. As one paraprofessional told us, “Their discipline has gotten much better, not just in dance class. I see it in their other classwork as well. They work better together—more like a team.”

Dancing Classrooms is about respect, elegance, and teamwork. What joy to watch these young people break through fear and resistance to, “Thank you, partner.” A few students act out, of course, which is why Heart of Dance created a new volunteer classroom assistant opportunity and trained six classroom assistants this semester to



help with classroom management and gender balance.

Then there are students who light up when the music starts.

“How did you feel about that?” teaching artist Andrea Miranda asked after she introduced students to the slow and elegant waltz.

“Boring,” said several.

One young lady looked up and said, “That’s what I’ll do on my honeymoon on the beach.”

And another responded, “That’s the dance my mom and dad did at their wedding.”

Our ballroom dance community is stepping up in other ways. Dancing Classrooms includes one session where a ballroom professional partners with our teaching artist and offers feedback to students. We are grateful to dance professionals Eric Hudson and Dustin Donelan from Cinema Ballroom, Russell Alliev from DanceLife Ballroom, Gordon Bratt from Mill City Ballroom, and Patrick Ellner from Fred Astaire

Dance Studios for visiting our classrooms. This session is always a favorite for our fifth graders!

All of this leads to the exciting inaugural Colors of the Rainbow Team Match on December 13th at 3:00 p.m. at Dancers Studio in St. Paul, where six couples from each of eleven classrooms will compete, one couple per classroom for each dance. The public is invited to watch dance couples compete in merengue, tango, rumba, foxtrot, waltz, and swing. Don’t be surprised if you see some heel-toe polka and the stomp thrown in as well. We are honored to have four professional ballroom dance judges to judge our dancers: Amy Anderson, Nathan Daniels, Eliecer Ramirez-Vargas, and Rebecca Ramirez. We are grateful for the Colors of the Rainbow Team Match sponsorship from University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club and U Partner Dance, Inc. Watch out for photos in the January issue of *Sheer Dance*.

Due to the great response from our community, Heart of Dance is expanding for the spring semester! We still have room for a few more classrooms. If you want to bring the benefits of ballroom dance to a child you know, or if you know educators who might want to bring Dancing Classrooms to their schools, contact Heart of Dance cofounders Ember Reichgott Junge at emberrj@heartofdancemn.org or Andrea Miranda at andream@heartofdancemn.org.

Of course, contributions large and small will help Heart of Dance expand our classrooms for spring so we can serve more Twin Cities students. With your help, we hope to serve six hundred students in this inaugural school year! Visit us online at www.HeartOfDanceMN.org, like us on Facebook, and follow us on Twitter.

If you would like to volunteer as a classroom assistant for the spring semester, contact Dede Ouren at dede.ouren@gmail.com.

Thank you for joining Heart of Dance on this journey, transforming young lives one step at a time! **E**

Rolling with the Punches

An Interview with Mary Beth Beckman

Sheer Dance: How long have you been volunteering? How did you start?

Mary Beth: About five years. My introduction to ballroom was a bit convoluted, but basically: had a best friend who introduced me to a boy who introduced me to ballroom, and I saw a bunch of stuff that could be done way better, and I said, “Hey! Can I do this stuff instead?” and they were like, “Yes, please,” because there’s a shortage of volunteers in ballroom. So if you want to do something and you offer to do it, you’re it. As for dancing, I started as a complete and utter beginner to ballroom in mixed proficiency at Star of the North DanceSport Classic several years ago. I did my first competition in standard waltz, tango, and quickstep with Nicholas Westlake, who’s now a standard championship dancer, but this was back when he was in newcomer and bronze. He taught me everything I know about standard and made me kind of a standard purist. And I took first place in all events!

SD: How did you feel about having taken first?

MB: I was pleased that I had taken first, and I was a bit surprised, because I had been dancing less than many of the people I was up against. It encouraged me, but I really just wanted to support the guy I was with in his passion, so I continued in ballroom because it was something he cared about a lot, because he was really engaged in it. And it became something I was really engaged in by extension. I didn’t really care about it for myself but more for him.



Photo from Dance Fest by Erik Anderson

SD: What did you think about those beginning days with dance?

MB: You know, it was really fun at the beginning because I was learning so much so quickly. I would go to a social dance, and people would ask me to dance, and I would say, “I don’t really know this one,” and they would say, “Hey, it’s okay, I’ll teach you!” and it would be completely incorrect technique and total garbage, but it was functional. And that people were

willing to coach me through it and make it work was great.

SD: You mentioned before that you saw areas for improvement in the ballroom community. Was that first for the newsletter or for the competitive events?

MB: It was first with the newsletter, the *Minnesota Dancing Times*. I remember looking over Nicholas Westlake’s shoulder as he was laying out an issue, and there was a particular article that was either poorly edited or not edited at all, and I asked him, “Did anyone edit this?” to which he replied something along the lines of: he wasn’t sure the editor did much editing. So I asked, “Can I be copy editor? I would like to do this because I could do a way better job.” And I got the job. And then a few weeks later, there was a meeting for Star of the North seeking volunteers. There was the role of registrar that no one seemed interested in that was all about data collection and data entry and keeping track of stuff—things I’m really good at. I offered myself, and soon I started getting registration checks and entries mailed to my home. One person even brought their check to my door at 9 a.m.!

SD: So for your first Star of the North, you were doing mixed proficiency, and by the next you were already registrar.

MB: Yes.

SD: What was it like, switching from competitor to organizer right away?

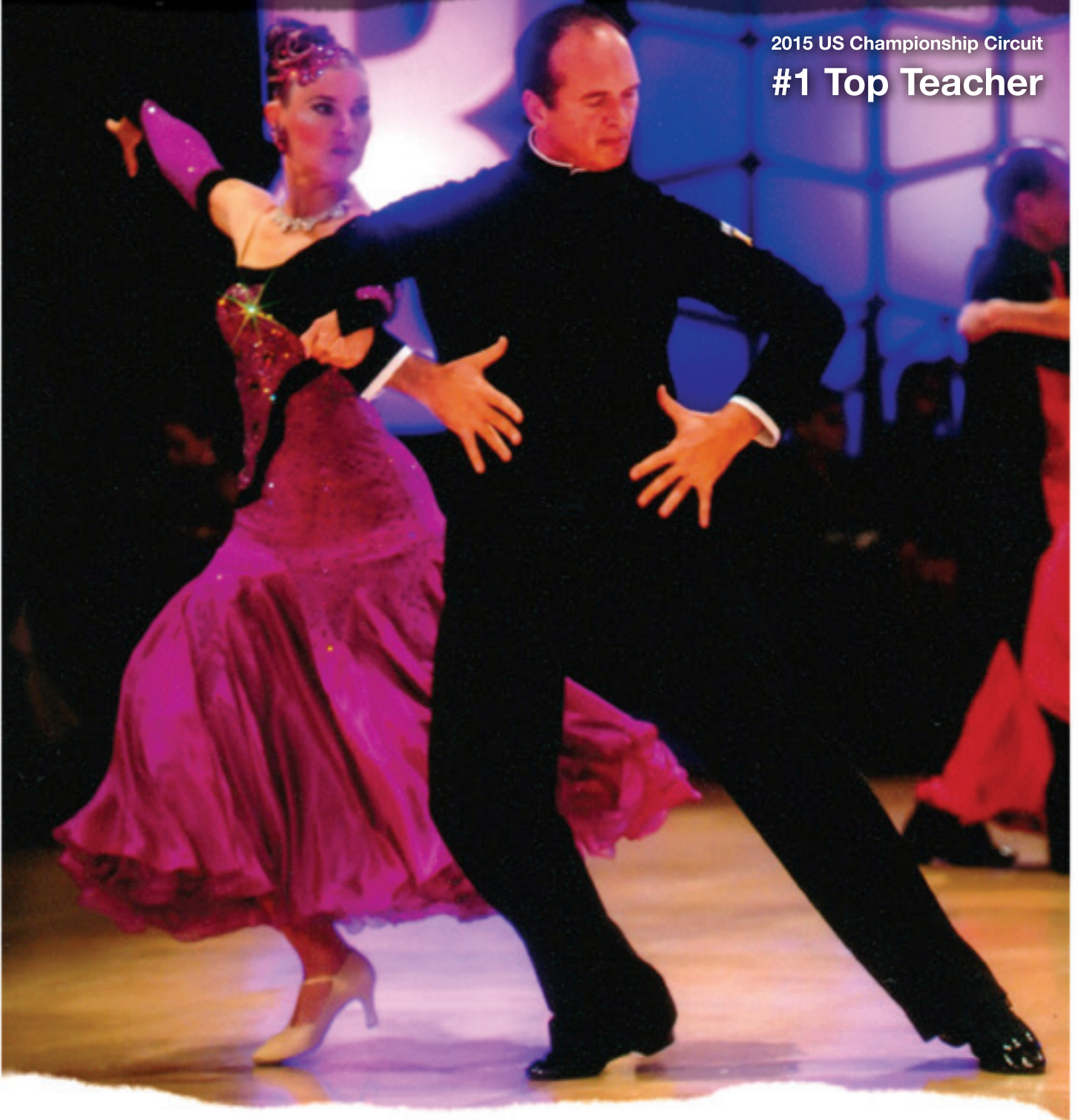
MB: You know, it’s part of my personality where this felt like the natural progression. “Oh, I’ve been in this event; now let’s make it better.”

SD: What was the learning curve like for being registrar?

MB: I was exhausted the first year. So much was left to the last minute, and the organizer at the time was very inexperienced. We were waiting for them to give us direction, and then we realized, “Oh. We’re in this on our

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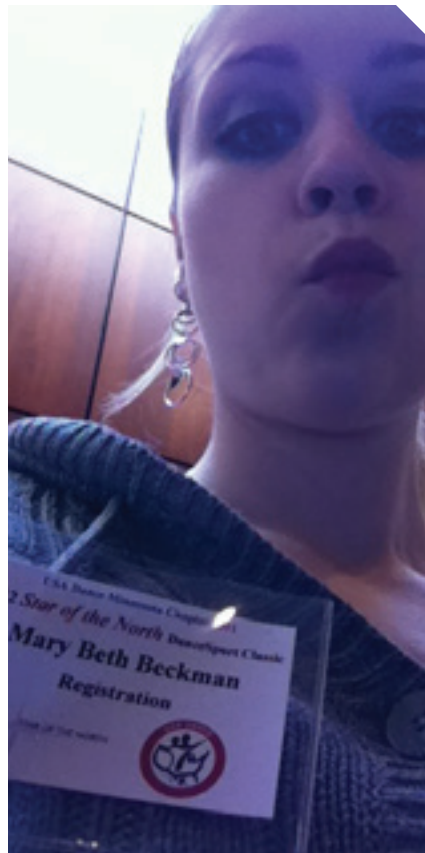
- World Pro/Am American Smooth Champion
- US Pro/Am Champion in Junior, Adult, Open, and Senior Divisions
- Champion of the United States Ballroom Dancesport Championship Series 2015
- USDC 2015 Top Teacher
- Fellow of the US Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance
- Championship level Adjudicator, NDCA

own. We have to make decisions. Okay. Let's make this up!" And so we did. A lot of things went wrong between my first Star as a volunteer and the second: venue changed ownership, contract things were violated, but we still put on a really great event. And the competitors didn't see any of the back-office strife that was going on, and that was based a lot on the professionalism of the team and the front desk presentation of: "Everything's great! Everything's fine!"

SD: What were some things that you learned?

MB: I learned that you really just have to roll with the punches. It's all about versatility. It's all about understanding that this role is extremely variable, and that the things you're expected to do can be completely random. Sometimes people will come up and say, "Hey, the water cooler is completely empty," so you have to find the person responsible for that and tell them. After all, I can't leave the desk. I have to stay there in case someone comes and wants to drop or add events, and communicate that to everyone involved. But really, I learned to smile through everything and tell people that everything's okay, that I'll be able to solve all of their problems, even if I really can't. And that's the thing about primarily collegiate competitions: college students are not good at planning ahead. So someone would come up and tell me they can't do all of their events despite having been sent their heat sheets a week in advance, but I would be like, "Okay. I will solve this for you. I will manage this. Tell me all the things you need. I will make this happen. You have a great day. I want you to have the best competition experience of your life, so I will take care of this". And the first Dance Fest was totally that.

SD: So you were a founding member of Dance Fest. How did that differ from



Mary Beth shows off her name tags from her very first time as a volunteer at Star of the North and her very last Dance Fest.



Star of the North? Was the vision or planning of the event different?

MB: It was much less confined to previous ideas of what the event should be. It was much freer to be what the current group of organizers thought it should be. We wanted to it be a fun amateur event. Let's have no goals of it being a sanctioned event—I think that was a constant stressor on Star of the North, of "maybe we want to be sanctioned," and Fest was like, no. We want to draw people to dance and create a competitive experience that's fun and isn't tied to all the rigmarole of USA Dance specifications and requirements. So Dance Fest was about introducing as many new people to competitive dancesport as possible. And I think that's what made it really successful, because people were like, "This is just fun!" A person could wear a sparkly dress and not get called out for it. It was good. And the first one was put together in about thirty days and was awesome, because we were all really fired up and pretty damn good at what we did.

SD: How did you grow and change from Star of the North to Fest, in your role, and how did you apply what you learned to future events?

MB: In Star, I really felt like I was tied to someone else's vision of what a competition should be. Fest, I really felt like it was my thing. So I knew that whatever decision I made, it was legit. I felt like I got the shackles taken off. If you want to dance with someone of the same gender, go do it. Go have fun. I want you to love competitive dancing. I want you to make the judges believe you are the best out there. And for me, that's what Dance Fest was. I don't care what it was for anyone else; for me, it was taking off the shackles of someone else's event and making it mine. And for me, challenging that heteronormativity is really important.

I would get emails as registrar asking if boys could follow, and would say, “Yes. Yes, please. Do that more!” We need to challenge these things. We need to embody them, make them glamorous, and dare any judge to mark you lower simply because of what gender roles you’re performing.

SD: What are some of your favorite moments as registrar being at Fest, Star, or Ballroom Blast?

MB: I really loved watching the college team matches based on the sheer amount of energy at the events. And I use the word *sheer*, which is incidentally the name of the magazine, because it’s always about the energy and enthusiasm people bring to partner dance—the enthusiasm, the love, the dedication. Because without that sense of belonging, there’s no reason to continue dancing. Anytime I was able to sense the community, that was really valuable for me, even simple moments at the front desk where I got to see that excitement and feed off of it. The collegiate match really embodied that. Really, I have a lot of fun memories from packet-stuffing parties, where we would prepare the competitor competition packets. There would be a bunch of people together in a room, all stuffing things into envelopes, me and Rosemary O’Connell writing names on folders and insisting that people do things correctly It sounds plain, but it was so much fun.

SD: Being registrar, you learned a lot of rolling with the punches and organizing data. How did you bring that into your personal and professional life?

MB: A lot of the information recall has been day-to-day. In my professional life, I remember the name of everyone I ever meet! But really, I now think in spreadsheets. I think about information in its context. People at work are often impressed by the amount



Photos from Dance Fest by Erik Anderson



of memory recall I have, but it comes from practice as registrar.

SD: So let’s talk about your work as editor for the *Minnesota Dancing Times* and *Sheer Dance*. When you first got your start, how did those first few months go? How did you become Editor-in-Chief for the *Minnesota Dancing Times*?

MB: You know, it was really easy to transition into because everyone on the team was really happy to have a qualified copy editor. I transitioned into Editor-in-Chief for the *Dancing Times* when the editor at the time left after a few months of me coming on. And honestly, nothing changed that much. I started with copy editing, then setting deadlines, then acquiring material. I kept on taking more and more work. And that went on for two years.

SD: What are you most proud of during your time at the *Dancing Times*?

MB: Honestly, the thing I’m most proud of is the most controversial thing I did while I was there.

SD: What happened from your point of view, and how did you handle it at the time?

MB: The start of everything was that I happened to be intimate at the time with someone who competed at USA Dance Nationals the year it was in LA. And I heard several different narratives of what happened at Nationals and about the judging and how it seemed completely inconsistent and that it looked like judges were marking their students favorably. And I’m in a special position where I’m not a competitor and I have nothing to lose or gain. So I asked, “What are people being judged on? What are the criteria here?” and then I got some really heinous letters to the editor, one of which was not published, and one of which was heavily edited to make the writer look less nasty.

SD: Why did you think this development was good?

MB: Because I don't have any personal investment in ballroom in any way, I was able to draw some attention to some shady stuff that may be happening in judging. If you're marking the couples you coach higher, that's something that needs to be looked at—sorry, it is. And that was not something people wanted to hear. That was something I was attacked personally for, strongly and repeatedly. And the volume and tone of that response was telling; it indicated to me that these were questions no one had asked before, which is problematic and honestly a bit shocking.

SD: So you eventually left the *Dancing Times* and created *Sheer Dance*.

MB: Yes, and *Sheer* is my baby.

SD: What were your ideas for *Sheer Dance*, and how did your history with the *Dancing Times* affect *Sheer Dance*? What were the goals you had in mind when creating *Sheer*?

MB: Well, my experience with the *Dancing Times* honestly was that the nonprofit board there had a lot of discomfort with anything controversial ever happening in their publication. But without controversy, how do we ever have growth? How do we ever have change? How do we ever have a useful discussion? I was done with their discomfort, and I started a publication with a very clearly defined structure for how we discuss things respectfully. I wanted a safe space to discuss the issues facing partner dancing in our particular community, and that was not afforded to us in the *Dancing Times* because of the restrictions of the board.

SD: Do you feel that *Sheer Dance* has accomplished that goal these past two years?

I feel that in the areas I have encouraged people to discuss, such as gender equality, sexual orientation, and heteronormativity, yes. One month we featured an article written by a queer

person of color, and I'm thrilled with that. I hope it happens more in the future. I think we need more diversity. I want more people to say, "Are we really growing? How do we work that?" I want *Sheer* to be a space where everyone is comfortable saying, "Hey, here is a problem. How do we address this?" and then I want it to be addressed. And that's something I will say: I always want to be available to respond to those questions. I am, in many ways, disassociated from partner dancing at this point—I don't dance anymore—but I will never be disassociated with the issues of partner dancing. So if someone asks a question that someone from the leadership team of *Sheer Dance* can't answer, I want to be there for that.

SD: What has been your favorite issue of *Sheer* or your favorite article in *Sheer Dance*?

MB: Oh, I love Joel's article about sexism in partner dancing. I think that in some ways I encouraged him to write it, but it was really good. And everyone knows this based on my editorial following it, but it's very important for straight, white men to talk about these issues, because people are more likely to listen to them. I mean, as a woman, people will always think that I have an opinion, but I love that Joel helps the cause.

SD: What are some skills you learned as Executive Editor of *Sheer Dance*?

MB: Management. It's a lot of talking to people, understanding their experience of things, and trying to guide them into what I expect from them. When you first integrate someone into a role, they're not going to fit exactly. You need to use some very precise skills to mold them to become productive.

SD: How do you feel you've grown as a person during your time as a volunteer for dance? How do you think dance has added to your life?

MB: I've learned a lot more about people's motivations, my own and those of the people I manage. Why do people volunteer? Because a lot of people don't. What's the difference that makes people volunteer? What motivates me? Analyzing that piece has really helped me grow a lot. In my professional life, understanding what motivates someone in their work, what gets them fired up to come in even when it's stressful, has been helpful. I've learned a lot about versatility and just being able to operate with whatever happens, being able to roll with the punches. It's the little things of making people feel like they're being heard and taken care of, and understanding the value of that. That's what volunteering has given me more than anything else: understanding how important it is for people to feel heard. It's been important for me as a volunteer and in the greater context of my life. I've felt mistreated, unheard, disrespected, and in contrast I've known the joy and peace that comes from being truly seen and heard. And I've spent a lot of time asking myself: how can we all, as people, work together to create an optimal outcome?

SD: Do you have any regrets with volunteering?

MB: I honestly think it was important that I wasn't attached. I don't think I could have accomplished this much had I been tethered to a part of the community. Because I was more attached to my personal values of egalitarianism, feminism—those are my driving factors—I was able to accomplish more and stay truer to myself than if I had social dance or competitive dance aspirations. Because I was removed, I had a purer experience. I don't regret any of my volunteering. It has been such an important component of my growth as a person. It was all a very natural progression of my life. I learned a lot, and I've taught a lot. A lot of people learned

from my guidance and my values, and the fact that I've been so unflinching about my values is an important part of my contribution to everything ballroom. I don't regret any of it, and I'm glad I had an effect. I really do believe I've had an effect. I have no question that I have influenced the direction of thought and the way things have progressed in the community.

SD: Choosing to leave the ballroom dance community is a very big decision. As you now work on the last issue of *Sheer*, what are your thoughts? How did you know that it was time to leave?

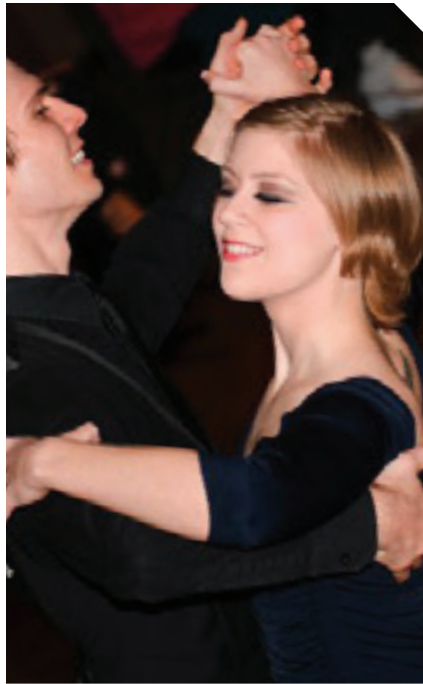
MB: I'm not sure if I'll ever be okay letting go 100% of anything. If anyone requests my input, I will be happy to provide it. I don't know if anyone will ask me for it, but it's the truth. My intention isn't to cut myself off entirely. I have many very close friends who are embedded in the partner-dancing community. It's more that I can't be responsible for the quality of the publication anymore, especially in a community I'm not personally invested in. I'm not gone; I'm just taking a few steps back.

SD: What do you plan to do with your newfound free time? What are your new plans and goals?

MB: Ummm, Netflix? But really, my goal is to establish what is important to me. I've been operating based on what has been important to my ex for about a year now, and it didn't occur to me until very recently that that's what I've been doing. I didn't realize I was still attached to this value system that has been outdated. It's time for me to find my own passion.

SD: What sort of contact will you have with the ballroom community from now on?

MB: I'm going to stay in contact with my close ballroom friends. If any of them invites me to a social dance for whatever reason and promises to spend



Above: Mary Beth competing with mixed-proficiency partner Nicholas Westlake at her first Star of the North. Below: Mary Beth and mixed-proficiency partner Nels Petersen awaiting results at her last Dance Fest. Photo by Erik Anderson.



time with me there, I'll probably go. I went to a wedding recently where I ran into a ballroom dance instructor and we danced a fun west coast swing. And that made me realize I missed social ballroom dancing with fun, respectful people. But yeah, I'm going to step back. Invite-only. I'll be around, but I'll be significantly less engaged.

SD: Any parting thoughts you want to tell the ballroom dance community and *Sheer Dance*?

MB: Honestly? Be true to yourself and your values. If anything about partner dancing feels exclusive to you, talk about it. If you're queer, if you're female but prefer to lead or male but prefer to follow, if you feel like judging was unfair—if anything feels counter to the common grain of partner dancing, talk about it. We need to have these things be public. It's scary and it's difficult, but it's important, because without talking about it, we can never resolve these issues. And what I have tried to create within *Sheer Dance* is a safe space to talk about all of these issues. Whatever happens, I will always be an advocate for people who want to help their community and themselves. I understand how important that is and how therapeutic it can be. I want whatever you do to be as enriching and true to you as possible. The ultimate goal for *Sheer Dance* was for it to be a global publication, and it's been growing, but I can't be the one to take it there. I love a huge number of people in the ballroom dance community, but it's not mine. So I've got to let it go.

SD: Well, on behalf of all the people whose lives you've touched, whether they know it or not, thank you for everything you've done for partner dancing and the people who love it. We wish you all the best.

MB: Thank you. See you on the other side. (That's a *Battlestar Galactica* reference.) **E**



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Photo from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson

Hustle Hijinks

A #ShippingIt Story

BY CHELSEA VISSER

HEY—QUINN!

Riley?

Quinn, you're not busy ... two weeks from now, right?

I ... I don't think so?

Awesome! We're dancing hustle.

Wait, what?

Hustle! You know, backstep, forward, spin, back—

Yes, I know hustle, Ri, but why are we doing it two weeks from now?

Oh! There's a comp in town! But there are some dances open to everyone; you don't need to be on the team or anything. Please? It'll be fun, I swear.

I-is coach going to be weird about it?

Why would he be?

Ri, you know why.

He won't be weird about it. I mean, he might, but he won't say anything about it. And if he does, I'll call him on it, and the rest of the team will back me up.

I don't want you getting in trouble.

Hey. Hey. I want to do this. I want to dance with you, Q. I'm tired of tiptoeing around coach, and I'm not the only one tired of the comments he makes.

We're going to dance, and we'll have fun, and that's all that matters.

*

Good morning!

Is it still morning?

I brought you coffee.

See, this—this right here is why you're my favorite.

How'd morning session go?

Madison and I made it to semis in foxtrot, and I think we would have finaled if I didn't trip over my own damn foot.

Hey. Next time, right?

Yeah. Thanks, Q. You get us all signed in for hustle?

Yep! Heat's supposed to start at 2:47.

Oh, thank god; that means I have time for lunch.

Go! Go eat! I'm going to go get changed.

Meet you back here in a bit?

Yeah!

*

You would not believe how much stuff is in my hair right now. Don't touch it! I just got it to look right!

Okay, okay, I'm sorry! But wow, yeah, did you use the whole can, kid?

Most of it. Somebody in the dressing room had this super-strong stuff. We got my hair standing all the way on end; it was awesome.

Okay, yeah, we're trying that later.

Only if we do your hair, too.

God, fine. Okay, come here. Let's go dance this song and warm up.

Hey, Ri?

Yeah?

You look really good today.

My frame was awful; I don't know what—

That's not what I meant.

Wha—oh. Thanks.

You know, with your hair like that, you can really see how pink your ears turn when you blush.

Oh, my god, brat, come on. Let's dance.

*

That was so fun!

Right?!

How many times did you even spin me that one time?

At least four—I lost count.

Did we make the next heat?

Here comes the sheet. If we make this next round, you need to dip me.

There it is! Do you see our number?

Let's see Yes! Third row!

Come on!

*

I am so, so sorry.

Q, stop apologizing. That was hilarious.

I didn't mean to knock you over!

I know, Q. I'm fine, I swear. Seriously, though, did you see coach's face—

During that dip! Yes!

I've never seen his face turn that color before.

Hey, heat sheet....

Hey. Hey, it's all right.

We didn't even make quarterfinals.

Hey, look at me. I don't care about quarterfinals. Did you have fun?

Yeah.

I did, too. Tons of fun. I don't need a ribbon for that.

Okay.

Thanks for dancing with me, Q. Seriously, that was the most fun I've had all day.

Really?

Really. Now, come on. Let's go cheer on the next group—there's still a lot of dancing to be done. **E**

AS I FILLED OUT MY APPLICATION for graduate school, one of the sections was a statement with the following prompt: “State your immediate and long-term career goals.” Goals are important. They are something you want to be or someplace you want to end up. They are things to work toward and get excited about.

When I first joined the dance team, I didn’t think much about goals, aside from having fun and learning more. While having fun is still one of my goals, it is a given that regardless of setting, I’m going to have fun dancing. What is different now is that I have goals for competitions. It helps me prepare for them and get excited as opposed to getting nervous.

Looking back on my first semester, I wish I would have done it differently. I studied in London the following semester, so I didn’t put much effort in at first. I showed up to the team practices, and that was it. I didn’t practice on my own with my partners or give much thought to Collegiate Nationals in Columbus, Ohio, other than recognizing it as a really large competition that required an incredibly long bus ride to attend. In other words, I was unprepared, and it was obvious the moment we arrived.

While we were standing in line for smooth, I was shaking. I couldn’t calm my nerves, and suddenly I didn’t think it was fun anymore. I just wanted it to be over, which is a feeling I never wanted to associate with dancing.

Two years later, it is completely different, and it is because I, along with my partners, set Collegiate Nationals as a goal to work toward. We have put in so much time over summer and on the weekends for practice. Now, instead of having to control my fears, I have to try to control my excitement. It’s a weekend I never want to end. **E**

The Importance of Setting Goals Preparing for Collegiate Nationals

BY THOMAS STASTNY



Photo from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson



Collegiate Ballroom Championships coverage coming next issue!

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A Balancing Act

BY LIGAYA CARLOS

MY DANCE PARTNER, PB, and I recently participated in the Chicago DanceSport Challenge. We were thrilled with how we danced, doing well enough to qualify for USA Dance National DanceSport Championships in Baltimore. However, competing in Baltimore next year does not solely depend on us qualifying; our families need to be consulted and considered before a decision to travel and compete in March could be made.

Our partnership began over a year ago after attending my second standard class at Dancers Studio. PB approached me and asked if we could practice together after classes just to hone the skills that we learned for the session. It was a dance style that was new to me, so I welcomed the opportunity to practice with him to help me improve. Neli Petkova was the first to suggest that we consider dancing together. Soon, practice sessions became regular events after Monday classes, and we later sought coaching with Nic Westlake and Neli. These coaching sessions and practices were planned around the activities of our families and work.

My husband is a physician, and we have three kids. I am a homemaker and am also active in the Filipino community, especially our dance troupe. I also compete (since 2014) in American-style ballroom dance with Jeff Halverson, my professional dance instructor. PB and his wife both work and have two kids. PB lives north of Minneapolis, while I live twenty-five minutes south of Dancers Studio. The one main interest that PB and I share is ballroom dancing, and with seven people to prioritize plus work and other activities, we did



Photo from Ballroom Blast by Erik Anderson

our best to compromise and set aside time to train.

Initially, I didn't think PB was interested in competing, but he was encouraged and motivated by winning first place at Dance Fest early this year in a mixed proficiency event with Neli. We then participated in multiple showcases at Dancers Studio and finally joined the Twin Cities Open as an amateur couple. I thought the competition went extremely well despite the fact that most events we signed up for were uncontested.

We then hatched the idea of trying to qualify for Nationals, thus we set our sights on the Chicago DanceSport Challenge as our most logical qualifying competition for nationals. The date of the Chicago event meant that we were going to miss Halloween (trick-or-treating) with our young families.

We did well in Chicago, beating all couples except for one extremely good couple in a field of over a dozen participants, and successfully qualified for Nationals. This is certainly the highlight of our dance partnership to date, but what happens next is still up in the air. Competing in Baltimore (and continuing to dance together, in general) will only be possible with the full support of our families.

I know our situation is not unique in the adult amateur realm of ballroom competition. Every partnership is different, and the dancers in a partnership are also different, including backgrounds, support, and attitudes. In our case, we have two different families with several priorities involved, and they take precedence over any competition (over anything, really). It's certainly a balancing act! **E**



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