

IN APPRECIATION OF...

DANCE

STORY BY LIZA HOLTMEIER

Have you ever jumped up and down at a football game, cheering your team on to victory?

If you have, then you've danced.

Have you ever slammed a door, thrown a book or hit a pillow when you were frustrated or angry?

If you have, then you've danced.

Dance is communication through movement. And while the above actions may seem dull next to the dramatic pirouettes and leaps of the Bolshoi Ballet dancers, they still equal dance.

"Dance is something everyone does whether they are aware of it or not," said Lisa Fusillo, professor of dance at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "Dance is natural and instinctive. It is fundamental to the human being. People forget that it is a part of everyday life."

Dance has always been one of the primary, fundamental art forms. Practically every culture has or has had some form of dancing. People dance to socialize, to celebrate and to express emotion.

In America, dance has ranged from the ceremonial dances of American Indians to the neoclassical ballet of New York City Ballet.

America has given the world such notable dance artists as Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Maria Tallchief, Jerome Robbins and Alvin Ailey. America has also provided a haven of artistic freedom for foreign stars like Mikhail Baryshnikov and Alicia Alonso.

Dance has played an evolutionary role in the history of America, mirroring the artistic and social changes of a developing nation. From the social

But, as the saying goes, you are never too old to start dancing.

The important thing to realize about dance is that it is a participatory art form. While it's wonderful to watch others dance, you can only truly appreciate movement once you've tried it yourself.

And once you start, you will see it affect every area of your life.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT MILLER

own pace.

"As a young adult, don't compare yourself to anyone else in the class. Dance is an individual art form. It is your body. Take things at your own pace and don't get frustrated," she said.

Adams emphasized the importance of finding a teacher with whom you connect. She said each class should be an eye-opening experience.

In addition to taking class, Fusillo said, dancers should see as many performances as they can, not just groups specifically billed as dance groups.

"Go see 'Smokey Joe's Cafe' and the Cirque Eloize," Fusillo said. "It's all movement. It's all choreographed."

The most important thing is to approach dance with energy and curiosity.

Martha Graham wrote in her book "Blood Memory" that she didn't look for perfection at the beginning of training. She wanted passion, eagerness and enthusiasm for life.

These are the qualities dance celebrates.

"IT IS AN ART THAT IS A PART OF OUR BODIES."

—LISA FUSILLO
UNL PROFESSOR
OF DANCE

dance lessons of Irene and Vernon Castle in the early 20th century to the athletic antics of Pilobolus since the 1970s, dance has sought to explore and explain the roles each of us play in society.

But despite the rich heritage of dance in America, people continue to be intimidated by the art form.

"I think there is a fear of the unknown in very general terms," Fusillo said. "People who have no experience playing a musical instrument will avoid that when they are older. As children, we are more open to exploration and discovery. As we get older, we channel those energies into things we know."

"Dance is one of the best disciplines that anyone could undergo," said Charlotte Adams, director of the UNL dance program.

Adams said dance enhances self-confidence, promotes creative thought and provides a sense of accomplishment.

"Dance really taps into the learning abilities of the individual. It is an art that is a part of our bodies," she said.

Fusillo added that dance provides a sense of logic and order that can be applied to everything in life — including calculating taxes.

However, Fusillo warned that beginning students in dance should be at their

VENUES

UNL Department of Theatre Arts and Dance

The dance program presents two evenings of dance per semester. The first concert generally consists of works choreographed by faculty members and guest artists and performed by University of Nebraska-Lincoln dancers and guest artists. The second is a more informal concert consisting of works choreographed by UNL dancers in their composition classes. To find out about the dates for these events, call the Temple Box Office at (402) 472-2073.

The Wagon Train Project

The Wagon Train is known for bringing cutting-edge choreographers to the Lincoln area. Not only does the Wagon Train offer performances, its season consists of two to three residency projects with companies such as Dav Dorfman Dance. These residency projects offer an opportunity for dancers of all ranges and abilities to expand their dancing knowledge. For more information, call the Wagon Train at (402) 43-7776.

The Lied Center for Performing Arts

The Lied Center's dance offerings range from season to season. Some years are more traditional. Some are more contemporary. Regardless of style, the companies that perform are usually first-class and nationally known. Past highlights include American Ballet Theatre, Hubbard Street Chicago and the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre. For information on dance events, call the Lied Center box office at (402) 472-4747.

Lincoln Midwest Ballet Company

The Lincoln Midwest Ballet Company is a company of 27 dancers and 13 apprentices who perform mainly classical ballet. The company does an annual performance of "The Nutcracker" each December at the Lied Center as well as a spring concert. The company often brings in guest artists to choreograph their shows and to teach master classes. Past guest artists have been from the Colorado Ballet, the Joffrey Ballet in Chicago and the Kirov School in Washington, D.C. For information on coming performances, call the Lincoln Midwest Ballet Company at (402) 477-8446.

Ballet Omaha

If it's a full-length ballet you want, look to Ballet Omaha and its partnership with the Dayton Ballet from Ohio. The Dayton Ballet presents four ballets a year in Omaha through the administrative help of Ballet Omaha. The productions are usually full-length ballets like "Romeo and Juliet" or "Swan Lake," but the company occasionally performs an evening of divertissement ballets. For more information, call Ballet Omaha at (402) 346-7332.

Omaha Modern Dance Collective

OMDC is an organization uniting modern dance choreographers and dancers across the state. The group offers classes, performances and workshops. OMDC's biggest event is its fall concert. Choreographers from across the state audition their works for this performance. Performances are generally held in the Lied Center on the Creighton University campus. For more information, call OMDC at (402) 551-7473.

Creighton University Dancers

Like UNL's Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, Creighton presents a series of concerts each semester. The concerts usually feature Creighton dance majors as well as guest artists and range from classical ballet to modern. For

more information, call the Creighton Performing Arts box office at (402) 280-2512.

Wonder Wheels

Established by Omahan Stacey Wonder in connection with Ballet Omaha, Wonder Wheels pairs paraplegic dancers with stand-up dancers. The dancers take classes together and also perform pieces choreographed specifically for them. Since the company is relatively young, Wonder has not established an official performance season. For more information, call the Ballet Omaha Box Office at (402) 346-7332.



MEGAN DANT, a freshman dance major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, will perform with several of her classmates this weekend in "Last Chance to Dance."

FILMED MOVEMENT

Dance performances in the area can be sporadic, so videos are a great alternative. Most video stores have a performing arts section with taped versions of ballets like "Romeo and Juliet" and of dance compilations like "That's Dancing."

One of the best story ballets on film is the 1961 musical "West Side Story." With choreography by Jerome Robbins, "West Side Story" provides the perfect balance between dancing and drama. Robbins worked extensively with American Ballet Theatre and New York City Ballet in addition to his musical theater work.

For some of the best musical dance sequences on film, look no further than Bob Fosse's 1969 film "Sweet Charity." Starring Shirley MacLaine in the title role, "Sweet Charity" represents Fosse at his best and most diverse. With numbers like "Big Spender" and "If My Friends Could See Me Now," the musical ushered in a new wave of musical theater dancing with its provocative, playful, knock-kneed gracefulness.

The 1977 movie "The Turning Point" provides an interesting look at the sacrifice and excitement of the dance profession. It stars American Ballet Theatre icons Mikhail Baryshnikov and Leslie Browne next to Hollywood stars Shirley MacLaine and Anne Bancroft. In addition to the poignant yet funny story, the movie includes some beautiful dance snippets with Browne and Baryshnikov.

PRINTED MATTER

Dance Magazine is the definitive publication on national and international dance. Printed monthly, it provides its readers with the latest news, trends and discoveries in dance as well as features, commentary and breathtaking photography.

For those interested in the evolution of dance, "Americana" by dancer/choreographer Ganes DeMille is an excellent introduction. DeMille's coverage encompasses centuries of the art form and includes everything from the dances of American Indians to the birth and growth of modern dance. However, readers should be provided with one word of warning: DeMille's profiles are very subjective. She covers only the artists she herself finds worthy and interesting.

Another more-objective history of dance can be found in Jack Anderson's "Ballet and Modern Dance: A Concise History." Anderson begins his book a little further back with the ancient cultures of Asia and Greece. He then devotes the majority of the book to a comprehensive look at the rise of ballet. A short chapter on the beginnings of modern dance follows.

For material on the Internet, CyberDance (<http://www.the-point.net/~raw/dance.htm>) is the best starting point. With more than 3,500 links, CyberDance can help you find sites on dance companies, research, events and personalities.

INSTRUCTION

It's never enough to sit and watch others dance. Dance is contagious, and once you've seen it, you want to try it.

Luckily, most dance studios in Lincoln have adult classes in ballet, tap, modern and/or jazz. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln also offers dance classes through the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance.

Social dance classes in Lincoln are available through private studios, the UNL Campus Recreation Center and the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance.