

Colorado Dance News

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Colorado Dance Alliance News

May Open Stages Performance: First Ever CDA Event in Colorado Springs!

Photo at below right: Dancer Post Knight (Photo by: Alberto Leopizzi)

CDA will host its next Open Stages showing at Pikes Peak Community College (PPCC) in Colorado Springs. This will be the first ever CDA event to be held in the Springs, and will feature a number of completed works and works in progress. Dance aficionados, come enjoy what promises to be a unique, varied performance on May 20 at 6:00 pm at PPCC's Downtown Studio Campus. Each performer, participant, and audience member will donate \$5, with a maximum of \$25 for a group of performers.



Event Details

Friday, May 20, 2011, 6 PM

Pikes Peak Community College

Downtown Studio Campus

100 West Pikes Peak Ave.

Colorado Springs, CO 80903

CDA's March Open Stages Held in Broomfield

By: Cora Woogen

On Sunday evening March 20, members of Pikes Peak Community College's repertory company HADE (High Altitude Dance Ensemble) presented *Saddled To His Dreams*, choreographed by Ila Conoley, the Chair of the Department of Dance. A small, attentive audience at Grace Studios in Broomfield enjoyed Venese Alcantar (Medovich), Juliana Brielle, Paige Gunter, and Anniece Perez in their demonstration of technical skill, artistry and joy in this modern piece. In the spirit of CDA's Open Stages, this is a work in progress that will be performed in its entirety at PPCC in May.

Colorado Dance Alliance is in Search of a Star Volunteer

The Colorado Dance Alliance would like to add a new series to its bi-monthly Newsletter. CDA plans to add a Dance Interview section to each future issue and is in need of a volunteer to take part in this exciting new project. The CDA Board will determine the interviewee for each edition of the Newsletter and the volunteer would be responsible for conducting and transcribing interviews. Please contact CDA Newsletter editor and Website Administrator, Leslie Merrill, at cdasubmissions@codance.org if you are interested in volunteering your services for this series.

News from the Boulder Arts Commission Dance Bridge

By: Mary Wohl Haan

8TH ANNUAL 'CELEBRATE DANCE MONTH' COMES TO A CLOSE!

Dance Bridge thanks all the dancers, studios, companies and schools for contributing to the 8th annual 'Celebrate Dance Month' festivities and brochure in 2011. With over 50 entries, the brochure had information on special exhibits and classes, workshops, dance parties and fundraisers, plus performances and events for children, teens and families - and this was still only a sampling of all the April dance happenings throughout the state. Sponsored by Dance Bridge, the production of this special brochure is a free PR & Marketing project open to all Colorado dancers. Furthering the spirit of 'World Dance Day' celebrated each year on April 29th, the brochure gives us an opportunity to reach out to new audiences and heighten their awareness of all dance offers to our culture and world. For more information on this and other Dance Bridge projects, or to receive the DB twice-monthly UPDATE with news, information and opportunities, contact coordinator Mary Wohl Haan at [303-441-4391](tel:303-441-4391), dancebridge@boulderlibrary.org. Dance Bridge is a project of the Boulder Arts Commission, an agency of the city of Boulder.



Left: Joanna Rotkin & Zoe Zimmerman perform at 'Step to the Pulse' (Photo: Mary Wohl Haan)

2011 'STEP TO THE PULSE' BOULDER LIBRARY DANCES 'WAY FUN!'

For the second year, dancers have taken over the Boulder Public Library's Canyon Gallery with an assortment of presentations for the public to *happen upon*. These dance 'happenings' delighted passers-by as well as the varied audiences who came to participate and watch. Dancers this year included: Tumblebones Contact Improvisation Collective rocking and a rolling across each others' bodies, Kasey Hall and friends 'Celebrating the Spirit', One World Folk Dancers and their lovely costumes and fancy steps, Joanna Rotkin & Zoe Zimmerman with feathers everywhere, Lyra Mayfield as a buffoon, eleven Naropa students improvising on a movement theme and white boxes, Cindy Brandle and husband filling the space with movement and words, Hawaiian dancer Miriam 'Pumehana' Paisner teaching audiences young and old, Nancy Cranbourne and one of her 'under 40 women' Mimi Ferrie, a great cast of dancers joining Natasha's Belly Dances, Julie Rothschild & Cristina Goletti who played and enchanted the children, Peg Posnick's sweet memories of her mother-in-law (with ironing boards & make-up), Jen Archer demonstrating intent-times-3, Laura Melling as the essence of Isadora Duncan, and Susie Park-Kelly with her pre-school through adult Hawaiian and Tahitian dancers (beautiful dances & costumes!). This event sparks the interest of new audiences as well as the library staff who love having dancers in the library. Thank you all for sharing your special dances in this outreach program sponsored by Dance Bridge and the Boulder Public Library.



Above: Children from Keaka O Kalani I Na Mauna (Photo: Mary Wohl Haan)

SPECIAL EXHIBIT IN BOULDER, "Hanya Holm: When Modern Dance Came to Colorado," on display

now through May 20, 2011, in the Canyon Gallery Corridor, Boulder Public Library, 1001 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder, CO 80302. Open during regular library hours, this special exhibit celebrates dancer Hanya Holm's long ties with Colorado and includes candid photos and images extending back to before Holm was affiliated with Colorado College. Materials were assembled from the Carson-Brierly Dance Library, which is part of Penrose Library's Special Collections and Archives. FREE. www.boulderlibrary.org. 303-441-4391, dancebridge@boulderlibrary.org.

(Special Thanks to the [CB-DL](#) and the [Penrose Library](#) staff for making this available).

Photo at right: Hanya Holm (Courtesy of Carson-Brierly Dance Library)

SUMMER DANCE IN COLORADO

Dance Bridge has once again put together a resource for the community on many of the festivals, workshops, camps and courses available throughout the state. As in the past, the document will be updated in the next few weeks as more information comes in.

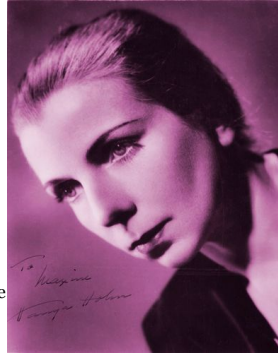
You can download a copy from the Dance Bridge [homepage](#) under Community Resources (along with lists of Spaces, Studios & Schools, Theaters & Performance Venues, and Teachers in the Area). To include your information, contact [Mary Wohl Haan](#) or call [303-441-4391](tel:303-441-4391). Free.

Mary Wohl Haan, Dance Bridge Coordinator

303-441-4391, dancebridge@boulderlibrary.org

www.artsresource.org/dance

A project of the Boulder Arts Commission



Above: Laura Melling performs at 'Step to the Pulse' (Photo: Mary Wohl Haan)

On What Makes a Professional Dancer: Bitter Ramblings from the Sales Floor

By: Chrysta Norelle Brown

Photo Below: Students Taking Class at the Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop (Photo: Wendy Turner)

I recently went to a job interview for a full time position with a prestigious organization. If all goes according to plan, in less than a month, I will have a lovely salary, healthcare, including dental, PTO, a retirement plan, and personalized business cards. The night before, I printed a flawless copy of my resume on card stock that cost me \$12 at Staples. I came up with three inquiries for that awkward part of every interview where the company employee asks, "So do you have any questions for me?" Apparently, it isn't a good idea to ask how much you're going to get paid right off the bat. The morning of the interview, I ate a good breakfast and had my morning cups of coffee. I got there 15 minutes early but waited in the

car for seven, so as not to seem too desperate. When I arrived at the front desk, I pleasantly, but authoritatively greeted the administrative assistant, informing her that I was Chrysta Brown and I was here for the interview for the nuclear physicist position.

I'm sorry. Did you just scoff? The job description clearly stated that the best candidate had at least 8 years of experience in the field of physics. I have been studying physics since the sixth grade, which is over 10 years of physics exposure. I have researched and published papers on the elements of physics present in Six Flags: Frontier City and the physics of a pirouette and other turns. I was a regular visitor of the Center of Science and Industry, or as we science buffs prefer to call it, COSI, the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia, and the Science Museum of London, where, it must be shared, I attended a fascinating lecture on the evolution of plastic, in 3-D. I have the glasses to prove it. In college, I took a class that met three hours every week on the role of nuclear science in national and international politics and another class that discussed the possibilities of renewable and alternative energy sources. In the latter, we spent a whole month studying nuclear power. While it is true that my involvement in the subject is purely academic, the only science materials I've picked up in the last year were closely followed by the word "fiction", and I don't have any actual professional experience, I feel that my wealth of knowledge on the subject more than qualifies me for the position.

Now, I suppose we've reached that part of every ridiculous story where you interrupt me and ask if I'm serious and I reply with a stifled smile, "Not at all." I started thinking about the lesson of the previous anecdote a few weeks ago at my day job when a woman told me that she needed some shoes for dancing. Now, here's what I observed: she was in the athletic section, so she was not looking for ballroom shoes. That being the case, I showed her the cross trainers, which are the preferred shoes of cheerleaders and pom squads, as well as, Pumas, Converse, and Free Runners, which people love because of the flexible sole that provides support without interfering with the articulation of the foot. With an unnecessarily angry tone, she informs that none of the selections work, "I'M A DANCER!", and adds rather indignantly, "I NEED SHOES THAT I CAN DANCE IN! DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M ASKING FOR?" Dangling somewhere in between self expression and self control, I ask, "What kind of dancer are you?" Her reply: "Zumba." At this point, I realize that nothing good can come from any further interaction and I summon another associate over to help her and before walking away I learn that her status as a dancer comes from two classes a week at her local fitness center.

Stephen King wrote in his Memoirs on Writing, that to be a successful writer you have to write often and read often. Every morning he sits down at whatever apparatus it is that turns his thoughts into ink and does not consider himself finished until he's reached his word goal for the day. My guess is that you were quick to judge me for considering a career in nuclear physics and you may have been even quicker to judge this woman who assumes status as a professional dancer even though she only takes two classes at her local gym. Let me stop criticizing people and take a moment to examine the plank impairing my vision and judgment and humbly ask, since we are so protective of the title, what makes us professional dancers? Let me stop you right there. Do not even try to give me the "It's not the art, it's the heart" retort. We are professionals, we spend our free time in dance studios. It most definitely is the art. It isn't the facility because not everyone with facility should be on stage. I know people who take dance classes who don't consider themselves professional dancers and a lot of people who perform but don't take dance classes. So, now that I've shot down most of the responses, I'm going to have to ask again. What makes us professional dancers? I was having this conversation with a friend who has a small dance company in New York. She defines a professional dancer as one who makes a living dancing, or, since we're still in a recession, one who makes a living for the purpose of dancing.



Recently, certain political figures have advocated for the cutting of the budget for the arts. Artists everywhere were enraged and I was among them. However, the reality is, we cannot expect other people, especially those who make such laws, to take our profession seriously if we don't take it seriously. I'm not saying that our complacent tendencies give anyone the right to discredit us as valued members of society, but consider what expectations come to mind when I hand you a business card that says I'm a nuclear physicist, or that I'm a consultant, or a blacksmith. You expect that I have training, you expect experience, you expect my knowledge to be current, and my skills to be evident. Let's return to Mr. King's definition of a successful writer - someone who writes and reads often. Based on that definition, is one a professional dancer or a dance enthusiast when one doesn't train often and dance often? Before you become offended, hear me when I say, there is absolutely nothing wrong with either. However, when and if we're going to subscribe to a

label, we might as well be honest about it. I was teaching a dance class to some children and I told them I was a Modern dancer and asked them what it meant. I really don't know why I asked or what answer I was expecting but they shouted out things like, "It means you're really good!" "It means you're well trained!" "It means you're a professional!". I didn't correct them because they weren't exactly wrong, or at least they shouldn't have been. Dance is somewhat of an exclusive industry, so why should our expectations of ourselves be so low. Maybe it's time we started holding ourselves to the high expectations of children.

I'm reminded of Dr. McCoy of Star Trek the original series, who, when asked to do something unrelated to his purpose and calling, replies, "I'm a doctor not a....." But, it isn't what he says that makes him a doctor, it's what comes next. It's the fact that after he denounces the titles of physicist, coal minter, or escalator he goes and saves lives. We can confidently call McCoy a doctor, not only because of his working knowledge of medicine, not only because of repetitive rhetoric, not only because he saves lives in every episode, but because he does all three. He studies, he practices, he performs. Maybe that's the standard to which we should hold ourselves accountable because it is what separates us from the self proclaimed dancer who takes a work out class twice a week or studied in high school. Maybe, that amount of obsessive commitment is the "what" that makes us who we are.



Above: Ying-Zhu performs for Louder Than Words Dancetheatre (Photo: Stale Veipe)

Does the Current Paradigm for Dance Reviews Just Need to Die?

By: Donald K. Atwood

I think as a first assertion I want to say that reviews have value. I myself seldom see a movie without checking a review of that movie by a critic I trust, which in my case is usually Ebert at the Chicago Sun Times. That is because I have learned that his view of what a good movie is coincides with mine. Interestingly, for some time I used to check the reviews in Time Magazine, but I used them in a different way. I knew that if that reviewer loved it I would probably hate it, and conversely that I would love something he gave a bad review. That says nothing about the competence of either of those reviewers. They had different lenses, and I just had to determine how their lens related to my likes and dislikes. Similarly, I think that a dance audience can find reviewers whose lenses they understand, and accordingly use their reviews to decide whether or not to buy tickets to a particular concert. I do not think it is a good thing that dance in Front Range Colorado is now being pretty much reviewed through one lens, the lens of World Dance Reviews. In my opinion, one point of view is never a good thing.

However, there is another part of the review paradigm that I worry about. It came to the forefront when a panel of ballet company artistic directors spoke to the Dance Critics Association (DCA) at one of DCA's annual meetings. Someone asked

that panel how they defined excellence in their work. The answer from one was, "I think we need to leave that to the critics." Really? Define excellence in dance in terms of what critics write? Then I realized that to a large degree that happens. I realized that funding agencies or groups want to see reviews as evidence of excellence. To me, the next obvious question is, does a valid lens on excellence exist within the critics? Does such a lens exist within critics in general, or is it apparent within individual critics?

Many critics have minimal to no training in dance. A large percentage of them were trained as journalists. There is value in that. People trained in dance see any concert from an elitist, or insider's view. World Dance Reviews (WDR) is an example of that. Many see WDR as a source of reviews written by dancers for dancers. Journalists on the other hand, see themselves as writing from an audience perspective, and for that audience. But does either perspective define excellence? One can argue that we first have to define excellence. But really, should journalists define excellence? And if so, should they define it according to what audiences like? Ask yourself: What would have happened to the work of someone like Merce Cunningham if, early on, it was evaluated and defined by what general audiences liked. You can apply this same question to other important works like Balanchine's "Jewels" and "Agon". By the same token, what does a critic trained in Modern Dance and/or Ballet know about excellence in Hip Hop, Break Dancing, or Butoh?

Ultimately, we struggle defining what is excellent, but it is inevitable that funding agencies and groups want to fund "excellence". I do not believe that singular lenses of critics, with those lenses set to varying focus and aperture, are the appropriate arbiters of definitions in such cases. Do I have an alternative? Not at the moment.



Above: Jennifer Delaney and other dancers perform with 40 Women Over 40 (Photo: Eliza Karlson of Phat Pencil)

Dance and Authenticity

By: Jennifer Delaney

I remember stepping into my first African dance class. I looked like a chicken pecking seed while flapping my wings. Well, that's what the mirror told me, and I have a feeling the reflection was right. But, why was I looking in the mirror? There comes a time to move beyond appearances and be moved from the inside out. The more I thought about what others might be thinking, the more confined and silly I looked and felt. And then I made the leap. I knew that if I showed my ego the exit door and I committed to the movement, the rest would follow – if not immediately, then soon thereafter. Eventually I performed African dance in Florida.

My singing teacher in New York City, David Kahn, who was in the original cast of *La Cage aux Folles*, said that some of the greatest singers he knew didn't have the best voices, but it rose up out of their pain and joy – a direct line to their soul. (I think this talk occurred as I was sitting on his couch crying my eyes out because, while I could carry a tune, I was not the next Norah Jones.) Talent is important, but authenticity is what moves people. The more we learn to accept ourselves, the more attractive we become because we are able to convey the human experience.

Dance is a reflection of who we are. When I was young, I was polite and restrained. That's how I danced. I was not in touch with the anger lurking deep within me and came across as fake. I didn't like the mess of extreme emotions. In part, that may be because I did not have adult models showing me that they can be felt, integrated and expressed without damaging everyone around in the process. The more I staved off emotions, the more depressed I became and the less interesting I was as a performer. That being said, the stage is not the place to spill our guts and drama when the time comes. People have enough of their own drama, and it just leaves an audience drained and repelled. There is a difference between needing validation from an audience and being a fine tuned instrument capable of conveying the spectrum of human drama. The former is a burden and the latter is a gift. The more aware, centered and healed we become, the more authentic and capable we are of serving our art and the people who pay to watch us.

The other day my daughter was preparing for an audition. She asked me how to make the audition reading unique when it was a famous movie and the role had been performed millions of times. I remember what my remarkable acting teacher, Gordon Hunt, in Los Angeles told me. He said to forget the original performance. Take it down to basics. Pretend the person I am talking to is someone I know well. Bring the character and experience home to who I am in this moment. Discover what I am seeking from the other character, and convey what it feels like to long that deeply. The minute an actor copies another performance he or she comes across as contrived. While I am not generally speaking when I dance, I do create a character for myself in order to come closer to what the choreographer hopes to convey. What would my name be? How would I dress? Where would I live? As a dancer becomes freer of her own drama and realizes it's never about her or how high her leg is, she becomes more capable of acting as a vehicle for inspiration.

Dance News from the Colorado Springs Independent and the Denver Post

Review: Martha Graham Dance Company Performance

Posted by Edie Adelstine in the *Colorado Springs Independent* on April 20, 2011

Seventy-five years ago today, **Martha Graham** performed at the brand-new **Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center**. Then, as now, her work remains triumphant and nearly indescribable. Tuesday night, her 85-year-old company returned to a packed FAC for a beautiful and moving performance.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE FULL TEXT OF THIS ARTICLE.](#)

Dance Now! DanceAfrica reaches out while it reaches back

By: John Wenzel

Published on April 24, 2011 in the *The Denver Post*

DanceAfrica began in New York more than three decades ago as a vibrant celebration of African culture and its worldwide diaspora. Now the festival has become a tradition in itself.

It's an evolving custom, one that aims to remain authentic to its African roots, while recognizing that dance, and the people who create it, are constantly changing.

"Through word of mouth, we went from a small theater to the opera house at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, which seats thousands of people," said "Baba" Chuck Davis, the show's artistic director.

"It's become an institution in that people fit their vacation time around it, and schools plan their bus trips around it."

Now in its 34th year, the festival's first-ever Denver installment runs the next two weekends at the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Theatre.

Read more: [Dance Now! DanceAfrica reaches out while it reaches back - The Denver](#)

Right: Kamilah S. Turner and Cedric Dewayne Hall perform at Dance Africa (Photo: Michele Knudsen)





Links to Great Art and Dance Resources

Check out Dance Magazine's recent article on Dancers and Twitter:

<http://dancemagazine.com/issues/February-2011/Dancing-in-the-Twitterosphere>

Below is a link to a great article about how dancing makes us smarter:

<http://socialdance.stanford.edu/syllabi/smarter.htm>

Learn about Community-Based Arts through the Community Arts Network archives:

<http://wayback.archive-it.org/2077/20100906194747/http://www.communityarts.net/>

Peruse some of the great articles on the Dance Advantage website link below:

<http://danceadvantage.net/index.php?s=balancing>

Catch up on your Dance News by visiting Dance Spirit Magazine's page:

<http://www.dancespirit.com>

Read Dance USA's Informative e-Journal by clicking the below link:

<http://www.danceusa.org/ejournal/>

Familiarize yourself with the National Dance Education Organization through the below link:

http://www.ndeo.org/content.aspx?page_id=0&club_id=893257

Bring yourself up to speed on many dance opportunities across the nation through the Answers 4 Dancers site:

www.answers4dancers.com

Did you know that Colorado is one of the top creative industry sectors in the world? Check out Colorado Creates for more info:

www.coloradocreates.org