



In This Issue

Beyond Bravura

ABT's Gillian Murphy finds new dramatic dimension in her roles.

Also: Dance Magazine Awards

Curtain Up: "This year the Dance Magazine Awards are personal for me..."

Off the Page

Tribute to Merce

[«Do's & Dont's](#)
[Table of Contents](#)
[Teacher's Wisdom: Diane Laurenson»](#)

Across The Floor



Living History

When Lea Kiddle, 15, learned sections of Anna Sokolow's 1955 masterpiece *Rooms* for a performance last winter with Nacre, a dance company based in Albany, NY, she learned much more than choreography.

"With Nacre, there's a lot of history—as well as learning the piece, you're learning about the choreographer and who she studied with," says Kiddle, a high school sophomore. "Jim May, who danced with Anna Sokolow, came to set the piece on us and told us all about her and the way she would have done things."

Bringing the legacy of 20th-century dance to vivid life is the goal of Nacre's founder and artistic director Beth Hartle Fecteau, a dance teacher in the Albany area and former director of the National Museum of Dance in Saratoga Springs. Her



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Douglas Dunn on Merce

This Just In...

Comings & Goings

Awards & Grants

Laura Dean's Impact, reconstructed

Choreography

Knocks:

Opportunities for choreographers at all levels

Wellness For Performers

A Growing List of Living Female Choreographers



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mission is reflected in the company's name (pronounced "KNOCK-ra"), which is French for "mother of pearl" and evokes the resilience, luster, and many layers of dance and dance history.

"I want these young artists to experience things they might never be exposed to otherwise," Fecteau says, "and to know where the techniques they're learning in class originated. If we do a Limón piece and they've already experienced a Doris Humphrey piece, then they have a sense of where it comes from, because they know Limón studied with Humphrey."

The company, made up of high school and college students and professional dancers, gave its first performance in February, with works by Humphrey, Isadora Duncan, Ted Shawn, Donald McKayle, and David Parsons. Providing color and context, a live introduction prefaced each piece. Duncan's *Bacchanal*, for instance, was introduced by Jeanne Bresciani, protégée of the choreographer's daughter.

While Fecteau has developed relationships with the Doris Humphrey Institute, the Sokolow Dance Foundation, and the American Dance Legacy Institute, she hopes that in future, the work of modern masters will be made more accessible to small companies like Nacre.

"These gems are sitting and gathering dust in what I call 'repertoire vaults,' " she says. "My wish would be for the companies that own them to be more open. It's a thrill to see works that haven't been done in so many years brought back to the stage."

Nacre next performs Dec. 13 and 19 at Albany's The Egg. —*Tresca Weinstein*

So You Think You Can Improve Dance Education?



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Cheerleader

After proving that he could change the face of reality TV, Nigel Lythgoe, co-creator and executive producer of *So You Think You Can Dance*, is taking on a new medium—dance education. Lythgoe has joined forces with director/choreographer Adam Shankman, *Dancing with the Stars* judge Carrie Ann Inaba, and actress Katie Holmes to create the Dizzy Feet Foundation, an organization that seeks to improve and support dance instruction nationwide. The foundation plans to provide scholarships to talented students and grants to choreographers; develop dance programs for children in underserved areas; and launch the Dizzy Feet Foundation's accreditation program to establish national standards for dance instruction.

After the Emmy-winning success of *So You Think You Can Dance*—and a flashy intro to Dizzy Feet through a Fosse-style number performed by Holmes on the show's 100th episode—the founding members have high hopes for the future. Many big names have already signed on to help, including Paula Abdul, Jennifer Lopez, Miley Cyrus, Mia Michaels, Mary Murphy, Shane Sparks, and Lil C. See www.dizzyfeetfoundation.org. —*Rachel Zar*

Notes & News

For one weekend each fall, Burlington, VT, becomes a vibrant hub of West African culture when the Jeh Kulu Dance and Drum Festival comes to town. “Jeh Kulu”—or “community” in the Bambara language of Mali—is at the heart of this celebration, now in its 15th year. Sixteen artists from Guinea, Mali, and Senegal teach 20 classes over four days in the dance and music traditions of West Africa. Onstage, Jeh Kulu Dance and Drum Theater, based year-round in Burlington, presents its evening-length *Duniya Lahnee (Peace in the World)*, with a dance party following the Saturday night show. Nov. 5–8. See www.jehkulu.org.

The **Tradition in Tap** series dedicates its next workshop to tap master Bob Audy with a weekend of master classes, tap history lectures, and an award ceremony at Nola Studios in NYC. The faculty of 15 includes veteran teachers Randy Skinner and Germaine Salsberg, with Audy himself teaching his original routine, “That’s Entertainment.” Students ages 10 to adult choose from four programs, working toward a final showcase in the state-of-the-art studio theater at Manhattan Movement and Arts Center. Nov. 13–15. See www.traditionintap.org.

Ballet Hispanico welcomes a new school director this season, Mexico native Mercedes Pablos. A former dancer with Ballet Hispanico, Ohio Ballet, and National Ballet of Mexico, Pablos brings her international teaching experience, expertise in dance training for young children, and an MFA from SUNY Purchase to the position. The company has also appointed Rachel Watts as director of education and outreach. —*Siobhan Burke*

Photo by Lawrence White, courtesy Nacre

[«Do's & Dont's](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[Teacher's Wisdom: Diane Laurenson»](#)

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