

UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

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An Educational Group

Two full houses greeted our two Spring Concerts the 27th and 29th of April where we have performed since the early 50's. To say that the audience was enthusiastic would be the understatement of the year. Without the aid of newspaper advertisements (is it really a help?), or their writers, or any other form of promotion, this year's audience was larger than our peak year with "L'Inconnue"; when we had KRIZA and KOESUN dancing and a more friendly press to give us publicity. Claudia Cassidy was around at that time. This year's success was due mostly to our enthusiastic group of newcomers on the program. This group in another year could reach a peak that we have not had in years past.

We faced a questionable situation without Bill Ploeger, Bruce McCaleb and Gladys Krych. As it turned out, we had the best lights since a helper Julie rustled for us, Brad Balonick, really did a great job. VI Badolato with her usual efficiency and the help of Rosella Huntley managed the costume situation, using mostly wardrobe that has not been used in several years. "Lilacs" was dressed off the rack from the dress shops which today are actually costume shops. Arthur LaPointe's new sound equipment did an expert job with the recorded music. Madelene Hargadon was at her very best with the piano accompaniment.

If one could single out any number as the most successful, it would, no doubt, be Stone's "Lilacs out of a Dead Land" and "The Singing Yankees", a real novelty for a dance program. What was significant to us was best said in JOHN KRIZA's words - "every-one on the stage was a performer" - and from one who was one of the great ones, that is a compliment to our young group. Outstanding performances were too numerous to single out any one in the younger ones, but without doubt, JULIE WALDER and JUDITH SVALANDER held up the standards of our best alumni. This year people went out of their way to tell us how very much they enjoyed the program. Gus Gordano wrote "your concert was only magnificent".

This year's front page of the program featured the names of 24 alumni of the school who in the past had their first experience appearing on our program. What is really interesting, we feel, is that 17 of that 24 have had European exposure in dance; several have danced around the world. It was difficult limiting the names to 24, there could easily have been many more. Of the more recent alumni, JORENE HOLAS and LAUREN ROUSE are at this moment galavanting about Europe with no definite plans. Jorene has recently finished her Houston contract and Lauren hers in Washington, D.C. PHOEBE REDMOND is deeply involved in the D.C. Black Repertory Dance Co. JAN ORR has recently returned from a dance engagement on a cruise ship to Bermuda. CINDY

BENSON is considering a summer in stock in Rhode Island's "Theatre-by-the-sea". SUZETTE POMPEI was home for the program and was a great help backstage. DEAN BADOLATO will be dancing in Milwaukee at the Starlight Light Opera season in July and August. On the sad side - MAGGIE SMITH has given up dance and will enter a western college this fall - sad, because she had a divine gift that was rare. Others give up but there is no loss to dance or the theatre and in the case of two scholarship boys quitting our lives should be a bit more serene without them. The greatest discouragement in teaching is having put in so much effort and concentration to make something of a pupil and then having them throw it away as they would an old shirt. Not that we don't have a great many to be proud of. The last we heard of POLLY HARDING she was roaming around Europe with a Mime group and just this week, we receive a wedding announcement and MRS. SAMUEL COLVIN CRAFT, THE THIRD, is home in Milwaukee. LESLIE BROWN and LOIS BLACK are here for a couple of weeks prior to going to New York for a summer course at the School of American Ballet, where they are to be on scholarship. ELIZABETH HAYDEN is temporarily out on sick leave from Disney on Parade, but will soon re-join them in Vancouver BC. We hear little that is promising from the New York con-

tingent, as it seems more and more becoming an island off the east coast of America. It will be Europe again for us this summer to include England, Scotland, France and again, Portugal. At this point, the watergate is a floodgate of trouble in planning it.

"An Analytical Study of Character Movement"

In the mid 50's, I worked for two years writing and preparing a set of Character lessons that could be an aid to teachers, dancers, actors and singers. They were extremely detailed with illustrations and suggestions for music for each exercise. Each lesson had a short essay about character, each lesson included a dance and with steps for circle work. Since that time, all of the music is now out of print and about two years ago, I had thought about stopping the sale, and rewriting them. Just about that time, there was a fresh spurt in their sale so I continued with them.

To date, there have been nearly four thousand lessons sold. The Dance Mart in Brooklyn, New York remains the most active buyer. Dance World Books in Blawenburg, New Jersey also has helped their sale, as well as Idento Disc Records, here in Chicago.

The Cecchetti Council of America gave a big boost to their sale when I presented the first six lessons at one of their meetings in Detroit. Eugene Loring one said that these character classes were an excellent system to prepare a student for picking up any choreographer's work. They were once presented at the University of Toronto for Dorothy Jackson, then head of their Physical Education system.

My particular type of character grew out of a personal need as a dancer; things I felt that were left out of my training to become a useful dancer. I found that classical dance alone did not prepare one for anything but corps work. There always has been a dearth of good character training, and there still is, especially in American schools. Mostly, it does not exist and the young dancers today just fumble around through ballets that cry out desperately for training of this kind.

When speaking of Character Dance, most people have in mind, folk dance, and this is not a true picture, for it has a much broader meaning and covers more areas of dance than does classical ballet. The study of character is a very special technique and can in no way be considered a subsidiary of classical ballet. Where ballet is an acquired way of moving, character is essentially a natural way of moving. It is completely independent of classic dance. Folk dance is a basis upon which the teacher or choreographer may approach it but he must more clearly define the intended character, must embellish and theatricalize it to give more life and a style approaching an art level.

Character is, in essence, a combination of these qualities or traits that distinguish one person, or class of persons, from another. This individuality is a result of many contributing factors, such as class, race, habits, occupation and environment. The divisions of character are nations, dramatic, lyric, satire, grotesque, eccentric and mimicry. The dancer temporarily identifies himself with the personality of a given character by the use of body mechanics. It is the study by observation and analyzation of these differences in personal character that the student must involve himself mentally with first, before he can truthfully project it through his own body.

Character dance is not at all easy. There are fewer first rate artists in this field of dance than there are in classic dance. It is a mistaken notion that anyone can do character work. Too much classical training first can negate any latent talent and the result will only be a surface performance. The student should be having this training along with ballet.

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And yet another success story of a local boy that leaves so much unsaid - as I mentioned in my reference to the JOHN NEUMEIER's article in Dance Magazine, everyone was happy and pleased that BOB FOSSE won so many awards, but it does seem that when one reaches this success, it would not hurt to mention other names. No one reaches the top without

working with others and being helped by them. The "some guy I worked with" was none other than CHARLES GRASSE. Almost all musical comedy and popular choreographers are "brain pickers". There have been notorious ones with very famous names in the business with no creative talent of their own, but with the ability to choose helpers to give them ideas, steps and formations. Only the profession knows this. They should honestly be called adapters or directors, not choreographers. We were happy to see that the Lerner papers (Fosse's first wife worked for the Lerner papers) finally mentioned Charles, who was the "some guy" that Fosse mentioned. Neither Fosse or the Lerner paper mentioned FRED WEAVER who recently died of cancer in his late 80's. Fred Weaver, a violinist and conductor and agent for talent, was greatly responsible for the success of the "Riff Brothers" as the two were known. While on Fosse, his assistant in the filming of "Cabaret" in Munich, Germany was JOHN SHARPE and no mention of him either. Back in the 40's, when the school was in the old Grand Theatre, Fosse was enrolled in the summer course in Character. Shortly afterward, he was to do "Damned yankees" with the baseball number based entirely on a "walk" that is standard in these classes. Later, much later, I do not remember the show that was trying out in Detroit, Fosse was the choreographer and he had three SC boys - HEIM, CUMMINGS and, I believe, REILLY or NOTARA in his group. At one rehearsal, he spoke of himself as an SC reject, which was news to us. We would be happy to claim him. He is said to be a loner which possibly is responsible for his many marriages.

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As most Chicagoans are not readers of the Milwaukee papers, it might be interesting to quote in part a few paragraphs of Jay Joslyn's article on the Milwaukee ballet scene - in that it does also refer to the Chicago area as well.

"Although there is only one producing ballet corps in the area - The Milwaukee Ballet Company" - there have been two groups wooing support for Ballet.

The second group is Mid America Ballet Foundation. It was born in the swelter of a televised press conference, amid spectacular projected plans and galactic names.

The stars almost immediately faded away. The plans burst like bubbles. The energy of some of the founders was turned to devastating infighting that continues to have its effect on careers.

What remained of the dream that so quickly became a chimera was the bare bones of the theory and super organization of money raisers and ticket sellers.

This organization has been responsible for filling Uihlein Hall for performances of the American Ballet Theatre.

The Mid America Ballet theory is what makes it dangerous. Fueling its magnificent machine is the article of faith that Mid America holds the key to successful ballet in the region.

Although no dancer, no choreographer, no designer, no costumer, no musician has derived an iota of benefit directly from Mid America, this group contends that ballet shall not exist in the region in the form of the small, professional company benefitting the entire mid West that Mid America envisions.

The fact that dancers, choreographers, - designers, costumers and musicians have collaborated in works of art under the Milwaukee Ballet aegis flies in the face of Mid America's faith.

In the face of Mid America's juggernaut money machine, it is not surprising that UPAD, also an expert money machine, should make sure all supporters of the performing arts are kept happy.

But somehow it seems a rather drastic initiation rite to send the creative Milwaukee Ballet through Mid America's sterile valley of frustrated dreams."

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This is the reason that the artist lives and works and has his being; that from life's clay and his own nature, and from his father's common earth of toil and sweat and bitter anguish, he may distill the beauty of an everlasting form, enslave and conquer man by his enchantment, cast his spell across the generations, beat death down upon his knees, kill death utterly, and fix eternity with the grappling hooks of his own art.

- Thomas Wolfe

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Philosophy may teach us to bear with
 equanimity the misfortunes of our neigh-
 bors, the science resolve the moral
 sense into a secretion of sugar; but
 art is what makes the life of each
 citizen a sacrament and not a specu-
 lation, and art is what makes the
 life of the whole race immortal.

Oscar Wilde.