



16th ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

**FOCUS ON DANCE EDUCATION:
Collaborations:
A Mosaic of Possibilities**

**November 5-9, 2014
Chicago, IL**



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**Congrats to Student Conference
Support Awardees:**

Victoria Huish-New York University

**Jade Primicias-Western Kentucky
University**

NDEO Student Chapter NEWSLETTER

Fall 2014, No. 4

How Can You Play a Bigger Role in NDEO?

By Kelly Ferris Lester

NDEO Board of Directors, Student Chapters

As the fall semester begins, I always sense the opportunity for new beginnings and challenges. The student members of NDEO are the future of our organization and can be an essential part of new initiatives and ideas. You will become our future leaders in the dance field and this organization. With our eyes on continued growth, I challenge the student members to help NDEO hop, skip, and leap into the future.

How can you make a difference? How can you become more involved in NDEO? What are the opportunities available to you?

Of course, the annual national conferences will reveal many possibilities. Have you considered presenting your own research at these conferences? Consider class projects and classmates as co-presenters. Start thinking NOW about what you can present in a paper, workshop, or poster for 2015. THEN start looking to your university for possible travel and conference funds.

Another way to voice your ideas, research, and concerns involves the forums available to you on the NDEO website. Use these to connect to other professionals and other students. Post surveys and questions for your research queries. Read the concerns of professionals in the field.

Lastly, take initiative. Be a leader. Charter an NDEO Student Chapter or NHSDA chapter at your university. Become an officer of these chapters. Then look for ways that you can advocate for dance in your local community. What ways can dance be showcased and available beyond the university?

NDEO wants and needs to hear the voice of our student members. Be heard!

Letter from NDEO Student Representative



Teresa Schmitt (Hofstra University)

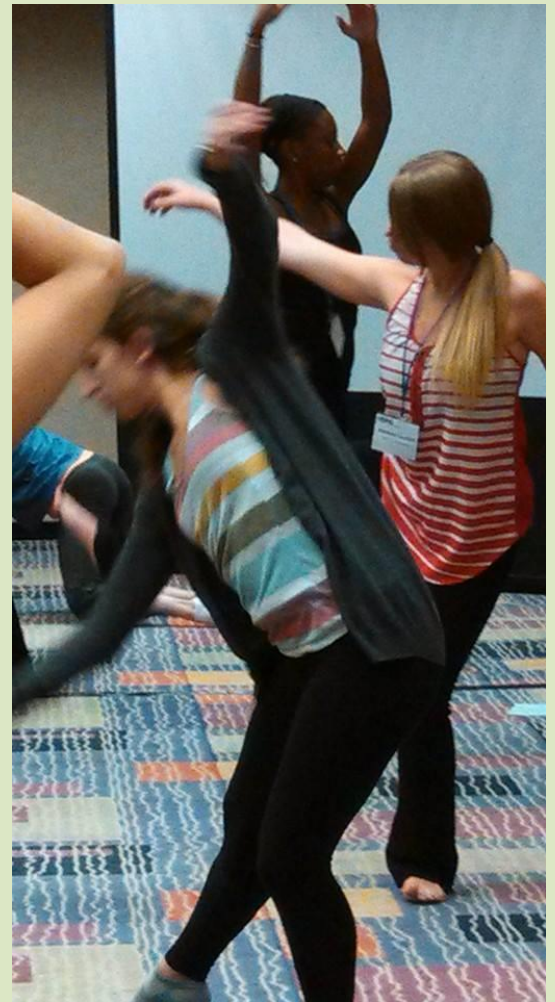
Happy Fall! I hope everyone had a fantastic summer filled with dancing and learning! I spent the summer taking summer classes at Hofstra University and teaching at the studio I work at. I love seeing the children I teach and their passion for learning makes me one of the happiest dance teachers around! That being said, I also hope everyone is transitioning back into the school-mode easily! This semester I am student teaching at two fantastic schools that I am so lucky to be assigned to. It's a lot of work, but so worthwhile. It reassures me that I picked the right career!

I am so excited to see everyone at the 2014 NDEO Conference in Chicago! I had a blast taking classes, hearing presentations, and meeting everyone last year in Miami. It was an experience I will never forget. I am very excited to see what Chicago has to offer!

I encourage you to find me throughout the Conference and introduce yourselves. Let me know of your experiences, concerns, and questions, or just have a conversation...anything! Don't forget to attend the special Student Sessions we have planned. There are some great networking opportunities included to help you choose the right path for your career. There is also a Student SIG (Special Interest Group) Meeting scheduled. It is very important and helpful for all if you try to attend this meeting. This is where we can hear any concerns, comments, or suggestions you may have to help Kelly, Gretchen, and I serve you better. The students are the future of the dance and dance education community, and hearing how we can better serve you will help NDEO continue to grow for generations to come.

As always, I am available to be reached via e-mail or forum post. I am here for you!! Check the Student Forum frequently, as there may be some post that will help you, or where you can help a fellow student.

Wishing everyone a successful semester! See you in Chicago!!!
YAY!!!



Interested in serving on a committee for the NDEO Board of Directors? Contact Gretchen McLaine, Director of Student Initiatives mclaineg@cofc.edu

Or Kelly Ferris Lester, Director of Student Chapters Kelly.lester@usm.edu

Brockport Student Chapter: At the Barre, On tap and Keeping Education on Pointe

By Allison Bohman, NDEO Brockport Treasurer

The student chapter at The College at Brockport, The State University of New York has been busy this Fall 2014 with a variety of dance educational outreach endeavors. To kick the year off, NDEO Brockport hosted a "Welcome Back" class for all returning and new students. Members of NDEO co-taught a playful dance class aimed at welcoming the dance community back and offering an easy transition into both Brockport and dancing again. Class included a somatic warm-up, time to chat with each other and a large group sequence at the end that took place in the grass outside of Hartwell Hall. Over 40 students were in attendance; it was a fun way to meet the incoming new dancers as well as reconnect with friends and our dancing bodies.

As the semester has been unfolding, NDEO Brockport continues to sponsor weekly "Playing as Pedagogues," a dance education lab originally created and curated by NDEO Brockport's previous president, Colleen Culley. Here, Brockport students have the opportunity to teach dance classes in the style of their choosing. These open classes provide students with a safe and supportive place to experiment with teaching styles and additionally gives the Brockport community at large the chance to study a diversity of movement styles. So far, Allison Bohman has led an open Tap class for all levels and Andrew Duran taught a Collaborative Inter-Culture Choreography class, which explored the relationship between culture and personal expression when creating and developing movement. Later this semester, Brianna Smith will be teaching a class based on Modern with elements of Contemporary variations. Bethany Fagan Good will teach a Somatic investigation focusing in imagery and constructive rest. To round October out, NDEO Brockport Undergraduate Representative, Lexi Hills, will be teaching an upbeat Jazz class that fuses the traditional and the contemporary.

Despite a busy Fall line-up of dance education and outreach, NDEO Brockport has busily been planning for Spring 2015. We are excited to be hosting our 5th annual "Tiny Dance Concert" at A Different Path Art Gallery in Brockport, NY. Here, Brockport students have the opportunity to perform and feature choreography in a 7ft x7ft space. It is a fun evening of dance and art that showcases the possibilities for dance in any space, no matter how small!

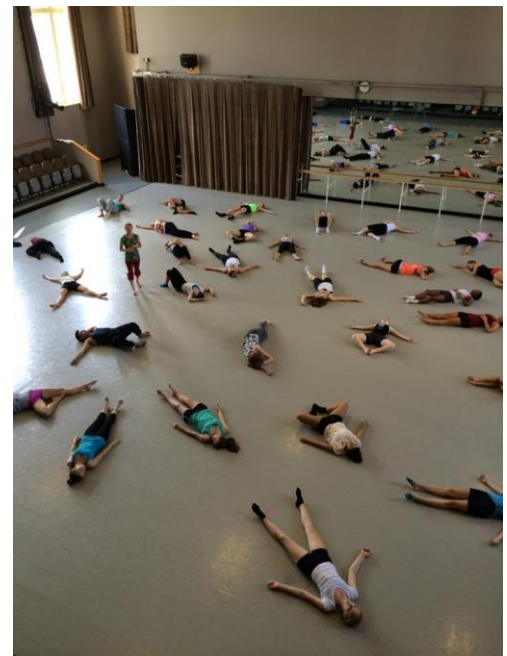
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**16th Annual National Conference
November 5-9, 2014**

Save the date for 2015!

October 6-11

Phoenix, AZ



NDEO Brockport is also thrilled to announce that we are sponsoring a hip-hop residency in the Spring with Rodney Hill, who has danced with Renee Harris Puremovement and is a well-known hip-hop mover from Philadelphia. This residency is in collaboration with The University of Rochester and The University of Buffalo. Hip-hop as a dance form embraces diversity and gives voice to generations of movers all over the world. It is our goal through this project to celebrate hip-hop as an art form and educate people in the Western New York area of the historical and cultural connections of this dance form.

Most recently, we held elections for new board members and we are looking forward to a busy year of continuing to draw connections between dance and education.

Pressures of Eating: The Struggle of Dancers

By Patricia Stefancin, NHSDA Mercyhurst University

"The table was piled high with my parents' efforts: a huge turkey, multiple sorts of potatoes, deviled eggs with paprika topping. I sat quietly in my corner seat, pushing an olive around my plate, collecting my meager portions into little piles, when my father left his chair and approached me. As he knelt beside me, my heart started to pound. Everyone was looking at me. 'Please, Katie,' he said, his voice low and desperate, 'it's Thanksgiving.' Within a year of this meal, I would be diagnosed with the first of a series of stress fractures that would haunt me for the rest of my life." These are the words of Kathleen McGuire, a former dancer and writer for Dance Magazine, in an article from 2010. Sadly, this appears to be a natural occurrence among dancers. Approximately 63% of dancers at national companies have an eating disorder (Thomas) or have struggled with one in the past. The research studies done in the past few on eating disorders in dancers blame this high percentage on the competitiveness of the dance world (Thomas). There are many weight expectations in the dance world, and the girls in these training programs are being pushed to achieve the "ideal body" that the ballet audiences look for. If they do not, they can be kicked out of the school, or sometimes have their careers ruined by injury. Even professionals face this criticism from directors and audience members, and the eating trouble that is developed from this criticism carries over into all aspects of a dancer's life. Today's idea of the "ideal body" is ruining many dance careers and the mindsets of the dancers themselves. There should be more mental health help available to dancers to help cope with eating disorders that are developed while under the scrutiny of teachers and critics.

Professional ballet schools and companies place a great deal of pressure on their dancers to remain thin, not only to the normal standards, but to the extreme standards of the dancing world. According to a study done by Jennifer Thomas, Pamela Keel, and Todd Heatherton, almost sixty-five percent of the students affiliated with a national professional ballet companies reported having an eating disorder, or having been afflicted with an eating disorder in the past. At the time of the study in 2005, 68.9 percent of dancers in a nationally affiliated ballet school stated that they had a desire to lose weight (Thomas). Dancers are impressionable when it comes to dieting and dieting methods and that dancers are more susceptible to eating disorders because the dance world pressures the girls to be thin (McGuire).

The idea of the ideal body for dancing leads these dancers to diet or throw up their food. Forty-three percent of dancers from national dance companies have reported binge eating and bulimia (Thomas). A nutritionist with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Peggy Otto Swistak says, "Dancers are perfectionists in many aspects of their lives...In school they're straight-A students, they're the perfect friends, the perfect daughter...They almost think their eating has to be that way too" (McGuire). Perfectionism is only a part of the problem. Dancers are natural over achievers, but when extra pressure is placed on them, things tend to be taken to a new extreme.

In an article titled "Psychological Price of Overachievement" by USA Today, a doctoral researcher named Kathryn Olsen points out that perfectionists put a great deal of pressure on themselves, because they feel the need to prove something. Teachers and directors use this desire to get dancers to perform to their standards, and also to get dancers to achieve weight goals. The already struggling mind of a perfectionist dancer is then put under more stress when a teacher asks them to lose weight, or they can risk being fired.

Several dancers in the past few years have been fired because of their weight, such as a Bolshoi principal who was fired for being too heavy (Los Angeles Times). Anastasia Volochkova was fired from her job because she weighed 110 pounds at 5'7" (Los Angeles Times). Volochkova refused to give into the pressure to lose more weight, and she was let go (Los Angeles Times). Professional dance companies, such as the Bolshoi, each have their own "look" that they try to have their dancers achieve. In a few cases, they take their measures too far and dancers develop an unhealthy outlook on food.

In February of this year, an Italian ballerina was fired for stating that her company was pressuring dancers to be thin, and that the company was using horrible methods to do so (Ryan). One in five dancers in the company are anorexic according to this dancer, and La Scala is using abusive tactics, such as calling their dancers "Chinese Dumpling", to get their dancers to lose weight (Ryan). It is these kinds of pressures from dance teachers and directors that send many dancers, student or professional, into a downward spiral of disordered eating.

Companies are not the only ones at fault here; audiences and critics are partially to blame in this current epidemic. In 2010 Jenifer Ringer, a professional dancer with New York City Ballet, was on the receiving end of a cruel remark about her weight from a critic at the New York Times (Springer). The critic, Alastair Macaulay, had stated that in her role of Sugar Plum fairy, Ringer “looked as if she’d eaten one sugar plum to many” (Springer). Ringer, who had anorexia nervosa in the early stages of her career, was being called heavy-she weighed around 110 pounds (Springer). Ringer became a professional dancer at the very young age of sixteen and there was a lot of pressure for her to fit the ideal image of the New York City Ballet. Instead of dealing with the stress of performing in an adult world in a more productive manner, Ringer developed an eating disorders, specifically anorexia (Springer). This critique was just another example of the pressures she had faced as a younger dancer. Macaulay wrote in a follow up column, “‘The body in ballet becomes a subject of the keenest observation and the most intense discussion. I am severe-but ballet, as dancers know, is more so’” (Springer). Unfortunately, this is not untrue, however, audiences should not be so critical of this delicate subject because they do not realize their words dig deeper and deeper into the mind of a stressed, perfectionist dancer, until a problem with food arises.

The touchy topic of conversation that is eating disorders in the dance world needs to be addressed more by the companies. There are professional dance companies out there that refuse to acknowledge that there is a problem in the first place, such as the Italian company that fired their soloist does not even believe that they are helping the problem along. “Besides, insisted a La Scala spokesperson, teaching methods have changed in the last 15 years. Young ballet dancers are fine now!” (Ryan) The idea that dancers are okay with the criticism that they receive from teachers appears to be common among companies, but clearly this is not the case.

A study performed in 2006 by Rebecca Ringham, Kelly Klump, Walter Kaye, David Stone, Steven Libman, Susan Stowe, and Marsha Marcus was designed to see how often dancers develop eating disorders. One of the results of the study was that 83 percent of the dancers interviewed from professional companies, “reported some sort of eating pathology” (Ringham). This clearly displays that young dancers are not okay with the harsh criticism that they receive from teachers, despite what company directors believe. Professional companies need to be more aware of the trouble in the first place, and they need to take better care of those in their employment.

Major companies do not have a psychologist affiliated with or working with the company, further demonstrating that companies are refusing to recognize the troubled dancers and their eating habits. Dancers’ body image issues should be confronted with therapy at least once a week, simply because they never truly go away, “Even after I began to eat in a healthier way, the fear of what every bite would do to my body remained” (McGuire). She received help, and progressed to the point where she could be healthy again, but there was always that fear of criticism and gaining weight in the back of her mind.

While it is true that therapy cannot completely heal a patient of an eating disorder that does not mean that a regular counseling session should not be scheduled by a company for the benefit of its dancers. Without a way for dancers to express what they are feeling, they can become consumed by their stress and fears to the point where disordered eating appears more than once in the lifetime (McGuire). Roberta Anding, a nutritionist for Houston Ballet, was quoted in McGuire’s article as saying, “An eating disorder is primarily a mental health concern with medical and nutritional consequences. If you don’t deal with the underlying stress, you’re using a Band-Aid when you need a surgeon” (McGuire). What she is saying here is that dancers need to have a way to vent about their troubles, otherwise the trouble will just keep coming back, and possibly in a more troubling form.

The stress of receiving criticism on their weight is leading to some dancers to eating disorders and other unhealthy habits in their lives. The companies need to address this danger by allowing dancers to have access to a psychologist or even a counselor to have appointments with the dancers on a regular basis. Body dissatisfaction leads to trouble in other areas of life, and dancers can eventually wear themselves thin, not just in weight, but in relationships. McGuire agrees with this idea, because she experienced it. “My negative attitude toward eating caused me more than injury; it affected my friendship and my family as well” (McGuire). Body image is something that is routinely attacked by critics and teachers in the world of dance, where self-esteem is already on short supply. Not only do teachers and critics need to stop giving such harsh criticism on dancers, but dancers and directors need to take care to set up a plan for counseling. This could improve mindset, health, and outlook on food as a whole. With a joint effort on the part of the companies, dancers, and critics, there can be less dancers throwing away a delicious Thanksgiving meal and more having a comfortable, healthy relationship with food. With more comfort in what they eat and what they look like, dancers can begin to have a more enjoyable work experience, one without added pressure and stress.

Want to see your writing in a Student Newsletter?

Look for bi-annual calls for submissions on the NDEO Student Forum

Submit:

- *Calls to action*
- *Articles about student issues and concerns*
- *Reports on Student Chapter or NHSDA events*
- *Articles about student success or interviews with an outstanding student member*

Email submissions to Kelly Ferris Lester

Kelly.lester@usm.edu

Visit the NDEO website for information on:

- Becoming an NDEO member
- Starting an NDEO Student Chapter
- Starting an National Honors Society for Dance Arts (NHSDA) chapter
- Attending or presenting at the National Conference
- Nominations for Student Representative to the NDEO Board of Directors
- Exploring the wide array of forums
- Applying for jobs or internships at NDEO

