



ON POINTE

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Newsletter of the Marblehead School of Ballet and North Shore Civic Ballet

Dance Therapy

Not Even Cerebral Palsy Can Stop One Woman from Pursuing Her Passion



Photo/Joseph Puleo

Her friends call her "Angelina Ballerina". To everyone else she's Susan Alperen. Susan was born 3 months premature, weighing 2 lbs. 3 oz, and diagnosed with cerebral palsy.

When she started to walk at age 4, her mother took her to a ballet class at Adrian Parker School of Dance. "Dressed in my leotard and tutu, I really didn't mind my leg braces and orthopedic shoes – because I was a "Ballerina". Susan recalls. "What started as one class soon became two. As my balance, muscle strength and flexibility improved, I added a jazz class, tap and exercise class. I spent 5 hours each week at the dance studio. These hours were filled with hard work, pain and much joy."

"Cerebral Palsy" or "CP" is a neurological disorder that appears in infancy or early childhood and permanently affects body movement and muscle coordination. No cure for CP currently exists but it is treated in a variety of ways. Corrective exercise and braces can help a child lead a normal, if not comfortable life. There are some medications and surgical procedures which can be helpful.

Susan has gone through a very difficult period in her life. She lost her husband, her back was painful and she could only move around by using a walker. To cap it all off, a very dear friend died. As it happens, this particular friend had been a dancer, and the shared interest in dance had been a vital part of their relationship. Their conversations, as the friend began to lose her battle with cancer, reminded Susan of how much she had loved dance when she was young. She developed a "crazy" idea that she would go back to dance for therapy.

"I finally got up the nerve to confess to my acupuncturist, Chris Ploski, that I wanted to dance again. I expected her to tell me I was nuts," Susan recalls.

Chris's reaction was a complete surprise. She was completely in favor of the idea and she suggested the name of the teacher who she believed to have the knowledge and patience to work with Susan. She suggested Paula K. Shiff, director of the Marblehead School of Ballet where Chris had taught dance for several years.

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Summer Dance Intensive 2012

The Marblehead School of Ballet is excited and proud to announce the return of the popular Summer Dance Intensive for the summer of 2012. Regarded as a distinct opportunity for students of dance to cultivate their technical skills and enrich their understanding and appreciation of the art form, our program attracts dancers from a large geographic area, national and international.

During full days of training, students ages 11 and up participate in highly individualized ballet and modern technique classes, as well as classes in related disciplines including music theory, nutrition, anatomy, injury prevention, dance history, and more.

One, two, or three week sessions are available for ages 11 and up, **July 23 - August 11, 2012**. There will be a performance on Saturday, August 12. **Young Dancers' Summer Intensive** for ages 8 – 12, **July 9-July 13, 2012**. Call for a brochure.

Student News

Julia Pingeton graduates Marblehead High School, Julia will be attending NYU in the fall. Good luck Julia!

Amber Primm, MSB & NSCB graphic designer is pursuing a graduate degree in set design from the University of North Carolina School for the Arts.

Elisa Laristan, a student from Paris who twice attended the Summer Dance Intensive, has been accepted to the trainee program at the Joffrey Ballet in New York.

Alumni Notes

Catherine Schmidt received certification as a pediatric specialist in Physical Therapy.

Jennie Edwards graduates from the University of Vermont this spring. She will do an internship and then work at a Registered Dietician.

Meghan Kartstein graduates from Drexel University in Pennsylvania.

Julie Papas will return to MSB for master classes July 16- July 21. The exact times and days are to be determined. She will teach floor barre, Jazz, and musical theater.

4 Ways to Celebrate National Dance Week with MSB



Photo/Peter A. Smith

Always wanted to try a dance class or thinking about enrolling your kids? May we suggest...

1. Enrolled MSB students may bring a friend to class as our guest from April 21- April 28. Advance registration is required.
2. Arrange a complimentary consultation with Artistic Director Paula K. Shiff to discuss your dance future.
3. Non-enrolled dancers may attend any class for **only \$5** from April 21- April 28; must call in advance.
4. Come watch a class!

Save the Date!

The North Shore Civic Ballet is excited to announce that **Jennifer Homans**, author of ***Apollo's Angels, A History of Ballet***, has kindly accepted our invitation to speak to an audience in Marblehead on **October 14, 2012**.

Jennifer Homans, historian and dance critic for *The New Republic* and herself a former professional dancer, spent a decade researching and writing this richly drawn story of the evolution of ballet from its origins to the present. Drawing on extensive archival research and interviews conducted in Paris, Copenhagen, London, New York, St. Petersburg and Moscow, **APOLLO'S ANGELS** shows that ballet was not only artistic, but political: bound up with the fate of kings, courts and states. The 'steps' were never just steps; they were a set of ideas and beliefs born of an aristocratic etiquette and reflecting the self-image of a noble caste.

Copies of *Apollo's Angels* are available now at the Spirit of '76 Bookstore and will be sold at the event.

Details of this event will follow. If you are interested in learning more, or would like to become a sponsor, please contact NSCB at 781 631-6619.

Special Thanks to the Ronald Renney Fund

The MSB and NSCB would like to thank the Renney family in loving memory of their father, and grandfather, Ronald Renney. Part of the gift has been used to refurbish the upstairs piano, and other renovations will follow. Thank you again to the Renney family for your interest and support.

Events: April – October 2012

Apr. 16 – May 7	Online auction at http://www.biddingforgood.com/ballet . Over 100 items at great prices.
Apr. 17	Repertory series begins culminating in a performance on June 9 th . Tuesday classes.
Apr. 17	Zumba® series, Tuesdays 7:30 – 8:30 PM.
Apr. 21- Apr. 28	National Dance Week.
Jun. 16	Spring classes end.
Jun. 25 – Aug. 16	Summer Eight Week open program.
Jul. 9 – Jul. 13	Young Dancers' Summer Intensive.
Jul. 23 – Aug. 11	Summer Dance Intensive.
Aug. 11	Summer Dance Intensive performance.
Aug. 5	Field Trip to Jacob's Pillow. See the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. Reserve your ticket now! This is going to be a sellout performance.
Oct 14	A Conversation with Jennifer Homans, author of <i>Apollo's Angels</i>.

Annual Jacob's Pillow Field Trip

Featuring Royal Winnipeg Ballet

About the Performance

Under the artistic direction of André Lewis, versatility, technical excellence, and captivating style are hallmarks of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. In this rare U.S. appearance, the company will perform Argentinean choreographer Mauricio Wainrot's passionate *Carmina Burana*, a feast for the senses set to Carl Orff's famous score. The full-company work is packed with visual drama and theatricality, and Wainrot's choreography is strong, passionate, and full of lush lyricism.

The program also features contemporary ballet choreographer Peter Quanz's *In Tandem*, deliciously matched with composer Steve Reich's "Double Sextet"; Alastair Macaulay of *The New York Times* describes it as "full of social charm and fleeting suggestions of social and love relationships."

Founded in 1939, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet is the longest continually operating ballet company in North America. In 1953, the Company received its royal title, the first granted under the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. In 1964, the company made its U.S. debut at Jacob's Pillow; this is the first time they have returned since.

Tickets

Tickets are available for **\$63 per ticket** for the **Sunday, August 5, 2012** performance. Because it has been almost 50 years since the Royal Winnipeg Ballet has visited the Pillow, tickets are expected to sell out, so buy yours as soon as possible!

North Shore Civic
BALLET

ONLINE AUCTION FUNDRAISER | Apr. 16 – May 7
Great gifts for a great cause.



Dance Therapy (continued)

"It took a few days for me to get up the nerve to call Ms. Shiff. I expected her to tell me I was nuts too. 'Hi Ms. Shiff, my name is Susan. I'm 65, have CP, and use a walker. I'd like to sign up for ballet classes please' seemed like one heck of an introduction," Susan said.

On the contrary, Paula Shiff required only that Susan's physical therapists and doctor gave their approvals, then booked a first-floor studio space in Beverly for them to meet. "I never impose limits on someone who wants to learn how to dance. Until a student tells me 'I can't,' 'I won't,' or 'It hurts' I assume they can do anything. A teacher has to approach students that way in order for them to realize their full potential," explained Paula. "Hearing 'I've never done that before' is nothing new to me."

Susan will never forget her first lesson. "I was so nervous I couldn't think straight. But I made a commitment and I don't back down."

Spending 10 minutes with Susan Alperen easily draws one to that conclusion. Despite having CP, Susan has led a full, active life that has included a rich family life and 20-year marriage, a 25-year career as a primary school teacher, and a deep love of the arts that has taken her all over New England's most treasured cultural venues. She also has PT every week, works out at a gym, and walks on the treadmill in her home.

Susan beams as she recalls meeting Paula for the first time last September. "Our first 30 minute lesson felt like hours. I felt muscles I hadn't felt in years, and my glutes literally hurt for days. But I loved every minute of it. I was so filled with joy and happiness that I thought I would drive off the road on the way home. That high lasted for days." Lessons require Susan's full concentration. "When I enter the studio, I leave the world outside. Everything else disappears and I give Paula my full trust and attention. The results after six months have been nothing short of miraculous. "One day around Christmastime I went to get a drink of water in the kitchen, turned around from the sink and realized my walker was in the living room. It was then I truly realized how far I had progressed," Susan remembers.

Susan expressed to "Madame Shiff", as she affectionately calls her, that one of her goals was to be able to stand up straight. Paula comments that they managed that goal by the end of the first lesson. Good alignment, good body mechanics, and musicality are key to teaching, not only ballet, but healthy, well balanced coordinated "everyday movement". Once Susan began to understand how to center herself, she was able to develop better balance, more efficient movement, strength and the list of improvements continue Susan is an inspiration to me ... she is an amazing woman!"

Susan plans to continue her weekly lessons indefinitely and may expand her schedule. "My lessons aren't a chore but something I enjoy and look forward to. With Paula as my guide and beautiful music as my companion, I make my muscles work and stretch my body into proper posture. I may only do a simple plié, but my heart and soul are filled with joy – because once again, I am a Ballerina."

Marblehead School of Ballet
115 Pleasant Street
Marblehead, MA 01945