



Black Tie Gala



The night of the Black Tie event is rapidly approaching. And we are all making preparations.

- 'What dress will I wear? '
 - "What suit can I still fit into?"
- "Do I need new jewelry to go with my dress?"
 - "Do I have a tie that even goes with this suit?"
- "Will this dress stay up while I dance?"
 - And the biggie.....
 - "How fast can I love 10 pounds?"

We look forward to seeing you at the event and sharing a wonderful and fun evening. As you recently read in an email sent to all of the Phoenix USA Dance membership, along with supportive friends and community members, it is our hope to expand the Black Tie to an even larger attending audience, and into a larger venue next year.



To achieve this, we will need your assistance, your support, and your creativity. We eagerly anticipate your input and the organizing of bigger and even better Black Tie in 2008. See you on the dance floor!!



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Phoenix Chapter



Changes in the Wind

After much thought and soul-searching, our national president, Esther Freeman, has decided not to seek re-election in November. Having been on the national staff as a voting Governing Council member since 1997, she served as national secretary, senior vice president and now president.

The 2007 election ballot is inserted in the Jul/Aug. issue of American Dancer. Esther is encouraging all chapter members to mark their ballot for Mr. Peter Pover for president and mail it to the address on the ballot so it is received before the Oct. 25th deadline.

Peter served previously as president of USA Dance before Archie Hazelwood and has been a voting member of the Governing Council from 1984 thru 1993. Plus, he served on the International DanceSport Federation Executive Board from 1995 to 2002. His experience and knowledge is invaluable, because of our position as National Governing Body for DanceSport in America.

If Peter is elected, he plans to create a much-needed position called VP of Administration and Finance, and he has asked Esther to accept this non-voting volunteer appointment.

Personally, I credit Esther's ground-breaking initiatives and indomitable strength of character as the driving force in propelling USA Dance ever closer to its original goal back in 1965: "To promote the acceptance of ballroom dancing into the Olympics."

Initiatives such as:

- Changing the organization's name from U.S. Amateur Ballroom Dancers Association (USABDA) to USA Dance, Inc., in order to become more closely aligned to other sports events, (i.e. USA Hockey, USA Baseball), as well as for clarification of who we are: dancers!
- Restructuring the timeframe of the National and Regional Championships so that the winners chosen at Nationals can represent the US in the World Championships - this is where Olympic hopefuls are chosen.
- Encouraging a broader spectrum into USA Dance of all dancers by now allowing professionals to serve on chapter boards, as officers, voting members, etc. However, no member may use his or her service on a USA Dance chapter board of directors in order to obtain personal financial gain or profit.



This final point was the catalyst behind changing national's mission statement from: "dedicated to promoting and sharing the excitement and joy of both social and competitive dance to communities across America" to the current broader but simpler statement: "dedicated to improving the quality and quantity of ballroom dancing in the United States."

So I, too, encourage all of you to vote in the upcoming national election, as well as to consider greater involvement in changes yet to come in your Phoenix chapter of USA Dance. Thank you, everyone.

Priscilla

Dance University

Part One—Etiquette

I'm going to stick my neck out in this issue's Etiquette section and address a recurring topic that has been brought to my attention by various dancers, of various skill levels, at various venues, and with varying levels of frustration, over the last few months. SP

Question: When is a dance floor not a dance floor?

Answer: When it becomes a parking lot.

Dance courtesy dictates that when you are not dancing, you clear the existing floor space for those who are. With the valley's dance floors filling up with more and more dancers (*which is a wonderful thing—we love new faces, and we are proud of the growth of the dancing community here in the Phoenix metro area*), the amount of available space to “claim” when you are dancing gets smaller and smaller. And unfortunately, when there are packs of people gathered on the edge of the floor, this diminishes the available dance space even more.

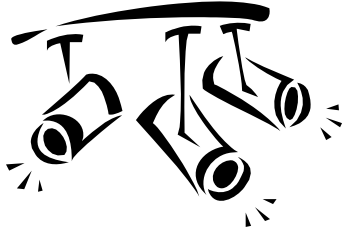
In most dance venues, whether large or small, seating is provided off the edge of the floor. These seats are there with a purpose: to provide a spot to rest between dances, and to accommodate conversation and socializing. However, these seats and standing spaces are placed off the edge of the dance floor with another purpose: to separate those who are ON the floor dancing from those who are OFF the floor not dancing.

Anyone who took a basic science course, especially physics, learned early on that a body in motion tends to remain in motion, and a body at rest tends to remain at rest. It becomes a dangerous situation when a body at rest impedes a body in motion....or in the case of most ballroom dancers.... TWO bodies in motion. It can have disastrous and even injurious results.

As I have often cited in this column, dance etiquette is a form of common courtesy. However, it is only “common” if we all practice it. Dance etiquette exists to create a safe and enjoyable environment among all dancers. This courtesy extends to those dancers currently ON the floor, as well as OFF.

It may take you a few seconds longer to walk onto the floor if you stand farther back. You may not have as clear a view of the dancers out there. And you may have to step outside to hold a group conversation because space won't allow 6-10 of you to cluster together. But bottom line, it's the courteous thing to do.





Member Spotlight

Leon Raper

What first got you dancing?

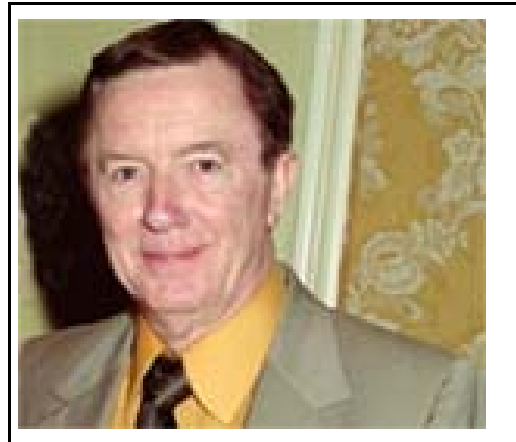
I was passing by a studio in Anaheim, CA and saw an advertisement for an introductory offer. Like most dance newcomers, I figured I could learn everything I needed to know about social dancing with a few lessons. I quickly discovered that learning to dance was more challenging than I thought. While I didn't stick with that studio, I did stick with dancing.

What is your favorite dance and why?

West Coast is my absolute favorite, but I enjoy all Latin and ballroom dances.

What is one of your favorite dance memories?

Dancing in the 1973 World Swing Dance Championships at the Palladium in Hollywood, CA to the music of Les Brown's Orchestra with over 2,000 people watching.



What advice would you give to other dancers?

Everyone in the swing dance circles knows a good friend of mine, Jack Carey. Once in the 1960's, someone asked him, "How do you become a good dancer."

Jack's answer was, "You live it."

I'll add to that, "Enjoy the journey."

Dance University

Part Two—TRIAGE

Five Most Common Dance-Related Injuries and How to Treat Them

1. Ankle Sprains

Few dancers (or any athlete) manage to perform without ever spraining an ankle. While stepping or landing wrong can instantaneously cause harm, fatigue is often a factor in sprains as well. Being too tired to practice proper technique, or not being careful enough.

Treatment includes the basic RICE principle:
Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation.



2. Knee Injuries

The knee is a hinge joint, but dancers often force it to do things way beyond what a simple hinge joint is structurally supposed to do. It is also difficult to tell if a knee injury is mild, moderate, or severe. And like most athletes, dancers don't know when to quit, even when the injury is painful.

Treatments range from the RICE principle, to physical therapy, to electric stimulation to surgery.



3. Hamstring Injuries

While muscle pulls are rarely serious, a hamstring injury can be especially bad for a dancer. Virtually every movement a dancer executes involves the lower body, thus making those areas susceptible to injury. Asymmetries in structure (spinal or pelvic) can increase risk, as well as differentials in muscle strength (growth spurts in young dancers, or returning to the floor after an injury without proper muscle preparation) can also leave to hamstring injuries.

Treatment requires rest and progressive stretching and strengthening. Try to “dance off” the injury is not recommended.



4. Hip Injuries

Few dancers are born with perfect “turnout”, whether for ballet or for ballroom. Hip pain often comes from tendonitis or small tears.

Treatment: Again, rest and slowly bringing the joint and tendons/muscles back into shape is the best plan for treatment.



5. Back Injuries

The most common problem with the spine for dancers is when the back ‘freezes up, causing a localized aching pain over a specific joint or area that limits movement. Possible causes for back problems include fatigue, hypermobility (imagine wrapping your legs behind your head), scoliosis, leg length inequalities and emotional stress. Nerve pain, which radiates down an arm or leg can be caused by a ruptured or degenerative disc.

Treatments include ice, electric stimulation, physical therapy, anti-inflammatories, and last resort, surgery.

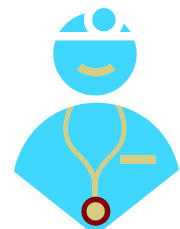


As dancers, we are often careless with our own physical health. We'll “doctor” friends and family, but there's no concern, or even common sense caretaking, for our own physical well-being. It's our own responsibility to pay attention to and get the most positive use out of the “instrument” we are playing when we dance, our bodies.

Keep Healthy

Keep Safe.

And Keep Dancing.



Competition Corner

by Felix Ray

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Our chapter's first two competitions were called "Phoenix USA DanceSport Challenge." However, we have been told by National that we can no longer use the "USA" in connection with the word "DanceSport." The burning question is: *why?*

The explanation from our National President, Esther Freeman, is as follows:

"USA Dance is our name and the only name we use. DanceSport is the activity of competitive ballroom dancing. USA Dance used to have several DBA's (doing business as). They were (1) United States Amateur Ballroom Dancers Association, Inc., (2) USABDA, and (3) USA DanceSport. None of these three are valid any-more. We only do business under the name of USA Dance."

SO WHAT THE HECK IS OUR NEW NAME:? It's "2008 Phoenix DanceSport Challenge"

WHEN: Sunday, Feb. 10, 2008

WHERE: ViewPoint Golf Resort in Mesa (same place as last year's competition - a great space!)

TIME: 1-6:30 pm.

Application/entry forms can now be downloaded from our website:

http://phoenixusadance.org/dancesport_challenge.html.

If you get a chance, please take a look at our Frequently Asked Questions section, which gives invaluable information you'll need to know to compete.

Last year's event was terrific, thanks to all of you, with:

- Approx. 116 competitors
- 370 spectators
- 7 local vendors, including DanceLife USA and Randall Design's (creator of the "Dancing With the Stars" costumes)

ViewPoint's facility includes the following:

- 3500' competition floor
- 2000' separate practice floor
- concession stand for competitors and spectators
- dressing rooms

PHOTOS

This year we're proud to announce that Diane Haggerson of *Diane's Design Photography* will be taking professional photos of the dancing action. She'll have a table set up with all her contact info.

VIDEOTAPING

We will have an area set aside for personal taping, but we will not be able to provide a professional videography company.

For questions about the competition, call me at 623-551-2324 or email: felix@phoenixUSAdance.org

Thanks, everyone!
Felix G. Ray

"When in doubt..... DANCE!"
- Anonymous -

Pearls from the Pros

Guest Professional: Blake Kish

Blake Kish has been a local dance fixture in the valley for over 20 years. Currently the owner/operator of Arrowhead Dance, an independent studio in north Phoenix, Blake continues to compete and teach.

What first inspired you to dance?

I first went into dancing against my will and initially hated every minute of it. I felt incompetent and completely inadequate to the task. After working for six months at my first dance studio, I left crying my eyes out because I was told I had no future in the dance business. Shortly after that, I met with the owner of a different studio who told me that unless I was prepared to give 100% of my efforts towards something for a full year, I really wasn't giving it a fair shot. So I went to work for her, and within just a few months, was one of the top instructors in the valley.



Blake and student

What keeps you on the dance floor?

The success and recognition I've received through the years has been wonderful. I've owned, operated and successfully sold 7 different studios across Arizona, all of which are still open and running well today. The successful competitive career I've attained has been gratifying. And constantly seeking to perfect my own skills, whether it's dancing or teaching, is what keeps me going. I love to see people reach levels of greatness they never knew they could.

What advice would you give to other dancers?

Never stop learning. I will never be so perfect that there will be nothing left to learn or improve upon in my dancing. Dare to be great at what you do!

Arrowhead Ballroom
5905 W. Bell Rd #1
Glendale, AZ. 85308
602-843-1136

Open house dances twice a month

Lessons
Mon– Fri / 9 am - 9 pm * Sat / 10 am - 4 pm

Groups classes 8-9 pm / Tues and Thurs

Dance University

Part Three— History

TANGO

The origins of Tango are obscure. There are many theories, each with its passionate advocates, but ultimately it is impossible to discover the facts because the records don't exist. It is agreed that Tango sprang from the poor and the disadvantaged, in immigrant tenement blocks and on street corners, amongst people whose lives usually leave little trace in the history books.

There is a cliché that Tango was born in the brothels of Buenos Aires. This is, in part, truth. In cities with growing immigrant populations, the men far outnumbered the women. Night was a time of memories and longing for home and what was once familiar. Hard-working immigrants would cluster together, sharing stories, drowning their sorrows in alcohol, and seeking companionship until the light of day drew them back to their jobs. Similar to the origin of jazz in New Orleans, madams and brothel owners would often employ musicians to entertain the men while they waited for their "lady". While tango was played primarily in the lower class areas, it was the middle and upper class who "discovered" it when they visited the shadows of less respectable venues

Though musical historians argue as to its exact origins, it is generally accepted that the tango borrowed from many nations--the relentless rhythms that the African slaves--the candombe--beat on their drums (known as tan-go); the popular music of the pampas (flatlands) known as the milonga, which combined Indian rhythms with the music of early Spanish colonists; and other influences, including Latin (the word "tango" comes from the Latin word *tangere*—to touch.)

In the beginning, Tango was often danced by one or two men - the tango of the "compadron", or knife-wielding tough who ruled the local streets after dark. The men did not dance arm in arm, but in more of a

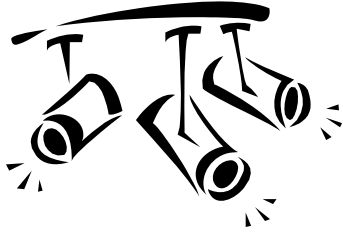
parallel style, expressing a tale of two men locked in symbolic mortal combat. As women made their way to the cities, they were incorporated into the dance. The close physical contact of tango is one of its signature elements, along with the "walking" steps which move it around the floor. The desire for physical connection, the limited space on dance floors, and not wanting to lose possession of your female partner are often given credit for this close embrace.

It is said by many that any dance is a form of communication... a conversation between dancers or between a dancer and the audience. In Tango, this particularly applies. Most Tango music is phrased to 16 or 32 beats of music. Tango music is like a story. It contains paragraphs (Major phrases); sentences (Minor phrases); and the period at the end of the sentence is the Tango close.

While traditional Tango more closely resembles Argentine tango, and is probably the most popular form around the world, the American and International styles of Tango have their own followings as well. As always, movies have helped to bring Tango to the masses. From Rudolph Valentino in the 1930's, to Raul Julia in [The Tango Bar](#), to the self-exploration of [The Tango Lesson](#), to Al Pacino getting "tangled up and tango-ing on" in [Scent of a Woman](#).

Regardless, Tango has, and will always, have a niche in the dance world.





Member Spotlight

Meryl Bassett

What got you dancing in the first place?

All my life I wanted to dance. I was married to a wonderful man who could not stand to dance. About a year after his death, I began to look for a way to get back into life and thought again of dance. One dance with an instructor and I knew it was for me.

What is your favorite dance and why?

For pure fun, I enjoy chacha, rumba, nightclub and salsa. I'm currently working on the challenge of international standard. Maybe after a few hundred lessons and a lot of practice, standard will become my new favorite.

What is one of your favorite dance memories?

I was living in Arkansas and shortly after I began taking lessons, a friend invited me to a waltz convention in Little Rock. I was dubious. I was a beginner, we wouldn't know anyone there, and it was out of town. We contacted the convention and they assured us that there would be plenty of people to dance with. We decided to go and had a ball. We danced up a storm. The last dance of the convention, I was asked to dance by a magnificent dancer who led me to dance at a level where I was completely comfortable and everyone and everything else vanished to the background. It was pure unforgettable magic.

What advice would you give to other dancers?

We are fortunate to have many dance opportunities in the Phoenix metro area. I am grateful to Priscilla and the board of USA Dance for their outstanding work promoting ballroom dance in our area.

My advice is—KEEP DANCING. Dance is a sport which attracts the nicest people, it's great exercise, and you never know.... your next dance may be "pure unforgettable magic".



Meryl and Olegas



While “So You Think You Can Dance?” has wrapped its season, with Sabra Johnson earning the title of 2007 season winner, you can still see the talented dancers from this year’s series strut and shake their stuff in a city near you. The “So You Think You Can Dance?” road tour has already started. They will be performing around the country, and will be coming to Arizona in November.

Jobing.Com Arena in Glendale, on November 11th

Support Our Fellow Local Dancers!



[Viva Espana:
A Journey Through
Spain](#)

Flamenco Del Sol
Glendale
October 11

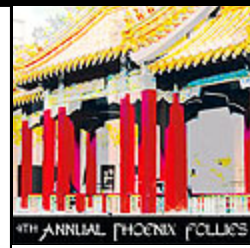
[New Danceworks I](#)

**ASU Herberger
College of the Arts**
Tempe
October 11—14



[Fifth Annual
Phoenix Follies](#)

Phoenix Theatre
Phoenix
October 18—19



[Doors to the Past,
to the Future,
to the Soul](#)

**Center Dance
Ensemble**
Phoenix
October 18—21



How NOT to Practice

By Sue Putzier

Source: Elizabeth Knoll – former US champion, and current coach and adjudicator.
Taken from her seminar at the USA Dance NW Regionals in Seattle, WA, June 30, 2007.

This article is intended to give insight into some of the common pitfalls of poor rehearsal practices. It is NOT a how-to guide of the best ways to AVOID practicing..... so for those looking for an easy out.... Sorry....it's back to the practice floor for you!

As a long time competitor, and an active coach and judge, Beth Knoll has had the opportunity to see the training and practice styles of many dancers, at every skill level, from beginner to professional. During her seminar, Beth relayed many stories of professional dancers and some of her own students she had seen through the years who had fallen into one or more of the “traps” of bad practice form. While they were wonderful dancers and competitors, their practice times were often volatile, unproductive and, on occasion, downright physical.

In her opinion, there are six keys to a successful practice, and most of them have to do with **WHAT NOT TO DO.**

1. Don't blame your partner.

The definition of partnership – two or more people working in a collaborative effort for a similar goal. As Beth puts it, the two people in any dance partnership are each 100% responsible for their 50% of the partnership. No one person is totally at fault or totally absolved when a mistake is made. It's best to accept that formula and put your effort into problem-solving versus wasting time blaming each other.

2. Don't set your expectations too high or too low

Often we set our personal goals and expectations too high and we get frustrated when we don't reach them. You didn't learn to walk, shoot a basketball, drive a car, or make the perfect recipe overnight. You can't expect learning to dance to be any different. It takes time, trial and error, and persistent, consistent effort.. Set your goals just out of your grasp and “reach” for them. Once you've attained them, set new ones and “reach” again.

Or we may have the opposite problem and we set our expectations and standards too low and we reach our goals too quickly and think we are better than we are and can do “anything”. Beth stresses that many intermediate dancers fall into this trap, no longer desiring to work on basics because they “already know all that stuff”. She warns about developing a “know it all” attitude for several reasons. 1) Basics are the foundation of everything else you will ever learn in dancing. Why do you think the pros still practice them and coaches constantly stress them? The perfectly executed basic step is the core to every flashy, show-stopping move that may follow. 2) It turns judges off on the competitive floor. Confidence is one thing. Cocky arrogance without technique to back it up is another. And 3) it turns off partners on the social floor.

Learn the lingo

Learn the names of the moves that you dance. It will help you immensely in coaching sessions if you can tell your coach WHAT is the problem (“We're not coming out of our feather step correctly”) versus trying to explain that you “can't seem to get around your partner when they do this underarm twirl thing after that leg flick what-cha-call-it”. Learn the terminology. It's a common language that all good and knowledgeable dancers speak, so use it.

Warm up

All too often, in our hectic lives, we are rushing from one place to another, trying to beat traffic or check off one more task before we move to the next thing on our overloaded agendas, and we arrive a few minutes before our scheduled practice or coaching time. We buckle or tie on our shoes, do a couple stretches (if there's time) and run onto the dance floor to "practice". Nothing makes dancers more prone to injury than not being properly prepared to step onto the dance floor. Beth points out that "warming up" is more than just stretching. Cold muscles don't stretch very well, so she encourages doing basic patterns, slow and easy to warm up the muscles and joints first. THEN stretch. Then dance. You don't prepare to run a marathon by rushing out the front door and doing 10 hard miles. You walk first, then you jog, then you run. Same for dancers. We are athletes, too. Dancing isn't called "danceSPORT" for nothing.

Don't "get personal" on the dance floor

In most partnership situations, the two people involved are also "personally involved", whether as a married couple, as two people in a relationship, or as friends. Rarely are you going to find two "strangers" dancing together, or people dancing strictly "for business", especially in a competitive partnership. Hence, the two people involved in the partnership "know" each other, often extremely well. While this can be a wonderful thing, allowing for free communication and a comfort level due to familiarity, this can also make for volatile and/or nasty situations. Because the two people DO know each other so well, they also know all the right buttons to push when they are angry or want to make the other person angry. Avoid this at all costs. Make the dance floor neutral territory, and break out the duct tape to cover your mouths if necessary to keep hurtful comments out of the air and off the dance floor. Beth reports seeing even top professionals use name-calling, derogatory comments, literally throw each other away on the dance floor and storm off, or other methods of personal or physical attack during practice sessions. It serves no purpose, and only escalates what might have been a very small issue in the beginning.

Use your coach

Bottom line, you're going to a coach to become better dancers. If you can't fix it yourself, then ASK questions. PROBLEM SOLVE dance issues with them. Invite them to MEDIATE conflicts to avoid #1 and/or #5. You're paying good money to glean from them their knowledge and expertise, so isn't it in your own best interest to take away from any coaching session as much as you possibly can? Beth relayed a situation where a professional couple flew from one coast to the other to take coaching with a particular teacher. After spending money on travel and hotel, they then spent \$300/hr for 15 hours of the teacher's time over a long weekend of sessions. Unfortunately, they fell into the traps of #1 and #5, and spent most of their time arguing and fighting. The coach would simply walk away and sit down whenever the two of them would begin to snap and blame each other and wait for them to finish. In the end, they received about 4 hours of actual coaching on the floor for their trouble and thousands of dollars spent.

In the end, there is one basic lesson to be learned: What you do with your dancing is your own business. But if you want to get the most out of it.... in enjoyment.... in learning..... in advancement..... you have to put in the effort. If that means keeping your mouth closed and your ears open (to your partner or to your coach), then that's what it means. If it means opening your mouth and admitting you don't know something rather than faking it, then by all means, fess up and ASK. If it means taking longer than you expected to accomplish your goal (years versus weeks or months), then take the time. In the end, the results, both for the competitive dancer and the social dancer, will be worth the effort.

Beth's final word is this: *"The goal of any dancer at any level should be to keep a sense of play, and enjoy yourself. Remember why you got into dancing in the first place...for the fun of it!"*

HELP WANTED

We will be adding a section to the newsletter for specific volunteer opportunities. This section will also be available within the monthly Dancin' Newz distributed by Priscilla Dean, along with updates on recent and upcoming events.

The purpose behind the "Help Wanted" section is to provide opportunities for members to participate in special events, aid their chapter in growth, and to expand the volunteer foundation on which we are built. We know people cannot always make a long term commitment, such as a board position, but are able to help out "once in a while" or for a time-limited activity.

In the future, you will see specific information regarding volunteer positions related to the upcoming competition and other chances to join us, share your time and talents, and get to know other USA Dance members better.

We look forward to working with you.