



# DANCE MATTERS

Old Donation Dance Education Program  
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## Dance faculty: Meet Mrs. Spear-Jones...

Dear ODC Dance Community - Students and Parents,

I'd like to share one of my favorite dance pictures and two important moments in my life as a young dancer. I'm fond of this picture because even though my form leaves a lot to be desired (check out those "lobster claw" ballet hands and "limp noodle" legs), I remember how excited about dance I was even at five years old. My mom could barely get this tutu off my body. I wanted to sleep, eat and go to school in it. Yes, it was a little weird. I just couldn't get enough of this magic world of dance. This was much to my mom's delight because it gave her about 50 minutes of peace. I was a child that was always on the move. I went right from crawling to running, so my mom was always chasing me except when I was in dance class. When I was dancing, she was resting.

The first important moment in my young life as a young dancer was when I got my first pointe shoes. At the time, I thought that day would NEVER come. I realize now what a wonderful ballet teacher I had, but back then I couldn't understand why she was being so "mean" and not letting me get those most prized shoes. She made me wait. She was determined not to put any of her students on pointe until our legs, spine and ankles were strong enough to handle the physical demands of pointe work. Unfortunately there are many dance teachers that aren't so wise and knowledgeable and put students on pointe much too early. I count my blessings that I had such an incredible teacher. I waited four long years, taking dance class twice and sometime's three times a week, when finally she said I was ready. At age twelve I received my first pair of shoes and it was as if I had gone to heaven -- Well that was until the blisters came.

The second important moment was when I was accepted into the North Carolina School for the Arts, a prestigious school where students from the seventh grade through college age came to study their chosen field of the performing arts - dance, music or drama. At this school, students lived on campus and attended both arts and academic classes. So when I was fifteen, I packed up my bags and left home to pursue my dreams of becoming a dancer. For the next five years I lived, ate and breathed dance. Even summers for me were usually spent in a dance camp.



When I arrived at this school, I realized that I had truly found my community. Students just like me had a passion and love for the arts. Little did I know however, how demanding this school was going to be. My day would start at 8:00 with a dance class, followed by academic classes, followed by another dance class, then more academics, followed by another dance class and then dance rehearsals. Somewhere in there, we ate, slept and studied. I can't imagine how I got through such a rigorous schedule. I do remember being tired, sore, and sometimes frustrated with the intensity of the school, but I also remember never wavering, never wanting to give up on my dream of becoming a dancer.

Today, dancing has remained as important to me as it was when I was that little girl. Over the past 40 years, I have performed in many different cities and on all kinds of stages, choreographed a body of different dance works, taught students of all ages, from 80 down to 5, danced in museums and churches, and I am still amazed at the power of dance in my life and the lives of others. *(see p. 2)*



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### Dance Word of the Week:

**Gesture** - a motion made with some part of the body, especially the hands or arms, to show some idea or feeling

### Dance History Fact:

During the Romantic Ballet period (the 19<sup>th</sup> century), gas lights were used to illuminate the stage, giving the stage space an eerie, other worldly atmosphere. During this time there was no such thing as flame retardant materials, so unfortunately several ballerinas' tutus caught on fire as they danced close to the gas lights and they were badly injured.



# PARENTS' INFORMATION

*Dance faculty...continued*

When I look into the eyes of my ODC students, I often see my own eyes from many years ago - eager to step into that magic world of dance. The second picture illustrates that yes, there have been some changes (wrinkles and wider girth aside). I have learned to hold my hands and legs in the proper position, but what hasn't changed is my love for dance. And even though my body has slowed down, my heart still races when the music begins.

Yours in Dance,  
*Mrs. Spear-Jones*

**FOUND:** a pair of lavender glasses in the large dance studio.

Please contact ODC if your child has lost his/her glasses - 473-5043

**Oct.29 – Nov.2: Parent Visitation Week**

Parents are cordially invited to come and watch their child's classes on the day of attendance from 8:30 until 10:45 AM.

Unfortunately, we do not have space in the cafeteria for parents to stay for lunch.

**"Mom, Dad...I don't think the dance teachers like me! It seems like they are ALWAYS correcting me."**

All students need frequent reminders from their teachers as they learn to control their bodies. Dance teachers use corrections as a way to help the student refine their skills throughout the year. Corrections should never be taken in a negative or personal way. If a teacher should say, "Rita, straighten your leg and extend your foot when you do a tendu to the side." This doesn't mean that the teacher doesn't like Rita or her leg or foot it just means that the teacher is showing Rita a way to strengthen her legs and to achieve the proper form. A dance teacher giving corrections to a dancer is like a gardener giving water to a plant. The dancer needs corrections and the plant needs water in order to grow and thrive.

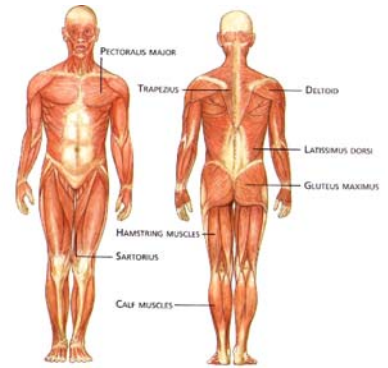
After being exposed to new skills throughout the year, students enter a practice phase in which they learn to self-correct their skills. They also learn to observe their peers and give positive feedback in the form of compliments and "stretches", or goals to achieve. Students often learn better from each other than from us!

## Bodies At Work

*Dance is the only art of which we ourselves are the stuff of which it is made. ~Ted Shawn*

As dancers our bodies are our instruments. Like violinists who have to tune their violins prior to performing, dancers have to tune their bodies in order to grow stronger and more secure in their technical skills. This body "tuning" is not easy and it requires a lot of hard work, determination and commitment.

Dancers solidify their technical skills in ballet, fundamentals, modern and jazz classes. Technical skills are specific building blocks of dance; such as stabilizing spinal alignment, sharpening movement sequencing, strengthening bodies, understanding rhythm nuances and performing with a sense of artistic expression. The students are not only using their minds but they are also using their muscles! Your child may discover muscles he/she never thought they had. The dance teachers believe in teaching these technique classes in an exact, careful and thorough approach. In doing this, the students are able to physically sense their muscles in a deeper way. Dance teachers take the training of these young bodies very seriously. Injury prevention is a key component in this training. If your child comes home and talks about being a little sore, remind them that their bodies are in the process of being "tuned."



### The First Weeks at ODC Dance In Pictures



Monday  
Dance Students  
in  
Ballet Class

Tuesday  
Dance Students  
In  
Modern Dance Class



Stay tuned for  
more pictures  
from each day!

**Dance Legends**

**George Balanchine** (January 22, 1904 –April 30, 1983) was a Russian ballet choreographer. Balanchine is one of the 20th century's foremost choreographers, and one of the founders of American ballet. The dance company he founded is called the New York City Ballet Company. His work formed a bridge between classical and modern ballet.

