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jete

magazine



RTDC
POSSIBILITIES
from the
ROBERT THOMAS
DANCENTER



In the late Winter /Early Spring of 1978, **Robert and Miyoko Thomas** traveled to Ames, Iowa from New York City in a recently purchased pre-owned sky blue Opel station wagon. They traveled with their two cats, a monkey and most of their personal belongings. After three decades as professional dancers working in touring companies, Robert and Miyoko were ready to retire to Robert's hometown.

Their goal was to create a dance environment where young people could enjoy the experience of learning the technical skills, presentation, and performance of dance in a professional setting much like the one Robert and Miyoko had been working in.

PAS de DEUX *Robert & Miyoko Thomas*



Robert Thomas, in 1964, retained a position in the highly competitive Harkness Ballet first as a trainee then as a company member and toured the world. In 1969, Robert was offered positions with the Stuttgart Ballet, the National Ballet Contemporair, the Joffrey Ballet, the Geneva Ballet, and the second Harkness company. Choosing the Joffrey Ballet, Robert performed in New York, throughout the United States, Europe and Russia.

Miyoko Kato Thomas received her extensive ballet training at the Tachibana Ballet School of Tokyo in her native Japan, subsequently joining the Asami Maki Ballet Company. Miyoko became a first-ranked ballet dancer in Japan. Wanting to further her training, she traveled to the American School of Ballet. New York was the center of the dance world at the time. In 1965, she joined the Harkness Ballet Company. She was promoted to the rank of Soloist in 1969. Ms. Kato joined the Joffrey Ballet in 1974.

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JETE Magazine is published quarterly by **Robert Thomas Dancenter** as a tribute to the history, heritage, and social impact of Dance and Dance Education throughout the world.

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Musings by

The Motivation of Inspiration

Robert Thomas



Miyoko Kato: Perfect Blend of Talent, Discipline, and Stoicism

Miyoko was born in Hiroshima, Japan on September 26, 1939, four weeks after Hitler invaded Poland and launched World War II. Her father, Eikichi Kato, was the senior officer of the Imperial Japanese Navy forces on the Bonin Peninsula during the latter stages of World War II.

He was tried by an Australian court after the war for killing seven civilians for which he pleaded not guilty. He was shot by firing squad. Miyoko never met her father.



During the war, the Japanese followed the dictates of the Emperor. The Emperor was their God. The Japanese would have fought to the last person if we had invaded Japan, but after the bomb, the Emperor spoke on the radio and said it's finished, lay down your arms.

Most Japanese had never heard his voice, but after he spoke, they became docile and believed the Americans would kill them as the right of the conquerors. They were ready to die without resistance after the Emperor told them to stop fighting.

Miyoko said they were surprised that the Americans told them to stop kneeling, and to get up and work. They gave the

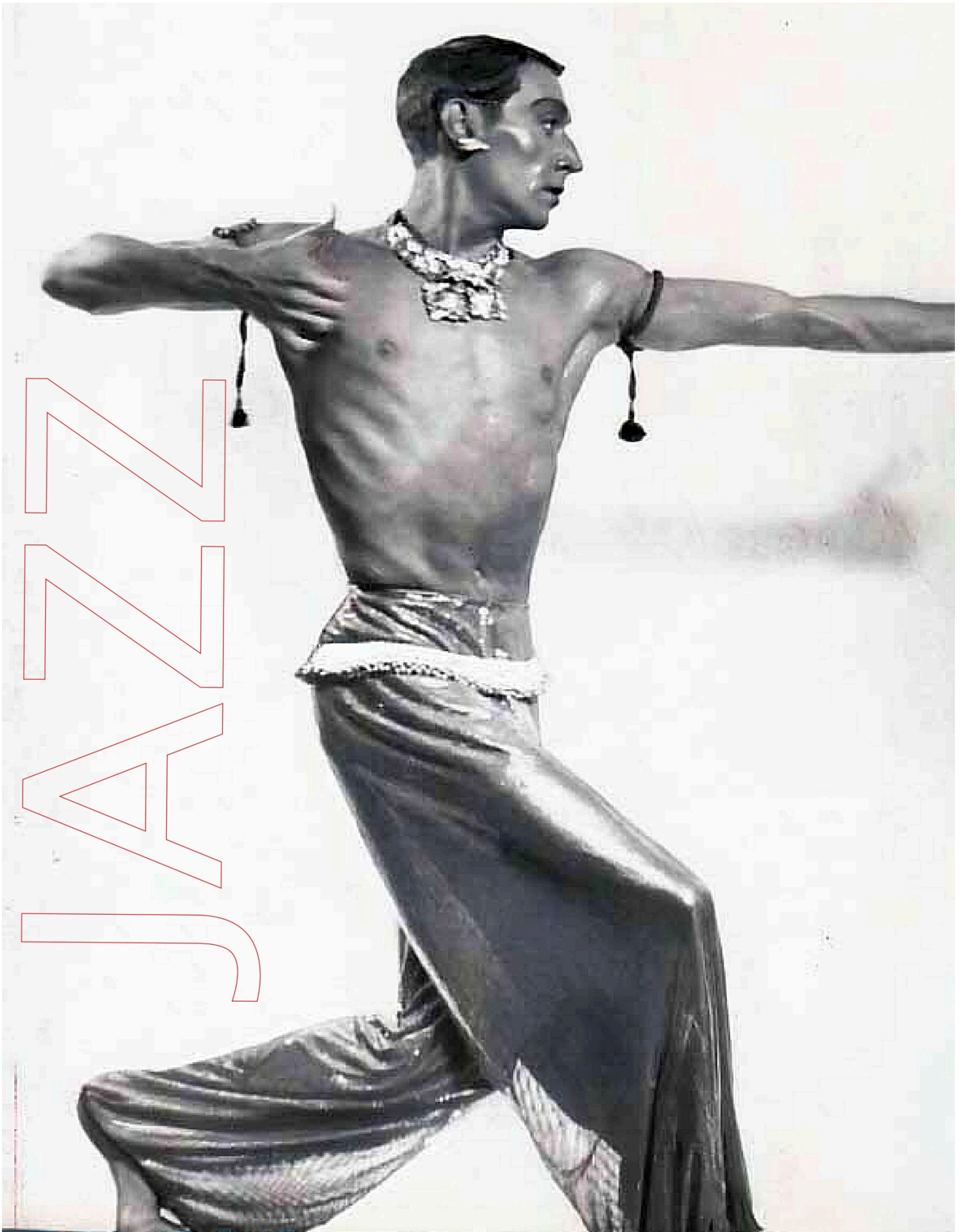
kids candy bars. Miyoko's brothers got jobs painting rocks in those beautiful Japanese gardens white to signify an American headquarters. The Japanese have a fascinating culture, internally very powerfully disciplined, and really quite different from all the other Asian cultures.

Miyoko also lost a baby brother and an older sister during the war and aftermath. Hardship was normal life to Miyoko as a child. She had never known anything else and did not know anything else existed.

Her mother would exchange jewels for food. Once she traded a pearl necklace for two cans of salmon. Fortunately, the family had moved from Hiroshima one year before the bomb. They had moved to Sendai where her grandfather was a teacher in a private school.

Miyoko never complained about those years. Her early memories of a kindness was when the GIs gave her chocolate. She ate hers and the other children's, who thought it was poisoned. It wasn't and ever since Miyoko loved chocolate.

My story about Miyoko's background will continue in the next issue.





"Sometimes
you have to slap
them. Sometimes
you have to kiss
them."

JACK COLE

Jack Cole was an American dancer, choreographer, and theatre director known as "the Father of Theatrical Jazz Dance" for his role in codifying African-American jazz dance styles, as influenced by the dance traditions of other cultures, for Broadway and Hollywood. Asked to describe his style he described it as "urban folk dance."

His work as a dancer and choreographer began in the 1930s and lasted until the mid-1960s. Beginning in modern dance, he worked in nightclubs, on the Broadway stage, and in Hollywood films, ending his career as a teacher.

He was an innovative choreographer for the camera and a hugely influential choreographer and teacher, training Gwen Verdon, Carol Haney, and Buzz Miller, among many others, and influencing later choreographers, such as Bob Fosse, Jerome Robbins, and Alvin Ailey, all of whom drew heavily from his innovations.





Jack Cole & Hollywood

Cole's talents on film also extended to his work with major stars, whose talents he could harness and highlight whether or not they had prior dance training. Cole understood that stars didn't have to leap and turn around the screen, but could draw the audience in through smaller movements. In **Gilda**, Rita Hayworth immediately commands attention in her charismatic number **"Put the Blame on Mame"** with just a flip of her hair.

Nowhere is Cole's strength in working with stars more evident, however, than in his work with Marilyn Monroe. Cole worked with Monroe on six films, from 1953's **Gentlemen Prefer Blondes** to Cole's last film, **Let's Make Love**, in 1960.

Despite both being characterized as individuals who were often difficult to work with, the two had an excellent working relationship. Monroe's iconic sultry persona is even likely due to her work with Cole, who was able to use his own slinky style to bring out the sensuality for which Monroe was so renowned.



JJs / Alamy Stock Photo

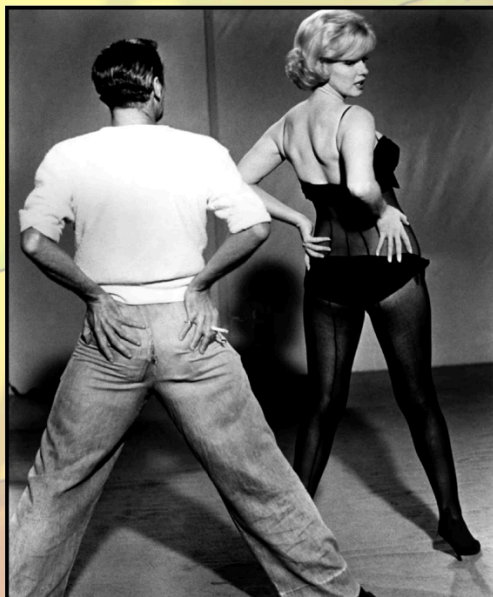
Jack Cole's strengths in working on film are clearly demonstrated in Monroe's signature number, **"Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend."** The piece is a feat of cinematic choreography, despite containing very little actual dancing.

Cole's dazzling visuals are on full display here, from the arresting red/hot pink hues to the red staircase he uses to create levels and structure.

The dancers themselves also give structure to the piece, with Monroe's male admirers creating formations that fill the screen and dictate the shape of each cinematic image.



ARCHIVIO GBB / Alamy Stock Photo



TCD/Prod.DB / Alamy Stock Photo

20th CENTURY FOX

GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES



"DIAMONDS ARE A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND"
GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES - 1953

RGR Collection / Alamy Stock Photo

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YOU DON'T KNOW JACK! ***But I did.***

"That's right, I knew Jack Cole and danced for him." Robert Thomas

I was in this class at Harkness House in NYC. In the group picture, I was just to the left of the boy in front with black hair on the other side of Mr Cole. Bummer! I wasn't in the shot.

These are some the 20 dancers he picked to work on his new ballet, at the time, for Harkness Ballet. We were trainees at the time. He wanted to train dancers in his style.

He worked us to death but we loved him. He was very demanding, exacting, and difficult if he didn't get what he wanted, but we worshiped him and he liked us or we weren't in the class.

He developed Jazz from ethnic dance forms from around the world. He traveled from India to the Andes, to Spain and to the Apollo Theater on 125th street in New York City. He studied with Martha Graham, Ruth St. Denis, and Ted Shawn, so he was well rooted in modern dance.

He taught us Indian dance forms. He taught us Spanish heel work. He taught us Cicchetti ballet. He had exercise classes for us that worked us so hard that the mirror was fogged over. He sometimes

came to class in a suit and talked about dance history and why he broke away from Ruth St. Denis - Ted Shawn to create and develop his unique style of Jazz (as did Martha Graham for modern).



He trained dancers like Gwen Verdon and Matt Mattox and innumerable others. All of the jazz techniques that followed drew from what he started. He was the true pioneer of the Jazz idiom and I was beyond fortunate to work with and be molded by his genius.



Mitzi Gaynor, on shoulders, in the 1953 film "The I Don't Care Girl," which featured Jack Cole's choreography.

Jazz Dance Today

BALLETS JAZZ MONTRÉAL: Sensuous, Sultry and Stunning



Under Louis Robitaille's artistic direction, 14 dazzling dancers and three international choreographers evoke in "five seasons" the grand cycles of existence, as captured in the music and poems of Leonard Cohen.

The revered torch singer's words find new expression through dance in this stylish, sexy, and innovative program, which received Cohen's blessing before he passed.

Ballets Jazz Montréal is one of the most prolific dance companies in Canada and a major force on the Montréal cultural scene. Currently celebrating their 50th

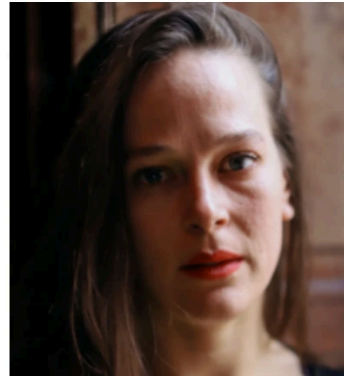
anniversary, Ballets Jazz Montréal is an internationally renowned repertory company that embodies excellence, innovation, and above all passion.

This troupe of high-calibre dancers from around the world, the company continues to pursue its original mission while collaborating with celebrated contemporary dance choreographers that push boundaries and explore new ways of moving and expressing emotion.

To date, Ballets Jazz Montréal has presented over 2,600 performances in 68 countries, reaching nearly 3 million total audience members.

The company is currently touring North America.





BOBBI JENE SMITH

ROBERT THOMAS DANCENTER STUDENT • 1990 -1995

Bobbi Jene Smith is an alumnus of The Juilliard School, North Carolina School of the Arts, and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School. Her choreography has been presented by The Batsheva Dance Company, CORPUS of The Royal Danish Ballet, LADP, VAIL Dance Festival, LaMama Experimental Theater, and The Martha Graham Dance Company. In 2019 she was awarded The Harkness Promise Award and was The Martha Duffy Resident Artist at Baryshnikov Art Center.

Smith's film and video work include "Annihilation," directed by Alex Garland starring Natalie Portman; "MA," directed by Celia Rowson-Hall; and "Yossi," directed by Eytan Fox. The documentary "Bobbi Jene," which follows Smith's trajectory of leaving a dance company to create her own work, swept the Tribeca Film Festival, winning Best Documentary, Best Cinematography, and Best Editing in 2017.

PROFESSIONAL DANCE CREDITS

Robert Thomas Dancenter
Juilliard School
North Carolina School of the Arts
Royal Winnipeg Ballet School
Batsheva Dance Company
Royal Danish Ballet
Martha Graham Dance Company
Harkness Ballet





In 2018, Bobbi starred in and choreographed the feature films "Mari," directed by Georgia Parris and choreographed by Maxine Doyle, which premiered at BFI; and "Aviva," directed by Boaz Yakin, which was a SXSW selection.

Smith has been a certified GAGA teacher for the past 15 years and has taught Ohad Naharin's repertory in schools and universities around the

world. She is part-time faculty at The Juilliard School, and is on guest faculty at NYU and UArts.



NUTCRACKER WORKSHOP

SAVE THE DATE

Join our 2025 Sugar Plum Fairy, Tanya Trombly, for a special workshop Friday, August 15 on the Stephens Stage. Not only is this a unique opportunity to get professional coaching in both technique & artistry, but it's a chance to be seen by Tanya, who will be participating in the selection process for The Nutcracker auditions the next day.

The workshop options includes:

- 2-hour open level Technique Class (middle school - adults)
- Pointe Variation Class (pointe dancers)
- Non-Pointe Variation Class (middle school & up)
- Ballet Acting (Pantomime) & Movement Class (6-9-year-olds)
- Pantomime & Partner Dancing (Adults/Party Scene Guests)

The Pointe Variation Class will feature non-Nutcracker pieces.

Pointe dancers are encouraged to also join the Non-Pointe Variation Class as an opportunity to focus on artistic development & expression.

While this workshop is not a requirement to participate in the audition process, it provides a valuable opportunity to help dancers to feel prepared and confident going into auditions the next day!

Tanya understands firsthand that auditions can be stressful and scary. She wants to make this workshop fun and encouraging for the dancers, so they feel ready to showcase their best personality and talent at the auditions Saturday!

Friday, August 15 Workshop Schedule:

10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Open level Technique Class (middle school - adults)
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm	Pointe Variation Class (pointe dancers)
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Non-Pointe Variation Class (middle school & up)
4:00 pm – 4:45 pm	Ballet Acting (Pantomime) & Movement Class (6-9-year-olds)
5:00 – 6:00 pm	Pantomime & Partner Dancing (Adults/Party Scene Guests)

FEES:

Techniques Class:	\$50	Three Class Bundle:	\$99
Variation Classes:	\$30/Each	(techniques plus two of the three variation/adult classes)	
Ballet Acting/Movement Class:	\$25		
Pantomime/Partner Dancing:	\$30		

REGISTER: www.center.iastate.edu/nutcracker-workshop/

Jeté is a magazine that is designed to bring awareness to the Dancenter and its activities, goals, and features. We will present manageable bites of history of dance and dance makers in each quarter's issue.

Dancers should have a working knowledge of the history of their art. We will be presenting information on the various forms and styles of dance that have evolved since the Italian Renaissance courts of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Under Catherine de' Medici's influence as queen, it spread to France, where it developed even further as an alternative entertainment to the brutal jousting that took Catherine de' Medici's husband's life.

Then, we will include human interest arti-

cles, featuring alumni that have gone on to contribute to the dance world, and our own local young artists as they develop in their art of dance. I hope you enjoy this magazine. I have enjoyed being involved in its creation.

TAKE THE LEAP!

jeté
m a g a z i n e

Jeté is a dramatic "leap forward" movement in ballet.

Mastering the jeté is crucial for any ballet dancer as it showcases their strength, agility, and control.



Dance in Art

The Dance

by André Derain 1906

The intensely saturated color palette and rudimentary shapes are designed as a way of reconnecting with the natural energies of the universe and uninhibited, wild expression. Dance being a form of innate, primal human expression and liberation, it is naturally the perfect activity for the figures of this Fauvist painting to engage in.



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