

POSSIBILITIES
from the
ROBERT THOMAS
DANCENTER

jeté
magazine



PREMIERE ISSUE • SPRING 2025



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.

jeto
magazine

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



Welcome to the **first issue of Jeté Magazine** - a quarterly publication of the Robert Thomas Dancenter designed to **explore the possibilities of dance throughout the world**. Enjoy insight on what's trending in dance, classical ballet dance as root of most other forms, the pioneers who innovated, and those who have broken through on their own with the **motivation of inspiration**.

For me, I began my professional journey as a dancer the summer I was sixteen. After seven years of dance classes, my mother arranged for me to travel to Jacob's Pillow. The Pillow is a renowned dance camp originated by Ted Shawn, a pioneer in Modern Dance and contemporary of Martha Graham. Located in the affluent Berkshire Mts. "Papa" Shawn offered scholarships to dance students in exchange for labor to operate the camp.



Many dance students paid to attend the Pillow each year. There were dorms, camp dining halls, a public theatre, a 12-week performance season, renown guest instructors and performers, and 150 girls.

The Pillow was an in-depth dance experience, but I was ready to party.

My mother labeled and packed everything I owned and took me to the vacant lot where the Greyhound Bus stopped on its way to NYC. I kissed my mother and boarded the bus. Thirty-six hours later, sleepless and needing a shower, the bus climbed the rise on I-78 before the descent into the Holland tunnel.

As the bus crested the rise a full view of the skyline of NYC came into view. I was stunned. It looked to me like OZ. It was a magnificent site, and I had never seen anything like it.



As we descended into the tunnel, I had no idea what my summer was about to show me. I would learn that I knew nothing of dance, that I was not even a beginner, and that I wanted to be a dancer more than anything else in the world.... It would be 14 years before I returned to Iowa.



***"Nobody cares
if you can't dance well.
Just get up and dance."***

MARTHA GRAHAM

Martha Graham was an American modern dancer and choreographer, whose style, the Graham technique, reshaped American dance and is still taught worldwide.

Graham danced and taught for over seventy years. She was the first dancer to perform at the White House, travel abroad as a cultural ambassador, and receive the highest civilian award of the US: the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction.

In her lifetime she received honors ranging from the Key to the City of Paris to Japan's Imperial Order of the Precious Crown.



She said, in the 1994 documentary *The Dancer Revealed*: "I have spent all my life with dance and being a dancer. It's permitting life to use you in a very intense way. Sometimes it is not pleasant. Sometimes it is fearful. But nevertheless it is inevitable."

Founded in 1926, nearly 100 years ago (the same year as Graham's professional dance company), the Martha Graham School is the oldest school of dance in the United States.

First located in a small studio within Carnegie Hall, the school currently has two different studios in New York City. A touring company is currently out acquainting new audiences with Martha Graham's innovative and breathtaking dance.

The
IMMORTALS

Modern Dance Blazed the Trail for Contemporary Dance

Modern dance is a broad genre of western concert or theatrical dance which includes dance styles such as ballet, folk, ethnic, religious, and social dancing; and primarily arose out of Europe and the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was considered to have been developed as a rejection of, or rebellion against, classical ballet, and also a way to express social concerns like socioeconomic and cultural factors.

Loie Fuller first gave “modern” dance artistic status in the United States. Her use of theatrical lighting and transparent lengths of China-silk fabrics at once won her the acclaim of artists as well as general audiences. She preceded other modern dancers in rebelling against any formal technique, in establishing a company, and in making films. **(RIGHT: Serpentine Dance 1897)**



Dance was only part of Fuller’s theatrical effect; for another American dancer, **Isadora Duncan**, it was the prime resource. Duncan brought a vocabulary of basic movements to heroic and expressive standards. She performed in thin, flowing dresses that left arms and legs bare, bringing a scale to her dancing that had immense theatrical projection. Her revelation of the power of simple movement made an impression on dance that lasted far beyond her death.

Since its founding, modern dance has been redefined many times. Though it clearly is not ballet by any traditional definition, it often incorporates balletic movement; and though it may also refer to any number of additional dance elements (those of folk dancing or ethnic, religious, or social dancing, for example), it may also examine one simple aspect of movement.

(BELOW: Doris Humphrey in 1928)



As modern dance changes in the concepts and practices of new generations of choreographers, the meaning of the term modern dance grows more ambiguous. The term Contemporary Dance has emerged to reflect this.

Today's contemporary dance is an eclectic mix of styles, with choreographers drawing from ballet, modern, and "post-modern" (structureless) forms of dance. While some contemporary dancers create characters, theatrical events, or stories, others perform entirely new creations as they improvise in their own unique style.

Martha Graham was a first contemporary choreographer. She said later that to remain modern or contemporary, dance must be willing to continue to change.



Contemporary Dance Olivia Jozaitis to Teach new Ballet Fusion Class

Trained in Classical Ballet and Modern Dance, Olivia is currently a senior at Iowa State majoring in chemistry with a minor in dance.



Olivia wants to continue to share her experiences in teaching and choreographing to create an environment where inclusivity and self-expression are recognized, yet pushing her dancers to new limits.

Olivia teaches Ballet Technique at Robert Thomas Dancercenter and will also cover Contemporary and Jazz classes.

She is excited to teach the new Ballet Fusion class in the fall of 2025.

As she puts it: "When I choreograph, I always leave room for dancer input. A piece should reflect the people in it—not just my vision.

"I'm committed to learning and growing alongside the dancers I work with, constantly inspired by their unique voices and energy. Helping dancers connect with their own movement style is essential; it's where passion and artistry begin."

what's next at the dancenter?

Dance Expo June 7 at C.Y. Stephens

On 9 June 1840, a year or so into his European tour, Franz Liszt hosted the first of two London concerts - advertised as 'Liszt's Pianoforte Recitals' - at the Hanover Square Rooms in Mayfair, London. The piano recital was born. **This was the first time the word 'recital' had been used in terms of music.**

Exposition: a large public exhibition of art.

That is the definition of our annual recital which we call Expo! The recitals at the Dancenter are a display of all that our dancers focus on during classes: technique, beauty, stage presence, friendships and more, creating a performance that is a work of art.

The recital allows dancers to fully experience a performing art and the unique feeling of being on stage. Preparing for

a recital is a way for dancers to work on memorization skills, rhythm, technique, teamwork, and much more...and they LOVE having something to be proud of. Expo includes all dance disciplines at the studio, as well as some unique components uncommon to most dance studios such as Stage & Screen and Musical Theater.

This year we will be adding an instructors piece for all instructors and their assistants and demonstrators showing ballet jazz Irish and hip hop.

Expo is a fun happy low pressure experience for all our student and parents. With performances at time to suit the youngest dancers and at length under three hours .

The performances are free and Stephens provides an abundance of good seating as well as parking.



FREE ADMISSION

DANCENTER EXPO

Grades PS 3-12

Exposition: a large public exhibition of art.

That is the definition of our annual recital that we call Expo!

A display of all that our dancers focus on during classes: technique, beauty, stage presence, friendships and more.

A performance that is a work of art.

JUNE 7, 2025
10:30 AM & 3:30 PM

CY Stephens Auditorium

Dance in the News!

A Two-Person Dance Production *Waltz* Built Entirely of Famous Waltzes and Tour de Force Dance Performances



In *Waltz*, classical formality is trumped by the emotional surge of Romanticism as the **wild passion of the triple meter overwhelms**. Saburo Teshigawara with Rihoko Sato give a full hour of glorious excess in waltz-time. The tiny stage of the Coronet where the **audience sits in close proximity**, tingled with energy.

The **soundtrack to the evening is a rich mix of well-known waltz tunes, those melodies you know so well but infuriatingly can't remember the titles**. The two



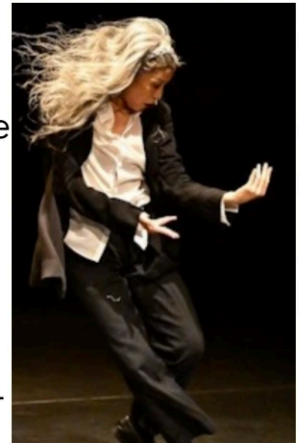
performers are each, in their own manner, enthralled by the music but their passions are expressed in very different ways.

Teshigawara, the older of the pair, directs

his emotions inwardly, his body seething with buttoned-down emotion. **His**

movements are bound, the walk almost paraplegic, the gestures strained, before being suddenly interrupted by a fast twirl. Hands and arms gesticulate, stretching and spreading, or gripping fists tightly in a language of longing and need.

Sato is the free spirit, the one able to embody these desires. She lives the rhythms, **her fluid torso finding expression in every muscle**. Her arms follow the sweeping trajectory of the dance, her feet barely touching the stage. **Moving with speed and grace, she is energy personified.**

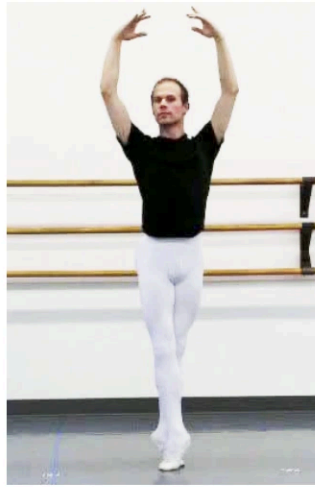


The waltz was the most popular dance form of the nineteenth century and has maintained its popularity ever since.

Tchaikovsky, Chopin and notably Johann Strauss the Younger, nicknamed 'the Waltz king,' wrote a treasury of tunes in triple meter.

The passions the waltz stirred and the close embrace of the couples initially shocked polite society and quite rightly. It's still a potent force as Teshigawara proves so powerfully in his inimitable fashion.





MICHAEL FOTHERGILL

ROBERT THOMAS DANCENTER STUDENT • 1995 -2001

Michael was introduced to dance as a student of the Betty Hill Dance Studios in Des Moines, Iowa, furthering his training under the guidance of Robert Thomas and Miyoko Kato at the Robert Thomas Dancenter. His studies continued on full scholarship at the Milwaukee Ballet School, Boston Ballet School, and ultimately at the School of American Ballet.

Graduating from high school ahead of schedule, Michael completed his training at American Ballet Theatre and embarked upon a performing career that spanned two decades. He performed extensively throughout the US, Europe, and Japan as a principal guest artist and was as a member of the Charleston Ballet Theatre, City Ballet of San Diego, Milwaukee Ballet, and Alabama Ballet, among others. While employed in Japan, Michael was awarded the prestigious title of "Artist of Extraordinary Merit", a seldom granted honor. Michael retired from performing in April 2017 and was appointed Executive and Artistic Director of Ballet Arkansas the following July.

PROFESSIONAL CREDITS

Robert Thomas Dancenter
Iowa Youth Ballet - Artistic Director
American Ballet Theatre
Charleston Ballet Theatre
City Ballet of San Diego
Milwaukee Ballet
Alabama Ballet
Ballet Arkansas - Executive/Artistic Director



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 articles, feature an 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 it's creation.

Robert Thomas

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

**Ballet at the Paris Opera
by Edgar Degas 1877**

In this famous masterwork, the artist creatively joined the monotype technique, rarely used in his time, with the fragile medium of pastel. Described as "the powder of butterfly wings," pastel was the perfect medium to illustrate the onstage metamorphosis of spindly young dancers into visions of beauty as perfect and short-lived as butterflies.



Robert Thomas Dancenter (South)

319 S 17th St
Ames, Iowa 50010
(515) 233-0826

Robert Thomas Dancenter (West)

134 Dotson Dr.
Ames, Iowa 50010
(515) 292-4602

Robert Thomas Dancenter (Mailing Address)

3405 Clinton Court • Ames, Iowa 50010

<https://rtdance.com>