1973 New Haven Register article “Bowen-Peters Carry the Message”

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Bowen-Peters Carry The Message

BY MARSHA B. COCHRAN

"I won't dance, don't ask me," go the lyrics of the song. However, this is not a typical reaction from students at the Bowen-Peters School of Dance. A real test of how students will respond to requests for belly dancing or belly dancing moved to the New Haven Register article "Bowen-Peters Carry the Message" published by Virtual Commons - Bridgewater State University, 2021.

Angela has found that a "beau

She also noted that a "beau
time," which is essential.

"I love the kids. And it's becuase I love them, so I always demand a little bit more from them than they're used to giving. My own training was based so vital in ballet. Therefore, I use the ballet as the basis of my teaching. I've required of all students. And this comes as a shock to the kids who are just used to flying through everything. They must be punctual, neat and interested in learning. Gradually it gets through to them that I'm fair and honest. Classes run from September to May and it's always interesting to note that around November we have about 20 percent drop out. They simply don't want to put out the necessary effort. And then in February, they see how well their friends are doing, they want to come back.

Total Experience

But it isn't all hard work. The Peters see their school as a total educational experience utilizing the dance as a means to personal communication and development. They've tried to make a school as well as an experience for making things happen. For example, in 1963 Ken and Angela decided they wanted to open a dance studio. Ken, who is a member of the Chambers of Commerce in Bridgewater, Hartford and New Haven, requested information as to the feasibility of a friend's project. The late John Mitchell, a community worker in New Haven, responded to their inquiry with a tour of three schools. Mitchell even suggested an appropriate spot for the school's first location on Dixwell Avenue. Ken Peters, 40, recall a recent conversation with Mitchell. "I said to John, 'We're going to make Bowen-Peters a household word.' He just chuckled and said, 'Good luck, Ken.' But in a sense, we've succeeded in doing just that. You ask anyone in the New Haven community today, 'What's a Bowen-Peters?' and they know.

Easy Feast

Turning the school into a household word was no easy feat. For the first five years of the school's existence, Ken and Angela received no salary. During summers, they took up odd jobs. Angela worked in various offices, while Ken taught history and junior high school.

A trained, machinist, in Boston, Ken discovered it was impossible to find similar work in New Haven. And for awhile he was a door-to-door salesman who gave his buying customers brochures on the Bowen-Peters School of Dance.

One aspect of Bowen-Peters' reputation involves, Angela Peters. She is often invited to dance recitals. As chief dance instructor, she has some real dance experience, they know that it takes perfect physical condition and great strength and endurance to be a good dancer.

Communicate

But the Peters' ultimate aim is not limited to dance or music. In working with the students, Angela has discovered that art can serve to communicate as much as between artists and audience. "Many of the kids are hostile at first. They have so many defenses against really touching each other or allowing themselves to be touched. The best way to handle that is to ease them out of their defenses so they can see how absurd it is. And the dancing really helps to open them up. There's no star system here. We're a cohesive unit. One week you might have the lead, but next week you're back in the chorus. We're all working together to do something beautiful. It's respect for the art, ourselves and each other that's important. Not individual recognition. Most people think that teenagers are impossible to work with. Parents come in with their children and say, 'Here, you take them. I can't do a thing.' But we've found that if you're honest and fair, they'll come to respect you. And if you give them something to really strive for, well, then they'll work like crazy. Dancing is our form of communication. If we were singers, they'd sing out. Or if we were actors, we'd have opened a drama school. Because we're really concerned with turning out a mass of great dancers. What's important is to watch some gain confidence, or to watch someone finally have a sense of themselves as people. That's what we want to produce here at the school. People.

The current enrollment at the school totals 150. Of that number, 30 are selected to participate as members of the popular dance group. The rest are offered an introductory course in African dance, music and costumes. And recently they took part in the Hartford Visiting Artists program. They conducted a 3-week long course in African dance. Music and costumes and recently they took part in the Hartford Visiting Artists program. They conducted a 3-week long course in African dance, music and costumes. And recently they took part in the Hartford Visiting Artists program. They conducted a 3-week long course in African dance. Music and costumes. And recently they took part in the Hartford Visiting Artists program. They conducted a 3-week long course in African dance, music and costumes. And recently they took part in the Hartford Visiting Artists program. They conducted a 3-week long course in African dance. Music and costumes. And recently they took part in the Hartford Visiting Artists program. They conducted a 3-week long course in African dance. Music and costumes. And recently they took part in the Hartford Visiting Artists program. They conducted a 3-week long course in African dance. Music and costumes.