

HONORING MERCE

I was in the Cunningham Studio preparing to teach my class that would begin in 20 minutes, when the executive director called to tell me Merce had died. I could teach or not, he said, depending on how I felt. I looked around that amazing space and over to the corner where Merce always sat, and I acknowledged and thanked him. I continued to warm up and prepare the class, still registering the news.

Accompanist Pat Richter was playing that day, and she heard the news when she came in the studio. We both knew—of course!—we would go ahead with the class. As the students arrived, I told them they could each decide what they wanted to do. Almost everyone stayed.

We began, and throughout the two beginning set exercises there were sniffles and a soaring beauty as well. Those familiar movements seemed to ground us. After those first surreal minutes, I told the class how grateful I was to be there and that they were there, too. And then we dove into the class.

I feel honored to have taught that first class after Merce left us. It felt important, and the perfect thing to do.

—Janet Charleston, Merce Cunningham Studio

Log on to www.dancemedia.com and enter to win the *Dance Teacher Video of the Month Contest!*

Congratulations to **Groove With Me**, the August Editors' Choice for *Dance Teacher Video of the Month*. Founded in 1996, Groove With Me is a community-based organization that provides free dance classes and performance opportunities for girls, ages 4–18, in East Harlem, New York. After-school and weekend classes are taught in a wide range of disciplines, including jazz, tap, modern, hip hop, Afro-Caribbean, ballet and choreography. All teachers volunteer their time, among them tapper Savion Glover and *Movin' Out* and ballet superstar Ashley Tuttle.

Groove With Me also gives girls a safe place to go after school and an opportunity to meet new female friends, and it empowers them with leadership skills, creativity and pride. Jamali Corniel, a volunteer since 2005, says the most rewarding aspect is watching her students gain a sense of self-respect and confidence needed to assert themselves and perform in front of others. "I have one rule in my class," she says, "my students are never allowed to say, 'I can't.'"

—Jenny Dalzell

www.groovewithme.org

Posting videos to the **Dance Teacher Video of the Month Contest** is a great way to build buzz about your teaching and/or your studio. Visit www.dancemedia.com, share your videos and vote for your favorites. Any and all kinds of dance are welcome.

THIS MONTH ON www.dance-teacher.com

➔ Go backstage with Shane Sparks at the Broadway production of *Dreamgirls*.

➔ Download a printable history quiz on costume designer Kermit Love to share with your students.

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Dance Teacher is now on Twitter! Follow us at [Dance_Teacher](https://twitter.com/Dance_Teacher) and we'll look for you!

Faux Pas: Susan Blankensop, who was featured in September's "Beyond Performance," received her BFA from Ohio University School of Dance in Athens, OH.

Ask the Experts

Q: I've had problems with students becoming too friendly with my studio teachers on social networking sites like Facebook. What's the best way to deal with this, since I can't control what students say on Facebook?

A: If used correctly, Facebook can be a positive outlet for communicating with students and parents. It does, however, present a new challenge in keeping personal life separate from professional communications. Any time teachers communicate with students,

even through Facebook, they represent your studio. We recommend that you set boundaries by establishing—and communicating—guidelines up front. Here are a few suggestions:

- If you are Facebook friends with students or parents, you can adjust privacy settings on your profile to exclude specific information or prevent specific people from seeing photos and wall posts.
- If information or advice is better communicated in a face-to-face conversation, or not at all, do NOT post it. Use common sense.
- Never use profanity or spread gossip.

- Be cautious of photos you upload and tag. Are they appropriate and aligned with your professionalism as a teacher?

We recommend creating a Facebook Fan Page to encourage dialogue between teachers and students, while allowing you as studio owner to monitor the posts. An alternative is to establish a Group to notify members of studio news. It's your business, so help your staff keep it professional.

Kathy Blake operates a dance studio in New Hampshire. She and Suzanne Blake Gerety are co-founders of dancestudioowner.com.



Stay in touch! Visit www.dance-teacher.com or e-mail questions and comments to rzar@dancemedia.com.