

The Dancing Feet

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Berkeley Beginners' Competition

Contributing Writer
Daniel Steele

The long awaited hour had finally come for the Berkeley Ballroom rookies: the Beginner's Competition was upon us. It was to be the first competitive dance of our nascent ballroom education, and it was to happen in the crib of our learning, the festively transformed Hearst Gym. It was early in the morning and we were all waiting nervously in line in our fancy costumes for the first heat to



Courtesy of UCBD

Rookies Rishabh Singhal and Katie Bubriski

begin—we would be dancing a waltz. I took in a final deep breath of air before I walked on to the dance floor with my partner, ready to face the scrutinizing gaze of the judges as cheerfully as possible. Thankfully, the encouraging shouts of friends, family and teammates had the effect of softening the tense atmosphere. The music started and we swept off, riding the music as if a gust of wind, turning, floating onto our toes and then gliding downwards and forwards into the next step, always to the cadence of the haunting, beautiful melody (at least that is how we hoped it came across). The song ended and we marched off into the side room, feeling both exhilarated and relieved. The room broke into applause and the mood remained celebratory throughout the rest of the day.

The Beginner's Competition was a great opportunity for us rookies to familiarize ourselves with competitive dancing and its grueling schedule, as well as to watch some of the advanced dancers demonstrate their agility during the open dancing interval; I was particularly impressed when I observed



In This Issue:

Berkeley Beginners'	1
How Ballroom Dancing Has Changed My Life	2
San Jose State Competition 2010	3-4
Fall Retreat 2010	3

Nick simultaneously dancing with two partners. Regardless of whether we were awarded any prizes or not, the competition was a fruitful experience because it pushed us to perform at a higher level, and gave us an excellent opportunity to examine where our greatest faults lay and how to fix them. Because of this competition, we are now ready to brave new dances, techniques, and events!

See the Team in these Upcoming Events

11th Annual UC Berkeley Classic	February 26th	UC Berkeley, CA
USA Dance Spring Fling	March 19th	Oakland, CA
20th Harvard Invitational	April 16th	Cambridge, MA
12th Annual Cardinal Classic	April 23rd	Stanford, CA

For more information, please visit the UCBD website at www.ucbd.org

How Ballroom Dancing Has Changed My Life

Contributing Writer
Fei Bo

I joined ballroom because, while in China, my friend dragged me to a dance class. Then, when I arrived in Berkeley, my roommate Chantal was conveniently a member of the ballroom team. She introduced me to UCBD and to the captain, who kindly began teaching me the dances. During that summer I also met the intermediate dancers Christine and Michael and became awed by their excellent dancing. Dancing helped me feel connected to China, especially dancing to the same music that we had back home. It reminded me of my last few days in China, and of my grandparents, senior dance coaches, with whom I grew up.

In the first competition of my freshman year I did not do as well as I had hoped but I had tons of fun nevertheless. I still have all those memories fresh in my mind. I remember waiting anxiously in line for the next round; secretly I hoped to be in the second heat so that I

could listen to the music while the first heat was on the floor. I recall trying to fix little things in between the rounds. After the first competition, I remember Michael saying to me, "It's okay. People usually get cut because of the timing, and as long as you fix the timing, it's pretty good." My tears ready to drop at any moment, I resolved to do better.

I had never really tasted failure. I was used to chasing after things that I wanted until I got them. After that first competition I started practicing really hard. At least that is what I thought I was doing. At the time, I did not understand how to practice smart; I needed to learn how to work with my partner. I had to

chase after, and motivate him to come and practice with me. The most 'practicing' we did together was during a competition, which was not very efficient nor practical.

Ballroom dancing has taught me the essence of communication. I learned that it is my problem as well if something does not go as planned. Also, I should take the initiative to understand what I am dealing with, what type of strategy I should apply, and what I can control to yield the best results.

Ballroom dancing has taught me to become more patient. I have learned that dancing is not going

to come to me immediately. It is not just about having a quick mind. Being able to understand the dancing is a part of it. More importantly, I have to keep dancing, even when sometimes I see no improvement at all. To do this will require years of practice and discipline. Additionally, I have learned to exercise stronger will. Dancing itself

is very attractive to

me, but there are definitely times when I do not feel like going outside of my room on a rainy, freezing night. However, every time I do end up going, I feel truly grateful and happy.

I would like to end with a quote from Amelia, my fellow ballroom dancer. "Everything that has created trouble for you just helps you grow." As the saying goes, whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger. I have failed many times, but I have learned a lot along the way and I will continue to learn about dancing and through that, life in general. I am truly grateful for what UCBD has brought into my life—the people, the perspectives, and the team spirit. Go bears!



Beginner DS Chief Danny Tan and partner Fei Bo

Courtesy of Fei Bo

San Jose State Competition 2010

Contributing Writer
Jonathan Eng

I unbuttoned my vest, hunched over the sink, and turned on the faucet. Exhaustion had not come over me yet. I glanced at the mirror to see the sweat dripping down my face. I knew my legs were tired but they would not admit defeat; they only wanted to dance some more.

The lights seemed brighter when I was on the dance floor than when I sat in the audience. I stood motionless in the middle of the dance floor, in good posture, a mirror of my partner. I heard the music before it came and the countless hours I spent practicing these dances flashed by me. My partner's body connected with mine, her hands

softly rested on mine, and our legs obeyed the music.

After, in the bathroom, I wrapped the wet towel around my head to try and catch the drops of sweat and keep them from descending into the sink. I knew dance was physically difficult, but I had not known it would be so mentally demanding—it required strength of the body, the grace of a swan, and peace of the mind. I let my mind wander off as I recollected my dances at the day's competition.

It seemed as if the world was spinning around us and we were at the center. We spun around and around in our waltz and slowly the rest of the world faded away. It felt like we had been dancing for hours. My



Courtesy of UCBD

Intermediates Rhesa Nathanael and Elfina Ho

mind was losing focus and distracting thoughts such as “are we going to make it to the next round?” and “I think my pants

— Continued on Page 4

FALL RETREAT 2010

It has been months since Fall Retreat, and I still don't quite know what to make of it. The people, the games, the food, the dancing – it was all a blur rounding out to an interesting Saturday.

Though, oddly enough, the one thing that I do remember clearly is finally finishing up the evening and settling down to sleep. When it came time to relax on that unforgiving plastic mat, share my too-small-for-comfort sleeping bag with a rookie dancer, and stare up at the absolutely frigid (but stunningly gorgeous!) night sky, I distinctly recall thinking to myself, “I'm really glad I came.”

The trip itself was to Tilden Regional Park – 30 minutes by bus northeast of the Berkeley campus. It led the group into a secluded campground where, surrounded by Eucalyptus, Monterey pine, and Coast live oak, the retreat was kicked off by fielding neat questions, playing a few games, and just chatting with friendly company.

“Let's talk about your patronus: your inner-animal. What would it be?”

Let's play the human knot: a game of tangled hands, legs, bodies. A game where that bubble of personal space becomes virtually nonexistent when working together to unwind.

And what better way to end a delicious dinner than with an improvised showcase – courtesy of Berkeley Ballroom's own advanced dancers. What about with a dance floor consisting of thirty some members around a bonfire? What about with a game of late night Mafia? What about with stories, riddles, and laughter?

And waking up the next morning to a game of ultimate Frisbee? Awesome.

The entire experience was pleasantly fun, and the best part was being able to bond with beginning dancers outside of Hearst Gym – beyond the dance floor. It was an opportunity to talk to them about their work as students, as coordinators, as singers, and as people.

Like I said earlier, I'm really glad that I went.

Contributed by: Jeremy Yip

(Continue from Page 3...)

are too tight” crept into my mind. Just as I managed to push those thoughts away, the music ceased and the round was over. I was left in a daze, pondering our performance in that round along with how enjoyable it was regardless.

I left the restroom and entered the auditorium to a bunch of Berkeley dancers dancing wildly. We had beaten Stanford, who danced just well enough to entertain us—a tiny bit. As the celebration carried through the night, our smiles showed our recollection of all the amazing things that had happened that day.

The many awards we had won, the dance rounds with our partners, the surprising amount one can pee when one drinks enough water, it all became part of our experience together as a team, something more than just a memory.

Unfortunately, all things come to an end, but when I boarded the bus headed back to Berkeley at 1 a.m., it felt like the dance competition had only begun and that we were on board the 6 a.m. bus taking us to our next dance competition.



Courtesy of Akari Imamura

UCBD Secretary Dinara Azimova and Partner Jeremy Yip



Courtesy of UCBD

Beginners DS Assistants Kenny Gallanosa and Elisha Ariela Cohen



Courtesy of UCBD

2010 UCBD Team

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