

FEB 1990



Noelle Jellison's dancers are going through last minute rehearsals as they prepare to compete this weekend in the western Dance America

competition, taking place in Los Angeles. Fifteen local dancers are making the trip.

Photo by Scott Crowson



MAR 20, 1990

Photo by Scott Crowson

The Can-Canettes of Fort St. John aren't limited to just one style of dance. They also do tap, the Charleston and, as seen here, country. They performed

at the Totem Mall on Saturday. FROM LEFT: Tania Bell, Patty Musselman, Brenda Wellard and Veronica Budell. For more pictures, turn to page 2.



APR 27, 1990

The Northern Dance Theatre Society's annual Dance Extravagana takes place tonight and Saturday at the Immaculata school. As well, Jellison

Studios is conducting its own dance recitals on Sunday. This picture is from last weekend's Performing Arts Honors Recital.

Photo by Scott Crowson

Dance Extravaganza events well attended

APR 1990

By Darwin Sauer
Alaska Highway News

Once again Fort St. John residents demonstrated that they are proud patrons of the arts by selling out two large dance events at the Immaculata school over the weekend.

The Northern Dance Theatre Society (NDTS) started the festivities off by packing in over 400 people on both Friday and Saturday evenings for its annual Dance Extravaganza.

Not to be out done, Jellison Studios had over 500 people attend its two recitals on Sunday.

The large turn out came somewhat as a surprise for Dance Extravaganza organizers since the Arts Festival had just concluded the weekend before, and tickets for the NDTS event were not selling very well at the beginning of last week.

"It didn't look too good at first, and then the tickets began to sell at the end of the week," said Linda London, president of the Northern Dance Theatre Society.

By Friday the Extravaganza had sold out and it was standing room only for both performances.

"I am very pleased with the turnout. We usually fill up the seats and we were hoping this year wouldn't be any different," London added.

The dance society president hosted both performances and she announced that the event raised over \$1,400 for the Arts Centre.

"We hope some day we can seat everyone in a nice modern building," she said later.

The crowds continued to come in Sunday, as proud parents and guests filled the Immaculata gym to see a superb lineup of dance students from Jellison Studios.

As usual, the performances for the two events were nothing short of spectacular, leaving the audience applauding enthusiastically after each number.

Organizers did an excellent job of mixing up the 55 different routines to make each program varied and interesting.

The youngest performers continued to win the hearts of most in the audience while ballet proved to be another favorite with crowd.

Two junior tap numbers received especially loud applause from their respective audiences, one featured a group of youngsters tapping away to the classic Disney tune "Whistle While You Work" and the other, a big band number entitled "In The Mood", had everyone clapping along in the end.

A solo ballet performance by Andrea van Donselaar thrilled the audience, while a number performed by intermediate and senior ballet dancers entitled "Waltz of the Flowers" left them breathless.

Given the weather last week, it seems almost fitting that the Dance Extravaganza would conclude with a winter number.

The big finale had dancers skating, throwing mock snowballs and going for sleigh rides. The audience showed their appreciation by giving the routine one last hearty applause.

Awards were handed out at the end of the Jellison Studios' recital.

Top award winners included: Krystal Brown, the Debbie Rector Student Teacher award; Kelly van Damme, the Shauna Strate Tap award; Tosha Brown and Elward Jellison, the Deneen Babcock Jazz award; and Andrea von Donselaar, the Allyson Fex Dance Excellence award.

Many more awards and scholarships were handed out to a number of deserving dancers.

The events concluded a season of dance that many young performers — and those who watched them — will never forget.

Dancers seek more funds for big trip

Dancers from the Northern Dance Theatre Society (NDTS) gave an encore performance for members of the Fort St. John Chamber of Commerce on Monday.

Eleven young performers danced four selected pieces from this past weekend's Dance Extravaganza program, in an attempt to raise funds for the troupe's trip to the prestigious Dance America Finals Competition in Orlando, Florida this July.

"We have some excellent dancers here in Fort St. John, and it would be really sad not to see them go," Noelle Jellison of NDTS said in address to the chamber.

Several corporate sponsors have made donations to the NDTS on behalf of the troupe and \$400 was raised during the Dance Extravaganza over the weekend, bringing the total amount raised so far to \$2,200.

Over \$18,000 is needed to cover travel and accommodations for the dancers' seven-day stay during the competition, Jellison informed the chamber.

Some of the fundraising events that the society has scheduled in the upcoming weeks include a raffle for a color television, a bake sale and a barbecue.

Anyone wishing to make a con-

tribution is asked to take their donations to Collier's Jewelers.

Meanwhile, the dancers did the rest of the talking with their feet. The audience was treated to a variety of dances in stage, jazz, interpretive and ballet.

"I think they're pretty good, and I would like to see them go to that competition," said one local retailer.

MAY 1, 1990
The performance was not without a hitch, as a beautiful interpretation of a bubble bee by Christy Campbell came to an abrupt halt when a hungry cassette player decided to eat the soundtrack.

Sue Popesku, of the Arts Centre Committee, later congratulated Noelle Jellison and the society on the success of the Dance Extravaganza and the Jellison Studios dance



These are some members of the Watt School of Irish Dance with a trophy they won at a recent competition held in Edmonton. This was the dancers' first Irish competition,

and they were one group of nine from B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan that competed. They'll be competing again in Calgary in October.

MAY 9, 1990



This group from the Watt School of Irish Dance, along with 13 other dancers, had a very successful weekend of competition in Edmonton recently. This was the dancers' first entry into official competition in which nine dance schools competed from Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C. They took home 55 medals, four small trophies and the large trophy (at left) for their group dance "Spinning Wheel". The dancers hope to compete in Calgary in October.

Dancers prove their point

By Doug Liddle
Alaska Highway News

Fifteen local dancers who returned Sunday from the DanceAmerica national finals in Orlando, Florida proved culture isn't confined to the urban centres.

The Northern Dance Theatre Society finished with one first, one second, one third, one fourth and three fifths against 1,100 of the finest dancers in North America. Only three of the local dancers failed to qualify.

"Just because you're from a little town doesn't mean you can't do anything," said 18-year-old Tannis Semeniuk who was invited to return to Orlando and audition for the Disney World dancers.

"It just has to be in here" she said, pointing to her heart.

In addition to the outstanding showings, 17-year-old Tosha Brown was one of 11 dancers invited to perform with the DanceAmerica faculty show. She is touring several American cities under the direction of some of the top American choreographers. She will return to Fort St. John July 27.

The NDTs was one of only four Canadian companies represented at the the competition.

"It was a phenomenal privilege for them," said the girls' principal instructor and choreographer Noelle Jellison. "They've been specially

treated kids. It was really a growth."

The dancers, all female and ranging in age from seven to 18, won their place in the nationals after their outstanding performance at the regionals in Los Angeles last February.

At the finals, they presented four solos and six group performances ranging from classical ballet, tap and jazz to modern lyrical during the five-day competition.

"There were all different styles of dance, choreographers and people there," said Jellison.

The dancers were judged by a panel of five renowned American choreographers who, along with many other prominent figures in the dance world, instructed classes for all the competitors during the off hours.

The girls were grateful for the experience of dancing on an actual concert hall stage, but were somewhat less than enthused with the audience, who apparently yelled and screamed throughout the performances.

"The audience was too rowdy," said Semeniuk.

"It was like being at a hockey game," said Ashlea De Rose.

"There was no sense of culture, whatsoever," added Jellison.

Between the stringent schedule of classes and performances the girls found the time to see Disney World, Sea World and generally enjoyed

the tropical Florida climate.

"It was hot, humid and beautiful," sighed De Rose.

The toasty climes were not without their drawbacks, however. The girls were beset with a virtual plague of frogs, their luxury condominiums were invaded by cockroaches and Jellison's youngest son had a fortunately uneventful run-in with a very poisonous snake.

Despite the creepy-crawlies, all the girls agreed it was an experience worth repeating.

"I'd go back there in a second," said Semeniuk.

The girls also had time to interact with other dancers.

"They received more growth than just dance," said Jellison.

Through their conversations with the American dancers the girls found that cross-border knowledge is often painfully one-sided.

"I met this one girl," said Semeniuk. "She came up to me and said, 'I hope you don't think I'm stupid or anything — but where exactly is Canada?'"

The girls financed their trip through selling chocolates, baby-sitting and family and community support.

"The girls put in a lot of effort and energy for this trip," said Jellison. "We can't say how much we appreciate the community's support."

Square dancers

Photo by Brenda Rutledge

SEPT 1990

Fort St. John was included in the annual square dance tour from Mile-O to Alaska for the first time this year. The Fortyniners, Fort St. John's square dance club, were excited to finally have the chance to show off their town. "Especially with '92 coming up," said member Evelyne Zoerb. "They're tourists first and then square dancers.

The RV caravan of 44 people enjoyed moose, elk and home grown beef at a potluck welcoming them to Fort St. John. The tourists coming from as far as Hawia and Florida enjoyed a full agenda of sight seeing and community events. Although the Fortyniners spent most of their time in Fort St. John entertaing they are looking forward to the remainder of Tour '90 scheduled to last a month.

The Fortyniners, who started dancing in a hall at mile 49, have

grown to include about 50 members. Their main objective is to have fun and they've got the badges to prove it. Members work toward earning a variety of fun badges like the moose badge, the icebunny badge and the crock pot badge (presented for dancing in a washroom).

Zoerb won the jailbird badge for square dancing in a Fort St. John cell. "We had to be out by 11:30 so they could get their regulars back in," jokes Zoerb.

The caller, brought in from Alberta, keeps every one on their toes.

"He's having fun too," Zoerb said. "A good caller will shaft you right now." By December most beginners have learn all the basic moves with a little help from an oldtimer. Dances are held every Friday night beginning in September.