



PRESS RELEASE

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Desert Dance Scene: A Bright Future Built on a Rich History

Darcy Carozza, founder and Executive Director of Palm Springs Dance Project, became interested in the history of dance in the desert as it is the basis of imagining its future. With a background in business management, special events and productions, and a passion to enrich and improve the lives of her fellow community members, in 2017 she produced a well-received multi-day celebration of dance for the Palm Springs community. The celebration evolved into a 501(c)(3) non-profit, aptly named Palm Springs Dance Project. The organization is dedicated to nurturing the development of a thriving, progressive, collaborative community with diverse and inclusive dance performance, education, projects, and grants for underserved youth. Carozza says "Dance's transformative powers are well documented, and we want to instill these powers within our community - to improve our own mental, physical, and emotional health; to change the trajectory for poverty-stricken youth; and to organically expand our collective capacity for empathy."

Though not widely known, dance education and performance has a long history in the desert. In a 1962 Desert Sun newspaper article choreographer Trixie Jarrette was featured for her 20th local production entitled, "Wonderful World of Dancing", showcasing local girls and boys doing tap, modern jazz, and ballet. Originally from Mexico City, Jarrette came to the desert and opened a dance studio in 1952, enriching the lives of local children, and presenting reviews for the Women's Club, churches, and yearly at the Riverside County Date Festival.

In the early 70's dancer Tianne Saunders, who had appeared in "The King and I" on Broadway, arrived in the desert with her husband, Hollywood actor Shep Saunders, and made her mark on the development of dance in the desert through the 90's by creating a long-running, significant dance program for Palm Springs' recreation department.

Known for her performances and choreography around the world, Shea New came to the desert in 1984 to dance in a production of "Around the World" at the Riviera Hotel. She fell in love with the environment and decided to put down roots. She taught jazz dance and took ballet classes at the Village Center for the Arts (now Palm Canyon Theatre) and started dancing with a Palm Springs ballet company performing in "The Nutcracker" and "Swan Lake" - among others, then went on to produce "Planet Ôk" at Palm Springs High School. Shea choreographed for 5 years at PSHS Theater Company and joined College of the Desert's dance faculty in 1987 to choreograph the musical singing group, Celebration. She went on to choreograph COD's Opera workshop, as well "Rocky Horror Picture Show", "Rent", and "Evita" - which she also co-directed. Having taught at Idyllwild and other studios for 5 years, Shea opened her own studio, Cathedral City Professional Arts Center while developing Blues Boulevard, an original rock musical. From choreographing the first Vegas-style show, Fantasy Spring's "Festivale!" to "Golden Years of the Silver Screen" to "Sinatra My Way", Shea's creation and artistic direction of the "The Dance Under the Stars Choreography Festival" in 1998, now known as the Palm Desert Choreography Festival, is one of her

biggest achievements. Shea loves how the desert dance community has grown and matured, she says "The desert can be a dance mecca. So many individuals and organizations are supporting dance now that we could be a destination for learning and performance." Today Shea amplifies her impact on dance in the desert, influencing even more dance creation, presentation, and education as a board member of the Palm Springs Dance Project.

Often recognized as a way to help young people develop, Lindsay Kaufmann of Dance With Miss Lindsay Studio has been a proponent of dance as a way to build self-esteem, confidence, and discipline - no matter where they choose to go in life. As a studio owner, dance instructor, and artistic director, her motto is to "Dream, Create, Inspire". Kaufmann has spent her career energizing children of the desert to develop a passion for dance and musical theatre, and connecting them to the concept of sharing. Her impromptu dancers give back to the community through food drives, dance-a-thons, and care packages. Over her 20-year history more than 1000 students have been through her studio where she has developed a reputation as a second mom. It is not unusual for former students to go on to college and promising careers, while others come back and become her instructors. She says "Dance has been in the desert for more than 50 years. There has always been a lot of dance companies with authentic points of view and styles, that's what I love about it - I do me, you do you and together we continue to build a thriving desert dance community."

Cynthia Kaye, of CK Dance Company, is an example of the great talent the desert offers. In 2016 she was honored by the Desert Theatre League with their Lifetime Achievement Award for her dedication to the performing arts. Dancing since she was 5 years old, she has a Masters in Dance from UCLA and has danced and choreographed around the world. Her talent, experience, and knowledge lifts the quality of dance in the desert. Cynthia began teaching in the desert in the early 80's; 10 years as adjunct faculty at College of the Desert, and 17 years operating her dance program, CK Dance, at the Palm Springs Leisure Center. In 2009 she opened her private dance studio in Palm Springs. Since opening CK Dance she has presented over 30 productions, plus entertaining at senior centers and other organizations, and winning numerous awards including at the McCallum Theater's "Open Call", "The Choreography Festival" and a plethora of competitions. Kaye believes that dance teaches students "to be strong, successful, and not afraid of life". Former students have joined professional dance companies such as the Minnesota Ballet, while others chose college and impressive careers. The results of her investment in community youth is far-reaching – for example former student Stephanie Ann Jenkins went on to dance for Austin Ballet then 6 years ago opened her own dance studio, SAJ Productions in Palm Springs. Former student Chelsea Hammond Gilbert went on to study at UC Santa Barbara then returned to Palm Springs to head the dance department at Palm Springs High School. Though the last 2 1/2 COVID years have been financially rough on dance studios and the students, Kaye is dedicated to a long-term commitment to her dance students dreams. "Always dance with your heart and be true to yourself."

These are just a few fascinating stories of some the desert's dance trailblazers. If you would like to submit clippings and/or memoirs for our history archives, write to psdanceproject@gmail.com with the subject "DANCE HISTORY".

To see desert dance at its finest, join the Palm Springs Dance Project Saturday, November 19, 2022, 5:30pm or 8:00pm, for the MAIN EVENT - The Connoisseur Club, at the Indian Canyon's Country Club, Palm Springs. Tickets on sale @ psdanceproject.org/2022-season/main-event. Buy early for best prices. Learn more at PSDanceProject.Org.