

*Bold
Leadership
in Dance
Education*

DEDICATION

As NDA celebrates 75 years of leadership in dance education we dedicate this project to the ladies and men who have danced their way into the short history of the Discipline as a College and University academic offering. They have been focused. As one chose the title for a dvd/book, “bold” was the word chosen to describe the memoirists and their mindset and behaviors. They were/are brave and confident. They exhibit a daring spirit and are wholly assured. Most are retired but the stories of watching the discipline unfold are priceless.



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INTRODUCTION

National Dance Association Leadership has named members to various committees to serve for a term of office. Archives and Oral History have been listed as such a committee for many years.

The Oral History half of the component began their very active life in 1976 and created a pilot project. Between 1971 and 1981 seventeen interviews had been scheduled and completed.

Phase One completed! Transcriptions, photographs and other necessary paperwork was often submitted many, many years later.

2007 finds 32 “almost” complete histories. One, #33, has not been transcribed. The chairs of the Oral History Committee have been Vickery Hubbard, Kathleen Kinderfather, Theodora Weisner, Karen Bradley, Miriam Lidster, E. Carmen Imel, and Jewell McLauren.

Unfortunately, the reports to the NDA Board are scarce and speak to more plans than finished product.

Funding has been an ongoing concern. Planning the transcription and edit phase has been very time-consuming and expensive in time and material. Grants have been written and submitted with little success.

During the life of the committee hardware and software have become very much more sophisticated. Cassette tapes are a thing of the past. Tapes we have become brittle and at best are very hard to hear. We have no hope of archiving them.

We are very pleased to bring these transcribed oral histories to our celebration of 75 years of dance education. The contents are priceless. The articulated passions are so strong, yet, clear and heartfelt. This DVD/book is a treasure trove of our history. Enjoy it and share the story.

Each dancer began as a student, performer, teacher, and many became administrators. Each memoirist articulates how they arrived at a philosophy of teaching. The placement of dance in the College/University department structure was a long process fraught with philosophical, financial, and political overtones.

Facilities and performance venues were also huge factors in finding a home for dance education in higher education.

As one chose the title for a DVD and book, “Bold” was the word chosen to describe the memoirists and their mindset and behaviors. They were/are brave and confident. They exhibit a daring spirit and are wholly assured. Most are retired but the stories of watching the discipline unfold are priceless. In celebration fo the seventy-fifth anniversary of NDA, I, Kathy Kinderfather, and company, present these oral history transcriptions.

Interview With
DR. DUDLEY ASHTON

University Of Nebraska



INTERVIEWS WITH DANCE EDUCATORS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT NATIONAL
DANCE ASSOCIATION

Dr. Dudley Ashton Interviewer: Madge Phillips

M. PHILLIPS: *Dr. Ashton's last official university position was at the University of Nebraska. She was there as Chairman of the Physical Education Department for Women from 1952 until 1971. Since her retirement, she has been a professor emerita and has lived in her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. We are doing this interview late in the afternoon of November 5, 1981 at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The interviewer is Madge Phillips. This interview is being conducted as part of the National Dance Association's Project which is to create an archive of oral history of prominent dancers and dance educators. Dr. Ashton has given significantly to the dance field and dance organizations. During her academic career, she was, among other things, Chairman of the National Section on Dance from 1947 to 49, and was active on numerous dance committees in the National Section on Dance. Most recently, she was the recipient of the prestigious dance Heritage Award from the National Dance Association. Her writing, including her dissertation, were related to dance, and it is my understanding, Dudley, that you have been interested in dance since you were a child of six; and I know that from the time you were six until now, approximately 70 years have gone by. Would you share with us some of the changes that you*

have observed in dance during this seventy year period?

DUDLEY: Well, it is a pleasure for me to be here and to be able to discuss my interest in dance and to reminisce about some of the changes that have taken place both in dance in the culture, and dance in education. In the first place, I think we have to realize that dance is culturally imposed. It is of the time and of the place, and it reflects the history and the culture of the time and of the place. In my lifetime, which began in 1905 shortly after the turn of the century, the culture was restricted as far as the moves went, and, therefore, the dance movement was epitomized at that time as restricted movement. Dance started first in education with simple rhythms for children, and the folk dance movement in recreation and later the folk dance movement for girls only in the schools. As the time and the place changed with World War I, dance changed to more freedom in movement and more participation in dance. And so as a result of the changes of the moves in this century, we have seen a change from quite restricted and specific movements to the possibility of a great deal of freedom in movements, in interpretations of feelings and aspirations, in themes, and even in philosophies and sociological movements as reflected in dance. Perhaps I could mention, without being too specific, one thing that has happened—we have had a change from a total interest in the theatre and ballet to an interest in various forms of interpretive dance

leading into: (1) modern dance and some of the bridge dancers in the theatres today, (2) early modern dance and now into the current forms of modern dance which are reflections of ballet interests as well as modern dance, (3) non-dance which occurred in New York a few years ago, and (4) dance as it reflects our present society; a free, open movement with loss of some of the restrictions, and a gaining of inspiration in movement as related to dance.

M. PHILLIPS: I sense from what you're saying that these changes were evident in dance per se and also in educational dance.

DUDLEY: That's true. We have had in educational dance, for example, nothing but the kindergarten rhythms—simple walks, hops, skips, and jumps, and we have moved into that phase of dance for children that is highly exciting and creative. It took a long time for this to be accepted, and for people to realize that there were possibilities there. We had, in the beginning, objections by parents and by school boards to dance being taught in the schools which were based upon the mores and the restrictions of that particular day. We now have wide acceptance of dance in the schools and wide acknowledgement of its place in our culture.

M. PHILLIPS: Did you ever have a sense of history of what dance might become, as you lived through your years as a dance educator?

DUDLEY: I don't know that I was conscious of it at the time. One is so busy teaching and taking care of all the "nitty-gritty" details in the educational field that one has very little chance to realize what is happening. It wasn't until I began working at the college level and working in a wider range of the educational field that I began to sense this. But I did begin to feel that there were endless opportunities in dance, not just for the so-called "dancer," but for everyone.

M. PHILLIPS: Have you sensed any reasons for the resurgence of ballet?

DUDLEY: Yes, I think that I sensed that in early modern dance. It was quite stark. And there was a loss at that time, because the modern dancers were searching for a new form of movement and they rejected any of the old forms, and tried to get completely away from them. They came out then with the theatrical form of dance which was quite stark, and almost offensive to some persons in the audience. However, as the dance evolved, the techniques developed by the modern dancers were beautiful, inspirational, and exploratory, but there was a lack of finesse and technique. Gradually, the great modern dancers were the first to acknowledge that they needed the discipline of ballet techniques. Gradually, ballet techniques were brought back into the field, and, likewise, came a sense of theatre rather than a stark presentation of the dance movement in and of itself.

M. PHILLIPS: When you were in physical education and starting in university work in dance, did you anticipate or did you ever believe that ballet would ever become a part of college physical education programs?

DUDLEY: Not at the beginning. Not at the beginning. No, never the twain shall meet! But, fortunately, I was wrong and we all were wrong because there is a great deal to be said about the possibility of using many of the techniques of ballet. Let me say something at this point. Few people realize that ballet grew out of the folk. It did not come full born upon this earth as "Russian Ballet," but, it grew gradually over the centuries, out of the dances of the people and of the folk. And so did all our lovely medieval court dances. Therefore, what we really did was to return to our heritage.

M. PHILLIPS: Yes. It seems to me that the comments we've just been exchanging gives a very good rationale for dance students to take a course in dance history. I wonder if many of the students today who are taking ballet are aware that a few years ago it

would not have been possible in many universities for them to be taking a course in ballet on a university campus. Therefore, the courses in history seem to have another reason for being.

DUDLEY: It is another reason or being. If you've studied the history of dance, you've studied the history of civilization. I believe that very firmly, and I can prove it. This is neither the time nor the place to do it, but I think that one's education is neglected if one does not realize the contribution of dance as an art form to civilization. We have emphasized the art forms, such as: (1) pictorial art forms, (2) sculptural art forms, and (3) sound art forms, as in all forms of music, and we have neglected the art forms of dance.

M. PHILLIPS: There are several colleges and universities now offering dance appreciation courses, the same as we would offer music appreciation and art appreciation. Thinking in terms of changes and approaches to dance, whether this is in teaching, or in performing, or in just observing and appreciating dance, have you noticed any changes in these approaches?

DUDLEY: Well, I have a hard time pinning that down. I think that these changes occur very subtly and they occur over a period of years. The very fact that we once had none and we now have some means that there has been a growing appreciation of the world of dance in culture.

M. PHILLIPS: Maybe you would like to make a few comments regarding any changes that you may have been aware of in working with students during your career. As dance forms changed, as interest in dance changed, did your approach in working with students change at all?

DUDLEY: I think your approaches are bound to change if you are interested in students, their reactions, and what you can do to help them. Originally, these approaches to dance and their reactions were very highly stylized.

It was a dictated form of movement. You dictated the steps to a folk dance by telling exactly how the steps were to be done. Folk dances are now taught from another point of view. Originally, when I studied folk dancing, I was taught a very fancy ballet polka, and I had no chance to improvise upon the polka. Now, in order to avoid making it so boring, we teach a polka in a free and more open manner and we fool them into doing the polka step. I think that this change is all to the good. We are focusing upon the students and their interests, and building upon that interest rather than forcing a dance form upon a student who is a little reluctant to undertake it.

M. PHILLIPS: Do you feel that the changes which have occurred in dance are positive in direction? Do you think that there may be any reverting back to what we used to do?

DUDLEY: I think we have to guard against it, because all of us tend to move backwards a little bit, particularly as we grow older, I think that we have to think about the student and the student's potential in dance. In addition, we have to think about two classes of students. We must think about the student who is the jazz student in the class and the student who comes in as a means of activity. I think that movement is absolutely possible for every person. It's possible for every student to dance to some extent. We do not have to have extreme perfection in certain types of dance classes. I think we sometimes kill dance by demanding extreme perfection. However, we must demand extreme perfection of the majors in dance, and those who are going to teach dance, since they will have to know what is right and be able to do what is right if they are to make their points. But, we must also realize that every person has a chance to enjoy dance, and that it does not necessarily have to be taught rigidly.

M. PHILLIPS: Dudley, I think you've hit upon some of the key issues in dance today, es-

pecially in higher education, and those of us who are working with the universities, preparing teachers, or just working with general students. Would you care to elaborate regarding the controversy, if there is such a controversy, regarding performance dance or dance education, or are those artificial distinctions and differences.

DUDLEY: Well, very definitely there is controversy in that particular area. There is controversy, as well, in dance education as to where dance shall be located. I really do not think it matters where dance is located, as long as it has support. If dance is to survive, it must have administrative support just the same as any other field. And wherever dance can get the best administrative support, and over the years this has been physical education, then that is the place where it belongs and should be sponsored. As far as the other factor in your question, which escapes me at the moment...

M. PHILLIPS: ...the importance of the performer?

DUDLEY: Oh, the importance of the performer. Yes, the performer must have perfect movement within a given performance. No one gains perfect movement without practice. One thing that we have forgotten in our discussion is the interrelationship between the arts. There is a heavy reliance upon music in dance forms, a heavy reliance upon design in dance forms, a heavy reliance upon architectural factors, space factors, factors in engineering, in balance, in control, in structure, and in support. I think the performer must be aware of all of these factors and be able to understand them. But that doesn't mean that the undergraduate who takes a class in ballet or who takes a class in modern dance should never be exposed to these factors. The teacher should mention these factors every time she has an opportunity. The interrelationships between music and dance are particularly important, and I say to any young

dancer who can not find a fine dancer with whom to study—go and take music.

M. PHILLIPS: You've had a rich background in music as well as dance. I wonder if many of the dance majors today have taken time to gain a background in music?

DUDLEY: I wouldn't know. However, you run into more people who have been exposed to more music just as we are now exposed to more and more dance. I think that maybe this will balance out, but the dance major certainly should have a deep interest in music and in the technical aspects of music.

M. PHILLIPS: Many programs are in existence today for the dance major. Let's move aside from the dance major for just a minute and look at dance say at the elementary school and in the public schools. Is it important for those of us in physical education to continue to stress having dance included in the program in the typical secondary experience for students?

DUDLEY: I think it certainly is, and I think that the more that we can contribute to that the better. Over the years that I have been in this field, I've seen dance go from practically zero to the wonderful programs that you find in the secondary schools in many of the leading states, educationally speaking, in the United States. Now not all states are equal in their emphasis upon the art forms, but states such as California and Washington you will find a great deal being done in dance. We find it in some of the Eastern states, I think, particularly in some sections of Virginia. Also, I think that you find a great deal of dance in the Midwest, Illinois for example. Dance has been very beautifully sponsored and beautifully advocated in Illinois. It's also true in Missouri. Few people realize this. There's a great deal of dance in Texas. There's dance scattered all over these United States. There are isolated spots where dance is neglected, but I think we are gradually growing into a sponsorship of dance in education, the same

as there is sponsorship of art in education, music in education, and drama in education.

M. PHILLIPS: You mentioned the artistic aspect of dance. If the students are in a typical physical education program and exposed to dance as a physical activity, what is necessary as far as the teacher is concerned in elevating a movement experience to an artistic experience?

DUDLEY: Experience herself in an artistic preparation, and ability to realize that the simplest movement can be beautiful. I think we have too many teachers who want a very exaggerated, a very fancy movement, rather than a simple movement. The teacher should have the ability to look at a movement and say "That is a lovely line, it is a diagonal." Or to say, "You and your partner could put lots of diagonals together and see what you could do," or "That is a nice grouping, that's three against five; you boys play football, and you have a line-up of three against five many times on the football field so why don't you use that in this particular class?" If a teacher can say this to the fifth and sixth grade boys, they'll love dance. But omit saying this to the fifth and sixth grade boys and they may hate dance because they may think it's sissy. I have had a lot of experience with creative dance for children and teaching dance for children at the elementary school level, and I think they all love dance if it is given to them right and let them be happy doing it,

M. PHILLIPS: One of the questions that is on the list for us to consider really pertains to pedagogy or the role of the teacher in being a facilitator of dance in schools. Why don't you talk with us a little bit about the importance of composition or improvisation for the teacher of dance, whether it be with a regular student, general student, or with a professional student who will become an artistic performer.

DUDLEY: Composition or improvisation belongs in every dance class and every dance lesson.

It needn't be a polished performance, however, beginning in the first grade on, you can decide how you want your bear to be or your circus clown to be and do it. If the teacher is smart she can see the dance factors within the bear dance and the clown dance, and point them out to the children. All teachers who are teaching elementary school children or high school children should use dance terminology. There is no sense in omitting it. The teacher can say that this is a basic movement or that this is a derived movement and have them understand what it is. Teachers can say "Look you are working on a low level; your bear is almost down to the ground as he moves." Or "The clown is trying to snap a balloon in mid air while he is way up high," Or the teacher can say to the 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade boy who is pretending to be a skier as he swoops down his pretended ski slope, "Look at the lovely, gliding line that you have made, that is sustained movement." Thus, there is no reason to omit dance terminology. There is every reason to use it, and every reason for children to understand it. High school girls should understand dance terminology. They should know such terms as: (1) rondo forms, (2) repetition in dance, (3) that dance follows ABA themes or ABACAB themes, and (4) they should realize what is happening in the art forms as it relates to the very simple movements that they are doing. I stress again KEEP IT SIMPLE. Before the end of every lesson, there should be a sense of achievement. For example, students could try to improvise upon a forward and a backward walk. Students could improvise by: (1) changing numbers, (2) changing level, (3) changing dynamics, (4) changing the amount of force used (5) changing the space used, and (6) changing direction. Just think of all the possibilities that can be done in improvisation. At the end of such a lesson I always say to them, "Congratulations you have just choreographed!"

M. PHILLIPS: Dudley, when I hear you talk about this type of thing I feel the excitement and the commitment and a genuine, creative person talking about the importance of dance and creativity. If a person wanted to end up being a dance teacher, what experiences do you think such a person would need in order to have a reservoir of experiences to enable them to answer questions the way you are able to answer them?

DUDLEY: I guess I'm old-fashioned in that I believe that you need a scientific background. I think that a person who is teaching dance should know the human body. We are dealing with movement, completely with movement, and movement is the basis for all dance. Movement is the basis for joy, for sorrow, for ecstasy, and for aspiration. Therefore, we should know how and why we move and all the details of stress and ease in movement. A dance teacher cannot understand these details without knowing some anatomy. Also, I think kinesiology is important. Persons who are working in the dance field should realize the implications of the kinesthetic sense that you have as you dance. You can not dance in relation to space and to other people without being kinesthetically aware of what the other person is doing. So persons who are going into dance should be prepared in this aspect of dance. No one can get around a ballroom floor who does not have a kinesthetic sense. It's based entirely upon kinesthesis.

M. PHILLIPS: Do you think that some dancers may have this ability but can't articulate it?

DUDLEY: I do.

M. PHILLIPS: So that the dance educator needs to have both the art and science of human movement.

DUDLEY: That's right. And, not only that, they need to be able to analyze movement. The ability to look at a movement and say, "That is fine, because it has served its purpose and the aims are good."

M. PHILLIPS: Do you think that too much analysis might be a deterrent to creativity for the performer?

DUDLEY: Well, that's an interesting question, a very puzzling one; you really have given me a poser at this particular point.

M. PHILLIPS: Let me go back and review an experience that I had last week. We invited an experienced choreographer to meet with our dance company and he met with them. I believe the terminology now is "he set a piece on them." And for one week he worked with our very best dance majors. I used to think that choreography was all this creativity, the conceptualization, the finished product. I never saw as much in the way of analysis, dissection, precision, observation, correction of error, but, what I'm saying here is that I, as a spectator, saw the finished product and wasn't aware that in order to see the finished product that the performers went through this critical analysis and refinement. Up until that point I think I would have said that for the performer too much analysis would be harmful, but after watching these people working together in a creative way, I had to change my thinking.

DUDLEY: Well, all analysis used in dance I firmly believe should be positive. If you do a negative analysis, you've killed the spirit of the dance, and the spirit of the movement. Analysis is valuable if you can do it from the standpoint of improving the movement. However, if you do it from the standpoint of "I don't like this, and it's not the way I think," then it's going to have a negative effect upon the movement and upon the dancer's reaction. Now we're speaking of the person who is a dance major and who is going into a professional program. However, you still do minor phases of analysis with elementary school children, if you know what you're doing in teaching dance. If you don't know what you're doing, it's like failing to correct the addition in arithmetic and say-

ing "You added 2, 4, and 6 and got 11. It's wrong, but that's all right honey, you tried." I think that is criminal, and it's criminal to eliminate improving movement at any time. But, it has to be done in a positive manner.

M. PHILLIPS: When you look at the various dance forms that students in a typical high school or college program take, do you think that the form should be limited or should the students have an opportunity to participate in various dance forms?

DUDLEY: All forms are important. We have had an aversion to folk dance over the years because it has been taught in deadly manner. I think a folk dance can be taught so creatively that students can really enjoy it and be thrilled by it. The spirit behind the folk dance is what matters, not the technical details. But there I go back to this business about art forms coming out of folk dance. The social dancer of today is the folk dancer of tomorrow. Think about that. Think about hard rock and the disco scene and try to imagine what it's going to be.

M. PHILLIPS: That's an interesting point of view. I would imagine that the history...

DUDLEY: Look at the history of dance, the polka was a folk dance. Before it was a folk dance, it was a social dance. It became a folk dance afterwards.

M. PHILLIPS: And then it becomes a pattern in modern dance or in composition.

DUDLEY: And it becomes a basis for improvisation. And for distortion, and for moving into a polka form, but not a strict polka. I think we better move on to some of the other phases of dance. I'm so interested in this phase of dance I can hardly stop talking.

M. PHILLIPS: It seems that the experiences you've had as a dance educator certainly qualify you to talk about the pedagogical aspects of dance, not only for the general student, but for the professional student, and for the performer. Are there any other comments that

you'd like to make about differences between the dance performer and the dance teacher, before we move onto another area?

DUDLEY: I think the dance performer is a teacher, for those who have the eyes to see; and that, I think, says it all. You see beautifully executed movement, an authentic movement that has been perfected to the "nth" degree, and if you have the opportunity to see great dancers and the great dancers of the past, if you've had this chance to see them, it has improved your movement whether you're conscious of it or not.

M. PHILLIPS: When I think in terms of some of the great performers of the past, many of them became great teachers. I wonder if our students today who once studied performance, look ahead to the point where they may visualize themselves as teachers.

DUDLEY: Well I think that comes later on as a shocking realization that one can not be a performer per say "forever," even as a person who sings suddenly realizes that "Now my days of singing concerts are over, but I can still perform for my own enjoyment and for the enjoyment of my friends." In the dancers world it comes in "Now I can no longer perform in public, but I can give my rich background and my rich appreciation to another person."

M. PHILLIPS: That leads me to something that has absolutely no place on any of these sheets. But you were as well known for your competency in writings and in administration as for your work in dance. Not many dancers move into administration, but I would imagine that in the future we should have some dancers who wish to move into administration in order to give this support for dance in universities and to make other administrators aware of the importance of dance in a program.

DUDLEY: Well, Madge, you know this reminds me of the first time that I conducted a board meeting for the National Section on Dance,

and I walked in and I said “Girls, you don’t have yourselves a dancer, but you do have yourselves an administrator, and oh Lord, how you need one.” And, it was true, a lot of the business of dance had drifted off to the side and we were having financial difficulties at the time and a lot of things were happening that needed a hard headed administrator and I’m afraid that’s what I became and I never have quite figured out how a dancer became an administrator except it’s the fault of one person—a very famous woman in physical education, Elizabeth Halsey. She encouraged me to go into administration, as well as dance.

M. PHILLIPS: Well, she evidently saw, in her wisdom, the opportunity to combine two abilities to advance both of them.

DUDLEY: Yes, she was intensely interested in dance. Few people realize how interested in dance she was, and how much she did for dance in education.

M. PHILLIPS: I would imagine that she was also interested in the art, and dance as an art form. Often times some of our colleagues in physical education view dance as just a physical experience.

DUDLEY: I’m supposed to tell you in this interview something about some of the things that I did in the past, historically speaking, and this particular point which you are making brings me to the fact that I had a great opportunity at the University of Iowa to do a series of summer courses called “Dances of One World.” This was ethnologic dance. Over the years, we did Dances of North and South America, Northern and Southern Europe, Eastern and Western Europe, and dances of the Far East and the Near East. This was a great opportunity to investigate the backgrounds of all of these areas and to bring the material together into a course which was both enjoyable and had a great deal of content for the students. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience, and from

that grew my dissertation in ethnologic aspects of dance.

M. PHILLIPS: I was at Iowa and had many opportunities to look at your dissertation and was always curious as to how you became interested in an ethnologic approach to regional dance, I don’t know if you wish to add any additional comments about your dissertation or about your interest in ethnologic dance.

DUDLEY: I had an opportunity to work with elementary school children in Indian dance. I decided that the dance must be authentic, and, therefore, investigated the ethnologic anthropological reviews, and found materials on dances of the Plains Indians, which we used as a basis for creative dance in the elementary school. From there, I went on to working with Indian dancing in the high school, and then on to the University of Iowa where I found myself involved in American rhythms which included Indian dancing, and finally I went on to other phases of ethnology. Therefore, I think I owe quite a debt of gratitude to the American Indian for my interest in ethnologic dance.

M. PHILLIPS: When you were in high school and as you were growing up and taking dance, did you ever think that you would end up studying dance?

DUDLEY: Well, I always knew that I was going to be dancing because I have danced ever since I can remember. I never remember learning how. It was in the family. I had an uncle who loved to jig, and he’d take me out and let me imitate him jiggling, and so I started that way. Due to a childhood illness, I was placed in gymnastics and dance at the age of six. I knew from that time on that someday I was going to teach dance. I loved it so.

M. PHILLIPS: So very early then you were interested in dance and in teaching dance.

DUDLEY: Right.

M. PHILLIPS: Did you ever teach other children dancing when you were a child?

DUDLEY: No, no I didn’t.

M. PHILLIPS: Did you ever try to write down any complicated steps, using any notation system?

DUDLEY: No, because I danced too easily. I think it came to me too easily.

M. PHILLIPS: Did you ever have any thought about becoming a performer in dance?

DUDLEY: Yes, I certainly did. I wanted to, but the family objected.

M. PHILLIPS: Ah ha, so in fact dance indeed is a part of the culture in which we live.

DUDLEY: Right.

M. PHILLIPS: I wonder how many individuals have loved dance and could not pursue it as a career. That would make an interesting study, wouldn’t it?

DUDLEY: Yes, it would make a very interesting study.

M. PHILLIPS: This is the second session of an interview with Dr. Dudley Ashton. We have been discussing the importance of dance in education and will continue with this interview by discussing the importance of performance in dance education. Dudley, in your experiences you have worked with a number of students who have had opportunities to perform. Would you talk with us, in general, about the importance of the performance for a student who is serious about dance, and how the audience relates to the education of the dancer or how the dancer relates to the education of the performer.

DUDLEY: It’s highly important that a serious student of dance have a chance to perform. It is also highly important that we find opportunities for the student in dance to perform. Music students run up against this block many times in their careers. They are ready to go into public performance, but have had no prior experience. The more familiar you are with public appearances and with performing before an audience, the

more comfortable you are with this situation. Unless you have had this experience, you could in the words of the slang expression “blow” your first public appearance, and thereby wreck a promising career. So while the students are still in the process of being educated for a public career, they must have a chance for performance. They must have contact, also, with a performing artist who can give them the cues for a fine performance, who can give them the confidence that it takes to appear before an audience. A loss of confidence reminds me of one thing I choreographed for myself in the days when I was doing a little performing on the side. And this was a dance that I thoroughly enjoyed doing called “Her First Public Appearance.” I had a little ditty that I did, where I knew the steps quite well. It was set to Kreisler’s “Lietersfreud.” I plunged into this thing that I knew quite well, this series of steps and danced it beautifully. Then the second theme in the music began and I had no idea what to do in this performance, so I looked to the side, to the sides of the stage for cues from somebody to say what to do and I would pick up a cue. At this point I forced myself to dance against the rhythm of the music so that I could give the audience the effect of being uncertain of what I was doing. Then the “Lietersfreud” repeats the “A” theme and I went back into my lovely little thing that I knew backwards and I danced it beautifully. This is an example of what might happen to you if you had no experience in performing, and you found yourself before an audience. You have to educate an audience as to what they’re going to see. The lecture demonstration is one of our best vehicles for this. Often, we gave performances in which the students explained what they were going to do and then performed. The audience knew what to expect and, therefore, appreciated what they saw. If an audience is uneducated in any form of dance, whether it is tap dance, or jazz, or modern

dance, or one of the art forms, I think the lecture demonstration is most successful. Your explanation of why you are doing the dance, how you are doing it, and where the dance came from helps the audience appreciate dance. We are going now into ecclesiastical dance and here it is vital that you explain the place of dance in the life of the church, and that ecclesiastical dance is quite different from any other form of dance that is ritualistic and has a depth of feeling that many other forms of dance do not hold. On the other hand, if you are before a lay audience and you're doing something that is light and gay, then please say so, so that the audience knows what to expect. Such orientation is particularly important when an artist is coming to give a program. I recall the first time that Jose Limon came into Iowa City with his company, and we were getting the audience ready for his appearance. Several of us in the department went out to all the clubs in the city and gave a little talk about Jose Limon's background and his studies and what he had done in the past, and how he had done it, and how he was choreographing for himself now, and what he was expected to do. He was dancing "The Moor's Pavane." We explained "The Moor's Pavane" and its relationship to the Shakespearian play Othello, and we explained all types and kinds of things about his performance. The audience accepted him with great joy, and with real appreciation. So the young dancer deserves this same type of opportunity and same appreciation.

M. PHILLIPS: Most of our students who are going to teach have what we call student teaching or practicums or a number of opportunities to work with students before they actually engage in quote "the real thing." What types of opportunities do the dance students have to perform for others before they go onto the stage for a "for real" dance performance?

DUDLEY: We are trying very hard now with our dance students to give them opportunities

to perform ahead of time. We can kill two birds with one stone, by taking our dance students into the high schools of the region so that high school students may become aware of the possibilities in dance. It serves a recruitment aim and it also gives the student a chance to perform. Probably the most critical audience that one could possibly have is a high school audience. They are uncertain about dance, about dancers in general, and they mistrust the situation. If you've ever given a speech before a high school audience you know that that's your most critical audience. So this is a real challenge to the student of dance to go out and work with high school students. Another satisfying experience would be for the student in dance to work in creative dance for children before going out into the field. Children are so natural and they are so willing to try anything. They are totally unconscious of the fact that there is anything that is impossible, and they will give you their very souls if you will just open the door and let them do it. This can be a very satisfying experience for a student and certainly could be a foundation for confidence in the future.

M. PHILLIPS: I remember the opportunities that the dance students at Nebraska had. In the beautiful studio, which I'm sure you've had a great deal to do with as far as designing it for class purposes, where they took classes there was a stage and I believe that many of the dance majors there had opportunities to perform on a stage in a class situation so that it wasn't terribly traumatic when it did become a "for real" performance.

DUDLEY: That is right. The more chances you have the better. I, myself, was a student in music at one time and I used every possible opportunity to sing in a church choir, or a club group, or for anybody who would listen to me. I was perfectly willing to sing because I needed a chance to use my voice. I now belong to a woman's club where the music committee brings in young artists in

the community every summer to perform. We are thanked time and time again by the university department preparing them for giving them an opportunity to perform in public. This is one of the things that we must think about for the future.

M. PHILLIPS: I note that many of our universities now have exciting programs supported by the Endowment for the Humanities or the Arts Programs, and visiting artists come to live on campus for a week or so to work with the students. Do you think that having these residents or visiting artists is helpful for more than just the dance major, more than just the academic community?

DUDLEY: Yes, it is. It is very helpful. The one that comes to my mind at this moment is when Charles Weidman visited the campus of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, very few people realized that he was born in Lincoln, Nebraska and lived there as a child. His famous composition, "Daddy Was A Fireman," was the truth because his daddy was a fireman in Lincoln, Nebraska and that came right out of his life experience. He came back to the University of Nebraska and spent a week with us, but he didn't spend it just with our department, he spent several hours each day over at the theatre teaching mime and giving students over there various mime experiences. Our students, also, went to these mime sessions and thereby established a link with the other departments. He also went to the Department of English and talked about some of the materials that he had used and where he had found them. This was through an English professor who was very much interested in dance. He went to the TV station and made several short presentations for them, dancing before the cameras and then he came to our studio and we had lovely mirrors and he danced before our mirrors with the camera recording not only his own dance but the mirror's dance. That was one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. Our students were highly involved with

it, he gave master lessons for our students, master lessons for people in the community, and, finally, he presented an abbreviated performance at the end of his stay using several of his own compositions and using our students in a set piece. This was a wonderful experience. We had many other people, a ballerina, a number of the modern dancers, and several teachers from other universities. Probably one of the most rewarding things we did was to have Margaret H'Doubler, in her late eighties at that time, come to talk with our students about the role of science in relation to movement and dance in general.

M. PHILLIPS: Do the dance students have to have any type of preparation in order to respond to these different artists who come in to work with them?

DUDLEY: Not if you're dance education has been sound. They are ready for it if their dance education has been sound. If what you have been doing is superficial then they are not ready for it.

M. PHILLIPS: It would probably give them an opportunity as far as adjusting to some of the demanding...

DUDLEY: They appreciate their own experiences much more after one of these experiences.

M. PHILLIPS: Is there anything else that you think that should be added regarding performance or visiting residents?

DUDLEY: Well, the mechanical details of preparing for visiting residents and for a performance are often forgotten in the excitement of having a visiting "fireman" in, so to speak. These mechanics must be carefully thought out before hand. They must be carefully arranged; everything from hospitality for the visiting artist up and down must be arranged. Students must be oriented. The coming event must be very carefully and very extensively publicized. I think that this is something that our students need to learn. If there is an opportunity to give a dance ma-

for responsibility for some of these details, I think it's an excellent experience.

M. PHILLIPS: I would imagine that most colleges and universities cannot afford to have a large dance faculty so that these visiting teachers, artists in residents, add another dimension to the type of movement the students will experience.

DUDLEY: They do indeed, they enrich it enormously.

M. PHILLIPS: Let's take a different approach, Dudley. We've been talking about a number of important issues in dance and exploring some of your ideas or philosophies and really haven't taken much time to look at some of your experiences. I believe that some of the purposes of engaging in the interviewing process is to maintain a record of some of the experiences which you have had, which might enable those who wish to study, pioneers in dance or outstanding dance educators, so that, the students of the future will appreciate some of the background material, some of the early experiences that you have had. Can you think of some of your earlier experiences in dance that you believe would be of interest to those who will be listening to these tapes and reading the materials in the future?

DUDLEY: Well, I can think of a number of things that happened that were very funny. For example, in the high school that I attended I was on tap constantly to dance in anything that happened to come along from all the senior plays during my three years there on through. One time the school was invited to participate in some big festival at the fair grounds, and a dance had been taught to the group and I was to do a solo in the center of the circle. A male high school band was in an elevated stand on one side, and another high school band, also male, elevated in another stand on the other side. I went to the center of the circle to dance and I lost my underskirt. I want to tell you that I was the most

embarrassed 14 or 15 year old you've ever seen, but I did have sense enough to pick it up and finish dancing. This was a rehearsal situation, fortunately, and at the real performance I was well fortified with safety pins. So that's one experience that I recall distinctly because of my embarrassment. I think the fact that as a child and as a teenager and as a young woman growing up in Louisville, Kentucky, I had a family very much interested in all phases of dramatic art. Thus, I was taken out of school to hear opera, to see Shakespeare, to see the great plays of the day, and also, I was taken to every dance performance that came to town. I had a chance to see Pavlova on her last appearance across America, her farewell tour, the one that really was her farewell tour and not the two or three previous ones announced as a farewell tour. I saw her dance the Dying Swan and thought it was pretty, but I couldn't see what everybody had been so excited about when I saw the Dying Swan. It wasn't until I experienced vibratory movement that I realized what a feat that was. I also saw, at this time, the Dennis-Shawn Dancers and was thrilled with some of the things that they were able to do theatrically speaking. I was thrilled, for example, with a lovely scarf number that was called I believe "Waves" and I recall the stage upon which it was performed, I enjoyed that thoroughly. When Isadora Duncan made her tour, I was a high school girl, and I went to that. Isadora was a very heavy set woman. You would never dream to look at her that she was a dancer. But it was a lesson for the rest of my life in how to walk onto a stage and command the attention of the audience. Her music was always classical in nature, and she merely interpreted classical music; sometimes to the benefit of the music, but more often against the benefit of the music. We would have been better off just hearing the music. It was worth the entire evening to see her enter the stage, walk to the piano, place her hand upon the piano

and address the audience talking about her next number. I also saw during this time the Joos Ballet shortly after World War I dancing the "Green Table." It is the most emotionally packed ballet of which I know, and it is the most emphatic argument against war of which I know. The diplomats gather and argue, and a shot is fired, and war is declared. In the second act of the ballet, you see the effects of war upon children, teenagers, mature people, and the aged. The third act is identical to the first, and war is declared a second time. It made quite an impression upon me. During this time, I had a great opportunity also of seeing Kreutzberg. Not too many people in America remember Harold Kreutzberg, but he was one of the bridge artists from Austria, I believe, and Germany (he lived in both countries). He danced in solo concert; beautiful dancer! I recall particularly one called "Ceremonials" in which he stood in the center of the stage and simply waved the sleeves of his long kimono-like costume and directed everything that was going upon the stage, and the stage was empty. You could see the motion, because of what he was doing. I saw all the great artists in concert many times that we know as the early modern dancers. I saw Martha Graham, and practically everything that she did and choreographed. I saw Hanya Holm in "Work and Play". I went into New York City at Christmas one year with only one purpose in mind, to see "Trend" danced again, her great modern ballet based upon sociological themes. I also saw Doris Humphrey. I had the chance to see Doris Humphrey rehearse her Bach, "Passacaglia" when I was studying at Bennington. That was a marvelous opportunity and influenced me in rehearsal direction later in life. I think this is a wonderful experience for a dance person to watch an artist rehearse a group. I also, of course, saw Charles Weidman, you know of his great performances. "A House Divided" is a lesson to all of us—his great story of the Civil War,

or as we say in the South, "The War Between the States." Perhaps, this gives you some idea of what I did that helped me, and I'm still going to dance anytime it appears. I hope I will always be able to do that. I had some marvelous teachers.

M. PHILLIPS: I was just going to ask you about the educational experiences you've had. You must have come in contact with some outstanding dance educators.

DUDLEY: Well, you know, the National Dance Association has had a project recently called "Project Plaudit." It was my great privilege to honor the first person who taught me dance, Mrs. Emilie Watzenborn of Louisville, Kentucky. She was Turnverein trained and very disciplined in all of the dancing that she taught. She gave me a wonderful foundation for the future. Later, I was in Gertrude Colby's classes at Columbia University the last year that she taught. No one expected this to be Gertrude Colby's last year, but she had the thing happen to her that all of us dream about and hope might happen someday. No, I'm not saying this in a mean way, but we all hope that someday a rich relative will die and leave us money and we can live happily ever after, and this is exactly what happened. A cousin whom she did not even know died and left her money into the hundreds of thousands of dollars and she resigned promptly in order to enjoy the theatre in New York and to enjoy all the things that she'd always wanted to do. So it was my great privilege to study natural dance with Gertrude Colby. I recall, particularly, the performances in which I participated because, at that time, I weighed a mere ninety pounds. I was always stereotyped for this. I was the slave who was dragged at the end of chains across the stage in a Greek Frieze. I was the maiden who was captured and born on high by the warriors and carried across the stage. I was the person who was always dragged forth when anything needed to be dragged forth. I'm afraid I didn't appreciate

that quite as much as I should have. But I did get a chance to dance in the rest of the concert. She was an inspiration in that she was able to divorce her students from complete devotion to ballet and introduce us to a freer form. My experience in the past had been folk dance and ballet and here I was exposed to a brand new form, and I loved it. I think it helped me to go into modern and to realize all the possibilities of modern dance. At Bennington, I had the great privilege of studying technique with Martha Hill. No one in this country is a better teacher than Martha Hill. I remember, with great appreciation, the classes and technique that I took with her. Later, when I was working on my master's degree at Columbia, I also had the great privilege of studying with Mary P. O'Donnell. This was a lesson on how to teach dance without moving. Dr. O'Donnell had had a serious fall in directing dance from a gymnasium with a balcony. She accidentally leaned over the balcony and lost her balance and fell to the floor. She was seriously injured and could no longer move about the dance floor. She told us this was no handicap, that this is the way modern should be taught. We should not demonstrate. We would influence, too much, what the student would give back to us if we did too much demonstration. I think that that is true. It has been a marvelous life to have started with these people and to have seen all these great dancers. I think the more you can do of this the better. At Bennington, I had a chance to study with Martha Graham and with Hanya Holm and Doris Humphrey and also with Charles Weidman. That was one of the finest summers of my life.

M. PHILLIPS: You mentioned previously that Margaret H'Doubler had visited at Nebraska. Did you ever participate in any of her classes?

DUDLEY: No, I didn't. I didn't have a chance for that. I recall that she visited Columbia, but I was studying with Gertrude Colby, and we

were told about it the day before she was to arrive. At the lesson, we were all very jittery and very nervous about the class that day because she was watching and we knew that she was a master in the art of dance and in presentation in educational dance.

M. PHILLIPS: Dudley, as an administrator, I'm positive that you have experiences to employ dance teachers. What did you look for when you were employing a faculty member who would be teaching dance?

DUDLEY: Well, personality is very vital to dance. You must be outgoing; you must be willing to accept the new as it comes along. In this day of tight budgets, you must be well versed in several forms of dance. If you have a full dance major then you can have a ballet specialist and a modern dance specialist and probably an ethnic specialist. But if you're in a small college situation then you have to look for a person who can do more than one form. Some of these forms are more easily combined than others. I think that jazz, tap, and folk can be more easily combined than trying to get the same person to teach, for example, ballet and modern. You do have to be versatile in order to do this. I also look for fine scientific preparation. I wanted people who had a scientific background. Above everything else, I looked for personality, for a vivacious person who would attract people to the dance. And, of course, I looked for fine teaching skills.

M. PHILLIPS: Do you think with the emphasis on performance that there is as much attention given to teaching as there may have been at one time?

DUDLEY: I think you're right. But where are we going to get our performers unless we have fine teachers? And that's one of the things that I think we have to think about for the future. We have to have fine preparation if we're going to have fine performers. That means fine teachers. Perhaps we need to look at the program a little more closely and see if

we can get back to some of our former high standards in teaching skills as well as in performance skills. Expansion is what it means.

M. PHILLIPS: I notice in our dance curriculum that we are adding a course in notation. Do you think that we're beginning to develop an academic program in dance that will enable dancers of the future to understand the classics, some of the great performances which in the past we couldn't see again but now with notation students in the future might be able to see?

DUDLEY: The saddest thing that I know is that we have practically nothing of Nijinsky in our background because he lived and danced in the day before audiovisual aids of any type or kind, and in the days before dance notation. It is a great blessing that we now have an emphasis upon dance notation. Certainly the ability to notate your dance is quite different from what I used to do when I was choreographing. Namely, detailed stage drawings were made and were written and then the dance movements were described which took hours and hours of time. It would have been wonderful to have notated it as we do in music. So I think dance notation is important to the field, but let's not get to the point where we no longer dance, where we just study about dance.

M. PHILLIPS: Well, when you think in terms of history of dance...

DUDLEY: Oh, I love it, I'd rather teach it than eat.

M. PHILLIPS: ...or teaching dance, or notating dance, or writing about dance. It seems to me there must be some place where people who are going to be the historians, going to be the teachers, going to be the notaters, going to be the researchers, going to be doing the writing about dance, if there isn't this strong background in their preparation. It seems to me that there may be a number of dancers, but no one to carry on these other traditions to make sure that dance is perpetuated.

DUDLEY: Well, I think that's true and I think we have to have both sides of the picture. I think we can fall into the same trap that's happened in a number of other phases of education. Namely, that research is *it*, and teaching is *not* it. I think if we do that, we will have done a disservice to the dance field.

M. PHILLIPS: I think that's an important point. I just hope that there will be some individuals around who will be able to share the information...and be able to write about it.

DUDLEY: I hope there will be a balance between the two. That's what my hope is for the future. That there be a balance. Maybe we'll look at other fields and realize that a balance is needed.

M. PHILLIPS: The work that you've done in writing, certainly, has benefited a number of people. I know we've used your book on facilities, planning dance facilities in planning our future studio. I believe that in the future the students who have come through some of our programs will be doing some of these things that you've been doing in your career.

DUDLEY: I have to correct one thing on the facilities, which was committee work, I put it together.

M. PHILLIPS: The materials that you've included in your vita I think will attest to the fact that you are one of those unique individuals who has been able to perform, to teach, to write, to be an administrator, to be recognized. Considering your career, your recognitions, your accomplishments, how do you view the future, the potential of what dance will become? How do you view dance in the future, as far as a performing art, as far as a course in college, as far as an organization? Talk with us a little bit about your attitudes and feelings about the future of dance.

DUDLEY: When I first started in the dance field as a teacher in a small two year college, I never would have dreamed that within the scope of my lifetime that dance would have advanced

to the point that it occupies today in importance in the field of arts and life in general. I think that the future is wide open. I think it's a glorious time ahead for dancers. It's a glorious time ahead for teachers of dance. We have the public attention at last. We have the public eye upon us at last. We must realize that we have obtained this through hard work and struggle, and that many persons have gone down in the struggle, while others have survived. So as one of the survivors, I would like to say that we need to preserve our heritage; we need to move ahead in the scientific phase of dance, in the theatrical presentation of dance, in the basic forms of dance. We need to keep our eyes and our ears open. You have only to look at the history of dance to discover that dance changes, and unless you are ready to change with dance, than heaven help you. As in all other fields, you must change with the times because dance is definitely of the time and of the place. I still dance in my own home often at night before I go to bed. I still do certain ballet exercises that I think are good for my shoulders and arms, I love port de bras. And I still do very active movements. I even tried the disco floor recently to see if I could do that; and found out that it was a basic step and after that you were on your own. So, I think that you have an opportunity here that is limitless. You must realize that you are in dance to advance the cause, to have joy in movement yourself, and to translate this joy into forms that other peoples may use as an expression of joy for themselves. I never expect to stop dancing

M. PHILLIPS: Well I think that those who hear this particular tape will assume that Dudley has been reading from a script. But I would like to assure the Dance Association and those who listen to these tapes and read the material that what you have read and what you have heard has been strictly a spontaneous reaction from one of our most articulate individuals in our dance field. We have spent

a few good days together here at Tennessee, and yesterday Dudley observed some of the contemporary dance teachers and commented very positively about their teaching and about their performance. During our time together, she has given ample evidence that she is indeed still dancing and, I might say, with the same quality she continues to articulate her feelings so adequately to others. In spite of sounding sentimental, I must say that the dance world has been a wonderful world in which to live. But, as a friend who is a superb cellist cautioned students in a career planning seminar, "don't go in music unless you have to", I say, "don't go into dance unless you don't go into teaching unless you love it.

Active Membership

DUDLEY ASHTON

1905

Born, , Louisville, Kentucky

1923

Diploma, Louisville Girls High School, Louisville, Kentucky

1923

Columbia University, B.S.

1935

Columbia University, M.A.

1938

Student, Bennington College

1951

State University of Iowa, PhD.

Teaching experience at elementary, secondary and college levels; at State University of Iowa (1945-52) and since 1952, at University of Nebraska as Professor and Chairman of Physical Education for Women; Conducted Summer Workshops in Physical Education for Elementary Schools, Universities of Nebraska and Iowa.

Member of state, district and national organizations in HPER, and AAUP, AAUW, Pi Lambda Theta, Delta Kappa Gamma, Kappa Delta Pi and Altrusa.

Awarded Certificate of Honor, Kentucky AHPER; Fellow of Central District AAHPER.

Extensive record of service in all organizations including presidency Kentucky AHPER; membership Steering Committee, Washington Conference on Physical Education for College Men and Women; University of Nebraska representative to National Conference on Program Planning in Games and Sports for Girls and Boys of Elementary School age; board membership University of Nebraska YWCA; faculty sponsorship of Pi Lambda Theta.

Many contributions to programs of professional meetings especially in areas of elementary education, dance, professional education and public relations.

Publications in Research Quarterly and Nebraska educational journals.

Co-author Characteristic Rhythms for Children, Materials for Teaching Dance; Member, Steering Committee, Children in Focus.