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A Written History of the Western Michigan University Department of Dance

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Ginsha, choreography by David Curwen, 2012.
Photo by John Lacko.
A Written History
of the
Western Michigan University
Department of Dance
by Amy L. Russell

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Dear Reader,

This historical telling of Western Michigan University’s Department of Dance examines its development in relation to dance in higher education and dance across the United States. An analysis of the development of dance at Western Michigan University in comparison to other universities and the dance field was conducted by studying professional influences in the field and evolving social, educational, and industry trends. Research from texts written by respected dance scholars was collected, and trade journals were consulted, for information regarding current trends in the dance field. Archival research at the Western Michigan University Zhang Legacy Collections Center: Archives and Regional History was completed to develop a historical framework of the department’s development. Interviews from Department of Dance faculty, both past and present, were conducted for first-hand evidence. This historical discourse serves to honor the past and establish a sense of permanence in the innately ephemeral and evolutionary art of dance.
DANCE AT Western Michigan University dates back to 1911, when courses providing instruction in folk dancing, aesthetic gymnastics, and aesthetic dancing were included in the Department of Physical Education for Women.¹ The inclusion of these courses follows the lineage of François Delsarte, a French dramatic teacher whose “American followers developed a Delsartian system of exercise which attempted to relate outer movements to inner states of feeling.”² The Delsartian system was largely influenced by dance and focused on principles of “freedom and harmony of movement” while encouraging expression of the inner-self through movement of the body.³

This system, also known as aesthetic gymnastics, inspired Melvin Ballou Gilbert, a dance teacher from Portland, Oregon, to develop his own method. The Gilbert method was created to replace traditional gymnastic work in women’s physical education departments at universities, and eventually shifted to be termed aesthetic dance. His method drew largely from ballet in its inclusion of the five positions of the feet and arms with “positions of the whole body known as attitudes, arabesques, poses, elevations, groupings, etc.” moving in relation to time and music.⁴ University departments that included the Gilbert method in their curriculum during the early 20th century were influenced by Isadora Duncan, an artist who found expression and emotion to be the impetus of all movement. As a result, the Gilbert method became more expressive and artistic, drawing on influences from Duncan, Gilbert, ballet, and ballroom.⁵ Though it was originally developed for both men and women, as the method became more artistic and expressive, it was met with resistance from men who sought to execute a “heavier and more masculine kind of work.”⁶ This masculine form of the method became known as gymnastic dancing, and it eliminated the use of ballet positions, turnout, and expressivity while utilizing gymnastics terminology. As a result, both gymnastic dancing for men and aesthetic dancing for women were taught in college and secondary school physical education departments.⁷ By the 1914–1915 school year, courses in General Gymnastics and Aesthetic Dancing were offered through the Department of Physical Education for Women at Western Michigan University.⁸

Like many other university dance programs originating in women’s physical education departments, Western Michigan University’s Department of Dance followed a model set forth by leading dance educator Margaret H’Doubler.⁹ H’Doubler founded the first dance major in higher education in 1926 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.¹⁰ It was through a music class with Alys Bentley that H’Doubler developed her foundational approach to dance in higher education, which rested on the concept of “dance as an art and as a science.”¹¹ H’Doubler wrote, “The aim of all modern education is the freest and fullest development of the individual based upon a scientific understanding of his physical, mental, spiritual, and social needs.”¹² Her work with dance and higher education was integrated at Western Michigan University as early as 1925 when “Dancing” was offered as a course that focused on “principles of dancing based on natural movements.”¹³
course reinforced H’Doubler’s theories by allowing the individual to explore their own, natural movement patterns rather than learn more structured techniques.

Western Michigan University continued its integration of H’Doubler’s theories when the department offered a “Theory of the Dance” course in 1933. This course provided students with an introduction to the dance field and explained its place in education. The primary medium for dance education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison was through creative movement; H’Doubler made a point to avoid techniques taught by artists at Bennington College, who placed a greater emphasis on aesthetic and a “specified execution” of technique. In contrast to these artists, her goal in teaching was in the expression of the individual’s experience in terms of artistic movement. She believed that dance offered an understanding of “the fundamental elements in all experience of beauty, rhythm, variety within limit, proportion, balance or symmetry, and unity and harmony of the whole,” which allowed for an understanding of the world beyond dance. H’Doubler also found it increasingly important for students to have abilities in a variety of subjects and, as a result, required students to take additional courses in anatomy, science, costuming, music, and philosophy. After Western Michigan University introduced the “Theory of the Dance” course in 1933, dance-related course offerings began to increase within the department. In 1936, courses in social and tap dancing were offered, and in 1938, Western Michigan University’s first course in modern dance was offered. Throughout the 1940s, the department saw little change in terms of course offerings. At this point, the department was providing dance training to its students to provide them with a background in dance that could be integrated into their own teachings as physical education instructors in schools. This trend continued into the 1950s. It is important to note, however, that though the students were only surveying the various types of dance in their education, the content of these courses was strongly aligned with H’Doubler’s theories and laid the foundation for a dance concentration.
and major to be developed within the university.

Professor Helen Brown, who joined the Department of Physical Education for Women in 1947, developed her own teaching philosophy that reflected H’Doubler’s theories. In a lecture presented by Brown at the Festival of the Arts at Western Michigan University in 1951, she clarified dance as an art where physical dexterity is only one aspect of the use of the body in creative individual expression through movement. Reaffirming H’Doubler’s idea that dance creates a pathway for which students continue exploring the artistic world beyond dance, Brown wrote that through dance, students may “expand their interest in related arts and in the world about them.” Professor emerita, Clara Gamble, studied at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where the foundational principle of building dance from a place of scientific understanding, and using it as a mode of individual expression, was instilled in her. She brought this philosophy with her to Western Michigan University when she began teaching in the Department of Physical Education for Women in 1965. Gamble’s philosophy helped to support Brown’s existing use of H’Doubler’s theories.
IN THE EARLY years of the department, one of the most influential artists on the department and its curriculum was Erick Hawkins, and his Normative Theory of Movement. Hawkins grounded his technique in movement efficiency built on kinesiological principles. He argued that the body can move most efficiently and harmoniously when it is allowed to move naturally; forcing the body to move strains the muscles and disrupts the natural efficiency of the body.\(^6\) He encouraged the proper use of muscular engagement and disengagement and helped dancers integrate their movement patterns through connections to the iliopsoas muscle in the abdominal core.\(^7\)

Hawkins’ long-standing influence on the department began with Clara Gamble in 1965. Gamble subscribed to Hawkins’ theories and techniques which centered on preserving the body rather than destroying it.\(^7\) Gamble’s introduction and instruction...
of “pure Hawkins” technique paved the way for other instructors to continue referencing the Normative Theory of Movement in their own dance teachings at the university. Professor Wendy Cornish began at the University in 1967 with training rooted in José Limón technique, but she began increasingly incorporating principles of Hawkins’ technique over the first few years of her employment. Faculty member Nina Nelson, who began her affiliation with the University in 1982, also cites Hawkins’ theories and styles as major influences on her artistry and teaching. Jane Baas, who began teaching at the University in 1981, was also influenced by Hawkins and wrote her graduate thesis on him. On a trip to New York City in 1975, Hawkins provided master classes to dance students from Western Michigan University, and also served as a guest instructor at the University on numerous occasions. Hawkins was presented with an honorary degree at Western Michigan University in 1983. His foundational presence in the Department of Dance was cited as the “philosophical base for the [Western Michigan University] Department of Dance.”

The department took this theoretical base for efficient and scientifically informed movement and used it to develop a curriculum that would support the students in their technique courses. Dance faculty Jane Baas built upon his theories with her instruction in dance science and kinesiology that was based on her research with Sally Fitt. She based her kinesiology instruction on using the science to support dance and the movement of the body, and she presented it in a practical, accessible manner for students. The dance major has progressively added courses that allow students to theoretically understand how to train the body safely, including classes in conditioning, which offers students the opportunity to learn about cross-training theories, Laban Movement Analysis, and Bartenieff Fundamentals. Not only
do these courses provide students with a background in movement analysis and
dance science that aids them in efficient movement study, but they also keep the
department on the cutting edge of the developing trend in the professional field that
is encouraging a healthier and safer training of the body.  

The department has also maintained this idea of body safety in training
methods through its inclusion of somatic practices in its curriculum. In 1979, the
department sponsored a residency, in partnership with Hope College, to bring
Alexander Technique master artist Marjorie Barstow to the University. This residency
provided students with an introduction to the technique, which focused on “body
alignment and kinesthetic reeducation.” The department continued this education
with another week-long residency in January 1980, where the University’s Visiting
Scholar Program sponsored Joan and Alex Murray to provide lectures and seminars
to students on the Alexander Technique. The department has recognized the
importance of keeping the body safe and healthy through its training, and this has been
supported through faculty research. Jane Baas extensively researched dance science
and kinesiology. She began her Dancer Wellness research in 2004, in collaboration
with Case Western Reserve University, to recommend appropriate strengthening
and stretching for dancers after measuring specific dance capacities. Baas is also
responsible for the initial incorporation of Pilates into the curriculum. She brought
the training to the department in 1994, then created the Conditioning for Dancers
course in 1996, which integrated Pilates training. Current faculty Jeremy Blair and
Carolyn Pavlik are incorporating yoga and Pilates, respectively, into their teaching
philosophies. Current dance professor Whitney Moncrief incorporates Bartenieff
and Laban language and principles into all of her technique courses to help increase
student awareness of the practical applications of these beneficial somatic practices.
The Western Michigan University Department of Dance offers a tri-focal program with equal emphasis on the modern, jazz, and ballet genres. Students’ technical training is also complemented by courses in various dance theories including science, history, production, music, and choreography. The combination of a tri-focal technical program, with supplemental curriculum, allows the department to educate its students in versatility, both physically and intellectually. While modern dance classes began in 1938, ballet and jazz technique courses were first offered in 1973 for dance majors, shortly after the establishment of the Department of Dance within the College of Fine Arts in 1972. Prior to the establishment of the Department of Dance, courses in ballet, jazz, and modern were offered within the Department of Physical Education for Women at the beginning level. The transition to a tri-focal program was an evolutionary process during the 1960s, especially beginning in 1965 with the advent of the Dance Emphasis within the Women’s Physical Education major. While social dance courses were included, the purpose of the new emphasis was to prepare students to teach all forms of dance in secondary schools with a focus on contemporary, or modern dance. In 1969, the Department of Physical Education for Women established a Dance Education major as well as a Dance minor. After dance became its own department within the College of Fine Arts in 1972, two degrees were created—a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science with a major in Dance. The department offered two majors and two minors, one for students planning to teach dance, and the other for students not planning to teach dance. The department added the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1977, and it established the Bachelor of...
Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts program it currently has in 1993.\textsuperscript{47} The department also offered a graduate Master of Arts program beginning in 1976\textsuperscript{48} until 1982.\textsuperscript{49} The development of the tri-focal program came partly as the result of faculty with collective experience in all three genres of dance.\textsuperscript{50} Faculty Armine Vart began teaching jazz at the university in 1964. Jazz instruction was continued by Wendy Cornish in 1967\textsuperscript{51} and Luretta McCray in 1969,\textsuperscript{52} while ballet courses were being taught by instructor Nellie Webb.\textsuperscript{53} With the evolution of the tri-focal program, the department has hired more faculty with stylistically diverse backgrounds. Today the department hosts faculty who are able to teach more than just one genre, creating an environment of versatility in technical training for students.\textsuperscript{54} Professors within the department are also able to teach a variety of styles within each genre. When professor Nina Nelson entered the department in 1982, she incorporated Cunningham, Limón, ballet, and Hawkins into her modern dance technique classes. Currently, faculty integrate a variety of styles, such as contact improvisation and release technique in modern dance classes or musical theatre and commercial jazz in jazz dance classes.\textsuperscript{55} As the department was developing, faculty understood that in order to fully prepare students for careers in dance, they must study all three genres. Because there are commercial job offerings within the jazz genre, such as on Broadway and cruise ships, it is necessary that students have a foundational understanding of the nuances of the jazz aesthetic. As a result, the tri-focal program was developed that is still in place today.\textsuperscript{56} The continuation of the tri-focal program exists because of the success of alumni, who are versatile, marketable dancers. Alumni have a broader range of opportunities, especially in commercial work, because of the tri-focal program and the inclusion of jazz in their curriculum.\textsuperscript{57}
Jazz educators believe that the majority of available work, besides concert dance, is in jobs influenced by the jazz style, making it “integral to every dancer’s development.”

The inclusion of supplemental curriculum outside of technical dance training is another key aspect of the Department of Dance at Western Michigan University. Courses in dance science, history, production, music, and choreography are included in the program’s curriculum. At the time the department was being established, faculty felt that they should prepare the student for more than just dance performance—one of the most significant reasons for the addition of supplemental curriculum. To the department, it was more than just “training a dancer to dance;” their goal was to educate and prepare students for a “life which they build.” The department realistically concluded that there were not jobs in dance waiting to be filled, and as a result, felt that it was most important to provide students with the skills necessary to create their own “world of dance.” By including these types of courses, the department seeks to introduce students to all areas of dance both physically and intellectually. This yields graduates who are more marketable to future employers because of their vast range of skills. The inclusion of this material reflects of H’Doubler’s approach to dance in higher education in which she advocated for the inclusion of additional courses ranging from anatomy to philosophy. It is important to note the complementary relationship between a liberal arts focus and H’Doubler’s theories in university dance education. Both seek to engage students in information beyond dance. However, the liberal arts education functions more comprehensively than H’Doubler by expanding a student’s knowledge beyond dance to encourage a strong global and cultural awareness and understanding. H’Doubler has a more
focused approach in her encouragement of an exploration of knowledge in relation
to dance. Both serve to establish versatility and broadened perspectives in students,
but the key dissimilarity is reflected in the relation of the curriculum to dance in each
approach.

Wendy Cornish, professor emerita and past department chair, valued the
importance of including these types of courses as a way to more fully understand
dance. The department offers several different theoretical courses, allowing students
to gain a vast variety of information that serves to enhance their perspectives of dance.
Technical production classes aid students by not only giving them skills in that area,
but also by offering them a new perspective on the design process, both important
in preparing students for collaboration.\textsuperscript{66} Cornish’s theories support the importance
of history and choreography in dance as ways to help students understand the
historical context of their work, and clearly present their ideas through movement.\textsuperscript{57}
The inclusion of history courses in university dance programs allows students the
opportunity to “develop a vocabulary for talking about dance” by enabling them
to articulate how their work, as well as the work of contemporary choreographers,
fits into the context of dance history and the current socio-political climate.\textsuperscript{68} This
idea is translated into the inclusion of writing within courses. By asking students
to write about and evaluate their work critically, they are developing the skills to
become “more reflective about dance, its place in the world, and its impact on us and
others.”\textsuperscript{69}

The inclusion of the Department of Dance within a liberal arts university is
an important factor to consider because of the versatility and variety included in
the curriculum. Changes within university general education requirements affect,
and are reflected in, changes to the dance curriculum.\textsuperscript{70} The goal of many liberal
arts university programs is to produce graduates with a comprehensive education. Western Michigan University cites itself as a globally engaged university that has
developed its curriculum to cultivate “global competence” and “cultural awareness”
preparing students to engage and participate in “world knowledge and discovery.”\textsuperscript{71}
Optimally, students will leave the University with a breadth of knowledge that
extends beyond dance. The liberal arts setting of the University allows students to
explore and expand their interests beyond dance. The expansive studies of liberal arts
university students allow them to find a more global engagement with society, which
can be reflected back into their art.\textsuperscript{72}
Connections to the Community

THE DEPARTMENT of Dance has cultivated an expansive network of connections that reaches into the local Kalamazoo community, as well as into the broader national and international communities. The department has been able to foster and maintain connections to the Kalamazoo community in part through its student dance companies. The form of these companies has evolved significantly since the department’s first company, University Dancers, which was established in the 1960s. University Dancers was originally established as a performance ensemble with volunteer-based membership composed of strong male and female dancers. In the early 1970s, Tour Company, a smaller ensemble, was established to provide lecture demonstrations to schools in the local community. In 1975, this ensemble was renamed Western Michigan Repertory Dance Company and served to provide lecture-demonstrations to the local community, as well as fully-produced concerts to communities across Michigan. The University Ballet Theatre was also developed in 1975, and retained a similar emphasis to the Tour Company in its provision of lecture demonstrations to local Kalamazoo schools, but it concentrated on ballet rather than a mixed-genre, contemporary repertory. Western Michigan Repertory Dance Company evolved into Children’s Repertory Dance Theatre, which focused on providing elementary school students, particularly those in kindergarten and first grade, with exposure to dance. This ensemble also shifted its composition and began casting younger dance majors to grant them more performance experiences.

Children’s Repertory Dance Theatre was renamed Western Dance Project in 2000 and is still present today. Though it continues to do shows for younger children, Western Dance Project has redirected its focus toward an older audience of students, which allows for the ensemble to perform more mature choreographic material in their repertory. The ensemble, much like its predecessors, travels around Southwest Michigan, as well as the Chicago and Detroit metro areas. Serving as an ambassador for the department, the ensemble performs in schools and festivals.

The department hosted the Ballet Teaching Seminar, which was started in 1983 as an instructional ballet program for ballet studio teachers in the Southwest Michigan region. The event was developed by ballet professor Eugene Mills and was held every summer for teachers in the region, and it has also attracted attendees from across the nation. Because of Mills’ efforts, the seminar boasted high-caliber teachers such as American Ballet Theatre’s Jürgen Schneider, Bolshoi Theatre’s Sulamith Messerer, and other elite international ballet dancers. The goal of the event was to improve the quality of ballet instruction in the Southwest Michigan region, and was designed for dance teachers to attend. This helped increase the department’s visibility both nationally and internationally because of its high-caliber faculty and its distinction from other summer study programs offered by university dance departments. The Ballet Teaching Seminar ended in the early 1990s due to financial constraints and difficulties recruiting instructors.

Partners in Dance is the community support organization associated with the Department of Dance. The organization is responsible for generating funding for
Jürgen Schneider conducting class during Ballet Teaching Seminar at WMU Dalton Center. Photo by James Riegel.

Madame Messerer oversees class during Ballet Teaching Seminar, 1986. Photo by James Riegel.
scholarships and projects, as well as increasing the community’s awareness of dance by encouraging attendance at departmental dance events. Partners in Dance is governed by a board of prominent community members who have a strong passion for dance and a desire to support the goals of the department. The organization provides student academic scholarships, support for special campus projects, financial support for off-campus study, and fundraising to help sustain the Great Works Dance Project.

One of the more prominent events the department hosts, to maintain its community relations, is the Dancing with the WMU/Kazoo Stars fundraiser. The event is based on the reality show Dancing with the Stars and is co-sponsored by Partners in Dance. The department’s adaptation began in 2008, by then department chair Nina Nelson, as a way to fundraise for student scholarships, and it pairs Western Michigan University dance majors with prominent figures in the local Kalamazoo community. The event also helps increase the community’s understanding of dance and the work ethic of the department’s students. As celebrity dancers rehearse with dance majors in the Dalton building, they see the commitment and drive embedded in the department’s students. Celebrity dancers also have the opportunity to experience the challenges that accompany learning and performing dance. The event serves as a gateway for celebrity dancers to become advocates and supporters for the department and dance. Following the event, the celebrity dancers share with other community members their first-hand experiences regarding the dedication of the students and faculty in their studies and commitment to dance.

The department has also conducted significant community engagement through
performances and its deeply-rooted connection to local dance company Wellspring/Cori Terry & Dancers. Wellspring’s artistic director, Cori Terry, performed with Erick Hawkins Dance Company, and, in 1980, she served as a visiting artist at Western Michigan University. Terry formed Wellspring in Kalamazoo, and the company has provided numerous Western Michigan University students, faculty, and alumni with performance and choreographic opportunities.90

The annual Festival of the Arts premiered in 1951 to increase the public’s appreciation for art forms including dance, art, English, music, and speech. The event included art exhibits, lectures, music recitals, and dance performances91 and concluded in 1960, after ten festivals.92 In the 1960s, the department hosted performances in downtown Kalamazoo parks for the public, in addition to its two concerts in February and April.93 Currently, the department presents numerous performance events for the community. Every December, the department participates in Art Hop, a free event held every month featuring art exhibits, events, and performances.94 The Art Hop presentation provides a performance of works in Western Dance Project’s repertory and previews of works in the Winter Gala Dance Concert.95 The Winter Gala Dance Concert offers the community an opportunity to see a fully-produced dance concert featuring the students of the department.96 Both the Great Works Dance Project and the National Choreography Competition gained attention in their ability to connect the department and the Kalamazoo community to the professional dance world by bringing in professional artists to recreate masterworks, or create new choreographic works for the dance students of Western
Michigan University. The department also presents Graduating Presentation concerts, Open Rehearsals, and Noon Dance Showings for the community. These concerts and performances help the department to increase its visibility within the community by allowing it to experience dance more viscerally and personally. It serves to strengthen the community support of the department and dance.

Several registered student organizations also help the department form and strengthen its community connections. Orchesis Dance Society, one of the oldest student organizations within the department, was developed in 1982 as a service organization. The origin of the organization’s name traces back to H’Doubler, who suggested “orchesis” be used as the name for the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s own dance club—its translation is “the science of movement in action and repose.” H’Doubler’s own Orchesis became an example for other university dance programs to follow. Western Michigan University’s Orchesis Dance Society began producing concerts in the early 1980s as a way to fundraise for the organization, and the tradition still exists today. The organization hosts a student-produced concert each year and offers students classes and other resources in conjunction with the department. The department also supports Hip Hop ConnXion-Michigan, a branch of the Chicago-based hip hop company Hip Hop ConnXion. Western Michigan University’s branch performs at local university and community events. They also travel to Illinois and Indiana to take part in workshops and company showcases, helping to expand the department’s reach into these communities. In 2006, Ebony Vision, a student dance company founded by dance major Edgar Page, became a registered student organization. Ebony Vision served to celebrate African-American culture, and it was incorporated as a student organization to preserve the “sacred space [the members] curated for [their] personal growth as performers and civic-minded dance artists.” Movement Exchange at Western Michigan University was founded in 2015 and is a chapter of the dance service organization Movement Exchange. The University’s chapter provides local, underserved Kalamazoo populations with free dance classes through its dance outreach initiative, and it also travels annually to Panama to provide dance outreach services to schools and orphanages in Panamanian communities. By introducing these communities to dance, Movement Exchange is helping to increase the community’s awareness and interest in dance, especially within the department.

The department has also made efforts to connect to international communities through various projects, performances, and guest artists. Jazz professor Lindsey Thomas traveled with students to participate in the Jazz Dance World Congress at Weisenbaden, Germany in 1997, University of Buffalo, New York in 1999, and Monterrey, Mexico in 2001. In 2000, Thomas and Nina Nelson traveled with students to the Czech Republic to compete in the Prague Festival. Through the Student Investment Project, students have had the opportunity to connect to the dance field internationally in Montreal, Canada. The department has also exposed students to international guest artists, thus strengthening its international connections while providing its students a greater exposure to dance outside of Western culture. In 1988, the dance and art departments hosted Park, Soon Ja as a visiting scholar from South Korea. During her semester-long residency, Park taught classes in traditional Korean dance and performed these dances and other arts at
Western Michigan University. In 2015, the Great Works Dance Project brought guest artists, Michal Sayfan and Shahar Biniamini, to restage “Kyr” and “Anaphase” by Israeli choreographer, Ohad Naharin. Other guest artists have included Nelly van Bommel from France, Laura Alonso of Cuban heritage, and Marianela Boan from the Dominican Republic. In the 2000s, several faculty made separate international trips to teach in China, including Carolyn Pavlik, Sharon Garber, David Curwen, and Whitney Moncrief. Faculty member Jane Baas presented her dance science research internationally in Sweden, Switzerland, Australia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom during this time, as well.
THE DEPARTMENT has a long history of collaboration, especially between different departments at the University. Interdepartmental collaboration between the Frostic School of Art and the School of Music, as well as the Department of Theatre, for projects of various scales was extremely pervasive in the 1980s. Though the amount of collaborative projects has declined slightly since then, the spirit and openness toward collaboration has remained strong within the Department of Dance. Collaboration has been integrated into the curriculum through the Choreographing for a New Millennium course. Professor David Curwen, who was highly involved in developing the course revision for the 2007–2008 academic year, used the relationships he fostered within the music and communication schools to develop a collaborative project for the course. He paired choreography students with student composers and videographers on a dance film project, allowing students the opportunity to interact with technology and experience the collaborative process. Other university dance programs offer similar opportunities for their students, citing that “learning how to collaborate is an invaluable experience in preparing for success as a 21st century artist.”

The collaborative nature of art is inherent in some disciplines like theatre, opera, or musical theatre—integrating music, theatre, and dance. One of the most significant collaborative events for the College of Fine Arts was the musical theatre work Proud Music of the Storm, which premiered in 1976. The multimedia musical theatre production was produced in collaboration with composer Ramon Zupko, artist Dwayne Lowder, and choreographer Clara Gamble. It featured an “orchestra, two bands, chorus, dancers, electronic tracks, narrators, and projections.” In 1983, another significant collaborative event within the College of Fine Arts was Rituals and Dances, a 50-minute production based on the book Anpao by Native American scholar Jamake Highwater. The production was conceived by dance faculty Wendy Cornish, with music by Zupko, choreography by Cornish and Gamble, set design by Greg Roehrick, and lighting conceived by Cornish and executed by Jon Flegel.
Highwater also appeared in the Miller Auditorium performance as the narrator.\textsuperscript{117} Other significant collaborative projects in the 1980s included productions of Carl Orff’s “Carmina Burana,”\textsuperscript{118} and Ramon Zupko’s composition for “The Nightingale,” a collaborative project between music, theatre, and dance.\textsuperscript{119} The continuance of interdepartmental collaboration is supported, in part, through the Luscombe Collaborative Projects Endowment and the Ramon Zupko Enrichment Fund. Both financial grants are given to students or faculty engaging in collaborative projects with other units within the College of Fine Arts.\textsuperscript{120}

Intradepartmental collaboration has also been one of the cornerstones of the department. Because the department has consistently relied on a relatively small faculty, compatibility between professors and other faculty has been extremely important. Each member of the faculty has been expected to commit to the department’s mission, and support its goals, by working synergistically toward its success.\textsuperscript{121} It has been critical that faculty work with each other collaboratively to mentor and foster the development of the department’s students. This collaborative energy within faculty has been reflected in the students, who often engage with faculty and peers in collaborative projects and mentorships.\textsuperscript{122} Carolyn Pavlik’s dance film “Manson Revealed” is an example of this type of collaboration. Pavlik created this film, in collaboration with a student, based on Pavlik’s concert work “The illusion has been just a dream…” and she also utilized students as performers in the film.
Connections to the Field

Two of the most notable ways the Department of Dance at Western Michigan University has actively engaged itself with the professional field of dance has been through the National Choreography Competition and the Great Works Dance Project. These projects were conceptually developed by developed

by Whitney Moncrief and Nina Nelson, respectively. The National Choreography Competition was co-created with Whitney Moncrief as a way to support emerging choreographers and provide students with valuable networking opportunities and experience. Many of the choreographers selected through the competition have connections to professional companies that have proven beneficial to students after graduation. The Great Works Dance Project, which was inaugurated in 1997, seeks to provide students with opportunities to “physically experience the works of master choreographers” in all three genres. This physical experience of historical works is invaluable to students by connecting the knowledge they are receiving in history courses to their bodies, which can reflect in their own artistry. During the residency of an artist or artists with the Great Works Dance Project, students are able to interact with the guests in a variety of ways. The artists are often teaching several

technique classes and participating in discussions during seminar courses within the department, as well as recreating the work on selected students. In addition, this historical exposure reaches further into the community with the live performance of the piece by Western Michigan University students. Both dance students and

community members benefit by experiencing the work viscerally through a live performance rather than through archival video documentation.\textsuperscript{127}

Beyond the benefits of bringing artists to the department for the National Choreography Competition and the Great Works Dance Project, guest artists have proven to be extremely beneficial to students in their learning. The presence of guest artists within the department is one of the more prominent ways the department continues to develop its connections to the professional dance field. They can help broaden the students’ perspectives by encouraging “new ways of thinking, creating, and moving,” and they also offer valuable networking opportunities for both the department as a whole, and for the students.\textsuperscript{128} When bringing in guest artists, one of the department’s aims is diversity, both in their stylistic concentration and in their racial and gender identities. They are looking for artists who can support the tri-focal program through classes in the ballet, jazz, or modern genres, and provide students with varying perspectives through their personal backgrounds. The department also looks for artists who can supplement the students’ education with classes outside of the tri-focal program, including music theory and West African classes.\textsuperscript{129} They are seeking artists who understand that university dancers are often more invested in the educational process, and physical research of learning, compared to professional dancers.\textsuperscript{130}

The Department of Dance at Western Michigan University also makes considerable efforts to take their students out into the professional dance field. The department has developed the Student Investment Project, a program that utilizes funds generated by the College of Fine Arts differential tuition to provide students with opportunities to experience dance in various national and international cities. These experiences are extremely valuable to students by providing networking opportunities with alumni and other artists in cities that may provide future employment opportunities for those students. In addition, it grants students the opportunity to become acclimated to city-living, a transition that can be difficult for those who have lived in areas like Kalamazoo, Michigan. Similarly, ballet professor Sharon Garber developed a separate project that allowed her to take several junior and senior dance majors to work with a professional ballet company. Students have gone to companies such as BalletMet and Milwaukee Ballet to take company classes, as well as watch and participate in rehearsals. These opportunities allowed students to fully immerse themselves in a professional dance environment, which expanded their realizations of what is required of a professional dancer. Garber noted that students returned to the department with improved work ethics and a greater understanding of professional class etiquette.

The department also supports its connections to the professional field through its faculty and their own professional development. One of the primary considerations for potential faculty is their professional connections to the dance field. It is extremely important that the department’s faculty have existing connections and continue to build connections to dance professionals across the nation. The current faculty are involved in a variety of different areas to further their own professional development,
The illusion has been just a dream, choreography by Carolyn Pavlik, 2016. Photo by John Lacko.
including choreography, teaching, research, and external organizations. Professor Carolyn Pavlik co-authored a seminal book on site-specific dance that is well-regarded among dance scholars and is referenced in many undergraduate and graduate programs. These connections serve to not only promote the department and increase its visibility, but also to provide students with more opportunities. In addition, faculty use their connections from previous professional performance or choreographic careers to develop the department’s connections to the dance field. Faculty use these connections to bring in high-caliber guest artists and choreographers to provide master classes and performance opportunities for students.

The Department of Dance also employs its extensive alumni network to maintain connections to the field. With the development of social media technology, communication with alumni has become much simpler, allowing the department to maintain these connections more easily. The various career successes of the alumni, combined with the continuous communication efforts, has allowed the department to remain current with trends in the professional field. This network is also increasingly being used within the department for the recruitment of new students, and for employment opportunities for recent graduates of the department. Additionally, the department annually invites an alum to create a new choreographic work for first-year dance students.

The involvement of both the department and faculty with external dance organizations also helps to sustain its relationship to the professional dance field, and to continue to build connections. The National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) has been a significant influence on the department. NASD is an accrediting organization that establishes national standards for undergraduate and graduate university dance programs. In preparation for the department’s initial accreditation in 1982, NASD helped the department clarify its objectives and refine its curriculum to accomplish goals set by the department and meet standards defined by the NASD. The organization has also served to facilitate the exchange of information regarding trends and issues in university dance education by connecting the department to other accredited dance programs across the nation. The American College Dance Association (ACDA), formerly known as American College Dance Festival Association, has also been a significant collegiate organization in terms of maintaining connections to the professional field. The Department of Dance was a founding member of the organization, and it was also the first to host a conference in this region in 1977. The department has maintained an ACDA board position since its inception, and the organization serves to connect the faculty and students of Western Michigan University to other university dance programs by allowing them to see and interact with current trends in university dance education.

The International Association of Dance Medicine and Science (IADMS) has helped the department shape its curriculum to integrate the safe-training practices developing in dance science. Faculty member Jane Baas was involved in this organization, and was integral in applying developments in dance science to the curriculum, and forming connections within the organization. Much of her research was in dancer wellness, and offered best practices for stretching, rehabilitation, concussion prevention, among many others. The National Dance Education
Organization (NDEO) has been a valuable faculty networking organization. Several faculty members, including Trudy Cobb, Jeremy Blair, Whitney Moncrief, Megan Slayter, and Carolyn Pavlik, have been involved in this organization, which provides training advice and allows for information sharing among dance educators across the nation.\textsuperscript{149} The CORPS de Ballet International has served a similar function to NDEO. It has allowed ballet professors Sharon Garber and David Curwen, who have each served as President of the organization, to network with other ballet educators in higher education.\textsuperscript{150} Western Michigan University was one of the founding schools for this organization, as well, and has hosted annual conferences for the organization to support its mission of developing and advancing ballet in higher education.\textsuperscript{151}

With an art form as prone to evolutionary development as dance, the department has had to consider how it can best match these evolutionary shifts in the field. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the rising trend of disco dancing was incorporated into social dance classes offered by the department in an effort to reflect and adapt to this shift in the dance field.\textsuperscript{152} Similarly, the rising trend of hip hop has been incorporated into the Great Works Dance Project along with the department’s Roots of Jazz and jazz technique courses.\textsuperscript{153} Currently, dance is shifting in a way that is fusing and blending all of the genres. The distinctive lines differentiating the styles of dance are blurring, requiring dancers to have knowledge and experience in a variety of styles so they can be as versatile as the field demands.\textsuperscript{154} This stylistic blending is resulting in what many are describing as the contemporary dance of this era. Recent scholars define contemporary dance in relation to time and aesthetics; each thread of contemporary dance is tied to specific time periods where work with similar aesthetics or intentions was created. As the aesthetic of contemporary dance shifts, and time progresses, the form experiences an evolution into a new, temporary form. Currently, contemporary dance in both the concert and commercial realms is linked stylistically to the usage of modern and post-modern techniques with the integration of “non-Western forms and street dance.”\textsuperscript{155} Modern dance, the historically popular term for contemporary dance during much of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, is linked more closely to a “point of view” rather than a particular aesthetic, and is definitively eclectic and experimental.\textsuperscript{156} The department has adapted to this shift by teaching students a mixture of pure stylistic technique and blended contemporary technique in jazz and modern.\textsuperscript{157} Currently, the department stays in tune to these shifts through its expansive connections to the dance field through alumni, external organizations, professional relationships, and guest artists.
A Written History

ALWIN NIKOLAI was a significant influence on the Department of Dance at Western Michigan University, particularly in terms of multimedia dance and technology. Nikolais utilized a dance form he termed “decentralized technique” in which dancers were urged to “maintain a fluid center” and focus on the motion of their movement rather than its emotional qualities. His work extended itself into dance theatre, where elaborate props, costumes, lighting, and music were married to create an abstract world that centered on the movement of bodies in space. Through several residencies at Western Michigan University, Nikolais was able to spread his movement and production philosophies to the department. In a residency at the University in March 1985, Nikolais choreographed *Inner Sanctum* to inaugurate the Multimedia Room in the Dorothy U. Dalton building and was premiered the same year at the American College Dance Festival Association regional conference hosted by Western Michigan University. This work utilized “electronic music, live dancers, 360° slide projections, 10-foot mirrors, wands with tiny lights at the ends, four climbing ropes, and full-round seating for the audience.” Through improvisation, Nikolais encouraged dancers to recognize the impetus for dance as motion that can be developed to create a vocabulary and build relationships. His theories became a major influence on how professor emerita Wendy Cornish taught and developed courses in Lighting and Staging as well as Improvisation.

The department has sought ways to stay up-to-date with technological advances and incorporate Nikolais’ influence into its curriculum and has done so through its choreography and production courses. The integration of technology into university dance program curricula is a common trend. Many other schools are allowing students...
opportunities to experiment with different technologies in their dance courses, and there is a particular emphasis on providing students with experience in both video and production work. One of the significant curriculum revisions in the department occurred in the choreographic sequence. Choreography II became Choreographing for a New Millennium in the 2007–2008 academic year. Along with the name, changes to this course included a section on dance and film, where students are asked to create their own dance-for-camera project, often in collaboration with students from film and music composition studies. The department also offers Lighting and Staging for Dancers as a course where the focus is on audio and lighting production elements. Initially, the course was titled Staged Productions, and its first offering was in 1969. This course provided students with an introduction to various production areas including costuming, programming, budgeting, promotion and publicity, stage management, and audio. Students were taught to edit music on magnetic tape, and received theoretical lighting instruction. As the technology became available, more sophisticated lighting instruments and software were integrated into the department, allowing students the opportunity to experience this technology firsthand. With the increased accessibility to lighting technology, the Staged Productions course was divided into two courses in 1991: Dance Production and Dance Management. Dance Production, which became Lighting and Staging for Dancers in 1995, focused on the technical production work, while Dance Management prepared students for administrative responsibilities.

The development of new technologies has served to raise the sophistication of production equipment used within the department for performances. Music was originally played on turntables with vinyl records in the 1960s, which evolved to reel-to-reel tapes. Now, music is digitized and broadcast through sophisticated sound systems. These advances have allowed for higher quality sound reproduction and a greater ease in music editing, both greatly important to dance production. In addition, video technology has allowed for collaborative projects utilizing motion capture, livestream video, and animation with dance in performances. As lighting elements have advanced, the department has access to more intelligent lighting equipment. Specifically, the Studio B performance space has seen an increase in the quantity of lighting equipment—lighting trees, instruments, and electrics—and an increase in the quality and sophistication of the equipment. The department’s first lighting equipment in the Dalton building consisted of six six-by-nine ellipsoidal instruments, and it has since grown to include lighting instruments of various types and sizes, curtains, a cyclorama backdrop, a dimmer-per-circuit lighting board, and a variety of other production equipment that is continuously updated. With the evolution and obtainment of new lighting technologies, the production level of department performances, especially those in the Studio B performance space, have been able to grow.

These improvements in production technologies have allowed department faculty to create choreographic works that are more technologically innovative and collaborative. Professor David Curwen has been a significant proponent for the integration of video and projection technology into choreographic works. Curwen has often included some form of technology in his choreography, be it motion capture,
projections, or livestream video displays. He is a supporter of the use of technology within performances rather than just installations.\textsuperscript{177} Professor Sharon Garber has also experimented with the use of technology in choreography and values it for the experience it grants students to interact with performance technology. Both Garber and Curwen have collaborated with Kevin Abbott in developing various technologies to be used in their choreographic works, which speaks to the theme of collaboration present within the department.\textsuperscript{178}

Additionally, the department began offering an online certificate program in Dance Studio Management in the Fall of 2016.\textsuperscript{179} This program is administered and taught entirely online by part-time faculty Amy Avery, and is geared toward current and prospective studio owners.\textsuperscript{180} Similarly, online courses in dance science have been taught by faculty Jane Baas in the past.\textsuperscript{181} These developments have occurred primarily as a result of the technological evolution. With the development of the computer and internet, communication and the dissemination of information have become much more efficient with the use of email, Google, and eLearning, an educational website utilized by Western Michigan University.\textsuperscript{182} The growth of social media and video platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, have also become valuable teaching tools. Faculty are able to quickly send information to students through Facebook pages and share educational videos through YouTube.\textsuperscript{183}
THE WESTERN Michigan University Department of Dance originally operated on East Campus in Walwood Union, East Hall, and Oakland Gym. The College of Fine Arts, originally composed of art, dance, and music, was given priority for the construction of a new building to house the music and dance units due to the poor conditions of the music school’s facility. In addition, the prevalence of collaboration between all of the arts was a compelling argument for the creation of the College of Fine Arts at Western Michigan University. As faculty became more interested in collaborating with other disciplines across departments, it became evident that all of the arts should become unified under one college. As a result, when the funding was donated to the University, the Dorothy U. Dalton Center was built and finally opened in 1982. Three spacious dance studios were originally designed and built with suspended wooden floors that allowed the dancers to use the studios’ beauty as a source of inspiration as they explored their art. The building also boasted three performance spaces for dance in the Multimedia Room, Recital Hall, and Dance Studio B. The new Dalton building, as it is affectionately known, allowed for significant growth within the Department of Dance. The sophistication of the building cultivated an environment of professionalism within the department, paving the way for students to develop their own professional aspirations.

The location of Western Michigan University’s Department of Dance in the Midwest has impacted how it connects with the professional dance field. Many faculty can agree that if the department were located near or within a larger city, such as Chicago, it may see greater national recognition and enable easier recruitment of guest artists. The department’s Midwest location, specifically in Kalamazoo, also limits the accessibility of professional dance performances for students. It is also a significant drawback, in that students are interacting with and experiencing professional dance less than students in a major city. Several faculty noted the differences in the student body at Western Michigan University in comparison to university dance programs in larger cities. As a school in a more rural location with a predominantly white population, there is a difference in cultural perspectives and student backgrounds that affects the curriculum and the classroom environment.

It is worth noting that much of the existing dance audience in the Midwest was, in part, created by H’Doubler and her work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It paved the way for other schools in the Midwest, like Western Michigan University, to develop their own dance programs and tap into that audience. Because of the department’s central location to Chicago and Detroit, it is still able to recruit a high caliber of both students and guest artists. Faculty feel that the department is maintaining an active presence within the field because of its continuous networking efforts with both the east and west coasts of the United States through initiatives like the Student Investment Project, National Choreography Competition, and the Great Works Dance Project. An extensive alumni network also aids in the department’s ability to maintain an active presence in the field. Another significant factor in the department’s maintenance of its presence in the profession is through its faculty, who
have collectively woven a vast web of connections across a wide variety of disciplines within the field. The department’s location in the Midwest has ultimately lead to the development of a program with faculty who are continuously networking and cultivating an active presence in the field. Through the department’s active efforts to build and sustain professional connections through alumni and faculty networks, as well as department projects, the maintenance and growth of its visibility within the field is achieved.
DANCE IS inherently linked and responsive to shifts in its environment, and this especially includes changes to social, political, and cultural circumstances. Significant socio-political events or trends can impact the way artists create, the types of work they create, or how they support themselves. One of the most influential social climates on the department’s development, especially in terms of student population, was the AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s. During this time, there were very few men within the dance department, and many of the male students during the 1980s have unfortunately passed away because of AIDS. The department faculty was also affected by this epidemic with the loss of a professor.

Politically, the reduction in arts funding from the government was extremely significant in the development of the department. The stigma that surrounded dance following the outbreak of AIDS as an epidemic led to a decrease in external government funding. As a result, the department had to shift from being primarily grant-funded to donor-funded. It began courting donors to obtain the necessary funds to operate and provide students with the types of opportunities faculty deemed valuable to their future successes. The Great Works Dance Project has proved invaluable to the department in its marketability toward donors for funding. While it is quite common for university dance programs to perform historic works, Western Michigan University has differentiated itself from these programs in its branding of the Great Works Dance Project. Donors are able to see the success of the historic works in concert and direct their support towards this project because the department has created a unique brand image around it.

Currently, the primary funding for dance is via philanthropic donations and endowments. Additionally, the support of government funding organizations, such as the National Endowment for the Arts, is still available and present, though in meager amounts. The shape of funding for dance and other arts has shifted to place more of the responsibility for financial sustainability on the art organizations themselves. It is the duties of the artists and associated companies to secure financial support from donors and through ticket sales. The funding landscape for the arts is responsive to financial shifts, especially those that result in economic disorder, as was seen in the 2008 housing market crash that marked the beginning of an economic recession and the end for numerous dance companies across the nation. Despite the financial turbulence, dance perseveres through the determination and initiative of its artists, who continue to create while endlessly adapting to the shifts in their environment.
Conclusion

The Western Michigan University Department of Dance has a deeply-rooted history dating back to 1911, when the first university courses in dance were offered at Western State Normal School. Drawing largely from the groundbreaking work of Margaret H’Doubler as the pioneer of dance in higher education, Western Michigan University’s department developed its program to produce highly-trained and aesthetically versatile dancers. Students of the program receive a multi-faceted education in dance, and other studies offered at the liberal arts university, that allows them to successfully develop careers with unique relationships to dance. They receive exceptional technical training from distinguished faculty who encourage a safe and efficient use of the body, a result of the influence Erick Hawkins has had on the department. The department has maintained an active presence in the dance field through its vast network of alumni, faculty, and guest artist relations that has enabled it to evolve in tandem with shifts in the community and field. With each new hire, the department experiences fresh opportunities for growth and change. As the world continues to evolve and socio-political climates transform, so does the work of dance artists. They create in response to the world around them, and they continue to adapt to their ever-changing circumstances. At Western Michigan University, artists and faculty have demonstrated their ceaseless adaptation in efforts to preserve the integrity of their work in both its history and future.
Endnotes

1 Western Michigan University, “1911–1912 Course Catalog.”
3 Richard G. Kraus, Sarah Chapman Hilsendager, and Brenda Dixon Gottschild, 296–297.
4 Richard G. Kraus, Sarah Chapman Hilsendager, and Brenda Dixon Gottschild, 297.
5 Nancy Reynolds and Malcolm McCormick, No Fixed Points, 14.
8 Western Michigan University, “1914–1915 Course Catalog.”
10 John M. Wilson, Thomas K. Hagood, and Mary Alice Brennan, Margaret H’Doubler: The Legacy of America’s Dance Education Pioneer, 4.
11 John M. Wilson, Thomas K. Hagood, and Mary Alice Brennan, 23.
13 Western Michigan University, “1925–1926 Summer Session Course Catalog.”
14 Western Michigan University, “1933–1934 Course Catalog.”
15 John M. Wilson, Thomas K. Hagood, and Mary Alice Brennan, Margaret H’Doubler, 44–48.
16 John M. Wilson, Thomas K. Hagood, and Mary Alice Brennan, 23.
18 John M. Wilson, Thomas K. Hagood, and Mary Alice Brennan, Margaret H’Doubler, 59–60.
19 Western Michigan University, “Thirty-Third Catalog 1936–1937.”
20 Western Michigan University, “Western State Teachers College Bulletin, Catalog 1938–1939.”
23 Helen Brown, You and the Dance.
25 Erick Hawkins, The Body Is a Clear Place and Other Statements on Dance, 95.
30 Wendy Cornish, email to Amy L. Russell, March 5, 2018.
31 Western Michigan University, “W.M.U. Students To Tour N.Y.C.” 6.
32 Western Michigan University, “Dance Master, Scientist Given Honorary Degrees,” 1.
35 Western Michigan University, “Special Dance Series Funded,” 2.
40 Western Michigan University, “Western Michigan University Undergraduate Catalog 1973–1974.”
41 Western Michigan University, “Western Michigan University Undergraduate Catalog 1972–1973.”
42 Wendy Cornish, email to Amy L. Russell, March 5, 2018.
43 Western Michigan University, “Western Michigan University Undergraduate Catalog 1965–1966.”
44 Western Michigan University, “Western Michigan University Undergraduate Catalog 1969–1970.”
45 Western Michigan University, “Western Michigan University Undergraduate Catalog 1973–1974.”
46 Western Michigan University, “Western Michigan University Undergraduate Catalog 1977–1978.”
47 Western Michigan University, “Western Michigan University Undergraduate Catalog 1993–1995.”
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wmich.edu/dance/performance.


John M. Wilson, Thomas K. Hagood, and Mary Alice Brennan, Margaret H’Doubler, 29.


Suzannah Friscia, “Music in Motion,” 52–53.


Jack Anderson, “Lots of Smoke Rises Around This ‘Indian,’” Washington Post (Washington, D.C.), February 16, 1984. Despite the controversy surrounding Highwater’s ancestral claims, this production served to teach the Department of Dance many valuable lessons in collaboration and was an impressive event at that time for the College of Fine Arts. The legitimacy of Highwater’s heritage was not questioned until after the Rituals and Dances performance.


Sharon Garber, interview by Amy L. Russell, December 5, 2017.


Marisa Hanson, “Learning from the Past,” 52.


Sharon Garber, interview by Amy L. Russell, December 5, 2017.

“Student Investment Project,” Western Michigan University, accessed January 30, 2018. https://wmich.edu/dance/sip. Differential tuition is charged in addition to a student’s tuition and is allocated to cover the expenses of learning enrichment opportunities.


Jeremy Blair, email to Amy L. Russell, March 6, 2018.


191 Sharon Garber, interview by Amy L. Russell, December 5, 2017.
Western Michigan University Department of Dance

Timeline

1903  
Western State Normal School founded

1911  
First dance courses offered in Department of Physical Education for Women at Western Michigan University

1926  
Margaret H'Doubler founds first dance major at University of Wisconsin-Madison

1951  
Festival of the Arts premiere with Helen Brown's "You and the Dance" lecture at Western Michigan University

1965  
Dance Emphasis created within Department of Physical Education for Women at Western Michigan University

1972  
Department of Dance formed within College of Fine Arts at Western Michigan University

1973  
American College Dance Festival Association formed

1982  
Western Michigan University Orchesis Dance Society established

1982  
WMU becomes charter member of NASD

1997  
First Great Works Dance Project pieces selected at Western Michigan University: Valse-Fantaisie by George Balanchine Marimba by Lar Lubovitch

2022  
50th anniversary of establishment of Department of Dance within the College of Fine Arts at Western Michigan University

Clara Gamble: Professor of dance from 1966–1990 beginning in the Department of Physical Education for Women then later within the Department of Dance. Studied at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and from Erick Hawkins.

Cori Terry: Artistic Director of Wellspring and has served as a visiting artist within the Department of Dance at Western Michigan University.

Erick Hawkins: Postmodern artist who developed the Normative Theory of Movement that encouraged safe and efficient movement principles. Held numerous residencies and master classes at the Department of Dance.


Helen Brown: Professor from 1947–1983 beginning in the Department of Physical Education for Women, then later within the Department of Dance. Reflected H’Doubler’s theories in her teaching.

Jane Baas: Professor in the Department of Dance from 1981–2015 and has served as Chair of the Department of Dance. Studied dance science from Sally Fitt and wrote her graduate thesis on Erick Hawkins.

Margaret H’Doubler: Pioneer of dance in higher education. Developed the first dance major at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1926.

Nina Nelson: Professor in the Department of Dance beginning in 1982 and has served as Chair of the Department of Dance. Creatively developed the Great Works Dance Project.

Wendy Cornish: Professor from 1967–2003 beginning in the Department of Physical Education for Women then later within the Department of Dance. Served as Chair of the Department of Dance from 1979–1988. Instrumental in the development of the Department of Dance in terms of curriculum and the tri-focal program.


Brochure for Dorothy U. Dalton Center building. “Dorothy U. Dalton Center.” Western Michigan University. Kalamazoo, MI.


Fuhrer, Margaret. “Not Your Average Residency.” *Dance Magazine*. May 2014.


Western Michigan University. Kalamazoo, MI.


