

NYCB SEASON REVIEW

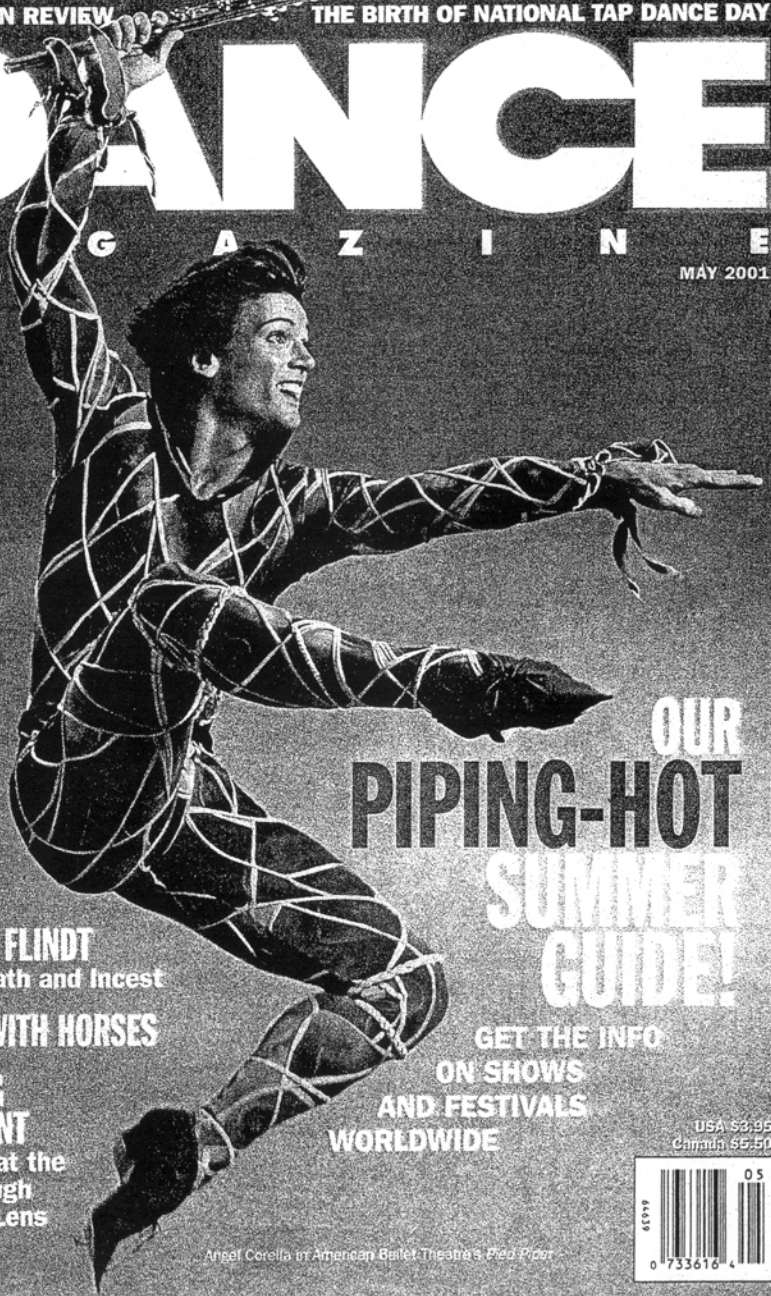
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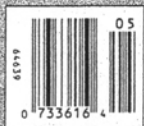
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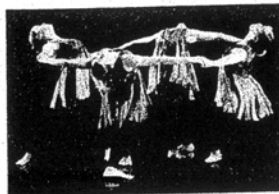


HIGH SCHOOL DANCERS GET A FEEL FOR PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

Students from eleven Bay Area high schools performed their own choreography alongside emerging choreographers and dance companies on one of San Francisco's premier stages as part of the third annual Vision Series, a modern dance workshop and concert. Several young participants are now planning dance careers. But to Donnette Heath, creator of the series, inspiring students to keep performing is just icing on the cake.

"There are so many lessons dance can teach," says Heath. To bring the experience to as many students as possible, she designed the Vision Series to support and celebrate dancers at all technical levels. This year's event, held in February at San Francisco's Cowell Theater, was the largest yet. In 1999, the year the series was launched, five schools were involved. This year that number more than doubled. Eventually Heath hopes to bring in schools from neighboring states.

Once they sign on, the students begin creating. Twice during the month before the show, dance educators from local colleges or companies volunteer to watch their rehearsals and give feedback. On performance day, each school group is teamed up with a professional dance company appearing on the same pro-



Dancers from Mercy High School in San Francisco perform at this year's Vision Series.

PHOTOS BY ANNETT SHARPE.
COURTESY DONNETTE HEATH AND SHARPE

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gram. The students learn about technical rehearsals by watching the seasoned performers work through a piece to set light and sound cues. Then they set their own with the professionals' help. "It's a very supportive environment," says Heath. "The kids learn about the business, but also how to help each other."

This year, for the first time, Heath, working with *Dance Magazine* staff members, expanded the students' exposure by assembling panels of people who work in different corners of the dance world. While waiting for their turn to tech, students met with filmmakers, teachers, fund-raisers, and dance writers. Cowell Theater director Wayne Hazzard; K.C. Patrick, *Dance Magazine's* acting editor in chief; former Paul Taylor dancer and now Mills College instructor Mary Cochran, and Michael Cole, former Cunningham company member who now does computer animation for dance, were among those to share their knowledge of the art's many options.

Vision Series performers may go on to become scientists, bank clerks, or teachers, says Heath, but hopefully the experience will turn them into lifelong dance fans and leave them with happy memories. "Most of all," says Heath, "I hope they walk out of the theater feeling great about themselves. They should all feel as tall as the Empire State Building."

For more information, visit www.dancerepertory.com and click on the Vision Series link or call Donnette Heath at 510/652-0101.

—Janet Cohen