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(F11B)



A gentle hand on Jill Johnson's shoulder conveys the message teacher Barbara Cole wishes to give. Ms. Johnson of Beverly Hills is a member of the Oakland University dance company.



Suzi Sheaver experiences the sublime moment all dancers reach for through the long and often painful hours and years of practice.



Alvin Ailey dance school teacher Barbara Cole, left, shows Martha Meek what she wants her to do with dancer's style body language.

Ballet quests for perfection

Story: CORINNE ABATT
Photos: DICK KELLEY

For 11 days this month, teachers from the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center in New York City conducted intensive sessions on dance at Oakland University.

Classes for beginners, intermediates and sometimes advanced students in four categories were offered—ballet, jazz, modern dance and the Horton techniques, which applies to all dance forms.

In an advanced class like Ballet III taught by Barbara Cole, the emphasis was on the fine points of the performance, for many in the class were teachers themselves.

Along with movements and putting together intricate combinations of movements, Mrs. Cole was, for instance, concerned with eyes and not just arabesques, but the best possible arabesques.

She cautioned one of the advanced dancers in the class, "You're looking at your feet. Your eyes—not on the floor, not on others. Don't look at anyone else . . . you're a little bit vague in where you're looking."

MRS. COLE, who danced in the New York production of "Othello" at 17 and was a member of the American Ballet Theatre at 19, demonstrated a combination of steps that included an arabesque. For nondancers, the arabesque is high on one foot with the other leg extended out behind.

"When you do an arabesque, center your hand (in front) and make sure it lines up with the foot behind you. . . I want tremendous arabesques. Touch the ceiling."

Oakland University dance faculty member, Mari Winsor, who was in the class and has studied with Mrs. Cole before, said, "What

I like about Barbara is that she gets you to move, she gets you to extend yourself."

Mrs. Cole demanded great amounts of energy from her students, but the impression she conveyed was always to work with them to make them better dancers, closer to perfection with the finest line, the highest leap, the purest look.

She demonstrated a series of quick ballet steps and before they tried them she said to class members, "Bruise your toes a little as you land. Save the point until the toe feels the floor."

When class members did as she asked, she was complimentary.

After another complicated procedure, she said, "Some of you did it very nicely, now we can clean up the pieces."

THE WORKSHOP PROGRAM had close to a full-house enrollment, which pleased Carol Halsted, head of the dance program at the university. Mrs. Halsted predicted there will eventually be some changes in the dance courses at the school and that within a year or the number of workshops that will be available. The interest in dance and the number of workshops available on campus during the summer has been steadily increasing.

A nine-day workshop will be held at the university Aug. 14-26. This one will be taught by Warren Spears, formerly with the Alvin Ailey company and just recently on tour with "The Wiz." Along with Spears, Jodi Moccia from the Ailey company will teach ballet and Ms. Winsor will teach jazz classes.

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