



Winter dressing

In mid-afternoon as a snowy coat falls to cover the once-green ground, barren trees stand completely still in White Chapel Cemetery,

providing a picturesque view of the quiet resting place. (Staff photo by John Stano)

Dancing is more than fancy footwork

By DON BOWERMAN

Dance is "an addition of the most beautiful kind."

That's dancer Gina Buntz speaking. She was seen on ABC-TV recently dancing in excerpts from the musicals "Hair" and "Grease" with the American Dance Machine Company on "Omibus."

The 24-year-old Dearborn Heights native, who now makes New York her home, was on a panel at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield.

"The Big Apple's 'the hot spot' for dance," she told leotarded youngsters.

Ten years ago Ms. Buntz was a dance-struck kid herself. As a member of the center's Young Dancer's Guild, she dreamed of the kind of life she now leads — dancing with New York ballet companies and doing stunts in commercial theater chorus lines. And dancing in movies. "Fame" and "Four Friends" are her film credits.

Gay Delange, Debra Cash and Susan Kirschner also went on from the Young Dancer's Guild to professional careers in the world of dance. But not as dancers.

Ms. Delange teaches. She's associate professor of dance at the University of Michigan and director of the interlochen; Arts Academy's summer dance program.

MS. CASH writes. She's dance critic for Boston's "Real Paper" and is a contributor to "Dance" magazine and "Opera and Ballet News."

Ms. Kirschner manages. She's busi-

ness manager for the Music and Dance series at Brooklyn Academy of Music. All four women participated in the discussion on "Careers in Dance" as part of the center's "Winter Dance Extravaganza."

Go to New York for at least a year, Ms. Buntz advised aspiring professionals. "It's important to be in a center like that. If the dance center was Portland, Ore., I would recommend Portland."

The cost of a year in New York could be cheaper than a year of college, she said. She studied dance for two years at Stephens College before tackling New York. Not that New York wasn't expensive, she said.

"Last week I had to move out of a \$900 a month apartment," she said.

THE CITY offered "everything and nothing," she said. "Dance is very overpopulated."

But "the friction and aggravation can spur you on to things you wouldn't ordinarily do," she added.

New York was rough, she said. But "if you're young and have your health," and her voice trailed off. "Early marriage could be more of a trial."

"I'm glad I went to New York as a trained dancer," Ms. Delange said. "I lived in New York for 10 years."

During that period she danced with, among others, Lucas Hoving and Yvonne Rainer. That professional experience was her substitute for the advanced degrees professors usually have, she said.

"We're all practicing performers

who have had professional backgrounds rather than Ph.D.s," she said of the dance faculty at the University of Michigan.

"You don't have to be an intellectual to be a dancer," she added. "There aren't that many concepts. We are committed to making professional dancers."

MICHIGAN'S DANCE program is "very small, about 60 people," she said. "We audition our people. It's not quite just a BFA program — it's competitive."

A basic foundation in either ballet or modern dance normally is required for admission to Michigan's dance department, she added.

Ideally, she said, candidates should have had daily dance instruction.

"Not a lot of cities provide daily hour and half-hour programs in dance," she admitted. "God, it sounds like drudgery. It should be fun, too."

"I'm not a dancer," Ms. Cash said. "I haven't wanted to be a dancer since I was 11 years old."

That's when she decided to become a writer. Four years later she was Michigan correspondent for "Dance" magazine.

How did she manage that at age 15? Simply by sending in a review, she said. Nobody on the magazine knew her age and she didn't tell.

"But Harriet (Harriet Berg — director of the Young Dancer's Guild) knew what I was doing," she added. Ms. Cash said she quit writing for "Dance" at 18 when she went to college.

"What I do now is work for a weekly

newspaper in Boston like the "Village Voice," she said. "I write twice a month about professional companies only."

She also contributes to slick magazines, including "Dance," she said.

"I think that 'Dance' has content," she said. "I think there's something there to talk about. 'Dance' is something new. It needs to be described."

Ms. Cash specializes in reviews of avant garde dancers. Difficulty in the arts clashes with "expectations of immediate gratification created by TV," she said. "Art is not always to be approached passively."

She remembers dropping off to sleep immediately after seeing "Sleeping Beauty" for the first time. All that movement on stage exhausted her, she said.

"Criticism is the beginning of discussion," she told her audience.

Copies of Ms. Cash's dance criticism were provided. One review titled, "The Private World of Beth Soll," began, "Beth Soll's dances are a diary. . . ."

"Like Debbie, I realized I never would be a dancer," said Ms. Kirschner. Combining her interest in dance with a flair for marketing, she took an M.A. in arts and business administration at the University of Wisconsin.

UNLIKE DANCING ITSELF, the field of dance management was wide open, she said.

"Dance companies need good managers right now," she added.

Box office receipts don't meet all of a company's operating expenses, she said.



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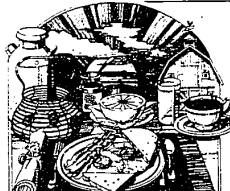
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