



Laurie Eisenhower

## Choosing a dance teacher

**A**s Artistic Director of a professional dance company, Eisenhower Dance Ensemble, and Professor of Dance at Oakland University, I am often asked for advice regarding dance training.

How do I pick a dance school? How do I know I'm receiving good training? How do I differentiate a good dance teacher from a bad one?

Anyone, with minimal or no training, can put a sign up, open a dance studio and start registering students. And sadly, many do. So, asking questions and investigating is important. The following are standards that I recommend.

**Does the teacher have a college degree in dance?**

Most college programs require knowledge of numerous styles of dance, choreography, pedagogy, dance history, current issues and trends in dance, dance philosophy, and most importantly, anatomy and kinesiology. Historically, dance has been passed down from one teacher to another, but science now offers new, positive advances in dance training and teaching methods. Instructors without this knowledge will rely on traditional rather than contemporary information.

Anatomy training is especially critical because, if a dancer trains with a misalignment, it can cause irreparable damage to his/her body.

**Is the teacher a good dancer?**

Teaching and performing are two distinct talents. With that said, it is important that teachers be skilled and proficient dancers or, if older, accomplished at some point in their career. Teachers need to have applied training to their own bodies in order to relate that experience to others.

**Who's teaching the class?**

Often, the director of a school has great credentials but has advanced students teaching many of the lower-level classes. Beginning-level classes require experienced teachers as much, if not more, than the advanced levels. Make sure you ask the qualifications of the person who will be teaching your class.

**Has the teacher performed?**

Performing experience is definitely a plus. For those students considering a dance career, retired or current performers are more able to prepare students for auditions and often have more professional contacts.

**Does the school offer competitions?**

This is a debated issue among dance professionals. I have to admit I'm ended by a practice that pits one school against another. Dance should be about creativity and expression, and the joy of sharing with others in class, rehearsal and, ultimately, on the stage.

Competition often rewards dancers for tricks rather than performance nuances (think of the value of the quad jump over an expressive performance in figure skating and you know what I mean). At Oakland University where I am Dance Program Coordinator, some freshmen students have resumes that list trophies from various competitions. Often they can do terrific pirouettes and leaps but have serious alignment problems and can't walk across the floor gracefully. Because they have been rewarded for accomplishing these "tricks" of dance, they have a skewed vision of their abilities.

**What performance opportunities does**

Please see DANCE, B3

## CONCERT

# Chorales reunite for one last song

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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Dr. Dennis Francisco quips "there's a lot of talented people singing in the Michigan Chorales reunion concert - and then there's me."

He's just kidding about his vocal abilities. Although he hasn't sung in years, Francisco thinks with a little practice he and the rest of the chorale members will

put on a concert definitely worth hearing Sunday, June 23, in Pease Auditorium in Ypsilanti.

For an entire summer each of them sang on tour as part of the Youth for Understanding Exchange Program founded by Rachel Andersen. The first chorale took to the road in 1958 and spent the summer serving as good will ambassadors.

"It was 1966 and I was a student at

Shafer High School in Southgate," said Francisco, a Dearborn Heights ophthalmologist living in Plymouth. "I spent six to eight weeks in South America and lived with eight different families. The highlight was we got to see how people lived in Chile. Nobody knew anything about South America back then."

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STAFF PHOTO BY ERYAN MITCHELL  
ARTWORK BY RANDY MASTERS

## Orchestra musicians share the music

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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Dr. Joseph Lewis looks as at home on the podium as he does the operating room. But before long his turn at conducting the Redford Civic Symphony rehearsal is over and Robert Zimmerman takes the baton.

It's classical camaraderie at its finest. No egos here. Everyone gets along with everyone. It's conducting by committee. Well, sort of. Lewis, a West Bloomfield thoracic surgeon, is the primary conductor but Zimmerman, John Gajec and Benny Moon frequently step up to lead a selection or two.

All will be on hand when the orchestra kicks off a summer series of concerts Tuesday, June 25, in Capitol Park in Redford.

"It will be a fast paced concert of semi-classic, overtures, patriotic music, marches, and show tunes," said Lewis who's been playing violin since his college days. In addition to the Redford Civic Symphony, Lewis performs with the Franklin Village Band so he knows music.

"It's a great symphony with potential to develop and progress. One of our goals is to present free concerts to Redford and surrounding communities. We're always interested in new members, strings especially."

Mutual admiration between musicians is key to the success of this orchestra along with the desire to serve the community. Lewis has only been with the Redford Civic Symphony 18 years compared to founder John Gajec's 46, but he's as devoted.

"John is so talented he can switch instru-

ments," said Lewis. "He's playing oboe now and before then cello. He plays whatever instrument depending on what we need."

Gajec is just as proud of Lewis who used to take a violin break from studies in medical school as a way to refresh himself.

"Dr. Lewis works well with the orchestra members," said the 84-year old Gajec. "He's one of six doctors in the orchestra. They just enjoy it. It's a relaxation, a relief from the technology they're around all day long."

Musical ability to relieve stress definitely is a plus for orchestra members but so is humor. Zimmerman joined one year after the orchestra was founded so he's allowed to take liberties. Like the Redford flutist, many of the musicians have been with the Redford Civic Symphony for decades.

"To get out of this outfit you have to die," quips Zimmerman. "And to get in the audition is — can you find the place?"

On a more serious note, Gajec jokes the orchestra operates on a "frayed shoe string budget." Although more than half of the 50 orchestra members are volunteers, 22 are union members who have to be paid for their services. Contributions from the audience, memberships in the Redford Township Music Society, and money from the Music Performance Trust Fund help keep the Redford Civic Symphony afloat, and the concerts free.

"Our supporters have kept the orchestra going even though financially we had hard times," said Gajec, a music teacher in Redford Union Schools for many years before retiring in the early 1970s.

"We don't claim to be perfect. We're not the Detroit Symphony but we try to emulate them."

**Founding father:**  
Above, John Gajec started the Redford Civic Symphony in 1956. Today the orchestra boasts 50 members.

## Redford Civic Symphony

**What:** Performs the opening concert of a summer music series

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 25

**Where:** Capitol Park on Capitol, west of Beech Daly, south of Schoolcraft. For more information about the orchestra, call (313) 538-1652

## Where to find classical music this summer

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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Just because the symphony season has ended doesn't mean classical music lovers have to go without Bach, Beethoven and Mozart. Parks and festival grounds provide the perfect place to hear an orchestra play lighter music while enjoying a picnic with friends and family. And two of the programs put on by the Livonia and Rochester symphonies are free.

While concerts in the Great Lakes Cham-

ber Music Festival are held indoors, the setting for Ruth Laredo's performance of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (3 p.m. and 4:50 p.m. June 23) is a fun one. See the new home of the Detroit Zoo's seven polar bears then listen to the pianist in the Wildlife Interpretive Gallery with its tropically-inspired hummingbird and butterfly gardens. The series continues to Sunday, June 30.

Tickets for family concerts at the zoo are \$7, single tickets for various locations around town \$28-\$30, \$25-\$23 seniors/students. Call (248) 659-2097 or send e-mail to chambermusic@juno.com.

## Rochester Symphony

Keith Hale can't wait to introduce the

Rochester Symphony's new conductor and season to the crowd 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 1, in Borden Park in Rochester. The annual outdoor concert gives the orchestra a chance to reach potential audiences.

"It's going to be rousing music, nationalistic kind of stuff with new music director Glenn Kassen conducting his first concert," said Hale, RSO president. "You get to an audience you wouldn't reach otherwise. Even though the orchestra's been in the community over 20 years if you walked down the street and ask people about the Rochester Symphony they've never heard of you."

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**Together again:**  
Eric Hurst (left from Greenwood, Ind.) and Steven Barnes (Caledonia, Mich.) rehearse for a concert at Pease Auditorium. They sang with the 1967 Michigan Chorale.