



Newsletter November 2023

Hello

I hope this finds you in good health and spirits! Some of us are loving the weather, some are not enjoying it, some are baffled by it! I am one of those; I seem to be “living in the past”, but I do remember when the seasons changed ... more or less gradually. Once I got a ride to and from Fort Worth TX as Mary was dancing in Modern at the Modern. On the way back her parents, Jerry and Calloway, were arguing about global warming. That was then, now it’s a crisis. But we are creative humans and will prevail ... I hope

Sweatt Dallas Dance Festival 2023: Standing!

There will be something for everyone as we celebrate ancestors, seasoned professionals, emerging artists and dancers who are just learning the ropes of discipline, community and self-expression.

We used to call it South Dallas Dance Festival, but a few years ago when we were in Pleasant Grove, we used the same letters (SDDF) and continued to dedicate it to Mary Lois Hudson Sweatt (1939-2016). After completing her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Mills College in California, Mary Lois moved to Dallas and founded the Mary Lois School of Dance. They just celebrated their 50th year recently, under the continuing direction of Tiffani Rogers and Lori Slaughter. Mary Lois was also on the Beckles Dancing Company board and insisted the SDDF remain in our bylaws.

So, on **17 November, Fri at 7:00 + 18 November, Sat at 3:00 and 7:00 pm**, BDC in partnership with the South Dallas Cultural Center will present performances of South Dallas Dance Festival 2023: Standing! Other events and a full schedule on a following page.

Delores Browne

She remains a most influential teacher and great supporter of Loris Anthony Beckles and company, even after her passing in October. Here is a spotlight I wrote about her ten years ago ... in a SDDF program!

SWEATT DALLAS DANCE FESTIVAL 2023:
STANNING!



presented by
Beckles Dancing Company,
in partnership with
South Dallas Cultural Center

17 + 18 NOVEMBER
SOUTH DALLAS CULTURAL CENTER
3400 S FITZHUGH AVENUE, DALLAS

with
Guest Artist
Orizon

For tickets visit TicketDFW.com
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NOVEMBER 17
Evening Performance | 7pm

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NOVEMBER 18
Open Master Class | 12pm
Youth Dance Showcase | 3pm
Round Table Discussion | 5pm
Evening Performance | 7pm

Thank you to Our Sponsors



Delores Browne

Delores Browne is one of our living legends in dance... but first [to me], she was just the teacher who fixed my positions and insisted on carriage. Miss Browne taught me a lot about ballet, and only later did I learn about her significant role in our history. According to Lisa Kraus, who got a grant and studied Miss Browne's career, "If you were lucky enough to have seen Delores Browne dancing the Bluebird pas de deux from *The Sleeping Beauty* on tour in Europe with the New York Negro Ballet in 1957, or in Louis Johnson's *First Sin* (1957), or in parts created for her by Alvin Ailey, Geoffrey Holder, Anthony Tudor, and other eminent choreographers, you wouldn't need to be told that Delores Browne was a great black ballerina. For the rest of us, though, it might be news. Gifted for dance, Miss Browne today "glows with energy". She celebrates her fortieth year as a ballet mistress with Philadanco, the Philadelphia Dance Company led by Joan Myers Brown.



She was a teacher at the Alvin Ailey School in New York in the early 1980s when I first met Miss Browne. Always impeccably dressed in leotard, tights, ballet shoes and chiffon skirt, she exuded the elegance we were trying to achieve. There were three things I remember about her. First, she insisted we carry ourselves as though we had high ruffled collars about our necks and upper chests. The second was that when things got really fast, she said, she would put on her pointe shoes! And thirdly, she reminded us that even though we strive to get better every day, there are some plateaus in our development, so we should not be discouraged. Well, these things stayed with me. It was wonderful to have finally caught up with her by phone recently.

Born in 1935, Browne grew up in an all-black section of South Philadelphia, which she remembers as safe and friendly. At the age of nine or so, watching Cyd Charisse in movie musicals, she fell in love with ballet. As her family was unable to afford tuition, she couldn't attend ballet class. When she was 13, through Barrett Junior High School's Ballet Club, she finally was able to study, which led to her being offered a scholarship to train with Miss Marion Cuyjet, who founded the



Judimar School. The training was varied, including jazz, tap, and the technique of Katherine Dunham. Cuyjet "felt that as black dancers we didn't have the luxury of only being trained in classical ballet," says Miss Browne. Dancing always came easily to Browne. "I thought ballet was naturally my gift. I have these square toes so I never was standing on just one toe. I never had to work at being on pointe." She feels that the variety in her training served her well. Cuyjet also cultivated her students' understanding of dance pedagogy, having them work as teaching assistants, correcting other students' placement as she taught. When they were ready, they began to teach. At age 15 or 16 Browne taught the young Judith Jamison.

For a year, she studied at the School of American Ballet, the training ground for New York City Ballet. The Mother's Club of Judimar School paid for her tuition. Browne lodged on the couch of distant relatives in the Bronx, and made her living with a job at Woolworth's. She worked hard, inspired to improve her own performance rather than compete with others. "I always asked: 'What did I do yesterday that I can do stronger, faster, longer—or slower if it's an adage? Could I push one more turn, or jump a little higher?'"

Later, Miss Browne remembers, it was in Karel Shook's classes that she met Alvin Ailey in Karel Shook's classes. (Mr. Shook and Arthur Mitchell would soon found the Dance Theatre of Harlem.) "He almost never called me Delores—he always called me "Madame." That was from the ballet culture. I don't think there's been anybody like him before or since.

This is only a brief glimpse at Delores Browne. Please see *Delores Browne: A Gift for Dance* By Lisa Kraus. (Search "delores browne dancer", and click on www.pcah.us/dance/culture-and-dance) Many thanks to Miss Browne and Ms. Kraus. Loris Anthony Beckles, November 2013.



Gus Solomons

I miss Gus, who died earlier this year too. A Black Dance man who did not respond to “the call of the south”, as he once said. After being the first of only four Black dancers (one at a time) in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, his own The Solomons Company/Dance, a writer, actor, and guest choreographer in other companies, I met the Gus Solomons! He was a guest of Contemporary Dance/Fort Worth at The Modern in a celebration of the Cunningham centenary. We had one photo together, went to a reception at a sponsor’s home and, among other things, revisited the idea of Black Dance. We did not agree on that subject, but we continued a phone correspondence. The last time I spoke with him, he hadn’t been able to dance in a year! We weren’t that close, but he remains an important figure in our history.

Some of our sponsors

Delores Browne (1935-2023) .. Carol A. Crowe .. Sally Hansen ..
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Thank you!



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Beckles Dancing Company is a component of ARGA NOVA DANCE, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.