

The 92nd Street Y, the New York cultural institution that is steeped in a tradition of providing arts education alongside professional performance opportunities, has always kept an eye on the future. The epitome of that forward thinking is the Y's Harkness Dance Center's Dance Education Laboratory (DEL), an innovative program that teaches dance teachers how to teach dance in an ever-changing world.

Arts education in the city hit a low in the 1970s, explains Joan Finkelstein, director of the Harkness Dance Center, but six years

wanted to appeal to working artists and teachers who really needed this information and needed it now."

Over the years, the student body has grown to 60 with more than 150 alumni with increasingly diverse backgrounds. "We like that. It creates a very exciting collegiate exchange in the classroom," explains Finkelstein. DEL students have been professional dancers from companies such as Martha Graham and Ballet Hispanico as well as dance teachers from studios, private and public schools and community centers. "Some of them are very experienced dance teachers," says Finkelstein. "They take the course because they feel burned out and need

# Y2 continuing education

**The 92nd Street Y's DEL program provides practical training for teachers with a wide range of interests and experience.**

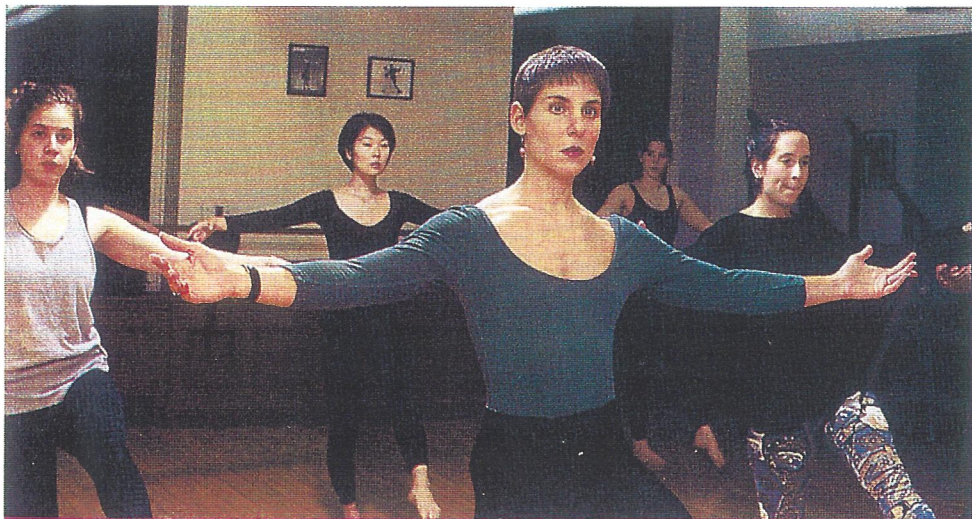
ago, the Y noticed a trend toward integration of the arts and academics in the schools. In 1995, after a yearlong study and discussions with leaders in the field, the DEL program was created. DEL founder and co-director Jody Gottfried Arnhold put together a focus group to brainstorm about how best to structure the program. "As a practical alternative to the two graduate dance education programs in New York City [at Columbia and New York University]," says Finkelstein, "DEL is a course of study that has all of the essential information minus some of the heavy theoretical courses. We

a new perspective." There are also many DEL students who are not from the dance world, such as music teachers, art teachers and drama specialists. Costume designer Liz Marshall Peach studied at DEL in order to teach history through movement and costume design. "There have been as many varied uses of this as there are students," says Finkelstein.

Louise Heit, one of DEL's first students, had been teaching theater and puppetry in the public schools, but not dance. "I wanted to go back," she says. "My roots were in dance. DEL taught me how to use my C.M.A. (Certificate in Movement Analysis from the Laban Institute) and how to fit it in with the public schools." Heit now works in the Y's educational outreach program at P.S. 102 in South Harlem with fellow alumna Carina Rubaja. "What's great is that we have a common language and a common training," notes Heit. "It gives a cohesiveness to our teaching."

The common language at the core of DEL is Laban Movement Analysis, which has a dance vocabulary and structure that is easily understood by children, parents and school administrators. Unlike the French classical terminology, words like "spiraling," "pressing" and "shrinking" get right to the point.

DEL also offers a hands-on approach built on self-reflection and evaluation. "This program is very useable," says Rubaja. "It's very concrete and gives participants the opportunity to develop their interests." At the conclusion



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## it's academic

of the Foundations of Dance Education course, students create a final project, which they demonstrate to their classmates. The project includes creating a unit of lesson plans for a specific age group, specifying the setting (school or studio) and illustrating the subject matter and dance objectives. For more in-depth evaluation, a student can choose an experienced dance educator as a one-on-one mentor through the Dance Partnerships Program.

Because of the multiple applications of DEL, its curriculum continues to evolve. The program can extend for one or two years, and classes may be credited toward an undergraduate or graduate degree. Foundation courses are supplemented by advanced classes and workshops led by guest artists in specialized areas of dance education. To support graduates once they are in the field, DEL holds a forum on dance education issues, where teachers discuss their challenges and problems and get solutions for their classrooms.

And while DEL emphasizes the school setting, studio dance teachers can benefit from the program, too. From her DEL experience, Sophia Fatouros has brought new creativity to her teaching at the Alvin Ailey School of

### 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Center's Dance Education Library

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212-415-5552

#### FACULTY:

Jody Gottfried Arnhold and Ann Biddle, co-directors

Barbara Bashaw, Nancy Beardall, Loren Bucek, Martha Eddy, Danai Gagne, Martita Goshen, Kyle Haver, Marna Herrity, Kathleen Isaac, Jessica Nicoll, Sheila O'Shea, Ellen Robbins, Millie Rockefeller, Joan Sax, Randi Sloan, Alice Tierstein.

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Dance and elsewhere around New York City. "Ballet can be a very codified and restrictive art form, but she was able to find the connection," says Finkelstein. Fatouros likes the freedom of Laban vocabulary in the ballet setting. For example, instead of talking about technique in a way that may make the movement seem unnatural, she may tell a student to visualize her leg as a long pencil which she can wrap around herself like a compass. "DEL teaches you to be less trapped by what you've been taught," explains Fatouros. "There's this idea that dance is either creative- or technique-oriented. DEL integrates the two."

DEL's advanced coursework helps teachers  
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 95)

## IT'S ACADEMIC

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 58)

meet federal and state mandates to integrate dance into the academic curriculum in a manner that does not compromise the essence of dance. "They are parallel paths—teaching dance and enlivening the other curriculums," says Finkelstein. One course, called Planet Dance, teaches dance from a multicultural perspective, so that teachers can relate dance to social studies and to children's heritages. "Our schools are extremely diverse; this helps promote cultural understanding among children," adds Finkelstein.

DEL constantly incorporates new material into the program. One timely course explores the topic of conflict resolution through dance movement. Instructor Martha Eddy did her doctoral work on the subject, touring the country to find the different ways people use movement-based modalities to deal with aggression. She found that anything that helps one person trust another could be effective, from movement as simple as dancing in a circle together to using weight-based partnering.

Heit has observed firsthand the benefits of dance for her students: "The discipline of the art itself, the focus that dance takes, is a whole new skill for them that's transferable to reading, writing and other subjects," she says. And Heit has used her DEL education in all aspects of her teaching, even science. For a unit on the life cycle, she read Eric Carle's *The Tiny Seed* and led her students into a water dance set to Chinese music. The kids became raindrops, attaching to each other to make clouds and raining down together. "It's an experiment," she says. "We're trying to get everybody involved to create a dialogue and collaborate."

Both Heit and Rubaja are now mentoring teachers through another Y outreach program with Brooklyn School District 22. Rubaja is helping an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher integrate creative dance into the language arts curriculum. She's tapped into the teacher's background in Native American studies exploring what the dance tells about a culture.

It is no accident that under the umbrella of the Harkness Dance Center, the Y's varied dance programs interconnect: mentoring and outreach programs, choreography space grants and performance series, children's dance classes and dance teacher training. "All of this dance activity at the Y is very exciting," says Finkelstein. "Professionals, adults, children and teachers are all moving through here. A teacher takes a course and goes back to the classroom to teach it to the students. The field is not fragmented but a continuum." **DT**

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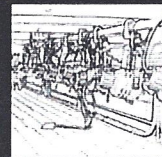
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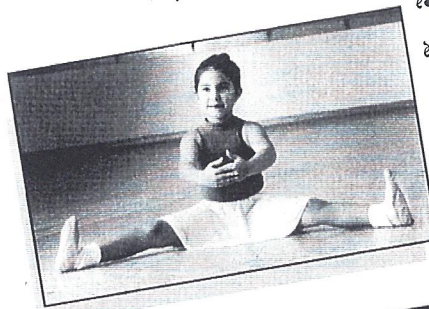
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