

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

CONNECTING DANCERS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

NEWS & FEATURES

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Alumni Updates



Our Regional Alumni Connections Committee reps will be bringing our exclusive SDUSA Alumni pins to selected competitions in each region. If you have not received your pin, be sure to find your rep to collect your pin!

Save the Date

Tartan Day Virtual Happy Hour
March 27th, 4:00pm Pacific

The committee is planning another fun Zoom party with games and prizes. Come in all the tartan you can get your hands on, to help us celebrate Tartan Day with games, prizes, and drinks.

TRIVIA QUESTION FACEBOOK CHALLENGE

What famous Scot was born 300 years ago and spent their final years in this house?



Make sure you like and follow us on Facebook. We will post this question some time in March, and reading the newsletter ensures you get a head start on figuring out the answer!

BEYOND THE GHILLIES

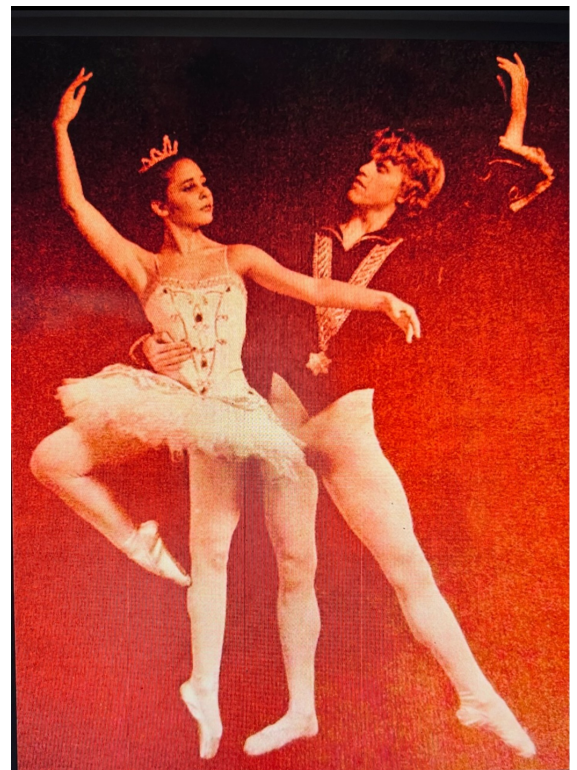


Matt Turnbull

I started Highland Dancing (HD) when I was 12 because my dad had asked me to go along to my little sister's dance class to keep her interested. I must admit that it was a lot more enticing than playing football where guys on my team were breaking collarbones and being pulverized every week.

My first dance teacher was Janis Ross Burkhardt. Janis is a wonderful teacher and judge whose love for the Highland Arts is evident from the moment you meet her. She had a very large studio of over a hundred dancers in the suburbs of Detroit where she taught from two locations; one on the North side of town and the other on the West end. Detroit is a sprawling metro area whose first generation Scottish expat community was extensive. So large in fact, that at that time there were 15 pipe bands and a typical dance competition would draw over 400 dancers! When I was dancing, I think my family was the only one that didn't have someone with a Scottish Brogue!

At sixteen I wanted to improve my HD and found a ballet teacher, Sandra Severo whose studio actually hosted the Bolshoi Ballet when they rolled into Detroit during their American tour. My thoughts were that ballet was the foundation of dance and what better way to improve my HD than start with ballet. Years later I would differ on this opinion; but ballet as an art form that pays dancers, makes it incumbent upon them to take a professional attitude towards their training. Mrs. Severo was trained in ballet by the Ballet Régisseur for the American Ballet Theater, Dimitri Romanoff. He was one of the Russian emigres who'd escaped when the Soviets took power and was the man who brought out of the Iron Curtain all of the classic dances when we think of ballet today; like the Nutcracker and Swan Lake.



Coppelia from the 1970's

CONTINUED WITH MATT TURNBALL

Severo trained her students to become professional dancers onstage as it was her belief that a good teacher needed that experience. And in a few years, I found myself auditioning in front of Mr. Balanchine, the director of the New York City Ballet for his School of American Ballet. My technique was still not providing me the results I wanted, so I took myself downtown to train under Maggie Black who had a major studio where many dancers (Ballet & Modern too!) would go to get fine tuned. She had been Anthony Tudor's aide and had a very discerning eye. Maggie was known for geometrically analyzing ballet movements and her classes attracted many dancers from major companies including the Royal Ballet, American Ballet Theater, City Ballet, Joffrey Ballet and Twyla Tharp. The latter company was one I was lucky enough to perform with on Broadway. My interest in improving took me to Joe Pilates' studio where I became an instructor. I have performed with a Modern dance company in France along with Opera companies and guest appearances on stages throughout the US.



Matt and son, Vlk

Eventually, my dad urged me to return to Michigan and where I earned a Masters in Physics from the University of Michigan. My research there included setting up labs in Greenland and the Yukon territories. Upon graduating, I passed on an opportunity for a research position and my pursuit of a PhD at Queen's University in Belfast in order to attain a degree that would be more flexible and portable. Today I am a staff pharmacist at the major trauma center for the Pacific Northwest where we deal with patients from Alaska to Montana. Presently, I reside in Seattle and have been kept busy with my young son Vlk Tyr Turnbull who is nearly 6 months old. Yes, his first name is simply V-L-K, no vowels, which is the Czech word for wolf as my girlfriend Alena is from Prague.

I have found through my artistic travels in dance that one has to perennially reinvent themselves. In that regard, I have continued my exploration of movement by training under a physical therapist where we delve into new ideas of the physical culture from across the world. I received a great piece of wisdom from a dancer who said that dancing is a way of life. I view this as a defining feature of HD in that it opens the door for you to see not only our lovely Scottish World, but those of many others. Its choreography is music in motion through which you can glimpse the history and culture of our Scottish ancestors. HD has had such a wonderful impact on my life that I try to give back by playing for the girls when I have an open weekend.

HD has also given me one of my lifelong pleasures, playing pipes. Just as with my dancing career, I have been blessed with many fine teachers, like Willie Connell and Bruce Burt. I was a Pipe Major of several bands, one even in NYC, which has an old, venerable Scottish community. I have had the honor of being a member of Bill Livingstone's 78th Frasers from Toronto but am now a member of the Bagad Cap Caval of France. I find their melodies often give me material for my own compositions, another hobby.



Scotland, mid 90's

Though I haven't been back to Scotland to compete on the boards (solos) recently, I am hoping that when my wee bairn gets his paws big enough we can tour the Games together.



FEATURED ASSOCIATION: LAS VEGAS HIGHLAND DANCING ASSOCIATION

Kristen Brimhall and Nola Patterson, both of whom grew up together in Alberta, Canada, separately moved to Las Vegas more than 20 years ago and found the absence of competitive Highland Dancing in Southern Nevada. Together they were determined to bring this culture to their new community. Their objective was to help dancers and the community find a love for Scottish Highland culture and dance.

They worked together to form the Las Vegas Highland Dance Association, incorporated it and received 501c3 non-profit status. It wasn't without dedication, determination and hard work. After several dance-outs featuring new dance students and multiple fundraisers, the association was able to host their first official competition in 2004.

LVHDA hosts one competition each year, hosts dance workshops, performs at private events, provides opportunities for dance students to participate in exams for advancement, supports dance-outs at schools and senior centers and has been featured on local PBS. LVHDA has a great relationship with our local St. Andrews Society and the Las Vegas Pipe band, participating with them regularly at special events throughout the year.

It is amazing what this small group has accomplished over the years and hopes to continue for years to come.

UPCOMING EVENTS

In addition to our own Alumni events, we present to you competitions happening around the United States.

We hope to see you there!

East Region

- 4/23/22 Celtic Festival of So. Maryland (MD)
- 5/7/22 Eastern Region Closed Championship (PA)
- 5/21/22 Colonial Highland Games - Fair Hill (MD)

Midwest Region

- 3/19/22 Cincinnati Indoor Competition (OH)
- 3/27/22 MWHDA Lucky Leap Competition (MI)
- 5/21/22 Michigan Celtic Classic (MI)
- 5/27/22 Alma Highland Festival (MI)
- 6/18/22 Chicago Highland Games
- 6/25/22 Ohio Scottish Games (OH)

Northwest Region

- 3/12/22 PHDA Indoor Competition (OR)
- 5/21/22 NW Regional Championship (OR)
- 6/11/22 Utah Scottish Festival (UT)
- 6/25/22 Tacoma Highland Games (WA)

Southeast Region

- 3/5/22 Pat Johnston Memorial Competition (NC)
- 4/2/22 Florida Open Championship (FL)
- 4/9/22 Loch Norman Highland Games (NC)
- 5/7/22 Southeast Regional Championship (GA)
- 5/21/22 Smokey Mountain Scottish Festival (TN)

Southwest Region

- 4/2/22 San Antonio Highland Games (TX)
- 4/23/22 SW Regional Championship (TX)
- 6/4/22 Rio Grande Valley Celtic Festival (NM)
- 6/11/22 Kansas City Indoor Comp (KS)
- 6/25/22 Cortez Celtic Faire (CO)

West Region

- 3/5/22 Phoenix Open Championship (AZ)
- 3/12/22 Margo Naismith HD Competition (CA)
- 4/9/22 Las Vegas Celtic Society Games (NV)
- 4/23/22 Woodland Highland Games (CA)
- 5/7/22 Arizona Highland Dance Assoc (AZ)
- 5/28/22 Western Regional Championship/Competitions (CA)
- 6/25/22 San Diego Scottish Highland Games (CA)

CONTACT US

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