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New music styles inspire ballroom dancing revival

By Layne Lakefish
Emerald A&E Reporter

What goes around comes around — from miniskirts to haircuts to dance. Everything runs in cycles, including ballroom dance.

For as long as the University's dance department has been around, so too has the ballroom dance program. It has come and gone, gained popularity and lost popularity, but it seems to have hit a high point recently.

"It (the ballroom dance program) has gone in sort of cycles and right now it's at one of the larger cycles," said Leonard Anderson, ballroom dance instructor.

"There's been a resurgence of people wanting to do what's called touch dancing or social dancing — things like dirty dancing and salsa dancing," Anderson said. "Mostly there's a lot of interest in Latin dancing because of bands like the salsa bands that play in Eugene frequently."

Every term two classes, Ballroom Dance I and Ballroom Dance II, are taught through the dance department for \$24. The classes meet weekly and are graded on a pass/no pass basis.

Students who enroll in the classes will leave at the end of the term being comfortable with and competent in dance forms such as the waltz, swing, foxtrot, rumba, cha-cha, one-step and the polka, to name a few, he said.

With interest on the rise, classes are getting larger and larger, which Anderson said is a benefit.

"I like having large classes because you meet a lot of people," he said.

"We try to get all the technique taught that we need to, but we tend to like to have it be a fun, social thing where people can talk to each other and meet one another."

The ballroom dance classes stand out from the rest of the dance classes offered at the University. Ballroom dance, as taught on campus, is a very social dance. "The emphasis is on the dance as a social dance as opposed to a performing dance, although it can be performed," Anderson explained.

With the club scene making its way across the country, ballroom dance classes may be the only opportunity for students to learn and feel comfortable with social dance.

"This is not something they learn anymore," Anderson said. "So few people learn any type of social dancing and people can ballroom dance to almost all styles of music."

"Right now, especially, with dance music becoming so much more popular, there's newer dances coming out to fit the music. There's more newer social dances, especially in New York and California, and there's been a huge explosion in ballroom dancing in the last couple of years."

"Because of the new music and a combination of other things, people are looking for something different in dance forms to do socially and they've ended up going backwards to something done earlier — ballroom dance," Anderson said.

Ballroom dance is something you can learn to do whereas club dancing can be difficult to pick up. "Anyone can learn to ballroom dance," he said.

He reiterated this idea in the ballroom dance syllabus when he wrote: "Learning to ballroom dance well takes time, patience, and effort — most people require more than a few classes to master the technique. However, persistence, rather than natural talent, will largely determine one's success."

The ballroom dance program, although it's on the rise, faces one controversy at the beginning of every term. The problem arises from the males-lead-and-females-follow stereotype that is attached to ballroom dance style.

"In my classes everyone is given the choice of whether they want to lead or follow," Anderson explained. "But it's really not about one person leading and one person following. It's the cooperative effort involved and learning to dance as a team."

With the rise of ballroom dance, many local opportunities have surfaced giving students the chance to go out and have fun with what they've learned. For students 21 years of age and older, the Vets Club holds dances every Friday and Saturday nights.

Also, for those under 21, West Moreland Community Center holds dances monthly. University dorms hold ballroom dance lessons periodically, fraternities and sororities and ASUO organizations schedule ballroom-oriented dances, and the dance department itself has a ballroom dance club for all interested students.

"More than anything, I try to get my students to go out dancing," Anderson said. "I want them to feel comfortable working with a partner, dance and understand the music and how to dance to it."



Photo by Vince Ramirez
Ballroom dancing instructor Leonard Anderson performs one of the dances he teaches to his classes at the University.

DEAD

Continued from Page 7

and officers expect a larger challenge with the upcoming two-day event, said police Capt. Dick Loveall.

Because of the sheer volume of people in one place, Loveall said, more police staff will be present at the stadium, as they are with athletic events. Providing police patrols at a concert is "easier than (at) a football game," Loveall said.

However, over the weekend the tens of thousands of visitors "are not going to be focused at Autzen Stadium," Loveall said. "They're going to be all over the place."

For this reason, more officers will be patrolling the campus area and the rest of the city during that time, he said.

"We're looking forward to everyone having a good time, and we will do what we can to facilitate that," Loveall said. "We certainly aren't despising the event in any way. If that's what the city wants, that's fine with us."

Richard Greene, president of the University Small Business Association and owner of Rainbow Optics, 766 E. 13th Ave., said, "There's nothing wrong with the band. But when the band brings with it illegal and harassing behavior, then it's a problem."

During the days preceding and following the

show, he said, Dead fans flood the 13th and Kincaid area. Their presence has a damaging effect on business at a number of campus area merchants, he said.

Sandy Walton, senior associate athletic director for the University, said a "bum rap" shouldn't fall on the Dead, or their mainstream fans. "The fans are easygoing, and not a hostile group by any means," she said.

"Any time you have 30,000 people in one place, unless it's a church convention, you're going to have more problems," she said.

These problems combine with the band's colorful image to result in misunderstanding, she said.

"Perception of the Grateful Dead is not always favorable," Walton said. However, "Perception and reality are not always the same thing."

The Athletic Department and Autzen Stadium have hosted the Dead three times. The concert is the AD's biggest non-sports event, Walton said. In 1987, when Bob Dylan appeared as well, the concert drew more than 35,000 fans.

Security is beefed up around the stadium during the days before and after the concert, Walton said, and a makeshift campground is set up in the parking lot to accommodate visitors who don't stay in hotels.

These steps help minimize disturbances around the stadium. "We've just not had any problem with them before," Walton said.



Photo by Vince Ramirez
Controversy occasionally arises in ballroom dance classes over whether the man or the woman should lead, but participants learn to compromise and work as a team.

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