

Ballroom Dance Certification Program Begun in San Francisco Expands to North Carolina

By: Natasha Baldwin-Garcia
January 2009

Aspiring dance instructors have never had a range of choices when it comes to acquiring formal dance teacher training. Now that Diane Jarmolow's certification program has moved into North Carolina, they are finding an open door right in the Triangle.

"This is the only program in the nation that teaches dancers how to teach," said Melanie Dale, master instructor of the American Style Bronze Teacher certification program.

The American Style Bronze Teacher certification program, currently offered in 11 states, is a formal vocational program that provides systemic training to those who desire to teach ballroom dance. Since deciding to offer Diane's dance certification in Raleigh, Melanie has received numerous calls from North Carolina studio owners requesting contacts for students who successfully complete the program.

"Studio owners really desire to hire people who have gone through the program," said Melanie. "Otherwise, people learn on the job and are only kept one step ahead of the students."

Those who are looking for a career or desiring to transition into a new, exciting field of work should consider ballroom dance. Registering for the American Style Bronze Teacher certification program offered through Wake County Public Schools' Lifelong Learning Program provides valuable training, on-the-job experience and access to a national dance teacher job board.

Diane says dance instructors are finding that even in this tough economy, there is a growing need for qualified teachers within the United States. "There is a shortage of instructors. Studio owners have been getting on planes and going overseas to countries like Russia to find dance teachers," explained Diane.

Now, however, many are turning to Diane's job board to find great instructors. Diane believes the shortage of teachers and the desire people have to relieve the stress and anxiety of financial woes are reasons why teachers remain in demand. "During the Depression, people gave up dancing last," she said.

Aspiring dance instructors should not allow their body types, age, or dance history to prevent them from pursuing this career field. "You don't have to have a certain look to be a dance teacher. What you need to make it is to be committed, caring, passionate, hardworking, and dedicated," said Diane.

One of Diane's students was an 80-year-old retiree who went through the program and now has a new career as a dance instructor. Another student, Kat Truitt, worked in various retail jobs, before becoming a dance instructor.

"I danced all the time, loved it, loved being around people, and loved being in the studio, so I figured I should just be there full-time," said Truitt.

With no formal dance background, Kat left her retail career and registered for several intense months in the Ballroom Dance Teachers College in San Francisco, California. There she studied with Diane Jarmolow. After graduating, she secured a coveted position as the dance director in Raleigh, North Carolina where she currently works for Melanie Dale.

"I have been a full-time teacher since the end of 2006. Dancing and teaching people to dance brings great comedic relief. I love it!"

Not only is this program beginning in January in the Triangle, but new classes will also be starting at the Ballroom Teacher's College in San Francisco. For more information about how you can launch into this dynamic career field or start your own certification program, contact Diane at 510-336-9426.

Natasha Baldwin-Garcia
Coordinator, Lifelong Learning
Wake County Public School System