Dussich Dance Studio

1970 - 1979

The 70’swere a real exciting time for Dussich Dance Studio. The first two years of this decade, the studio was still located in the old Heidelberg building at 74 N. Orlando Avenue just north of Minutemen Cswy. The Dussich Dance Company was beginning to gain momentum and started the tradition of performing once a year in February at Brevard Community College. The floors of the studio were terrazzo and there was a make-shift folding panel partition to make two small class rooms on Saturday mornings for the preschool and combo classes. The big changes started in 1971, when Al Bevilacqua purchased a portion of the strip mall at 124 N. Orlando Ave.; just one block north. After a spring & summer of much renovation work by a team made up of **Liz**, her husband, Liz’s dad, **Peter Marciniak**, **Al Packard** and Liz’s partner, at that time, **Marie Holland** and her husband **Dale Holland.** Classes started there in the fall of 1971 with approx. 100 students. Al Bevilacqua rented the facility to the studio. Prior to move-in, the building had been a slot car facility. Walls had been knocked down and the windows all painted black and the facility was “vacant” for some time. A group of homeless hippies had been camping in the building with no water or electricity. Class space was now increased to two rooms with high ceilings but still with terrazzo floors. The faculty consisted of **Liz, Marie, Sarah Denton and Al Packard**. In early 1972, **Dale Holland** was transferred to California and **Al Packard** purchased the Holland’s share in the business to become the new co-owner/Business Manager and Liz’s partner. Floating wood floors were installed at this time. Wonderful studio mothers filled-in to work the front desk until Al was available. Thanks to **Mrs. Gay, Mrs. Kansas, Mrs. Lubar, Mrs. Bodfish and Mrs.Parish**. The business officially became Dussich Dance Studio, inc in 1978, and became quite the hub of artistic talent. During this decade, it spawned ‘The Brevard Dance Company”, which performed annual Galas every year for 7 years with Ms. Liz as Artistic Director and Al Packard as general manager. During this exciting time, there were interesting changes in the faculty. **Sissy Slowinski** joined us for several years before her husband was transferred. **Sara Denton Stravinska** taught until she left to go to college and eventually was head of a college dance department. **Linda West** taught jazz for two years before leaving to perform at the MGM Grand in Vegas. **Debbie Armstrong** taught our younger dancers and Jazzercise before becoming the mother of triplets and moving to Maryland. **Catherine Alexander** joined us for a short time to teach ballet. Our Acro teachers in the 70’s, were **Steve Musilak, Bill Bevil** taught until his other work schedule caused a conflict. We were getting close to the end of the decade when **Brynel McDaniels** took over from Bill. **Charlsie Cohen** taught jazz and **Carol Branam** joined our staff to help in the ballet department. The studio was host of a number of outstanding Master Teachers starting with *Ballet Russe* dancer, **George** **Zorich** and **Ron Daniels** (Tap), **Nilo Toledo** (Jazz) **Jo Rowen (**Ballet) and **Toby Towsen** (Modern & Acro). Toby was the National Floor Exercise Champion and a contender in the Mexico City Olympics. Dussich Dance Studio has produced a number of professional dancers. **Jenny Roberts** of Cocoa Beach, graduated and went on to become a principal dancer with the Ghent Opera in Belgium, **Robert Hill** of Merritt Island became a principal dancer for the American Ballet Theater and The Royal Ballet in London. **Debbie Byrd** of Rockledge followed a different route and became an outstanding performer in Las Vegas and Europe while **Patty Laflin** from Melbourne Beach, opened her own studio in Palm Bay. **Kim Plogstedt** of Titusville married and moved to Australia and performed there before returning to LA to join the Company of Chorus Line. **Leslie Pozsonyi** from Cocoa Beach and **Sandy Childers** of Merritt Island, performed in Las Vegas and on TV with celebrities such as the late Sammy Davis Jr. Lastly, from this generation, **Melanie Hodges** of Merritt Island followed the academic path receiving her Bachelor’s Degree in Dance from Texas Christian University and her Master’s in Fine Arts from Southern Methodist University. She worked for 2 years with Carol Channing in the touring company of “Hello Dolly”. She currently owns a studio in New York, just north of the city.

The Latin Hustle was big during this area but switched to “Cotton Eye Joe” and the country two-step. The studio also got ready to move into a new era…