



"I want our audiences to see our humanity," Ann Sorvino, founder of the Sorvino Dance Project

Dancing through life

Sorvino Dance Project offers artistic expression to dancers with day jobs

Story by Anita Fritz

Photos by Paul Franz



They teach ballroom dance, school and yoga. They are personal trainers and therapists. They dance professionally and at small dance studios in small towns. They run children's programs and sell natural product lines.

And every once in a while, they become the members of an eclectic group of dancers known as the Sorvino Dance Project.

Founder Ann Sorvino, a graduate of the Julliard School, has performed with her dance company in numerous places throughout the eastern part of the country and across the world.

"Dance is an artistic art form that is as expressive as painting," said Sorvino, 53. "We are a group of professionals, and sometimes students, who want to share our love of dance with the world, but can't do it on a regular basis because we all have day jobs — so we do it when we can."

Sorvino said what she loves most about her company is that its members are not the traditional "ballerina body" dancers. Instead, she said, they are people performing the way they love to perform without feeling their physical appearance has to be perfect. Many of them are more "mature" dancers, she said.

"Most dancers would not still be on stage at my age, but I think I bring a wonderful experience to the performance and the audience is able to relate," Sorvino said.

She said she has never been interested in making her dancers, or herself, Rockettes. "I want our audiences to see our humanity."

The local dance teacher's hope is to someday take one of her "pickup" groups cross-country to perform modern dance for people of all cultures and backgrounds.

She and eight others recently represented the United States at the Thai Folk Festival in Surin, Thailand. They returned from the competition with the "Most Talented Group" award.



Meg Van Dyck, Ann Sorvino and Billbob Brown of the Sorvino Dance Project will be at Northampton's Academy of Music March 25.

Sorvino has been the chairwoman of the Performing Arts Department at Stoneleigh-Burnham School for the past 25 years and professor of dance at Greenfield Community College for the past 15 years.

The dancers who traveled to Thailand with her included Meg Van Dyck, also an instructor of dance at GCC as well as at Deerfield Academy, and Billbob Brown, department chairman of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Dance Department. Michael Nix and Greg Snedeker, composers and musicians who perform locally with Chris Devine as Pioneer Consort, accompanied the

dance project and Sorvino's son Vic, a documentary filmmaker, filmed the performances in Thailand.

On March 25, Sorvino, Brown and Van Dyck will be at the Academy of Music in Northampton, performing all of the numbers they presented in Thailand.

Sorvino said she decided a long time ago to create a dance company that would allow different people to perform at different times in their lives, instead of requiring long-term commitments.

"Everyone is busy and can't always See DANCING Page D3

Engagements

Foley — Wilkins

Bruce and Kathy Wilkins of 43 Stetson Drive, Greenfield, announce the engagement of their son, Ethan Michael, of 16 Dickinson St., Greenfield, to Katherine Lee Foley, daughter of Richard and Deborah Foley of 51 Colts Way, Attleboro.

The future bride graduated in 2004 from Bristol County Agricultural High School, Dighton, in 2008 from the University of Massachusetts with a BS in wildlife conservation and is to graduate this year from UMass with a MS degree in wetland science/ecology.

The future groom graduated in 1999 from Greenfield High School and in 2007 from the University of Massachusetts with a BS in civil engineering. He is a field engineer at The Middlesex Companies in Littleton.

A Sept. 15, 2012 wedding is planned.



Katherine L. Foley and Ethan M. Wilkins

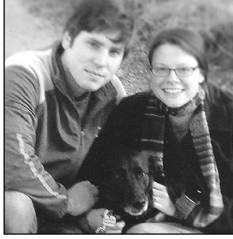
Youell — Burnham

Cheyenne Leigh Youell and Jay William Burnham of 137 E. Maple Ave., Langhorne, PA, announce their engagement.

The future bride is the daughter of Ann Youell of 718 Stuart St., Harrisonburg, VA, and the late Robert Youell. She graduated from Spotswood High School, Penn Laird, VA, and from James Madison University with a BA in recreation management. She is a recreation specialist with Upper Dublin Parts & Recreation in Fort Washington, PA.

The future groom is the son of Becki and Lenny Stratton of Shelburne, MA, and Betsy Burnham of Gill and the late William Burnham. He graduated from Mohawk Trail Regional High School, Buckland, MA, and from Elon University with a degree in communications. He is director of broadcasting for the Trenton Thunder Minor League baseball team.

A Sept. 21, 2012 wedding is planned.



Jay W. Burnham and Cheyenne L. Youell

Engagements

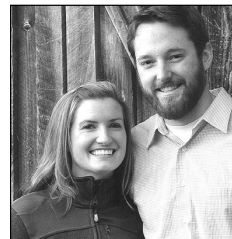
O'Neil — Chornyak

Kevin and Liza O'Neil of 178 Leyden Road, Greenfield, announce the engagement of their daughter, Meghan Kelly, to Zachariah Peter Chornyak, both of 165 Brickyard Road, Southampton. Chornyak is the son of Peter and Suzanne Chornyak of 337 Log Plain Road, Greenfield.

The future bride graduated in 2001 from Stoneleigh-Burnham School and in 2006 from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with a BS in animal science. She works in emergency veterinary medicine.

The future groom graduated in 2001 from the Academy at Charlestown and in 2006 from UMass Amherst with a BS in civil engineering. He is a civil/environmental engineer.

A July 7, 2012 wedding is planned.



Megan K. O'Neil and Zachariah P. Chornyak

Want to tell everyone the great news?

The Recorder charges a nominal fee for engagement, wedding, and anniversary announcements, which may include any information, photographs or artwork desired. There are no time restrictions for publication on Saturday's Milestones page. Here are the fees: Engagements, \$35 up to 8-column inches of space; weddings, \$50 up to 12-column inches of space; anniversaries, \$40 up to 10-column inches of space. Additional column inches are \$10/inch (approx. 35 words per inch).

Announcements are payable in advance: cash, check or credit card. Forms are available at The Recorder offices, 14 Hope St., Greenfield, or online at www.recorder.com. Look for the "Reader Services" section to the left.

Your submission should include a daytime phone number. The Recorder accepts sharp black & white or color photographs. Submitted photographs must have the names written on the back. Images may also be e-mailed to milestones@recorder.com. Announcements that are mailed, faxed or e-mailed must be followed up with a phone call to (413) 772-0148 to confirm receipt & payment.

MILESTONES

First contact

When modern man encountered dinosaurs

By FAYE FLAM
The Philadelphia Inquirer

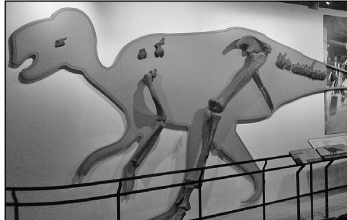
It was the time of P.T. Barnum, when people would line up to see a whitewashed elephant or a carefully faked petrified giant. But in 1868, a display in Philadelphia proved that reality could be far stranger than fiction. That year, the Academy of Natural Sciences showed the world its first glimpse of a real dinosaur skeleton — a 15-foot-tall *Godzilla* pulled from a pit in Hadronfield, N.J.

The creature threatened to obliterate the traditional picture of the universe. Along with Darwin's theory and a revolution in geology, dinosaur fossils were opening the human imagination to lost worlds on our own planet, separated by vast epochs of time.

It was a quantum leap from the neat, biblical picture of a 6,000-year-old Earth, created with all of today's living things. Some inevitably clung to the old order, insisting that these monsters were somehow lost in the biblical flood, said Robert Peck, curator of arts and artifacts at the academy and coauthor of "A Glorious Enterprise: The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the Making of American Science." The book is being released just in time for the academy's bicentennial festivities, which begin March 24.

The dinosaur that unwittingly donated its remains to this display was called "Hadrosaurus foulkii." It stood 14 feet tall and stretched 26 feet from head to tail. It didn't leave the complete skeleton, but there were enough bones to enable an American paleontologist and a British sculptor to fill in the blanks with plaster, said Peck.

The sculptor, Benjamin Hawkins, had created models of



Display of the bones of the Hadrosaurus at the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences.

dinosaurs for display in London. Another display in Central Park was destroyed by vandals. The paleontologist, Joseph Leidy, was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and a curator at the academy.

Unfortunately, said Peck, the beast was missing its head. So Leidy and Hawkins, as a rough guess, decided to scale up the head of an iguana lizard.

Together, their work shaped the public's image of dinosaurs for decades to come. Hawkins' earlier sculptures depicted lumbering beasts that stood with all four legs firmly on the ground, said Peck. Leidy, who was trained as a physician, used his knowledge of anatomy to propose a more upright stance, one that is closer to the current image of dinosaurs as more graceful beasts.

The display was so wildly popular that the academy had to start charging a 10-cent admission fee,

Peck said, hoping to keep the crowds under control.

The Hadrosaurus was first pulled from the ground in 1858, a year before the publication of Darwin's "On the Origin of Species." Through the 19th century, less complete dinosaur fossils were already tearing holes in the paradigm of an all-species-included creation.

Leidy was among those open to the possibility of extinction. At one point, he wrote that his public reputation was suffering as a result. "I am shamefully abused as being an atheist, an infidel," he wrote to colleague Spencer Baird of the Smithsonian.

When Darwin finally published his theory of natural selection, Leidy embraced it, and nominated Darwin for election to the academy that year. Darwin wrote back with gratitude. "Most paleontologists entirely despise my work; consequently approbation from you has gratified me much."

Dancing

From Page D1

commit to once specific project and be at every event," said Sorvino. "This allows dancers to come and go, to work on a project and then return to their lives."

It was 15 years ago that Sorvino had the idea for Sorvino Dance Project and did something about it. "My very first group was invited to Greece to perform at a college there," she said. "A parent of one of my students was from Greece and had connections. That's how we got our start."

Since then, the dance company, whose members are always changing with the exception of a few regulars, has performed numerous times on Martha's Vineyard and in New York City and has attended many festivals, some in Philadelphia and New York.

"I hear about an event coming up and I start looking to find who might be available — I find out who's around," she said. "When I find the number of dancers I need, we begin rehearsing. It works for all of us."

Sorvino said with a group like hers she can't just pick up the phone on a Tuesday and say, "Hey, can you dance with us this weekend?" She said the group needs more time to rehearse together.

"But that's OK," she said. "There aren't that many of those types of events that just pop up unexpectedly."

Besides Van Dyck and Brown, some of the dancers she has worked with include Amy Diaz del Rio, Tina "Sparkle" Clark, Katie Pousant, Christie Clovis, Johanna Birri and Elizabeth Budd. She has also worked with Snedeker and Nix many times.

When creating a new dance, says Sorvino, she focuses on the choreography first and then the music.

"That's the way I teach dance, too," she said. "I don't want the dance to mimic the music."

She also strives to create new

dances instead of revisiting works she has already done. When she does return to a certain piece, she changes it into something new. "I like to grow as an artist and I want the other dancers to do the same," she said.

At the Academy of Music, the dance company will perform original dances set to jazz standards and compositions by Snedeker performed by the Meridian Sextet, which includes Snedeker, piano; vocals; Nix, guitar; Devine, violin; Donny Hayward, bass; Joe Fitzpatrick, drums; Hilary Noble, tenor sax, congas.

They will also perform to "Small Moon," a new three-movement work for electric guitar crafted by Nix and performed by the NixWorks Ensemble, which includes Nix, Devine, Jaime Balmer and Joseph Ricker.

Members of the dance company are not paid for the time they devote to rehearsals, although Sorvino does try to pay them for performances with money she gets from grants. "They really love doing this — you have to," she said.

"We have all become family, even though it's not always the same people dancing together," she said. "But, at one time or another, we've all danced with each other."

Sorvino Dance Project will perform at the Academy of Music at 274 Main St. in Northampton on March 25 at 4 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students. Groups of eight or more will pay \$8 per person.

For more information, call the Academy of Music Box Office at 413-384-9032 Ext. 105 or www.academyofmusictheatre.com.

Staff reporter Anika Fitz worked at The Recorder from 2002 to 2005 and then returned in 2008. She covers Greenfield and can be reached at afitz@recorder.com or 413-772-0261 Ext. 280.

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Dad can be involved with kids, even from far away

By JANN BLACKSTONE-FORD
MCT

Q • After my husband and his ex split, she moved just far enough away to make it difficult for my husband to see his two kids. His ex quickly moved in with another man and has encouraged this guy to actively participate. The kids call him Daddy, which drives my husband crazy, and the ex is doing everything she can to cut my husband out of the kids' lives. A particular irritant is that we have not seen a report card in two years. What's good ex-etiquette?

A • There's a lot going on here so

I'm going to start with the most obvious: Good ex-etiquette begins with putting the kids first — and rarely is that done by moving away. Although wanting a new start after a break up is certainly understandable, if done without taking into consideration how that move will impact the kids' relationship with their other parent, it's really pretty darn selfish. Complicate that with a common belief that once a parent moves away it's the parent who has been left behind's responsibility to figure out how to see the kids, (which is not necessarily so) and you have the makings of a first class divorce war.

Some background: Although this

is changing, most of us are raised to believe that the best kind of family is a mommy and a daddy and two point how many children ... and therefore once there's a break-up and guilt sets in, it's not uncommon for some parents to try to recreate that "best kind of family" by re-coupling, getting the new parent figure involved, and actively acing out the other parent. This is often done quite subtly. Parents may suggest their child call the new partner Mommy or Daddy and refer to the bi-parent by their first name. Or, the new partner becomes the coach for the child's little league games while the other parent isn't informed about the

extra-curricular activities. Information becomes power, and whoever knows the most about the child is the best parent. Parents control that power by withholding information about their child.

The truth is, your child will be healthier if he or she retains a loving relationship with both parents after a break-up and the stepparent as well. Therefore, the MORE information about the child that a parent shares, the better parent he or she is. This boils down to your husband has a right to see the kids on a regular basis. Unfortunately, how often is dependent on how far away mom has chosen to move — but he

CAN see them and regular contact is important.

Finally, dad does not have to depend on mom to send report cards. Dad probably has joint legal custody. He can call the school, introduce himself to the teacher by phone, and have the teacher send all school info directly to him by email. Middle schools and high schools have online portals where parents can monitor their child's progress online. Skype is also an excellent tool to aid in long-distance parenting. Call the kids! Dr. Jann Blackstone is the author of "Ex-etiquette for Parents: Good Behavior After Divorce or Separation," and the founder of Bonus Families, www.bonusfamilies.com.