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THE DANCE LETTER



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College of the Arts
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Faculty Feature

(Editor's note: Vickie Blaine was featured in the February 1987 issue of *Women's Voice of Columbus* as part of "Making it in Columbus: Six Successes Tell You How." The article, written by Lauren Smith and Kathleen Van Gundy, is reprinted below.)



Vera J. Blaine (photo by Roman Sapecki)

Vera J. Blaine:

Thirty-three percent? Fifty Percent? Seventy-five? How much of herself must a person give to attain the Chair of OSU's Department of Dance? According to Vera J. Blaine, who has held that position for the past three years, it takes 100 percent. "I tell my students that being involved in the arts is all-consuming. But, being Chairperson means even more than going all the way with the process. There is never any end to engaging in it."

Involvement in dance began for Vera (Vickie to her friends) as a young girl. "Because I was shy, my mother gave me dance lessons," Vera relates. "I loved the physicality of moving through space, was swept away by it and would rather have died than to have missed a class. Dancing centered my being. Besides, my parents loved the arts, and they encouraged me right from the start to stay with dance rather than to choose another job just because of the money it would bring me."

It was not until Blaine's undergraduate and graduate study at The Ohio State University, however, that she understood dance as an art. Under the direction and careful eye of Helen Alkire, creator of OSU's Dance Department, the emotional, physical pleasure of dancing took on new dimension as it expanded into artistic expression. "Helen first taught me that dance is a symbolic system," explains Blaine, "and then she encouraged me, as she did all of her students, to continue my professional study of dance after I left OSU."

Taking her mentor's advice, Vera continued study of modern dance for four years in the midst of New York City's creative energy, performing and choreographing in off-off Broadway alternative spaces. Until, she reports, "My husband was offered a job at OSU, and coincidentally, a position opened up for me in the dance department."

Vera's talents blossomed as she began to work under the leadership of Helen P. Alkire. "She and I were on the same wave length," says Vera. "Helen encouraged me to implement my ideas within the department as I worked under her. And, while she was giving me every opportunity to develop my own work in dance and my position in the department, my husband was encouraging my

professional growth as well. I was feeling support on all fronts.”

The late '60s were an epoch in Vera's professional career. “At that time, the department was really expanding. My own performance and choreography were developing well, and I was appointed artistic director of the OSU Dance Company.”

“When Helen retired in 1983, and I was offered the Chair after a national search, I faced the impact that I could have on the field of dance in higher education. I was being asked to join a faculty of artists and scholars beyond compare. Working with these wonderful people, I realized that even greater things could be achieved for the department.”

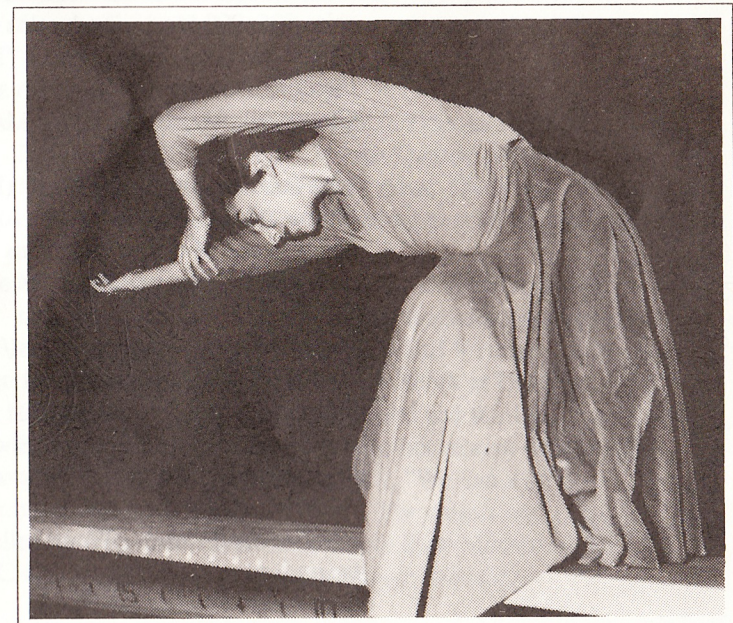
While chair, Blaine saw the Department of Dance at OSU designated a Center of Excellence by Provost Dietther Haenicke and President Edward H. Jennings. When speaking of the award, Blaine emphasizes that her work was merely a continuation of the tradition of excellence that had been established by those who went before her. Indeed, the department is considered to be one of the strongest dance departments in the country, with its production of outstanding artists, teachers and choreographers.

Today, at the age of 52, dance is still everything to Blaine. Her eleven-hour days can't include what is considered a “normal” family life. Ohio State is her family. Her students, her administering, her linking with the community, are her concerns and her loves. In the midst of this nurturing milieu, Blaine personifies dedication to and sacrifice for the love of art and work.

“My life has followed a progression,” explains Vera. “It has been a combination of following my interests, being open to the luck of situations, meeting challenges along the way, and through it all, deeply loving the dance, and therefore, my job.”

In April Vickie Blaine served as one of the two external reviewers of the undergraduate program in dance offered through the Faculty of Fine Arts at York University, Toronto, Canada. As a member of the advisory committee to the Teacher Education Commission of the Ohio Department of Education, Vickie helped to review the

teacher education programs that Ohio colleges and universities are proposing pursuant to new standards for public school curricula. May 1987 marked the completion of Vickie's second year as a member of the Ohio Arts Council Dance Panel. Vickie will be attending the OhioDance Festival June 11-13 at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.



Vera J. Blaine dancing on Pomerene diving board (1957)
(From The Ohio State University Photo Archives.)