


INSIDE THIS ISSUE

 Memoir from Betty PG. 2 - 3

Former RI President Betty Loafmann reflects on her tenure during the COVID lockdown.

 Faculty Profile PG. 4 - 5

The Roving Reporter interviews ballet instructor Susan Sklar.

 Clubs & Committees PG. 6 - 9

Updates from the committees, and tales from the Renaissance clubs as we near the end of the school year, and set our sights on summer & fall.



An important rite of Spring at Renaissance: Bagel Day!



Benevolence Ambassador Vickie Lapicki dispenses information, advice, and the occasional treat.

Hello, RI friends,

Our very busy Spring Semester of 2024 is nearly done, but be aware of several key dates:

April 30 & May 2 – last week of spring classes.

May 3 – End of Year Party and Awards Ceremony in FIC003 at 12 noon. Renaissance chorus will sing, *Reflections* will be distributed, and light refreshments will be served.

May 7 & May 9 – Course previews 10 AM on Zoom.

TBA – Registration begins.



MEMORIES OF THE NOT-SO-DISTANT PAST BY BETTY LOAFMANN

Note: Betty Loafmann served as RI President from 2021-2023. She was not only the resident visionary, but the “arm-twister-in-chief,” making sure the committees and clubs were up and running, amply staffed, & making plans. Recently, she was asked to share a personal account of how it felt to provide leadership during the worst of the COVID pandemic.



Historians insist that no one woke up in twelve hundred AD and said, “So, this is the Renaissance.” The same could be said for those of us who woke up to the fact that COVID was more than a temporary inconvenience.

This article is meant to help those who worked more hours than are countable to reminisce about what it was like. This is not a recounting of what we did, but how it felt to be a part of all of that.

Obviously, there is no one word that describes everyone’s feelings and thoughts in those days. I am fairly certain, we said “I have no idea.” more often than “Oh, we can just-- “

How much did we need to change? What options were available to meet our new situation? These and many other questions left us feeling everything from overwhelmed to determined.



RI is a community of friends who enjoy taking classes together and discussing the news, what’s wrong with our spouse and which doctor appointments we hate most. How do we keep that going when we can’t gather?



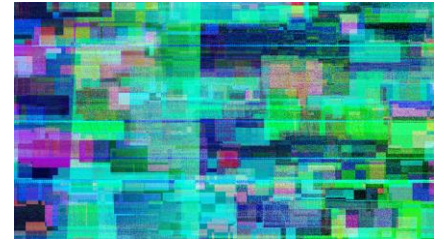
First, we had to face the fact, we weren’t going back to normal for some time. We also knew ourselves to be a community who would never describe the computer as our BFF. Were there enough grandchildren, nieces and nephews in the world to help us bridge that gap?

Those who helped reconstruct RI were as affected by COVID as everyone else. We were scared, bored, and tired, not necessarily in that order. But one other fact was clear, we couldn’t imagine life without RI. In retrospect, I think the essence of RI is what overcame the obstacles. That essence is our belief that when we work together, we are our better selves.

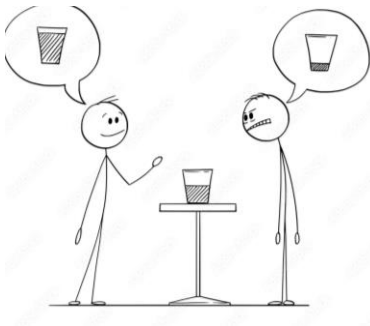
And that is what we did, we met (laughed, argued and did lots of listening). We learned how to use zoom to meet, to teach, to share hopes, fears and exchange potential solutions. We kept each other going when the obstacles outnumbered the solutions. Our greatest fear was that

our plans would not be strong enough and we would lose members, but eventually we had to trust our efforts.

My low point was the endless meetings in which the others wrestled with the best way to teach how to use Zoom. I am sure no English was used in these discussions. My role was to act as the dunce. If I could understand and follow their instructions, anyone could.



My high points? One was writing two letters a month to the members. It felt good to share the progress we were making in the new RI. My other high point came as I attended all the committee meetings in which we worked through old ways and new methods of meeting that committee's purpose. It was so encouraging to see that there were ways to address our new world. Progress bred hope and hope built confidence.



And my role?

Oh, that was simple. I was and continue to be the infernal or eternal optimist!





Empty urns on Wyndhurst wait all year for this!



Fabulous Phlox Courtesy of Joyce Dennison

"I first started ballet when I was seven and I loved it from the start."



"...when I was 12 or 13 the Bolshoi Ballet came to Baltimore to demonstrate the journey of a ballet dancer from a student to a professional dancer. They auditioned students ... I was chosen so I was able to perform with the Bolshoi. That was a highlight of my training."



Dear Readers,

This month we decided to learn about a long running class that many of us know very little about: Ballet Basics. Susan Sklar, our ballet teacher at the Renaissance, was interviewed recently and she gave us insight into the value of dance and her work at Renaissance.

Your Roving Reporter, Carol Daddazio

RR: We're so happy to have an opportunity to speak with you, Susan. How did you come to Renaissance? How long have you been teaching ballet at RI?

SS: I first started ballet when I was seven and I loved it from the start. My mom was a ballet mom, I think she would have wanted to dance. I showed an aptitude from the beginning and took a few guest classes in NYC as a young teen. The highlight was when I was 12 or 13 the Bolshoi Ballet came to Baltimore to demonstrate the journey of a ballet dancer from a student to a professional dancer. They auditioned students to do the very basic exercises. I was chosen so I was able to perform with the Bolshoi. That was a highlight of my training.

Out of college I started teaching first grade in Baltimore City. Teaching was rewarding but all consuming, so I didn't have time to dance. I'd come back at certain times, but 25 years ago I started taking classes at Baltimore Ballet Company in Cockeysville and I've continued there. I wasn't interested in teaching, more in dancing itself, but I had a friend whose dad was Ted Kascow, a member at Renaissance. He directed the chorus and taught a class on opera. They had had a ballet instructor who had moved on, so Renaissance was without a ballet program. Ted recommended me to teach about ten years ago.

I started and I loved the students-- they are fun, interesting people and very dedicated to improving their



“...people can wear comfortable exercise clothes, but I do prefer that they wear ballet slippers. As I explain to newcomers, a ballet class has a structure. “



“Some have been dancing for a long time with me. They were mostly beginners and they’ve come a long way. The nicest thing is that it’s a real community, mostly women in our 60s, 70s, 80s plus one 90-year-old. “

ballet technique. Some have been dancing for a long time with me. They were mostly beginners and they’ve come a long way. The nicest thing is that it’s a real community, mostly women in our 60s, 70s, 80s plus one 90-year-old. I think dance does build community, there’s something about sharing the space that really binds people together.

RR: Would you describe a typical ballet class.

SS: First of all, people can wear comfortable exercise clothes, but I do prefer that they wear ballet slippers. As I explain to newcomers, a ballet class has a structure. We start at the barre; we do exercises in a set order then progress from slowly warming up our muscles to gradually increasing the use of different muscle groups. We eventually work up to a “kick” but it’s not like a regular kick. There’s a ballet kick, a ballet walk, a ballet skip and a ballet jump that sets those movements apart from daily life. Then we move to the center of the room which requires a lot more balance and stability but the barre work has prepared us. We haven’t done a performance at Renaissance but we do “Waltz of the Flowers” from *The Nutcracker* each winter in Cockeysville. We perform mostly for ourselves and we invite a few of our friends. It’s so much fun and it’s a collaborative effort.

RR: Your students enjoy the class. What do you think they get out of working with you?

SS: I keep coming back to this quote from Larry Fask: “As we get older there are many skills that diminish but ballet is one thing you can you can always improve at.” Ballet is about flexibility, strength, range of motion, and posture, which is my number one priority. As we age our posture changes, heads slump, heads come forward. So the main thing I want students to do is improve posture.

When we stand up straight, we look younger and feel younger. There are cognitive benefits too. Dance is the number one exercise to help retain cognition. You’re



“When we stand up straight, we look younger and feel younger. There are cognitive benefits too. Dance is the number one exercise to help retain cognition.”



“I don’t want people to be scared or intimidated. Even beginners can gain. There’s all kinds of things we can take from dance into our lives: the effort, the discipline, the joy.”

moving to music, but the exercises and combinations change week after week. There are infinite combinations, so your brain is active, you’re working all the time. Then there’s just the joy of moving to beautiful music. When you come to ballet you forget everything else, you’re totally in the moment. All the parts of your body: head, toes, core, fingertips are fully engaged with your muscles and your mind.

RR: What do you wish the members knew about your class?

SS: I believe members can be intimidated if they are absolute beginners and it’s true that those who’ve been with me for a long time have progressed. People may be self-conscious, but the truth is that everyone is concentrating so hard on themselves that they aren’t paying attention to anyone else’s performance. I don’t want people to be scared or intimidated. Even beginners can gain. There’s all kinds of things we can take from dance into our lives: the effort, the discipline, the joy.

For me it’s just what I’ve loved all my life.





WHAT ARE THE CLUBS DOING?

Music Fellowship: Thanks to the large crowd who attended the April 10 concert by “High Strung Revisited.” Watch for Summer in the City musical activities soon. The following events will take place on campus. Be sure to join in the fun!

1. **LIVE MUSIC:** APR 17 Wednesday 12:00 noon in FIC003: **Bluegrass Concert** by the “Renaissance Pickers.” Two R. I. Members are in this band. Bring your lunch, bring a friend or two and join in the fun!

2. **RENAISSANCE SINGERS CONCERT:** The Renaissance Singers will present a Concert on Friday, May 3, at the **End of Year Lunch and Awards Ceremony**. This event will be LIVE! in Fourier at 12 noon.



Contact johnmeredith1439@gmail.com. — John Meredith



Mystery Book Club: Mystery enthusiasts: please consider joining the Mystery Book Club discussions. Our next selections are:

Friday, April 26, 2024 11:30 AM *Dying on the Vine* by Aaron Elkins

Friday, May 31, 2024 11:30 AM *Raven Black* by Ann Cleeves

Friday, June 28, 2024 11:30 AM *The Last Kashmiri Rose* by Barbara Cleverly

In April we will meet at the Cross Keys Clubhouse, In May and June, we hope to meet outside in the Village of Cross Keys, weather and construction allowing. Each book has at least one copy in the Baltimore County Library. Enjoy Spring! Nikki Cole colendleb@aol.com

Getting to Know You Club: Our next group meeting is on Monday, April 22 (also Passover and Earth Day) @ 2 pm at Rebecca Kennedy's home in the Broadmead Community, 13801 York Rd, Cockeysville. Contact Barbara Rooney for more information. Barbara Rooney 717-309-5034 (texting ok) roddonia@comcast.net





COMMITTEE UPDATES



Curriculum Committee: As always at this time of year, the Curriculum Committee is hard at work finalizing the courses for Fall. We will again field a wide range of topics and formats to serve the interests and needs of members. Creating the schedule is always a complex task: Honoring instructor preferences while balancing our offerings for topics, timing and whether on Zoom or on-campus. The final schedule is due out before Spring classes end and will be followed by course previews the week after

classes end. We are pleased to have several new members on our committee providing new perspectives and ideas for improving our program. We welcome new members. Terry Weisser, terryweisser@gmail.com & Kathleen Bennett bkbennett@verizon.net

From the Social Committee: The Social Committee is delighted to report that we celebrated Bagel Day in April and it appears to have been well received. We had lots of various bagels from Goldbergs with plain and vegetable cream cheese. We are delighted to sponsor events that bring the RI members together and look forward to many more chances to see you gather. Our last event of the semester is “End of Year Lunch and Awards Ceremony.” This will be held in FIC 003 on Friday May 3, 2024 at noon. See you there!!! – Bev Fransen fransenbeverly1@gmail.com



Reflections Committee: We’d like to thank all the members who submitted art, poems, photos and prose for this year’s *Reflections*. It would be nice to have space for all the pieces, but we don’t. One of the several difficult issues for designers is deciding which pieces fit together. Nancy Caplan, Armand Pulcinella, Susan Steiger, Diane Schaefer, Susan Steiner, Marcia Dysart and Carolyn Sutton are happy to let you know that the 2023-2024 issue is at the printer’s now. You can pick up your copy at the end-of-year party May 3rd. - Marcia Dysart mjdysart@gmail.com

Communications Committee: From time to time, the Roving Reporter asks the members to answer a simple question. This month’s question was:

Which team is going to have a better year, Orioles or Ravens?

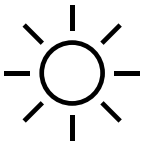


By a margin of 80% to 20% our members expect the Orioles to have a better year than the Ravens.

Which team are you rooting for the most?  (one rogue vote for the concession stand)

By a margin of 73% to 16% our members are rooting more for the Orioles more than the Ravens. Ten percent commented that they “don’t know or don’t care.” Amanda.Joyce7131@gmail.com





Summer in the City: The April 12 deadline day was, happily, very busy with last-minute event submissions. Thanks to our generous sponsors, Summer 2024 is filled with a variety of events, including hikes, restaurant meals, museum tours, potluck meals, group games, movie screenings, book sharing, feeding families at Ronald McDonald House, musical gatherings, a folk-dance party with international foods, and even a murder mystery! See the entire list on the RI website – www.renmember.com. If you weren't able to put together your event by Friday, we'll be happy to accept it now. Please send descriptions to risummerinthecity3@gmail.com. The catalog is still being assembled, this week.



August has lots of openings. You'll notice that some dates, especially in May and June, have more than one event scheduled. In most cases, different times of day will allow members to participate in both activities, but with some multi-week projects, conflicts were unavoidable. An embarrassment of riches.

We're grateful to members who have stepped up to provide social and learning activities during the summer. You've created Summer in the City! These events are invaluable - promoting deepened friendships and the sense of community that makes RI unique among lifelong learning programs. The catalog, with sign-up directions, will be published next week. Susan Serotte nsed7915@comcast.net



Looking Back on Spring Term



We had 11 inches of snow in February...



But now behold! A carpet of daffodils down by the library