From Selma Jeanne's Introduction to the International Encyclopedia of Dance. The two men who initially endorsed the encyclopedia were Philosopher Rudolph Arnheim and Dancer/Choreographer Jerome Robbins, reflecting a balance that pleased Selma Jeanne.

"In a world that is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of intercultural understanding, dance has begun to play a role of growing significance. After all, one does not need to learn an entirely new language, full of strange words and complicated grammar, to comprehend the message conveyed by the moving body. True, the message may involve some ideas that seem rather bizarre at first, but the familiarity of the figure signifying them encourages the viewer to try and understand. More and more these days, we are recognizing how important that intercultural understanding can be. Dance has been waiting for this and is ready to serve the cause."

Selma Jeanne Cohen, 1st page of Preface

p. XVIII - "We began with what we considered the core of the work: extensive historical surveys of the evolution of all kinds of dance in countries throughout the world. Of course we wanted to tell what had happened and who made it happen. But we also wanted to tell how and why dance had assumed such different forms, different values, related to the various cultures in which it evolved. We also felt it important to cover all types of dance, a form of human movement that can serve any one of three functions: People may dance for the gods (ritual), for one another (social), for an audience (theatrical)."
From Phil Alperson, currently at Rutgers University

It is a privilege and a pleasure to be able to join in the celebration of the pioneering achievement of Selma Jeanne Cohen.

I remember as a graduate student coming across one of the very first JAAC articles on dance, Selma Jeanne Cohen's 1950 article, "Some Theories of Dance in Contemporary Society." My knowledge of dance, I'm sad to say, was on a par with my own meager aptitude for the practice. I had always found dance something of a mystery, both in theory and in practice.

But perhaps for that very reason, I found the title of Selma Jeanne's essay intriguing: Just what was there about this form of artistic activity that could account for its coming into being and its continuing to flourish as a human practice?

I was surely not disappointed when I read the essay. For in that elegant article, Selma Jeanne explores four current and important approaches to the subject:

- first, as the production of a finished work of theatrical art exhibiting in an ideal way a fundamental relationship between a resistance to cohesion and a desire for harmony,

- second, as the development of a disciplined and acquired technique that represents variously, the denial of earthly gravity, freedom of action, and human efficacy,

- third, as a natural mode of expressive activity, and

- fourth, as the symbolic and self-conscious fusion of the pure imaginings of movement with dramatic and socially significant ideas

In the essay, Selma Jeanne works patiently through these conceptions of the practice, teasing out some of the basic concerns, assumptions, consequences and limitations of each perspective.

By the time I was done with the essay, I realized not only that I had learned something about these important theoretical approaches to dance, but also that I had come across a model of how to write in aesthetics. For it was clear that Selma Jeanne combined a very deep knowledge and appreciation of an art with a thorough acquaintance with the relevant literature; and that she brought to bear on all this not only a keenly critical insight but also a generous appreciation of what was of value in each approach. So I learned a lot from that early article.

Selma Jeanne ends her essay by saying that "the thoughtful inquiry into principles underlying various actual and potential directions is essential for the proper development of the art. It is only unfortunate that so few investigations have been undertaken."
Now, 48 years later, while it is still true that dance does not receive as much theoretical attention as do some other arts, more and more people are writing about the subject. And for that, we all owe a deep debt of thanks to the writings, energy, and spirit of Selma Jeanne Cohen who has for so many years worked to increase our understanding of the art she loves so much.
From Jack Anderson, Dance Critic, New York Times

Even though dancing is a physical activity and aesthetics, like any branch of philosophy, is a cerebral pursuit, Selma Jeanne Cohen, through her writing and teaching, reminds us of a quality shared by both dance and aesthetics at their best: clarity—clarity of the fleeting image and clarity of the developing thought. Throughout her career as critic, dance historian, aesthetcian, editor, and mentor to several generations of students, Selma Jeanne Cohen has affirmed the grace of the dancing body and the thinking mind.
From Arnold Berleant

Selma Jeanne has noted that her first published piece on dance appeared in the JAAC. That essay, “A Prolegomenon to the Aesthetics of Dance” was the first piece on dance aesthetics I ever read. Just recently I re-read it and it remains one of the best treatments of an especially elusive art. At the same time its clarity and grace hide a strong intellect and a penetrating eye. Knowing Selma Jeanne has been a delight on all those counts. She exemplifies for me the understanding and love of an art that one who is not herself an artist can nonetheless attain. And she is for me a model of the scholar whose critical edge is always clean and sharp yet never uses it to amputate kindness and generosity. She has been a pioneering scholar in dance history and a tireless advocate of its scholarly respectability. But at the same time her spirit has danced its way through her personal associations where she has long reigned as a prima ballerina. Encore, Selma Jeanne!
Selma Jeanne is a remarkable woman - loyal to her friends, loyal to her work, pure in her scholarship, and wonderfully persevering.

I have known her for many years and have admired her contribution to our knowledge of dance which culminated with her producing the International Encyclopedia of Dance. I was privileged to have worked with her in that monumental endeavor, and I respect her for never faltering in the twenty years it took to bring it to fruition. I end my remarks with what I said at the beginning - she is a remarkable woman.
From Hilde Hein, Department of Philosophy, Holy Cross College

I've racked my brain trying to remember when first we met. There weren't many of us little women running about ASA meetings in the 1960's, but she was there even before I was - and though there was not a lot of bonding in those pre-sisterhood days, we did manage to get together - mostly, I would guess, out of need. I was asked to be Program ChairMAN for the 28th Annual meeting in Boulder, Colorado in 1970; and I had the bright idea of introducing "hands on" (or "feet on", if you like) workshops - one in the visual arts, one in poetics, and one on dance. There were two other "regulars" with an interest in dance; one was Gertrude Lippincott, who taught at the University of Minnesota; the other was Juana de Laban, granddaughter of Rudoph von Laban, the creator of the notation system. And Selma Jeanne, the editor of Dance Perspectives. The program announcement says: "Participants are invited to take an active part in the program. Come in leotards or other appropriate dress." Believe it or not, some people did, and we were so obviously having a good time learning some rudimentary movements that gradually some inappropriately dressed folks came and joined us. I can still see Selma Jeanne demonstrating ballet movements - not only at this event, but in subsequent lectures - where she sometimes differentiated between say, a 19th century and 20th century version and then explained why the difference.

Starting an ASA newsletter was really Selma Jeanne's idea; and she did the first one - two sides of a mimeographed sheet that essentially gave information of interest to members. She had other fish to fry, however, so she asked me to take over, and I did, enlisting the help of Tom Leddy, who was then a graduate student at BU.

Somewhere in that interval, I began visiting her in New York, and, as is the practice of the tourist, dragging her off to places she wouldn't have otherwise gone to - like the Holography Museum on Mercer Street and the New Museum, which had some execrable stuff in it. In exchange, she took me to a wonderful 70th birthday party for Merce Cunningham at the NY Public Library and invited me to brunch with some of her friends.

Then we began "rooming" together at ASA meetings, and that, of course, meant long chats at night and rundowns of the day's sessions. We started correlating travel plans, and decided to go to the 1992 International Aesthetics Society meeting in Madrid. That's when Selma Jeanne revealed herself to me as a true New Yorker. I drove and she navigated - showing considerable surprise that towns were invariably to the right of the highway. I guess that the spatial consciousness that dance engenders does not extend to the principles of civil engineering. But I managed to get us lost in the narrow by-ways of Toledo, to wreck the fuel system by filling it with diesel gas, and to park us in a dump in Cordoba. She, however, was a terrific sport, and I continue to marvel at her energy, her sense of fun, her unflagging discipline and devotion to quality, and her loyalty to friends, cats, and even computer programs. She tells me she had to upgrade from the last one, but I will miss those Christmas cards from Giselle and Benny. Nota Bene SJ.
From Deborah Jowitt, Dance Critic, Village Voice

When I first met Selma Jeanne Cohen, I was a dancer and would-be choreographer who knew little about dance criticism or history. I had read *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, but didn’t know that its author, Théophile Gautier, had been a dance critic until I started writing dance criticism myself and craved entry into a tribe. Astonishingly, when I’d been writing for only a little over two years, Selma Jeanne, whose accomplishments as a critic, historian, editor, and aesthetician I much admired, invited me to teach criticism in the summer workshop for dance writers she’d organized at the American Dance Festival. She treated me as a critic she respected when I was barely sure I was one; she treated me as a budding historian at a time when practically all I knew of dance history was a few books, including her *Doris Humphrey: An Artist First* and Cyril Beaumont’s *Complete Book of Ballets*, which I’d poured over as a 12 year old. Her advice and subtle hints -- offered completely free of condescension -- as well as her example, helped me make myself into a dance scholar.

It is important in this age of specialization to note that Selma Jeanne refused to specialize; the two-hundred-and-thirty-one pieces of writing attributed to her in the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library not only tackle philosophical issues (as in her book *Next Week Swan Lake*) and historical research (see her article on the sources of Marius Petipa’s ballet *Satamellia*). As a critic she reviewed a wide range of performances: by the Royal Ballet, tap artist Paul Draper, modern dancer Lucas Hoving, and Dinizulu’s African dancers and drummers. Now, at a time when academic jargon threatens to hermeticize scholarship, I’m grateful for the clarity and openness of her writing. She’s shown as much respect for her readers as she has for the artists she wrote about and the students she taught.

Those of us who have contributed to the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, and all who have eagerly awaited its appearance, celebrate Selma Jeanne’s tenacity and integrity. The work she instigated and fought for stands as a major achievement. I mention my own experience because the *Encyclopedia* is a product of many minds, and many of those minds are the brighter for having come in contact -- as friends, students, scholars seeking advice -- with the mind of Selma Jeanne Cohen.
From Peter Kivy, Rutgers University

When I first came to a meeting of the American Society for Aesthetics, which would have been around 1965, there was only one art form less discussed by philosophers than dance--and that was music. How times have changed! But even back then, dance had something that music didn’t: Selma Jeanne Cohen, an eloquent and untiring advocate for an art practice which, indeed, may be the oldest of them all. The Encyclopedia of Dance was then just Selma Jeanne’s dream. Now it is her, and our reality. Dance was then something philosophers hardly ever mentioned. Now it is a principal concern, as today’s session amply demonstrates. What can we say but: “Thank you, Selma Jeanne, for dancing into our lives.”
From Barbara Sandrisser

Thank you for reminding us that the ephemeral holds value and truth, even as it disappears before our very eyes.
To me as an outsider in the organized dance world, Selma Jeanne Cohen seems to be a sort of ringmaster [ringmistress?] in a circus that might or might not have existed without her. Is dance, as an international phenomenon, the sort of thing you could have and encyclopedia of? Perhaps not, but it is now, because Selma Jeanne decided that there would be an encyclopedia, and now, at last, there is. To be an institutional reality, dance must be sustained by an apparatus of encyclopedias, societies, publishing ventures, international alliances, and the like, and Selma Jeanne for decades has been devoting her immense abilities and tireless energy to bringing this sort of reality into existence. Who knows how many hoops might never have been jumped through, were it not for the determined cracking of Selma Jeanne’s whip?
From Jennifer Tsukayama, Dancer and Choreographer, Arizona State University/Tempe

The International Encyclopedia of Dance is a long overdue gift to the world. Critics are quick to find fault with the minute errors in the first edition, but they fail to recognize that Selma Jeanne provided those of us in the field with both a past and a future. We can only expand our knowledge and our creative voice from what the past has given us.

Thank you, Selma Jeanne, for sharing your knowledge with us as a writer and teacher. I will not forget your enthusiastic responses to our dance performances in New York and our multi-media performance in Rhode Island on the sand, by the sea, with the tide coming in, and the sun eventually dropping below the horizon.
From Julie Van Camp, Department of Philosophy, California State University/Long Beach.

I regret that I cannot share in person the celebration of your extraordinary contribution to scholarship, the International Encyclopedia of Dance. You have provided a priceless gift to all scholars on dance, not only this valuable resource in itself, but also the affirmation of the importance of dance scholarship.

In 1977, when I joined the program staff of the National Endowment for the Humanities, you had already received a grant to conduct an historic planning meeting in 1976. As you later worked with staff in the research division on shaping a proposal for a major grant to launch the project in 1981, my colleagues asked if I could help in reviewing your draft proposals and advising them on suggestions for revisions and reviewers. They knew that I was hard at work at the time on my Ph.D. dissertation, "Philosophical Problems of Dance Criticism," and shared your passion for this little understood art form.

I remember long conversations with other staffers at NEH, trying to explain why the credentials of the contributors looked so different from the more established areas of scholarship NEH typically funded. Dance had barely established a foothold in the academy at the time, and it was a struggle to explain why a dance critic with no Ph.D. writing for the popular press should be considered a "humanities scholar." I met with no shortage of raised eyebrows when I urged that dance historians who earned a living teaching technique classes in physical education departments also should be accorded the regal status of "humanities scholar." Such was the state of dance scholarship in the late '70s and early '80s when you undertook this Herculean challenge.

No one was happier than me when your diligence paid off in another successful grant from my employer. Ironically, because of the Endowment's very strict conflict-of-interest rules at the time, I was subject to a lifetime ban on any participation in a grant project with which I had been directly involved in recommending funding. Thus, even though I left the government in 1985, I was barred from volunteering an editorial contribution to the Encyclopedia. So, today, I am sending along my only published contribution to the Encyclopedia, an article I wrote in 1983 for Humanities, published by the NEH, which applauds the forthcoming publication of the Encyclopedia.

Let me urge today's young dance historians to take a look at the history of the Encyclopedia, a mirror on the development of dance scholarship in the late twentieth century, and to follow in the path you have broken, so courageously, for all of us.
And the last and perhaps the most memorable, from Rudolph Arnheim

In the age of Giselle
people leap up to heaven,
but they never lose their
touch with the solid ground
under their feet. This is
Selma Jeanne’s realm, and
we happily follow her guidance
and gratefully.

Rudi Arnheim