

Minnesota Dancer

An official newsletter publication of USA Dance-Minnesota #2011



April 2026



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Dancers,

We're glad you're a part of our dance community. It's always a pleasure to see you at our dances and events!

Tickets for our Annual Tea Dance fundraiser are going fast. Have you bought your tickets yet? This event has sold out in the past several years. Early Bird pricing has been extended through April 7, 2026, so be sure to purchase your tickets before the special pricing expires.

The Tea Dance is on Sunday, May 3, at a new venue, **The Beach Club**, located on the shores of Bde Maka Ska, formerly Lake Calhoun. Please join us and enjoy a delicious buffet brunch and fun social dancing with DJ Scott Anderson. There will be several dance hosts, along with many friends and fellow dancers. We hope you'll be there!

Last month, as some of you may know, I had serious back surgery for a condition that had limited my ability to dance for many months. I'm thrilled to report that the surgery was successful, and I look forward to joining you all on the dance floor as soon as my doctor gives the okay. Returning to dance is a powerful motivator to aid my healing!

Thank you for supporting social dancing. To help cover event costs, the USA Dance-Minnesota Board of Directors has determined it is necessary to increase our monthly dance admission fee. The member rate will increase from \$12 to \$15 as of April, 2026. The last time dance fees were increased was in July 2024, and before that, in May 2015. This change will help us manage costs and keep providing a great experience. Our goal is to keep our dances affordable and fun. We appreciate your understanding and ongoing support.

I look forward to seeing you all on the dance floor this month and at the Tea Dance in May, where we will make new memories and continue supporting our dance community.

See you on the dance floor!

Connie

Connie Knipp, President
USA Dance-Minnesota #2011 Board of Directors

UPCOMING EVENTS

You can find all details about upcoming events on the [events page of the USA Dance-Minnesota website](#).

April 5:

-No Project Dance

April 7:

-Board Meeting

April 12:

-Project Dance

April 18:

-Third Saturday
Monthly Dance

April 19:

-Project Dance

April 26:

-Project Dance

May 3:

-USA Dance-
Minnesota Tea
Dance

May 5:

-Board Meeting

May 10:

-No Project Dance

May 16:

-Third Saturday
Monthly Dance

May 17:

-Project Dance

May 24:

-No Project Dance

May 31:

-Project Dance



USA Dance-Minnesota President Connie Knipp dancing with her Pro Instructor, Paul Botes (American Classic Ballroom), at the Savannah Dance Classic, June 2022.

Important News

Buy your tickets NOW for the May 3, 2026, Tea Dance!

**Early Bird pricing - \$75 per person for the Brunch & Dance -
is extended through April 7.**

- The price for the Brunch & Dance goes to \$95 each on April 8. Full price tickets will be available from April 8-15.
- If you choose to attend the dance only, the price is \$40.
- All ticket prices include valet parking.
- The 2026 Tea Dance will be held at **The Beach Club** in Minneapolis, MN. This historic venue overlooks beautiful Bde Maka Ska (formerly Lake Calhoun) and features a large dance floor. Enjoy a delicious brunch catered by D'Amico from 10:30 am - 12:00, and dance to DJ Scott Anderson from 12:00 - 3:00 pm.

We look forward to seeing all of you at this special fundraising event!

USA Dance MN Tea Dance

Sunday May 3rd, 2026

The Beach Club

(New Location)

***2730 West Lake Street
Minneapolis**



Brunch 10:30AM - 12PM

Dance 12PM - 3PM

Early Bird Brunch / Dance - \$75.00

Dance Only - \$40.00

Table for 10 - \$750.00

Valet Parking Included

April 8th -15th Brunch/Dance \$95.00

<https://usa-dance-minnesota-chapter-2011.square.site/>

Dance Only (No Brunch) after April 15

*Valet parking 2720 West Lake Street





The theme for the April
dance is Florals!

JOIN US AT THE APRIL 2026 DANCE!

Saturday, April 18

Wear pastel colors or floral prints to
be eligible to win a FREE pass to a
future USA Dance-Minnesota dance.

- 7 PM Lesson - Foxtrot
- Instructor - Prita Narayan
- 8 - 10:30 PM Variety Dance
- DJ: Prita Narayan
- Members \$15
- Non-members \$20

[Cinema Ballroom](#)
[1560 Saint Clair Ave,](#)
[St Paul, MN 55105](#)



Project Dance - Progressive Foxtrot



***Primary Instructor:
Prita Narayan***

****Alternate Cinema instructors
on dates indicated***

Sunday, March 1* – 1:30 P.M.
Sunday, March 8 – 1:30 P.M.
Sunday, March 15 – 1:30 P.M.
Sunday, March 22 – 1:30 P.M.
Sunday, March 29* – 1:30 P.M.
Sunday, April 5 – No Class
Sunday, April 12 – 1:30 P.M.
Sunday, April 19 – 1:30 P.M.
Sunday, April 26* – 1:30 P.M.

At:  **CINEMA
BALLROOM**

**1560 St. Clair Ave
St. Paul, MN 55105**

***Weather/driving concerns? Check
www.usadance-minnesota.org or
USA Dance Chapter 2011 Facebook page
before departing for the venue.***



**USA Dance-Minnesota #2011 offers dance instruction to members for \$7. Non-members pay \$12.
Cash, checks, and credit cards accepted.**

Become a member of USA Dance at usadance.org/page/MemberPage, or fill out a form available at class. A different professional instructor teaches a new dance at a different location every two months.

Wellness Corner

Be the Powerhouse Dancer

Pow●er●house (noun) - Person or team possessing great energy, strength, or influence

Every dancer works toward being the ultimate powerhouse, but let me introduce you to a different powerhouse that will get you one step closer toward this goal. In classical pilates, we work on strengthening our powerhouse: core, glutes, and inner thighs. All 3



of these areas of the body are highly used and very important to dancers. This is the center of our body, which controls our turns, leaps, kicks, and everything in between! Here are a few exercises you can incorporate to enhance your powerhouse.

Scooping:

Lie on your back and lift your hands to connect your pointer fingers and thumbs together to create a diamond shape. Take your diamond-shaped hands and place them on your stomach with your belly button in the center of your diamond. When you inhale, fill up your diamond, and when you exhale, scoop through your diamond from your pointer fingers to your belly button, to your thumbs.

Imagery tip: Imagine a fresh pint of ice cream. Now imagine taking a scoop all the way from one side to the other, creating a big dip in the tub. This is the shape you are creating in your core, scooping from one end to the other

Now your breathing can double as a way to maintain core engagement!

Cling wrap:

Stand up in first position, heels together, toes apart. Imagine that on each leg someone is taking cling wrap and wrapping you up from the inner thigh to the outer thigh and back toward your glutes. This leads to you finding rotation from the hip, engaging the inner thigh, and activating your glutes.

Start practicing these exercises and eventually they will become second nature and appear in your dancing, giving you a step above the rest.

Kaylee Haller - personal trainer, pilates instructor, and dance teacher. Kaylee is teaching Pilates at the Lifetime Fitness location in Eagan, MN.

Competition Dance



Competing at the Snow Ball Competition

By Grace Khouri

For almost six years, I've had the chance to dance at the Snow Ball DanceSport Competition in Minneapolis, MN, nearly every year. The experience is always exciting and impressive. No matter if you're competing or just watching, the event truly captures all your senses.

Snow Ball is a popular Twin Cities competition held every January that showcases the vibrant, passionate dance community I am proud to be part of. Dancers, both professional and amateur, come together from all over. The dedicated owners and organizers focus on every detail, making Snow Ball feel as grand as a Broadway show and emphasizing the power of dance to unite and inspire.

As an amateur competitor, I've learned that dance is about freedom and expression, as well as structure and careful steps. Competing is exciting, and

it's also a kind of performance. As a dancer, you keep good posture and a smile, knowing you might be judged at any time. You want to show something beautiful, both in how you look and how you feel.

Professional dancers are true athletes with remarkable skill. Their movements are confident, precise, and graceful, like living art. Amateurs improve with each competition. Everyone dresses elegantly: men in tuxedos and matador costumes, and women in sparkling dresses of every color.

Words can't capture it—you have to experience Snow Ball to appreciate its grandeur. I hope to return each year, grow as a dancer, and enjoy the unforgettable atmosphere with fellow dance enthusiasts.



Grace Khouri is a USA Dance-Minnesota Chapter #2011 Board Member. In the photos above, she is competing with her instructor, Troy Lerum (Dance Instructor at Dance and Entertainment Studios), at the Snow Ball DanceSport Competition, January 2026.

Share Your Photos!

Are you a USA Dance or DanceSport member? Would you be willing to share your favorite photos from a recent dance competition (not a showcase)? We would love to highlight both Amateur-Amateur and Amateur-Professional dance partnerships!

Please send your photos to USADance-MN@outlook.com. Include your first and last names, the name of the competition, and the year. If you are dancing in the photo, please tell us what the dance is. We want to celebrate our competitors!



USA Dance member Mehrdad Ameli and his Pro Instructor Natalie Botes celebrate their dance accomplishments at the Snow Ball DanceSport Competition, 2025.

Are you interested in competition dance?

Congratulations to all USA Dance-Minnesota members who compete at ballroom dance competitions!

Are you interested in participating in ballroom dance championships?

Here is a list of competitions sponsored by USA Dance, Inc.:

[Dance Competitions](#)



[Kansas City Dance Classic \(Regional\)](#)

June 6-7, 2026
Marriott Overland Park, KS
10800 Metcalf Avenue
Overland Park, Kansas 66210



[The MAC \(Regional\) Competition](#)

January 16-18, 2027
Newark International Airport Marriott
Hotel, Newark N.J.
1 Hotel Rd
Newark, New Jersey

Coach's Corner

Gleb Bannikov

Why Basics Always Win

In ballroom dancing, it's easy to believe that progress comes from learning new choreography or adding more complicated figures. In my experience, real improvement almost always comes from something much simpler - refining the fundamentals. Good basics give dancers freedom. When posture, balance, timing, and footwork become reliable, dancers stop thinking about steps and start focusing on movement, connection, and expression.

No matter the level - beginner or competitive athlete - I often notice dancers trying to move too quickly toward complexity. However, the strongest dancers consistently return to foundational work. Simple walking actions, clear weight transfer, partner connection, and controlled movement remain essential throughout a dancer's entire journey.



Working on basics is not about doing easy material. It is about practicing with intention and awareness:

- Where is your weight at every moment?
- Are you truly using the floor to create movement?
- Is your motion efficient and balanced?
- Can your partner clearly understand your lead or response?

When dancers prioritize quality over quantity, progress tends to happen naturally. Movement feels more comfortable, partnership improves, and musicality develops without force.

The goal is not to learn more figures, but to improve the execution of each movement. Ultimately, great dancers are not defined by how much choreography they know, but by how well they master the fundamentals.

Gleb Bannikov is a U.S. Professional Ballroom Showdance Champion, World Championship Bronze Medalist in 10 Dance, and European Championship Finalist in 10 Dance. He is also a Vice Champion of Russia and Finnish National Champion. Currently, Gleb is working as a professional ballroom dancer and coach at Soul Ballroom. Students can contact him for lessons: 763-358-2884 or gleb.soulballroom@gmail.com.

Member Spotlight

Jerry Bursh

We have a champion in our midst! Jerry Bursh decided to try competing when his instructor, Amy Hanson, asked him if he would like to compete in the *2023 Dancers Cup Tour*. He said to himself, "I'm going to do it, I'm going to win it." And he did! Twelve months later, he was handed the winning trophy.

Since 2023, he has won the *Dancers Cup Tour* every year and expects he will win it again in April 2026. Jerry typically enters 12 competitions a year.



The *Dancers Cup Tour* is the longest-running tour in the dance sport industry. Jerry has won the top male champion award in the *Dancers Cup Tour*, the *Dance Vision Circuit Tour*, and the *World ProAm DanceSport Series Tour*. He is a seven-time *National Tour Champion* and three-time *World Tour Champion*. He attributes his wins to lots of hard work and great dance instructors.

Jerry's primary competitive dance professional/instructor is still Amy Hanson. In 2024, they were both inducted into the *Dancers Cup Tour Hall of Fame*, an honor granted to one amateur and one professional each year. Amy has also won many Top-Teacher awards around the country.

Jerry says he takes six to seven lessons a week with six different teachers and social dances three to four times a month. He enjoys USA Dance-Minnesota's monthly dance and the annual spring Tea Dance coming up on May 3. He looks forward to local competitions, including the *Snow Ball DanceSport Competition*, the *Twin Cities Open DanceSport Competition*, and the *Go Wild Minneapolis DanceSport Competition*. Jerry also participates in local dance showcases with instructors Ricci-Lee Hotz, Janie Nordberg, Tricia Schwietz, Rebecca Ramirez, and Johanna Engebretson. Jerry believes dancing is a wonderful sport and social activity.

By Suzi Blumberg

March Monthly Dance 2026

CINEMA BALLROOM, March 21, 2026



We celebrated St Patrick's Day at the March dance with a splash of green. Congratulations to Stefan, winner of the drawing for a free dance pass. He is flanked by USA Dance-Minnesota Chapter Vice President Steve Philson (left) and USA Dance-Minnesota Chapter Treasurer Paul Stachour (right) in the photo below. Instructor William Shendel is supporting from behind!





Photos by Suzi Blumberg - Visit [our Facebook page](#) for more!

Looking Ahead

3rd Saturday Dance

May 16

7 - 8 PM Dance Lesson: Bolero

8-10:30 PM Dance

Location: Cinema Ballroom

3rd Saturday Dance

June 20

7 - 8 PM Dance Lesson: TBD

8-10:30 PM Dance

Location: Duende Dance Studio



Project Dance - Progressive American Tango

No classes on May 3 and May 10

Sunday, May 17 – 1:30 P.M.

Sunday, May 24 – No Class

Sunday, May 31 – 1:30 P.M.

Sunday, June 7 – 1:30 P.M.

Sunday, June 14 – 1:30 P.M.

Sunday, June 21 – No Class

Sunday, June 28 – 1:30 P.M.



Instructor:

Troy Lerum

Classes held at:

Dance and Entertainment Studios

5880 Omaha Avenue N

Stillwater, MN 55082

Weather/driving concerns? Check

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USA Dance Chapter 2011 Facebook page

before departing for the venue.



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Saturday, April 11, 2026 at 6:30 PM

(Spring Formal) Royal Coronation Ball

Public · Event by USA Dance Chapter #2017 and 125
LIVE

The USA Dance Rochester Chapter #2017 invites you to their Spring Formal on April 11, 2026! We encourage you to attend this formal event in your nicest black-and-white attire.

[Location: 125 LIVE!](#)
[125 Elton Hills Dr NW](#)
[Rochester, MN 55901](#)

Enter the building through the main doors and follow the signs for USA Dance. Look for the River Room on the right. Tickets will be sold at the door.

- General admission: \$10 per person
- USA Dance members: \$8 per person
- Students under age 25 (with ID): \$5 per person
- 6:30 pm Doors Open
- 7:00 pm Foxtrot Dance Lesson (included in price of admission)
- 8:00 - 9:00 pm Social Time & Dancing
- 9:00 - 9:30 pm Announcements & Pro/Pro and Pro/Amateur Performances
- 9:30-10:30 pm Social Time & Dancing

Beverages and concessions will be available for purchase, or BYOW. A refillable water station is available near the River Room.

This event is open to the public - Couples and singles of all ages are welcome!

ADVERSE WEATHER NOTIFICATIONS

Weather can be crazy any time of year....

If we have severe weather of any kind, and you don't know if a USA Dance event will take place, how can you find out?

It's easy.... Check our website, www.usadance-minnesota.org, or go to our [USA Dance Chapter 2011 Facebook page](#). There you will find out if there have been any cancellations made due to adverse weather conditions.



Photo by [Mick Haupt](#) on [Unsplash](#)

About the USA Dance-Minnesota #2011 Chapter



Photo left to right: Front row: Treasurer Paul Stachour, President Connie Knipp, Vice President Steve Philson, Secretary Su Anne Schloo. Back row: Rich Kjos, Regina Kim, Suzi Blumberg, Carrie Sandgren, Scot Gore. Missing: Jonathan Erickson and Grace Khouri

USA Dance-Minnesota #2011, 2026 Chapter Board Members

- Connie Knipp, President
- Steve Philson, Vice President
- Paul Stachour, Treasurer
- Su Anne Schloo, Secretary
- Suzi Blumberg
- Jonathan Erickson
- Scot Gore
- Grace Khouri

- Regina Kim
- Rich Kjos
- Carrie Sandgren

The mission of USA Dance-Minnesota #2011 is to improve the quality and quantity of dance in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Thank you for your support and participation in helping us to achieve that goal.

Please read the minutes from the [February 2026 Board Meeting HERE.](#)

This newsletter is intended for informational purposes. For the latest information, please visit our website at www.usadance-minnesota.org. The newsletter is published monthly. Deadlines for submission are the 20th of each month and can be emailed to Carrie Sandgren, [Newsletter Editor](#).

USA Dance-Minnesota #2011
www.usadance-minnesota.org



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