

Christina Bacock's Journalism Coursework

Dancin! Around the World

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The Reno Irish Dance Co. performs at a senior center on St. Patrick's Day.

At the age of 20 Amanda Coulson was pursuing her passion, singing and dancing in a tour group throughout Europe and Australia.

Decades later Coulson still pursues her passion, but in different light. Now, as Director for Reno studio, Dancin! Performing Arts and Events Center she has grown a sanctuary for local Reno area artists to come together and share their enthusiasm for the performing arts.

Coulson's lifelong experience performing has given her the necessary qualifications to be a successful director of the studio, but her natural keen eye for business is what has kept the studio doors open and her friendly presence is what keeps students coming back.

Coulson is a woman of many talents and has an excellence at achieving a successful studio. She has harbored many students into amazing things because of the experience they have gotten at Dancin!.

In the past, Dancin' has been known for its Irish Dance Company, but the studio has much more to offer, mainly because Coulson's network of artists creates limitless possibilities. Coulson can be seen as the hub of the local performing arts wheel. She brings together people from far and wide, past and present to create a dynamic atmosphere.

"The fact that I did a lot of different classes there made me well rounded," Lauren Haug said, a previous 5 year student of Coulson's who is now in North Carolina School of Arts preparing to join a ballet company. "What Dancin! did for me was to show the fun side of it, it wasn't just about the techniques, it helped mentally."



Sienna Shane, 14 waits to perform.

At the beginning of the year, Dancin! brought a show to Reno that has never been done before called a flash mob dance. This is where dancers randomly start dancing in a crowd. On New Year's Eve in the center of downtown Reno 60 performers from both Dancin! and 4th in the world hip-hop champions, Funk Beyond Control gathered in the center of the crowd. They performed a selection from West Side Story in a ballroom contemporary dance.

“Since it was the first time anyone did it we had to rope off the area because there were so many people,” Coulson said. ” It was amazing. I have never seen anything like it.”

Amazing experiences always seem to follow Coulson's presence, even before she had the prestige she does now, she has been performing for a wide array of audiences.

Growing up in Sydney, Coulson started dancing in local studios after encouragement from her mother. Coulson and her brother continued with dance as a duo, participating in tap championships and children's television shows. Eventually, Coulson started dancing overseas in productions throughout Europe gaining performing experience and finding new ways to become a better performer.



Hannah Myers, 15 wears a traditional Irish dress while performing.

“I was always looking for writers,” Coulson said. “So that’s why I came to America originally, was to look for writers. I had a lot of friends over here, especially in this area with Reno and Las Vegas, but in Reno specifically because of MGM and my brother was here and a lot of people I lived with, in Europe whom I had grown to love, they were like my family.”

After performing in local shows like MGM’s, “Hello Hollywood, Hello!” and “Sugar Babies,” Coulson had the realization of opening up a studio so she could be with her son, Reggie Coulson.

Dancin! continues to see talented students come in and out, all touched with Coulson’s passion for dance. Even students that did not pursue a career in dance used their experience with Coulson to guide their ways to their own creative destinies.

“My rhythm got better when taking classes at Dancin!,” Christina Sleight said, a former Dancin! student currently working on her master’s degree at Sacramento State University focusing on the art of teaching and conducting. “I understood what singers and dancers go through which helped me become a better conductor.”

Dancin! has been a studio that has gone through much growth, which is almost a representation of Coulson herself beginning with performing, then capturing her techniques and sharing them with the world as a director and teacher.

“[Dancin’] is a good place to go to get away and let loose,” Haug said. “Amanda has been all around the world and is so knowledgeable about the dancing career she has so many amazing stories people can learn a lot from her. Kids can look up to her.”

With the Reno Irish Dance Company being the prominent attention for the studio, it seems that the studio is now looking in an additional direction with Musical Theater and Ballroom dancing. What ever new style of dance or new production this studio produces, it will always perform with excellence since it has Coulson’s passion and talent to direct it.



Lacey Anderson, 14 waits to leave after her performance.