

At an Iceless High School, Hockey Team Takes Up Dancing: Hockey Team Is Dancing

By GRANT GLICKSON WHITE PLAINS

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HARRY Streep has been teaching contemporary dance classes for nearly 10 years. He has taught the young, the old, the fit and the unfit, and until the New Rochelle High School hockey team entered his class a couple of months ago he thought he had seen it all.

"It's unlike any dance class that I've ever taught," Mr. Streep said. "Normally the dancers don't say much. But this bunch makes a lot of noise. They grunt and they moan and they challenge me to challenge them."

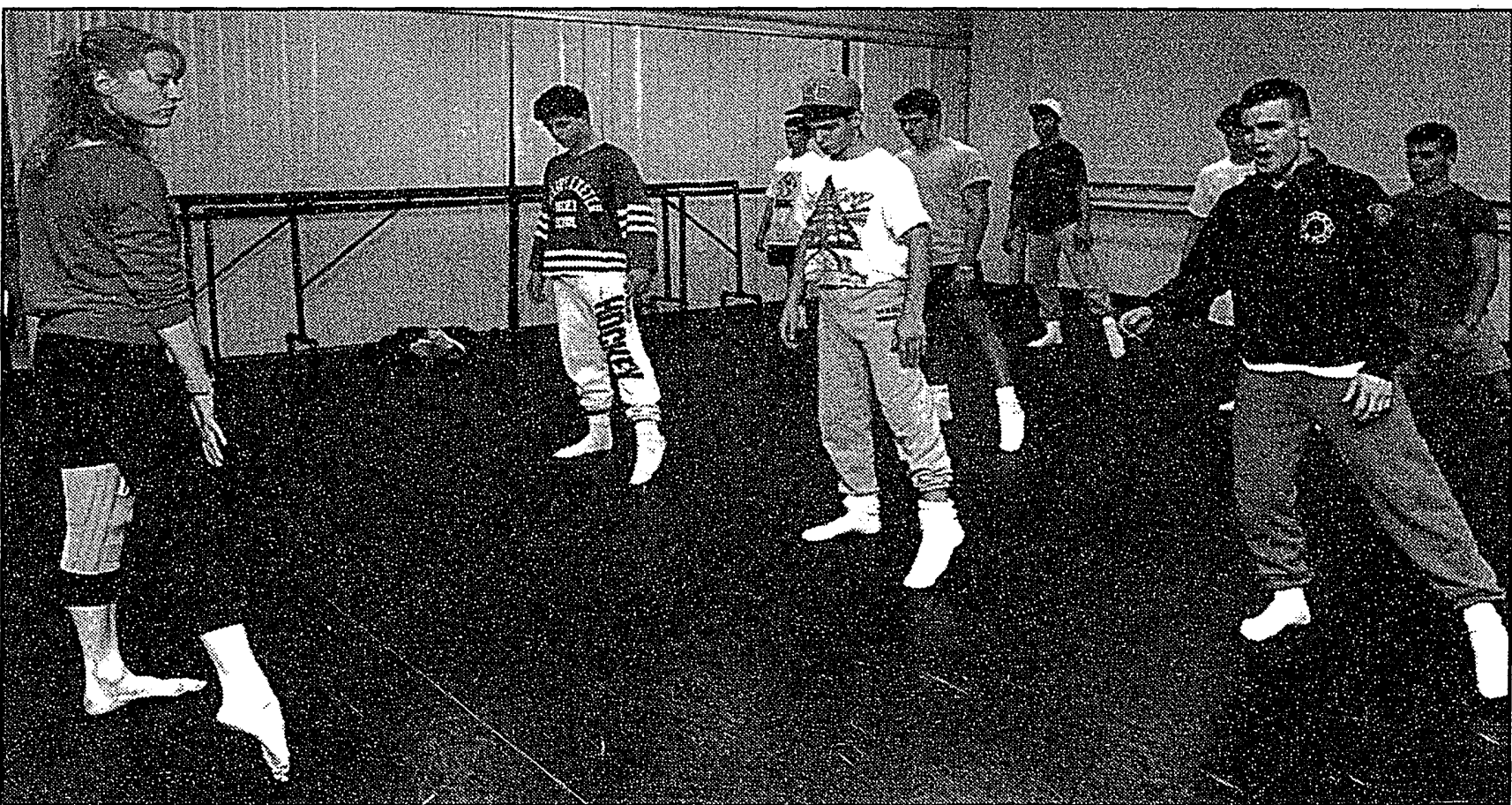
'They grunt and they moan and they challenge me.'

The members of the team, known as the Huguenots, don't have a rink of their own to practice on. To keep in shape, they came up with the idea of taking dance classes to compensate for their lack of work on the ice.

In an effort to limber up before they were introduced to their first opponent of the season, the Scarsdale hockey team, they turned to Mr. Streep and his exercise program at the Dance in Education studio in White Plains.

Chance of Injury Lessened

"When I first heard about the idea, I wasn't too high on it," said Greg Rosenberger, a left wing on the Huguenots. "In fact, I had a fight with my mother about it. But when she told me the rest of the team was going to go to the lesson, I said O.K."



New Rochelle High School hockey team members following Lesley Farlow during a class at dance studio in White Plains.

Kathy Wolfe, the executive director of the dance studio, remembers how the group of 15 spent its first day milling around, joking about the wall mirrors and acting self-conscious.

"They didn't know what to expect when they came here," she said. "They seemed terrified of being in a dance studio. But they came here on their own, and it was Harry's job to

keep them here. He must have done a great job because they've showed up for every class."

The classes usually start off pretty slowly, with Mr. Streep leading the athletes through warm-ups. The pace gradually picks up as the discotheque-type music blasts in the background.

"The exercises that I make them

do are a combination between break dancing and pushups," Mr. Streep said. "And they'll all look at me and say, 'Oh, we could do that.' And they'll do it and I'll make them do it faster and faster until they can't keep up with me. I always make sure that I could do something a notch faster than them so that there's always room for improvement."

Teaching the students how to properly stretch out so that they can prevent injuries is Mr. Streep's main concern. He's also showing them how to move muscles without expending more energy than necessary.

"I try to use movements that are similar to those used in hockey," Mr. Streep said. "But sometimes it's hard for them to imagine themselves mak-

ing these movements without a stick and a puck."

Mr. Streep said that while relating dance to hockey was essential in holding the students' attention, he never tried to equate the two. "It's like comparing potatoes and spaghetti," he said. "They're both starches, but they're really not the same."

An Upside Down Turtle

What he does do is explain every motion the players make. He said some of the exercises required an explanation because "they look so ridiculous." One hamstring exercise, in particular, requires special description because the position resembles "an upside-down turtle."

"They're scared," Mr. Streep said of the student-athletes, "because they're analyzing themselves for the first time. When you play hockey it doesn't matter how you look as long as the puck goes in the net. In dance it matters the way you look and they're a bit self-conscious."

When frustrated with difficult maneuvers, the athletes often start fooling around. "That's their way of dealing with it," Mr. Streep said. "But if they can do something they keep trying to improve themselves."

Students Pay Expenses

They all signed up for the \$65 class with self-improvement in mind. Kevin Thompson, a goalie, and Danny Ronca, a center, came up with the idea during the off-season while discussing ways they could improve their flexibility. "We had both read about all these football players like Lynn Swann taking ballet lessons," Mr. Thompson said, "and we thought it would be good for us, too. So we used our influence on the rest of the team and got my mother to make all the arrangements."

Kevin's mother, Linda, met with Paul Ryan, the athletic director at New Rochelle High School, and

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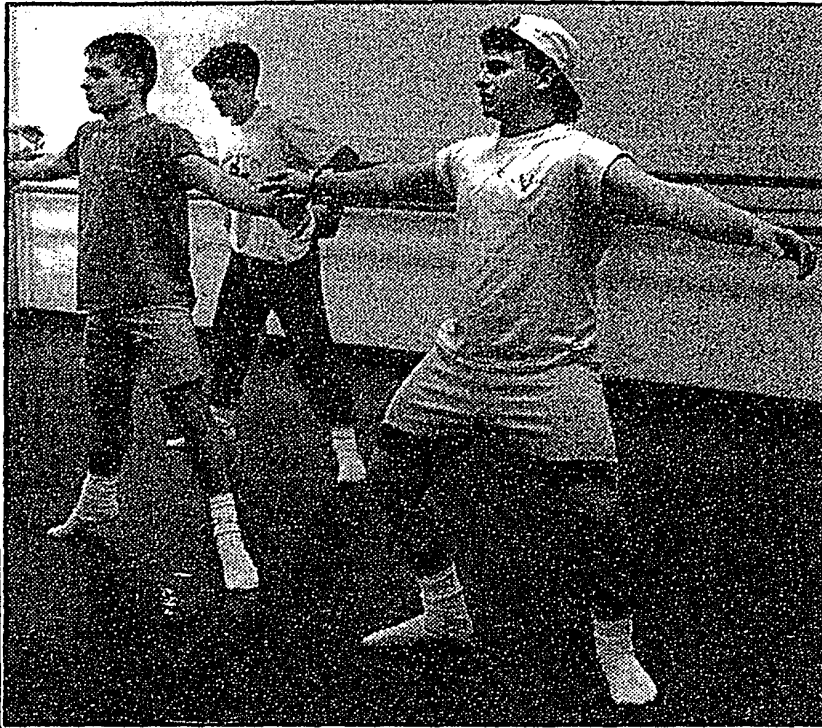
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worked out a deal to allow the students to receive independent-study credits for the dance program. Mr. Ryan said he had approved such programs in the past and was not at all surprised when he heard of the team's intentions. The students pay their own expenses.

"I know our hockey team, and they're a different breed," he said. "This team would do anything to improve themselves as players. But it's tough on them because we don't have our own rink. They don't get the ice time that other schools do. So when they saw a way to make themselves better players they took advantage of it."

And they seem to know how to utilize their teacher's expertise. "When I'm giving one of them a critical comment all the ears perk up," Mr. Strep said. "They're on a competitive team and each one is out to get a competitive edge over the other. They seem to be used to listening and being criticized."

Jim Tozzo, the team's hockey coach, said he was glad to see his team looking to improve upon last year's second-place finish in the Westchester and Rockland League. "I went down there halfway through their sessions and a few of them were having a little trouble with the steps," he said. "But what I noticed was that they were all following everything Mr. Strep did. And that made me happy because I knew that they respected him and they would learn a great deal from him." ■



The New York Times/Suzanne DeChillo

Scott Freeman, right, taking part in dance class with with fellow members of New Rochelle High School hockey team.