Letter from the Captain

Dear MITBDT Members, Alumni and Friends,

It is my pleasure to introduce the winter’s edition of the team’s newsletter to you.

Reflecting the continuing excellence of our training programs, our rookie dancers have had a fantastic start of their journey into ballroom dancing, as you will read about their strong results in the fall and winter competitions. Beyond positive competition results, our team’s camaraderie and mutual support continue to strengthen as we prepare for the upcoming competition season. We strive to give back to the community by promoting our passion for dancing through diverse showcases and performances in the local area, including high schools and charity events, hoping to inspire interest in dancing.

Preparations for the 2015 MIT Open are well on their way under the overview of our competition coordinator, Jessica Bernier. We are excited to welcome back the 2014 WDSF World Professional Standard Champions Mirko Gozzoli & Edita Daniute as our showcase couple. Once again I would like to thank you for your support throughout the years, and we look forward to seeing you at the MIT Open.

Sincerely,
Jorge Valdez
MITBDT Captain 2014-2015
Ten minutes to fill an illicit tupperware at the dining hall, five to walk to the bus stop. An hour on the bus (unless there’s traffic, make it two in case). Ten minutes walking time at MIT. Five minutes to change into practice clothes. Subtract two and a half hours from the time that practice starts, and round to the hour before.

This is how MITBDT dancers from Wellesley decide which Peter Pan bus to catch. It’s not a perfect formula, but we get better the more we commute. Last year, when the Wellesley administration began asking the group of Wellesley dancers to hold an election, we had only four active team members from which to pick two co-presidents and a treasurer.

We’ve been asked in the past why the ‘Wellesley Ballroom Team’ exists, since we are all members of MITBDT. The answer is in part that formula above. There are specific issues that apply only to Wellesley dancers, and the Wellesley team functions both as a support group for logistical problems, and as a social circle for dancers when they spend time on Wellesley campus. As co-presidents elected in that highly contested race last spring, we do our best help the group effectively serve the needs of all Wellesley MITBDT dancers, and expand interest in competitive ballroom dancing across Wellesley campus.

Last summer, we planned extensively for the upcoming academic year, hoping to address the myriad of problems Wellesley dancers faced during the last few competitive seasons. First on the agenda was improving recruitment, in the hope of retaining more Wellesley rookies after Dance Camp. Normally there is enormous interest in ballroom dance the first week of the year. However, over the course of the proceeding weeks, students dropped out as they grew busier from both school and other activities, and as they begin to realize how substantial the commute can be.

For the first time, current Wellesley team members held an information session before the start of Dance Camp, which was attended by over one hundred students. We addressed the bus schedule, how to find late night and early afternoon meals before and after practice, costumes, transportation to competition,
Community Highlights

(A Letter from Wellesley cont.)

and how to navigate the MIT campus. During Dance Camp and for several weeks after, we tried to guide new members through the commute in person, and show them the different practice venues. There are currently twenty Wellesley undergraduates dancing with MITBDT, a four-fold increase from the 2013-2014 academic year and the highest retention rate of Wellesley MITBDT dancers to date.

The twenty students who share the motivation and the commitment to travel to MIT three to six days a week rely on each other for encouragement. These Wellesley students have become not only fellow dancers but also travel buddies who endure together the congested Mass Pike traffic and the breathless dash to the bus stop at 77 Mass Ave. We have tried our best this year to make the group more cohesive. For the first time, we have organized transportation to competitions as a group, rather than each one of us individually trying to overcome the notorious inaccessibility of Wellesley campus in those early morning hours when the Peter Pan bus is not running.

Every Tuesday night, Wellesley MITBDT dancers congregate in a dining hall at Wellesley College to have dinner and chat about both ballroom-related and non-ballroom-related topics, which have helped build a safe and supportive social environment on campus for our dancers. This year, MITBDT brought together a diverse group of Wellesley students from all different backgrounds and academic interests. The group includes a plethora of majors, from Math and Chemistry to Russian, Economics, Philosophy and Religion, but we share the same love for ballroom dancing.

As co-presidents, we are thrilled with the progress this group has made during the last semester. Many thanks all of our fellow MITBDT members, and all of the team coaches for making Wellesley team members feel welcome, and supporting us as we pursue our passion for competitive ballroom dancing.

Please contact Fil Hsu at mitbdt-performances@mit.edu if you are interested in performing or community outreach or have opportunities that you would like to see the team involved in.

59 Days in New York

Team alumnus May-Elise Martinsen, now living in New York, is creating a musical comedy webseries, 59 Days in New York, that chronicles the life of Amy, an aspiring singer-songwriter. Currently at eight episodes, the show features Amy’s escapades as she tries to make it in the Big Apple itself.

The last time we heard from Martinsen, she had just moved to New York and was sorely missing the ballroom world. She wrote to the team in the Summer 2013 newsletter that she would be “storing away good memories and lessons to remember for when I write my own ballroom musical... a few years down the line.” While 59 Days is not a ballroom musical, episode 8, “The Dream,” does feature a partner dance medley with current team member Ben Moss making a guest appearance.

Find out more about 59 Days in New York on their Facebook Page or Youtube Channel.
The MITBDT Competition Committee is happy to announce that the 19th annual MIT Open will take place on April 25-26, 2015, at the Rockwell Cage on the MIT campus. We will once again be offering over $8,000 in scholarship money, so spread the word!

We are honored to announce the 2015 MIT Open professional show couple: **Mirko Gozzoli and Edita Daniute!**

Mirko and Edita have represented Italy in Professional Ballroom since October 2009. Throughout their career together, they have consistently ranked at the top of prestigious competitions, winning the WDSF World Professional Standard Championships in 2014 and 2010 (ranked second in 2011) and the European Professional Standard Championships in 2013. Mirko and Edita retired from the competitive ballroom scene in November 2014.

It is a privilege to be able to watch their expressive dancing once again. Their showcase will feature five dances in the International Ballroom style on the evening of Saturday, April 25th, 2015. Mirko and Edita will also teach a workshop and offer a small number of private lessons, available to competitors and the general public alike.

Our website will be updated with information about the schedule, registration, the professional showcase, and other details as the date draws near. Also check our Facebook Page for the latest competition news.

Planning the MIT Open is a monumental task that requires both MITBDT and community involvement. If you would like to contribute, consider making a donation or buying an ad space in the program. Contact mitbdt-comp-coord@mit.edu with any questions about getting involved.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2015 MIT Open!
Francesca Majluf, our Events Coordinator, ran and won on the platform of increasing intra-team sociability and community. In the last semester, she has worked to introduce novel events to rejuvenate our recruiting efforts, better integrate rookies into our ballroom family, and otherwise bring good cheer to the team and the greater Boston ballroom community. Below is her recap of the first semester of her term.

Rookies
The fall season kicked off with our recruiting season, an annual event that offers introductory classes and showcases performances of each dance style in order to recruit new rookies. This year, we introduced a new publicity technique: the Flash Mob. At noon on Monday, September 8th, six veteran dancers popped out of nowhere in Lobby 7 and danced four minutes of Cha Cha and Jive, leaving passer-byers amazed. Shortly thereafter, two standard couples VW’ed down the infinite on an early Thursday morning.

In order address previous complaints about rookie-vet separation in the first year, we planned mixers. To introduce the newly recruited members to the team a few weeks into the semester, both rookies and veterans headed off to J.P. Licks in Boston for some late evening ice cream. By the time the end of October rolled around, our rookies became official members after their first competition. As a welcome, two veteran members introduced them to a new component of ballroom dance: the fun dance. After their Halloween practice, several rookie couples competed in dances such as the Sad Swing and Robot Waltz, as well as a costume contest with candy as a prize. Afterwards, team members watched a movie to put an appropriate close to the eventful evening.

Pictured to the right: Top, rookies enjoy frozen treats at J.P. Licks; Middle, Arlene Hijara and Jeff McCollum lead a Paso Doble workshop at our Monster Ball; Bottom, Michelle Duan and Anette Tromborg at our Come Classy social.
Team News

(cont. from Fall Pg. 5)

**General Dance Socials**
We kicked off the social dance season with our first social titled “Dancing through the Decades.” The attendees displayed a wide range of costumes, from bow-tied 30’s gentlemen to hippies to even an impersonation of Armin. A costume contest took place, with two team members, Anette Kjoshagen Trømborg and Amy Ishiguro, tying for first place with their fabulous flapper girls costumes.

November brought two socials. The “Monster Ball” featured a brand new fog machine and a Paso Doble lesson taught by Matador McCol-lum. This Halloween dance proved to be a success among the terrifying and unrecognizable attendees. That same month the team had its third social, “Come Classy ft. Bows and Mustaches,” where sparkly bowties and mustaches of all kinds were given out at the entrance.

The month of December brought the last team social of the semester, a joint social with MIT’s Ballroom Dance Club. “Winter Fairytale,” although hosted the same night as the Big Apple Dance Challenge, still attracted crowds of social dancers that came for an evening of magic and gallantry.

**Winter Intra-team Socials**
As the weather started to hit the freezing point the last weeks of November, it was the turn of us dancers to put our balance and grace to test. On the second to last weekend of the month, numerous team members stepped off the ballroom heels on to the skating blades, and skillfully glided down the Johnson Ice Rink at MIT.

The fall semester came to an end with the team’s Christmas party. Featuring sugar cookies, eggnog, multicolored chips, and a ballroom playlist of holiday’s music, the party provided team members with the opportunity to relax, laugh and play with their fellow teammates. More than 25 dancers also participated on our annual Secret Santa gift exchange, with gifts ranging from mountains of chocolate to tanks of helium to underwear. The evening was a delight, and gave the team the perfect closing to a wonderful dance season.

**Competition Recap Fall 2014**

Peggy Zhu

The fall of 2014 has been another successful competitive season for MITBDT. Not only did the rookies enjoy their very first competition experiences, our vet dancers also achieved admirable results.

In October, our rookies made a strong debut at the annual Harvard Beginners, taking at least three spots in every Newcomer final. Josh Scherrer & Carolyn Rogan claimed firsts in Newcomer Latin and Rhythm, and Alex Padron & Amber Guo won Newcomer Standard and Smooth events. In the rest of the Syllabus events, the team was well presented in Bronze Latin and Standard, Silver Latin, and Gold Standard finals. Dan Chen & Casey Crownhart and Ross Finman & Shiyan Ji brought home blue ribbons for Bronze and Gold Standard, respectively. Corey Cleveland & Clio Flikkema, keeping up the good work from their rookie year, placed second their first time competing in Silver Latin. The
Team News

(cont. from page 6)

rookie-vet team match was undoubtedly a highlight of the comp, where MIT created much laughter and retrieved its winning title after losing it last year.

Held in Rhode Island this year, Brown was the second comp that rookies attended. Once again, they harvested a sweeping victory, claiming firsts in all Newcomer events and the trophy for rookie team match. Mathew Cavuto & Rachael Schwartz won Newcomer Rhythm and Latin, while Alex Padrón & Amber Guo placed first in Newcomer Smooth and Standard. In Bronze division, Dan Chen & Casey Crownhart won first in Standard and Smooth. The team was well presented in both Silver Standard and Latin events, with four MIT couples making the finals of each style. Vitaly Abromshitov & Amy Ishiguro and Corey Cleveland & Clio Flikkema claimed blue ribbons in Silver Standard. Aaron Beal and Amy Yuan won Silver Latin, having competed together only twice. In Gold, Ross Finman & Shiyan Ji placed second in Standard and Brian Solomon & Jessica Bernier won Latin. In addition, Ben Moss & Esther Rheinbay placed first in the final of Open Standard.

The Tufts competition took place one week from Brown and saw more or less similar results. Alex Padrón & Amber Guo continued their dominance in Newcomer Standard and Smooth. Hao Zhang & Peggy Zhu won in Bronze Latin. Giorgio Gaglia (Harvard) & Lihua Bai placed first in Prechamp Standard. As the last and the biggest collegiate competition of the season, Big Apple Dancesport Challenge was highly competitive. Although the team brought home less ribbons, MIT dancers still gave out their very best performance. In Newcomer division, Alex Padrón and his newly paired partner, Ziyu Wang won two finals in Standard and placed high in other three styles. Matthew Cavuto & Rachael Schwartz won Newcomer Smooth and finished top in Rhythm and Standard. Lingping Zeng & Linying Zhang placed high in Bronze Standard finals. Corey Cleveland and Clio Flikkema stood out in Silver Smooth and entered the very challenging Silver Latin final. Jorge Valdez and Laura Perovich claimed third in Gold Rhythm. Dilip Thekoodan & Amy Fan won Gold Smooth. In Champ Standard final, Ben Moss & Esther Rheinbay came to fourth place.

With many ribbons and a short break in hands, the team is getting ready for an even more competitive season ahead, including their very own MIT Open.

Team Highlights

- Casey Crownhart was named one of MIT’s 35 Burchard scholars, selected for demonstrating academic excellence in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, as well as in science and/or engineering. Find the article by MIT News is [here](#).
- We have added a new page to our website celebrating our active teammates who have reached Open dancer status. Check it out [here](#).
Team News

General Announcements

Studio Space
Efforts to obtain our own studio space on campus continue. Please contact Ben Moss (benm@mit.edu) if you would like to help in any way!

MITBDT Facebook Page
MITBDT has a new facebook page. Stay updated by liking us here.

MIT Open 2015
When: April 25-26, 2015
Where: Rockwell Cage
Contact: mitbdt-comp-coor@mit.edu
Stay updated by checking the MITBDT website.

February Social Dance
When: Saturday, February 21, 2015
Where: Sala de Puerto Rico, Student Center
Contact: mitbdt-ec@mit.edu

March Social Dance
When: Saturday, March 21, 2015
Where: Morss Hall, Walker Memorial
Contact: mitbdt-ec@mit.edu

May Social Dance & Team Banquet
When: Saturday, May 9, 2015
Where: Morss Hall, Walker Memorial
Contact: mitbdt-ec@mit.edu

Games & Move Night
When: Saturday, March 7, 2015
Where: McCormick Hall
Contact: mitbdt-ec@mit.edu

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Pictured: Matthew Cavuto and Rachael Schwartz (Row 1, left), Amy Ishiguro and Vitaly Abdarashitov (Row 1, right), Ross Finman and Shi Jiyang (Row 2), Ben Moss and Esther Rheinbay (Row 3, left), Ethan Bates and Lauren Jarin (Row 3, right), Juliana Neves and Alexander Creely (Row 4), Brian Solomon and Jessica Bernier (Row 5, left), Tiago Souza and Anna Gavrilman (Row 5, right)

Photos by Jacky Chen, Ron Hoffmann, and Jorge Valdez.
Rookies go on our annual shoe trip to Paterson’s (A).

The team comes together for a team dinner after Harvard Beginners (B), during our Holiday Party (D), and during our annual Thanksgiving Dim Sum trip (E).

Rookies Rachael Schwartz and Matthew Cavuto pose for the camera at our get together at the ice rink (C).

Photos by Ron Hoffmann, Jorge Valdez, and Francesca Majluf.
Alumni Update

Maria Polyakova

I moved to Stanford in late August 2014 after graduating from MIT in June. I am now a faculty member at the School of Medicine and have wonderful colleagues. None of them are, unfortunately, into dancing.

At work, I mostly focus on analyzing data and writing articles related to US health policy. We work on issues related to Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act Exchanges. I have been slowly discovering dancing at Stanford, starting with some recruiting camps and then joining some classes. The sentence “I used to be on the MIT BDT“ produces a spectacular reaction, with everyone assuming that my dancing must be fantastic.

Will be working hard (as soon as I find a partner!) in between my research endeavors on living up at least a tiny bit closer to that expectation.

Julia Shen Yue

I left Boston and the MITBDT in May 2014 and moved to West Palm Beach Florida to be a financial advisor for Morgan Stanley where I help high net individuals manage their wealth.

Life in Palm Beach County has been vibrant. I had the chance to watch a Polo match and attend the Super Bowl party with Donald Trump. I live by the ocean and enjoy the beautiful weather. Nevertheless, nothing is as fun as hanging out with my MITBDT friends.

I am still dancing and fortunately have some world class coaches to train me. I am planning to compete in top Pro-Am competitions while I am here. I can’t wait to see some of you at some upcoming competitions like the Embassy Ball, USDC and OSB.