



Vincent Nicholas Orlando

March 22, 1933 - June 3, 2016

Vincent Nicholas Orlando died peacefully in his sleep on June 3rd 2016. For over 50 years Vincent Orlando's outstanding creativity in dance and education has been experienced by generations of Long Islanders. His careful nurturing of ballet dancers, some of whom lived with him and his first wife, Betty, in their 1800s house, attracted the renowned television commentator, Harry Reasoner, who made a documentary film of Orlando, his 1800 Huntington house, and his unusual company of outstanding young dancers. Mr. Reasoner won an Emmy award for his documentary which he titled, "The Joy of Reaching," taken from Orlando's words: "It's not having the company that's important. It's creating a company. It's not the completion of it, but the joy in reaching for it."

Andre Eglevsky, his early mentor, invited Vincent to perform with him and Maria Tallchief in the live, televised, "Bell Telephone Hour." Declining an opportunity to join the New York City Ballet, Orlando chose instead to dance, teach, and choreograph in Huntington, where he knew he could enjoy creative freedom. Vincent formed a relationship with the Huntington Arts Council and performed with his company, Orlando Ballet, in Heckscher Park. He further enriched Long Island by inviting stars of such companies as New York City Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre to perform in Huntington bringing the pleasure of such stellar dancers as Melissa Hayden, Suzanne Farrell, Patricia McBride, Bobby Blankshine, and Edward Villella to the Long Island community. In addition, Vincent brought dance into the Northport school

district for 28 years in a program titled, "Values Through the Arts in Education" that eventually became accredited by New York State.

Orlando's experimentation in Haitian Dance developed a young drummer named Emile Latimer, who eventually served as drummer for Richie Havens and Nina Simone.

Vincent Orlando survived the death of his wife, Betty, who costumed the Orlando Ballet Company, the loss of their historic house by fire, and the dissolution of his company. Extending his vision beyond ballet, he created a unique exercise program for non-dancers that attracted professional sports players, business owners, and the Huntington community. He married modern dancer Kate Ciannella and together they built a new studio on his historic property on West Shore Road and Mill Dam Avenue and called it Orlando Dance & Exercise, Inc. The school offered programs in Ballet, Modern Dance, Jazz, Tap, and Exercise and offered end of year performances that instructed the audience in the art of developing young dancers.

Orlando taught classes in New York City at City Center's Ballet Arts and, in 2005, created his last Ballet, "In Search" performed at the Clark Studio Theatre at Lincoln Center.

Until his death, Vincent Nicholas Orlando continued to influence his immediate environment. When he moved into Hilaire Nursing & Rehab Center, his room was a statement of beauty decorated with his unusual antique furniture, and walls full of his illustrious dance career. Vinnie and Kate practiced tai chi together and Vinnie taught wheelchair tai chi to the residents and staff. He was elected and served as Resident Council President of Hilaire Nursing and Rehab, a position that he humbly accepted and did his best to fulfill. In 2009, the Long Island Dance Consortium honored Vincent Orlando for his many contributions to the arts on Long Island. One of his original ballets, "Albinoni Pas De Deux" was performed by guest dancers from Dance Theatre of Harlem. At that time he said, "A tribute is not an end. There's always more ... sharing of ideas, sharing of creativity, daring to be creative."

Cemetery Details

St. Patrick's Cemetery

45 Huntington Road
Huntington, NY 11743

Tribute Wall



“ Vincent Nicholas Orlando

November 27, 2022 at 05:33 PM



“ Jo Ellen Zinzi lit a candle in memory of Vincent Nicholas Orlando



Jo Ellen Zinzi - January 27, 2018 at 07:07 PM



I took dance and exercise classes with “Vinnie”, for many years during the 1980’s.

Whether dancing between the raindrops which fell from the leaky tarp covering the back building, or jumping up and down on those professionally “sprung” dance floors in the gorgeous new studio, Vinnie’s class was often the highlight of my day.

I will always remember the energy that he transmitted to his students. Also his commitment to excellence, which brought out the best in each of us.

There are many adjectives I could use to describe Vinnie, eg: artistic, happy, respectful, funny, intelligent, etc. , but, the one word of high praise, that best sums up his character for me, is that of “gentleman”.

Jo Ellen Zinzi - January 27, 2018 at 07:30 PM

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*I took the exercise classes from Vinnie and Kate and loved every minute of it. They were amazing. I got so addicted I was going 4 to 5 times a week. Even when it snowed. I remember a time there was only like 4 or 5 of us that showed up for class because of the snow. He gave us a jazz class instead. It was so much fun. I will always remember their kindness. My girlfriend Barbs always came too. She told me this morning about the loss of Vinnie. I was deeply saddened but have such fond memories. My thoughts go out to Kate...Just wonderful people.
Beth Brazel formerly Agoglia*

Beth Brazel - August 22, 2018 at 11:42 AM