

# W425T

Let's Dance!

By: Sophia Strawser

The Body Issue No. 52

"CUT TO:  
Third date with  
Mr (swiped)  
Right. You're  
in a salsa class,  
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IMAGE: ANTELAGEN

# let's DANCE!

Where are all New York's single men? They're making a move on **Sophia Strawser** RIGHT NOW at dance class

**R**emember the first half of *Footloose*? Where dancing isn't allowed and no one does it? That's where I live. I don't want to dance with somebody and my hips do, in fact, lie. That being said, this month someone hit fast forward on my movie and I found myself at the warehouse dance party aka Ailey Dance Extension.

With more than 90 weekly classes, I was quite overwhelmed with my choices. I started with salsa. I've always thought it was a hoax that singles go to salsa or ballroom classes to meet people. Now, I still can't speak for ballroom, but salsa is precisely where all the single men are at, New York. I had three handshakes, one business card, and four smiles waiting for me as I exited that class and I spent most of the time accidentally tripping people up. Just imagine if I'd actually been good. (Suddenly my left ring finger feels quite a bit heavier).

A week later, I headed into Horton. If you're not familiar with the Horton Technique, you've probably seen it without knowing. It's exclusive to Alvin Ailey and is incorporated into the majority of his choreography. I'm writing this article the morning after the class, with sore abs, and thighs that feel like I went on a 50-mile bike ride. It was a beginner class, which was great for me because each step

was very well explained. There were a few people who had been taking the class for weeks and were able to add in modifications as needed. This allowed them to grow as dancers before they elevate to the advanced beginner level.

Terri Wright was my instructor, and if a giddy smile — ya know the kind you get when you see a perfectly shaped scoop of ice cream on top of a homemade cone — was a person, that'd be Terri. I found the routine we learned rather challenging, but if you're the type of person who takes Zumba and you do one really good pop, or maybe drop, or maybe a good lock (remember I live in the *Footloose* town so what are the kids doing these days?) and you think to yourself "I should have been a dancer," take this class. Even my poorly executed Horton moves made me feel like a dancer. I went home and signed up for a slot on *So You Think You Can Dance?* (I did later cancel it, but is that temporary confidence not rewarding in itself?)

I got a chance to chat with Ailey Extension's director and former dancer Lisa Johnson-Willingham. Here's what she had to say.

**If you could recommend one class to try, which one would it be?**

A personal favorite is DanceFIT with Karen Arceneaux. It's an upbeat and challenging mix of cardio and dance

choreography that gives students a total body workout.

**What are your thoughts on the connection of dance and overall health?**

Dance benefits the body, mind, and spirit. Not only does it offer physical benefits — including coordination, strength, flexibility, endurance, and agility — but it also enhances your mental capability because the process of learning new moves and repeating what you see develops your memory skills. Participating in dance classes is a great opportunity to interact with others and work off stress and fatigue, while increasing energy and mood.

**Do you support dancing on the subway? If so, what would actually make you give a dollar after the show?**

I absolutely support dancing on the subway. I support dancing anywhere! It energizes the human spirit and brings joy not only to the performer but to onlookers as well. I'd give a dollar to any style that makes me smile!

With classes working out at less than the cost of the average NYC workout, it's the perfect addition to the weekly schedule. Talk about a cute second or third date idea. CUT TO: Third date with Mr (swiped) Right. You're in a salsa class, you're wearing Lululemon, you're both giggling, you're accidentally bumping into each other, you're working up a sweat, and all before you grab some late-night Thai food around the corner. You don't know how to use chopsticks. He does. You have a *Ghost* movie poetry moment but with chopsticks. You practice your new dance moves on your doorstep before a kiss goodnight. The End. I want full rights on that script idea. (I'm looking at you, Hallmark).

Catch me next month when I still don't know how to move my hips but I'll most certainly be introducing myself as a "dancer" to all new acquaintances. @SophiaStrawser