Images of the Flurry
by Lawrence White

Flurry 2007 Swing Dancers by Lawrence White

The first thought that comes to mind when a photographer gains a "full access pass" to shoot photos during the Dance Flurry event in Saratoga is: "HOW CAN I CLONE MYSELF?" It is impossible for anyone to be in so many places to photograph so many music and dance events at one time. The logistics of covering the entire event are impossible. Every session is noteworthy, most are visually stunning, and they happen all over Saratoga Springs at several venues at the same time. Whew! By the end of three days a photographer could easily miss three times as many photos as he or she captured simply because of so many events missed.

The technical challenge is also daunting, particularly if the goal is to capture the events with a natural lighting scheme and still be artistically expressive of the moods and themes. It requires the photographer to constantly make adjustments with equipment to accommodate the conditions and the movement in the space. It also requires thoughtful choices in lens selection and photo angle to bring the subject and the movement into proper perspective.

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To meet this challenge I called upon talented local photographers Patricia Connell and Dale Winsor to help me. They were able to photograph some crucial events that otherwise would have been missed.

"Two things really stood out in my experience," Dale recently told me. "One was the energy in the Afro-Caribbean belly dancing. Their vibrant passion was tangible—like electricity in the air. It was contagious and you automatically wanted to move your feet and swing your hips to the rhythm of the drumbeat. The flurry of motion in their colorful swirling skirts was visually fantastic."

photo by Dale Winsor

Dale recalls a touching moment he witnessed during one of the many spontaneous jam sessions that pop up throughout the hallways of the Convention Center. "I noticed that there was no age discrimination amongst the musicians, and that many were playing handmade musical instruments. I recall a young teenage boy playing his heart out next to another passionate musician who was probably in his eighties. You could see the joy in both their faces and feel their life force in their playing. There was a timeless bond between the two of them that was manifested through the playing of the music. It was lovely."
Pat Connell described the Dance Flurry as "a bright light in the middle of the dark winter!" She went on to say, "This was my first Dance Flurry experience, and I was thoroughly impressed. The variety of dances and the enthusiasm of the dancers and instructors were inspiring. Every nook and cranny of the venues seemed

to contain musicians and dancers and each venue literally crackled with energy and vitality. I don't normally use so many descriptive words, but there just don't seem to be enough of them to capture the experience." She finished by simply saying, "My photos will have to speak for me."

As the chief photographer, I was personally very touched by the beauty of many of the events. The Chinese ribbon dancing session at the Museum of Dance was particularly lovely. The colors and movement created a poetry of symmetry that was visually stunning. These hypnotic images called for both stills and video clips so that I was in constant movement throughout the session. In fact, by the end of the Flurry I certainly had danced as much with my camera as any of the dancers did with their partners.

The finale contra dances at the convention center provided the ultimate image of the Dance Flurry. Hundreds of couples spinning and moving in rhythm and harmony was a wonderful sight to behold and for me to photograph. It is a spectacularly joyous event. Here use of a strobe with a long shutter speed gave a look of motion and yet defined the dancers and the hall nicely.

In the final analysis it is almost as difficult to write about the Dance Flurry as it is to photograph it. The wonderful wholesome family energy that emanates from the Flurry is unique, and I hope that we photographers captured this feeling in our photos and video footage. I am certain that the Dance Flurry will continue to prosper and grow, providing a great cultural facet to our area that can appeal to anyone.

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photo by Lawrence White
Lwhite18@nycap.rr.com
http://picasaweb.google.com/FlurryFestival/LawrenceWhite
http://www.dancersaredifferent.com/