



Chelydra

"Dancer With An Attitude"

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UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: THE DISAPPEARING DANCER

I'm sure this has happened to you: You attend a seminar or show, and purchase the video. After some few weeks, the much-anticipated video arrives in the mail, you pop it into the VCR, and: Where did some of the dancers go?

The most frequently disappearing dancer is the seminar instructor or guest star. Is this some kind of conspiracy against dance consumers - a sleazy scam to rip off a few extra bucks?

No. The truth is out there, and it's pretty simple. The answer to a disappearing dancer is most likely to be one or more of the following reasons:

-Pride of performance

The dancer feels that the evening's performance was not up to her usual standards, and chooses not to allow it to be distributed.

-Unattributed piracy of choreography

Professional dancers at the seminar instructor/concert performer level work very hard at creating and polishing their choreographies. All too frequently, they see their choreographies pirated or heavily plagiarized from concert videos, without any recognition of the original artist. After this happens a few times, dancers become a little gun shy of appearing on uncopyrighted, unrestricted show videos.

Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but always give credit where credit is due.

-Complexities of copyright laws

Many instructors produce and distribute sanctioned, copyrighted instructional and performance videos. It is my understanding of the copyright laws that if your choreography appears at any point in or on an uncopyrighted medium, your copyright is null and void.

For this reason, if a dancer is presenting a copyrighted choreography, she cannot allow it to be distributed on a non-copyrighted concert video.

This is not an attempt to eke a few more dollars out of the student or concert-goer, but a legal Catch-22 that the dancer is helpless to change.

Remember, the performers on a concert tape almost never receive royalties for their appearance.

The whole issue raised here, however, brings up two ethical issues. First, the producer of the

concert video (who usually obtains video releases before or during the show) should make it clear to the consumer exactly which performances will, and will not, appear on the tape. You must, however, forgive the sponsor if this step is overlooked in the midst of the hustle and bustle of coordinating a programme.

As an informed and responsible consumer, one way to avoid disappointment is to always ask the producer who will appear on the finished tape.

The second ethical issue rests with the consumer - you, the dancer/student. If the tape is copyrighted, respect the law and do not re-distribute the tape to your friends and sister dancers. Do not loan the tape to friends who you know will make a pirated copy. If the tape is not formally copyrighted, but is advertised for the use of seminar/show attendees only, respect that restriction.

It is only through your respect of copyrights and good-faith restrictions, and your continuing ethical behavior, that the dance will continue to be made available through video.

Without your support, fewer and fewer dancers will allow themselves to be taped, and all of us will suffer in the end.