

**Inside the Artist -  
Heather Morris  
October 2014**



**Tell us about your journey in art / as an artist.**

I grew up in Burlington and started with Highland dancing at the age of 7. While attending the College of Wooster in Ohio on a Scottish Arts Scholarship for Russian Studies, I started teaching dance. It was so important in my life that I stuck with it through college and through various other careers. I couldn't leave the dance behind. When I moved back to Vermont in 2001, I decided to make teaching dance my focus.



I started the Heather Morris School of Dance in 2001 as a mobile unit as a way to bring dance to kids, making it more available and easier for parents. Since making that decision, the teaching has taken on a life of its own. Laurie Flaherty (founder of One Studio, now GMPA) contacted me about starting classes in Waterbury in 2007. I have had some of these same students since 2007 and it has developed into a wonderful community of dancers.

I have continued teaching in Waterbury and still travel some to teach in Colchester, Jericho and Charlotte. Celtic Company was developed at Green Mountain Performing Arts (GMPA) three years ago because of a need and desire to provide more opportunities for these talented dancers who wish to continue studying Celtic dance. I have kids that come from as far as Brandon and St. Johnsbury. At a Creative Social we hosted (with Across Roads Center for the Arts) this past spring, I described how Waterbury has become a crossroads of dance for all my students.

I step back and evaluate why I do this all the time. I've realized that my personal mission is kids, to help them develop into whole people. Celtic dance is a powerful way to do this for kids because it combines fun with teaching skills they can use for their whole life. I stick with it because of these talented and dedicated kids.

**What is the dance style/medium you most like to work with/in? What drew/draws you to it? What do you like about this type of dance?**

I started with ballet as a small child and still wish I could have continued with it, even today. My ballet teacher moved away and my parents found Celtic dance. I have loved it ever since. It is a tight community of dancers (I still have friends from Celtic dance as a child) and I like the family ancestry piece.

The music is such a great motivator and it just makes you want to move. I love all the different styles of Celtic dance, each for their own qualities. Highland has more open positions (reach and hold). Champion dancers do the same dance as beginners and strive to master technique, making Highland a great style of dance for perfectionists. Irish has tighter positions and more of the group dances.



**What most inspires your work - Has there been anything that has been life changing or that has influenced your practice?**

Without a doubt, kids inspire me most. I enjoy watching their growth over time. Sometimes it takes years, sometimes it happens in an instant. I have had kids that were struggling in life, at home, at school and have seen how dance has changed them and given them something that is their own. It has changed how I see dance.



**What blogs or books are you reading or would recommend?**

I love (author and founder of squidoo.com) Seth Godin's blog. He has long and inspiring posts that I want to forward to people every day.