

MOVIN' EASY DANCEWEAR
ESTABLISHED 1981

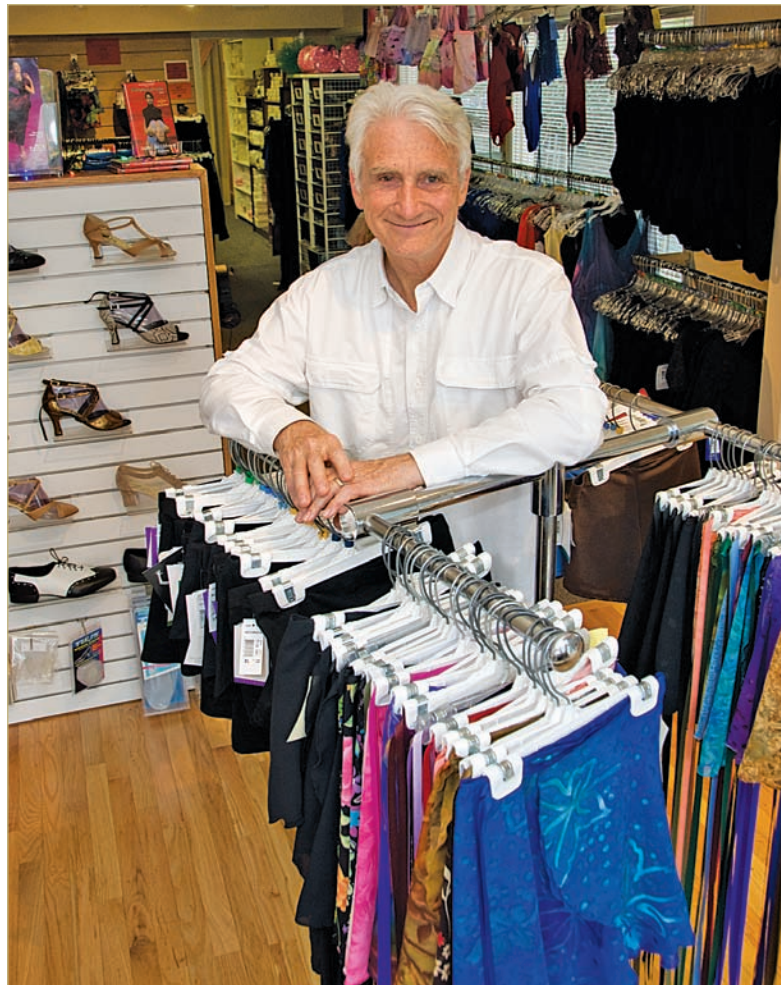
It wasn't easy being a young boy who wanted to dance in a small West Texas town in the nineteen-forties. In spite of having a father who loved to foxtrot and took his son to every Hollywood musical featuring Gene Kelly or Fred Astaire, Tim Hurst suppressed his desire to be a dancer himself. "I just couldn't bring myself to be in a dance class with all girls in that cowboy town," Hurst says. He recalls the occasions when he was exposed to the foxtrot or square dancing and realized he could learn to dance. "I just froze up."

Hurst's love of dance lay dormant for forty years, only awakening when he began learning karate and its graceful dance-like moves. Once he moved to Austin in 1972, Hurst began by attending performances of every troupe or company he could, from ballet to modern, and started taking tap-dancing lessons.

The opportunity to make a career out of his passion came in 1981, when a woman who was starting a new dance studio told Hurst that Austin needed a dancewear store, and asked him to open one. His previous South American import business had given him buying and selling experience, and Hurst jumped at the chance to provide quality dancewear and support local dance companies and schools.

"I came up with the name Movin' Easy because our line was half street clothes and half dancewear. We were the first store in Austin to carry one-hundred-percent cotton clothing. It was easy and breathable, not restrictive." Hurst partly credits the store's early start with its success, becoming established ahead of the curve of Jane Fonda's fitness, jazzercise and the yoga and pilates craze. The store's clientele is partly professional dancers and dance students, but also fitness customers who buy clothing for their preferred workout method; a growing client base is ballroom and salsa dancers. The customer age ranges from toddlers to seniors.

Movin' Easy set out to make sure that Austin had a quality store that carried the latest styles and offered expertise in fitting and ordering. Equally important was the desire to build Austin as



Tim Hurst

by Shelley Seale
Photo by Barton Wilder Custom Images

a premier center for all kinds of dancing, through supporting dance companies and advertising their shows. When Ballet Austin began its professional company, Movin' Easy established a streamlined and economical ordering system for all the company shoes and dancewear, and donated shoes to help build the apprentice program.

From the beginning, training of dancewear specialists and fitting specialists became a top priority. Movin' Easy trains all employees in sophisticated fitting techniques to guarantee that clients will walk away with the right fit, and have developed a reputation as experts on ballet pointe shoes.

Hurst is big on the subject of fit, coming back to it several times to point out how critical it is in dance footwear, especially with children. "I hate see-

ing parents taking their kids somewhere like Wal-Mart and sitting them on the floor to try on dance shoes. Then the kids outgrow them and they have to buy more a few months later. They could come here and spend two or three dollars more and get a quality dance shoe with a proper fit from a qualified professional. In fact, they would save money because the right fit allows the child to grow into it, and the shoes would last the whole season."

Even more important to Hurst is the introduction the child receives to dance. "These kids in a dance class are moving as much as a professional does. They need comfort and dancewear that encourages, not discourages. At a dedicated dancewear store with expertise and customer attention, the child is allowed to experience the magic of the

world of dance. It makes it special."

In fact, Hurst would like to bring that magic of dance to everyone. He writes a blog for the company web site, on which he posts not only practical tidbits such as the many benefits of dance and getting started, but also poetry and his own personal musings on his favorite topic. "When I see dance performed, I want to capture it right in the moment," he says. "When I write about it, it's not so much descriptive of the dance itself, but of my experience of it. Dance requires the whole body and mind. I love supporting people who are making that commitment to what they love to do. It takes courage to go for that much joy."

Hurst's blog shares the magic of dance: "The Dance Secret is the tradition of healing, happiness, and communication that has been passed down to us since the first humans began to sing and dance. Dance activates and integrates areas of the brain in ways that no other activity does. Dance is a direct way to create positive movement patterns and discard old patterns that damage our bodies. Dance is a direct link to learning how to explore and master the relationship between how we move, how we think, and how we communicate with ourselves and other people."

Though he readily admits that a retail business is a lot of hard work and difficult at times, Hurst is motivated to keep going by one simple thing: "I can't imagine living in Austin without a store like Movin' Easy."

Movin' Easy Dancewear is located at 404 W. Thirtieth St. and can be reached by phone at 512-474-0980 or at www.movineasy.com. Resources on the web site include a complete listing of every dance company, school and specialty group in Austin. Hurst also sends out a monthly e-mail of everything happening in the local world of dance. Store hours are Monday through Thursday 10am-8pm, Friday and Saturday 10am-6pm, and Sunday 1pm-5pm. 

Listening to Tim Hurst took freelance writer Shelley Seale back to the days when she wanted to be Ginger Rogers. You may e-mail Shelley at sseale@goodlifemag.com.