

In memory of Ingeborg Heuser

Biographical Sketch

Ingeborg Heuser was born in Berlin, Germany in 1928. Renowned in the Paso del Norte region for bringing ballet to unprecedented levels of excellence, she was also a versatile and international performer that manifested her talent in other dance forms, in cinema, and as a designer.

After graduating from the ballet school of the Deutsche Oper in Berlin under the direction of Tatjana Gsovsky (a student of Isadora Duncan and choreographer), she joined the corps de ballet of the Opernballett. She moved to the United States after World War II, in 1948, joining the University of Arizona as a student.

She moved to El Paso/Juarez in 1953 and opened her studio, "Ballet Centre," in 1955. In 1960, she became faculty at UTEP, then Texas Western College, she became the director of the Texas Western Civic Ballet, the first professional ballet company in Texas, and established a ballet degree. She retired from UTEP in 2007 after 47 years of service. She played a central role in bringing to El Paso/Juárez celebrated ballet stars and teachers. She always maintained strong ties with the European cultural milieu, facilitating international artistic exchanges, and crafted unique collaborations with the National Ballet of Mexico and Argentinian artists. She was honored by the El Paso Commission on Women's Hall of Fame for her service in numerous city boards, and also served on Dance Advisory Panel for the Texas Commission on the Arts.

She passed in El Paso on February 14, 2022, surrounded by her immediate family. Her former students, which include professional dancers in prestigious international ballet companies, have been sharing countless thoughts of gratitude and appreciation for the educator, the artist, the woman.

The UTEP Department of Theatre and Dance also wants to express our immense gratitude for Ms. Heuser's work for dance in El Paso and for her ongoing support towards the UTEP dance students' artistry and excellence with the Ingeborg Heuser Endowed Scholarship at UTEP through the Office of Institutional Advancement.

Remembering Ingeborg Heuser

"Professor Heuser was a global ambassador. Students came from all over the world such as Paris, Mexico City, Germany, and Singapore to study dance under her. Professor Heuser was one of the first women artists in Texas and created the pathways for other female artists to follow and succeed. Her contributions to UTEP and the region is unmeasurable, and she will be greatly missed."

-Hideaki Tsutsui, Interim Chair, Department of Theatre & Dance

I first heard of Ingeborg Heuser in my native Italy interacting with dance artists who remembered her work as a choreographer and guest ballet teacher at the Accademia Nazionale di Danza in Rome. When I moved to El Paso, it was clear, through the devoted words of her former students and colleagues, how she decisively impacted the relevance of dance in the Paso del

Norte region. Her legacy at UTEP is also marked by the presence of her endowed scholarship, which every year helps talented dance students pursue their dream. As a dance scholar working on the dance materials of the UTEP Special Collections, I could also see how Ms. Heuser, a true cultural leader, tirelessly built a network of regional and transnational dance relations. Ms. Heuser will be greatly missed but her legacy will keep reverberating.

-Melissa Melpignano, PhD, UTEP Director of Dance

“The first person I met related to dance in El Paso was Ingeborg Heuser because she started ballet studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. I was especially impressed that this world-wise woman created, directed, taught and choreographed for the El Paso Ballet. I found her to be a demanding teacher and that her students loved her gifts and her in return. Ingeborg's legacy rests with the dancers who began their studies with her and wound up with careers in private studios, education and performance. Ms. Heuser's contributions to dance in El Paso have been sorely missed since her retirement from UTEP and will be missed for many years more.”

-Myron Nadel, Professor

“When I was a student at UTEP I attended a production of the ballet *Carmen* in Magoffin Auditorium. I had never been to a ballet production before and had hardly ever watched ballet on television or anywhere else for that matter. I do not even remember how (or why) I ended up at that performance of *Carmen* but I was blown away by the production and immediately became a fan. I did not know how beautiful ballet was until I saw Ms. Heuser's production. The very next year I attended her production of *The Nutcracker* (for the first time) and was mesmerized by what I saw. The next year I started The UTEP Dinner Theatre (1983) and was introduced to Mike Spence who was the ballet's Technical Director. Mike started to work with me on the Dinner Theatre productions and he hired me to start working on the ballet productions. This started my (almost) 30 year involvement with Ms. Heuser and Ballet El Paso, Ballet of the America's, and finally the UTEP Ballet. I worked for the ballet for years as a stagehand, prop master and sound man on her productions. For the last 7 years of her UTEP career I became the producer of The UTEP Ballet in collaboration with The UTEP Dinner Theatre. I will always treasure my association with Ms. Heuser because I learned a lot from her on how to present professional productions. She was a true artist, a collaborative colleague and an inspiration to me and so many other El Pasoans who worked in the arts.”

-Greg Taylor, Associate Professor, Director of the UTEP Dinner Theatre

“One of nicest things about life is the people you meet along the way. I was fortunate to have worked with Ms. Heuser. Ms. Heuser was a great teacher, dancer, choreographer, costume designer, mentor and friend to many. She was, to me. Ms. Heuser shared her experiences with everyone. And she always listened. She used her experiences to help anyone that needed help. She was a perfectionist and never made it easy for anyone to reach their goals. Hard work

paid off - if you believed in yourself, she believed in you. She always recognized potential and brought out the best in you.

Ms. Heuser leaves behind a myriad of grateful dancers and performers. Many now follow what she taught them. I once read that when a light goes out in this world, another turns on. We that knew Ms. Heuser and the wonderful light that she cast on this world will live on through everyone that new her.

Thank you, Ms. Heuser for sharing your talent and kindness and mostly for enriching our all our lives. Rest in peace Ms. Heuser. “

-Beverly Kerbs-Ward, Associate Director UTEP Dinner Theatre

"Ms. Heuser was a godsend to all her many, many students. I saw the girls grow up and flower into young women who would be the best students".

-Lisa Smith, retired faculty, former Director of Dance

<https://www.ktsm.com/local/el-paso-news/ingeborg-heuser-el-pasos-mother-of-ballet-passes-away/>

<https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/local/el-paso/2022/02/22/ingeborg-heuser-el-paso-ballet-icon-who-founded-utep-program-dies/6893212001/>

<https://diario.mx/el-paso/fallece-ingeborg-heuser-iconica-maestra-de-ballet-20220216-1898643.html>

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/ingeborg-heuser-obituary?id=33026194>

Donations to the Ingeborg Heuser Endowed Scholarship fund can be done here <https://www.utep.edu/giving/give-now/index.html> by indicating in the Designation section “Other” and then pasting “Ingeborg Heuser Endowed Scholarship.” In the Tribute Gift section, please, indicate the donation is made in memory of Ingeborg Heuser.