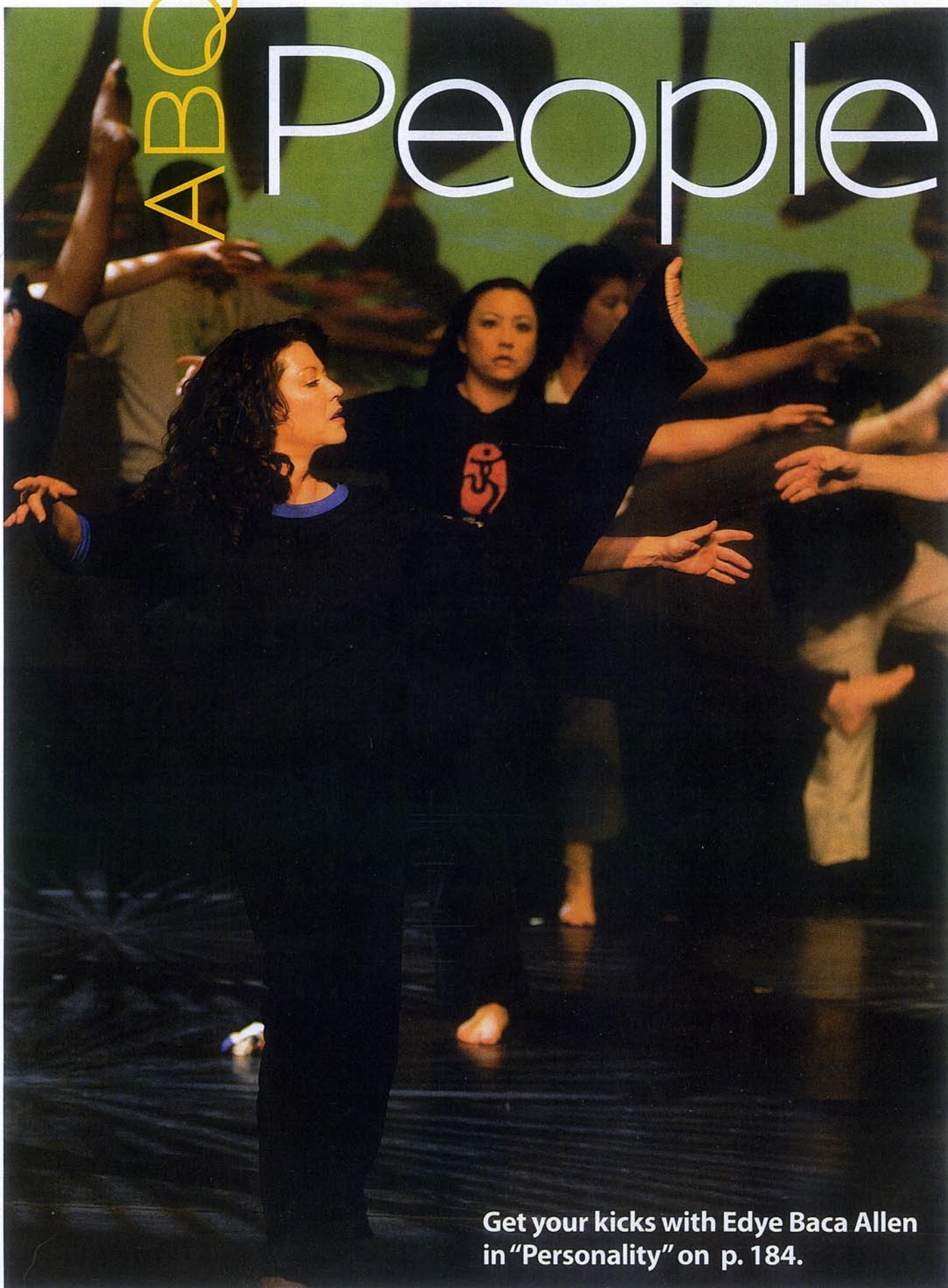


ABQ

# People



Get your kicks with Edye Baca Allen  
in "Personality" on p. 184.

Photo by Liz Lopez/ALM

a look at the life & work of  
albuquerqueans who deserve a toast

# PERSONALITY



## ( STEPPING IN )

*Edye Baca Allen's moves took her to Los Angeles, where she danced with the stars. But it's when she's putting on multimedia performances in Albuquerque with her dance company, Exposé, that she feels most at home.*

**E**dye Baca Allen remembers one of her first auditions in Los Angeles. This was just after the native Albuquerquean had moved to the West Coast; she was at a casting call with hundreds of other dancers. She was excited—she was in Hollywood! Allen walked down the hallway, past the other dancers, smiling, and then—bam. She stumbled.

One of the dancers had tripped her.

"That was definitely something I wasn't used to," Allen says with a laugh. "I'm still not used to it, actually. I don't understand



competition like that—there's room for everyone. I don't want competition like that in my company."

In fact, Allen doesn't hold auditions for Exposé ([www.danceexpose.org](http://www.danceexpose.org)), her dance company—not in the traditional sense, anyway. Instead of cattle calls, Allen invites interested dancers to attend a rehearsal. She says she knows within five minutes if the dancer will fit in. She doesn't base her opinions purely on expert dance moves, either. After

all, she says, she can teach anyone to dance. But attitude and personality? Those she can't teach. And those are important to her.

But Allen's anti-competition philosophy is just one of the things that makes Exposé unique. Allen stages performances that are filled with variety; it's part of her mission. She uses video, lighting, live music, and a wide range of choreography to infuse a show with enough interesting things so that everyone can walk away saying they enjoyed something



in particular. Hip-hop, hard rock, ballet, Broadway showstoppers—Exposé's shows have a little bit of everything.

"If it can change moods, and if the people in the audience feel like they were part of that mood, then I feel like I've fulfilled my mission," she says.

Allen got her start in Albuquerque, learning her early moves at Fishback Studio of the Dance (for whom she soon started teaching). She moved to Los Angeles in 1979 to dance in the movies—and dance she did. Soon, she was working with celebrities such as Janet Jackson, Elizabeth Taylor, Steve Martin, and Jessica Lange.

"Los Angeles was a wonderful experience," she says. "Especially because I came from Albuquerque, where I was well-rooted. That meant I didn't lose myself in the unreal environment there. I didn't get into trouble."

She did, however, dance for award shows, music videos, and find an interesting niche for herself as a choreographer.

"I became known for choreographing

men," she says. "That was pretty rare, a woman choreographing for men. That's actually something I'd love to do again in Albuquerque, for the productions filming here. I have something like 160 numbers that I've choreographed for Exposé since it began in 1992. But I want to keep going."

Allen has taught dance for 35 years, and her students remember her. Perhaps that's because her teachings come with lessons about the world; Allen teaches about the world through dance.

"In Exposé, I have learned many lessons," writes one student, "one of which is that, in dance and other areas of life, reward doesn't come without hard work, determination, and commitment.... I also have learned the importance of adaptability and diversity."

More than a few of Allen's Exposé alumni have gone on to do dance-related endeavors; one is a dancer in Los Angeles, several others are teaching, and one is even working steadily on Broadway. This last one, Keith Kool, still stays in touch with Allen, and invites her to New York for various performances. Kool is also the conduit of an interesting message for Allen—from the legendary dancer and choreographer Twyla Tharp. After watching him dance, Tharp asked Kool who had trained him—not who had trained him to dance, but to work the way he did. When Kool explained a bit about Allen, Tharp said that Kool had been done a great favor—she could see that he was different from other dancers.

"That was a huge compliment for me," Allen says.

Allen's dancers do more than just dance. They also run the lights, strike the sets, and constantly multitask. That includes Allen's 16-year-old daughter, Erin, who worked her way up from Exposé's junior company to become a regularly featured dancer, often sharing the spotlight with her father (Allen's ex-husband).

"She had to fight her way up, and that's what made her a good performer," Allen says. "She had to prove herself. I ignored her—I didn't want people to think it was favoritism."

As Albuquerque grows, Allen sees a definite place for Exposé—for the burgeoning entertainment industry to consult, for people to enjoy as audience members, for her own dancers to expand.

"Dance is all over the place. You can do it anywhere," Allen says. "With me, with my company, you learn life lessons—and can take them with you in whatever direction you decide to go." —**By Lexi Petronis** 