Ballet is ‘good time’ for males

By Peggy Snodgrass

Arts junior Jack Houlihan was a little nervous when he went to his 11 a.m. Monday-Wednesday class for the first time this semester.

“I was kind of apprehensive—I didn’t want too many people to know about it,” he said.

“My mother told me not to tell anyone. They’ll think you’re strange,” she said.

Houlihan’s classmate, arts junior Mike Atkinson, found the class challenging. “I’ve really had some difficulty with it,” he said.

“But it’s turned out to be such a good time—so relaxing—that we’re both considering taking ballet again,” Houlihan said.

Houlihan and Atkinson are enrolled in a classical ballet studio for the non-dance major. Houlihan said he signed up for the class out of curiosity. “I’d never taken something strange before,” he said.

“I had read that ballet was one of the most difficult and best excercises you can get,” Atkinson said.

“Wanted to take something that would help me get into shape—something to help me with basketball and other sports.”

Interestingly, neither Houlihan nor Atkinson had ever studied even music before taking the class.

“I’d never even seen a ballet,” Houlihan said.

The male students don’t have to wear tights, but may practice in sweatpants or gym shorts and a T-shirt, according to Atkinson.

“My biggest problem was trying to find size 11 ballet slippers!” Houlihan said. “I was about ready to give up and squeeze into a pair of pink size 9’s when I learned I could special order some.”

Both students said the class has improved their coordination, in addition to stretching out their muscles. At the same time, they said the experience has changed their opinions regarding male dancers.

“Honestly, there is that stereotype of the effeminate male dancer,” Atkinson said. “But after taking this class, I have nothing but the utmost respect for these guys.”

“It seems very difficult. These guys must really be studs,”

Nevertheless, Houlihan and Atkinson said they put up with a certain amount of teasing.

“What do I tell them?” Houlihan asked. “Hey, look at this way — there’s 25 girls in the class and just four guys!”

On Their Toes —

Arts juniors Mike Atkinson and Jack Houlihan practice ballet. Though they said they were apprehensive at first, both now like it enough to consider taking another course.