



PHOTO BY ALEX MCVEIGH/THE CONNECTION

Jody Skye Schissler teaches a class at the Classical Ballet Theatre in Herndon.

Finding the Dancer Within

Classical Ballet Theatre offers ballet outreach, education.

BY ALEX MCVEIGH
THE CONNECTION

While the ballet might seem to be in the realm of big cities around the world, the Classical Ballet Theatre in Herndon is bringing it to local stages and schools around the area.

"We believe in every child there is a dancer waiting to come out," said Cynthia Donavin, executive director of the Classical Ballet Theatre in Herndon. "Here we've created an environment that allows each child to be individually trained to be the best dancer they can be."

Donavin founded the theater as a not-for-profit 22 years ago, and they provide many education, performance and outreach opportunities around the Northern Virginia area. She opened her doors with three students, and within a year it had grown to more than 60 students.

IF THE SUCCESS of its pupils is any reflection on the curriculum at the theater, then the program is working. Jasmine Roberts, 15, a sophomore at South Lakes High School, recently completed an internship at the renowned Suzanne Farrell Ballet at the Kennedy Center.

An Hour At the Ballet

The Classical Ballet Theatre will be performing a 60-minute version of "Sleeping Beauty" in April. They will perform April 9 and 10, at 1 p.m. at 4 p.m. both days at the theatre, 320 Victory Drive in Herndon.

They will also perform at the Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus Saturday April 17 at 12:30, 3:30 and 6:30 p.m.

More information on purchasing tickets can be found at www.cbtnva.org, or by calling 703-471-0750.

"I've been dancing since I was three, and I just love getting onstage, it makes me happy," Roberts said. "It was the first time I've ever partnered with another dancer, and it was pretty challenging learning to work around someone else. From the second day on,

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— Cynthia Donavin, executive director

we have to form a trust, and it worked out really well."

Donavin says Roberts has a "beautiful quality of movement, she's an incredible performer."

While Roberts is among the more successful pupils of the Classical Ballet Theatre on the dance floor, many students realize the benefits in other aspects of their lives.

"Once my daughter started doing ballet, I noticed her working harder in school, because she knew she had to keep up her grades to stay here," said Jennifer Campbell of Herndon. "As I parent, I can feel the energy here, and I know it's the right place for my children. It's fascinating to watch

them work so hard at something that's so hard to learn."

The teachers are ballet professionals from around the world, such as Alisher Saburov, who started in Russia at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Moscow.

"It takes a lot of energy towards the craft for each dancer, but the passion becomes infectious," said Saburov, who serves as the artistic director. "I like it here because we do so much outreach to many local schools, and we have a good scholarship program for boys."

Donavin offers scholarship opportunities for boys because she says they are less likely to start ballet, and not having to pay for it opens up the opportunities.

In addition to outreach to local schools, they perform at local events such as the Herndon Festival, and offer groups attending their shows a behind-the-scenes look at the ballet.

THE CLASSICAL BALLET THEATRE will be performing a 60-minute version of "Sleeping Beauty" in April, as part of their annual Children's Series, which provides families a chance to see the ballet that isn't three hours long and requiring a trip into the city.

"A three-hour ballet can be intimidating, so the short version can offer an easy introduction," Donavin said. "You can see a high-caliber performance without going all the way to the Kennedy Center."

Classes are offered to boys and girls at various levels, starting at age three. More information on the Classical Ballet Theatre can be found at www.cbtnva.org.



Jasmine Roberts, 15, a sophomore at South Lakes High School and a student at the Classical Ballet Theatre in Herndon, recently completed an internship at the Suzanne Farrell Ballet at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.



Students go through the motions at the Classical Ballet Theatre in Herndon.