

Dancing more than showing off, wearing tutus

By Loraine McEllish
staff writer

A dancer who has been teaching for nine years has opened up her own studio now in downtown Farmington, where her first teacher taught dance.

"When my sister and I were little kids, about six and seven, we went to Shirley Bush School of Dance in the Grand River-Greenfield area," said Barbara Hatch, whose school now occupies the spacious second floor at 33316 Grand River. "Shirley moved her school to Farmington about the same time our family moved here, and when she left I was ready to break off on my own."

And even though the studio has only been reopened under its new name for a few weeks, Hatch said her students will be ready for the traditional end-of-the-year June recital.

"Recitals are a lot more than putting on a tutu and showing off. All of the

discipline in dance, the commitment, is wound up in the performance," she said. "Dance is a performing art and all students must have the opportunity to take the logical steps from classroom to stage. Sure, they show off some of what they have learned in class, but they do this under real conditions, with a real audience, real lights and applause."

"The confidence this builds can hardly be overstated. When a child can get up and dance in front of hundreds of strangers, there is no limit to that child's potential."

HATCH EARNED her fine arts degree from Marygrove College, where the program included studies in all areas of dance education. From there, she took up studies at City Center Joffrey Ballet in New York.

She has performed with Dance Detroit, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Michigan Opera Theatre, and has choreographed a long string of musicals for community theater productions throughout the entire metro area.

Hatch's sister, Mary Ellen Masak, has a similar background and opened up her own studio in Detroit several years ago.

Hatch filled in as teacher for the Masak studio when that was getting under way, and Masak travels to Farmington now to teach a few classes here.

The sisters both teach the Russian method of classical ballet, pointe, the toe dance for those who have achieved the necessary classical technique, pre-ballet and preact, jazz, and aerobic exercises.

"Our students range from 3 to about 30 years in age now, but whoever wants to dance, I'll show them how. Jazz is the most popular class for adults, but there's always special classes given when a fad comes along. We've given them for break dancing and flash dance and we'll be ready for whatever comes next," Hatch said.

WHILE JAZZ is the most popular class for adults, gymnastics is the most popular one with the teens.

"Gymnastics classes are a must for any well-rounded out dance studio now," Hatch said. "We're not pushing for any Olympic stars and we don't have six days of class for the rigidity that competition demands. Our classes are filled with kids who want to gain agility, kids who do it for the fun of it, and the kids who want to make the cheerleading team."

Kim Dennis, who coaches junior high and high school cheerleaders and has a dance background, heads up the gymnastics classes in Barbara Hatch School of Dance.

"She gives the kids a wide range of selections for whatever they want to attain, and we can do that because we like all classes to be limited to 10 kids. Most of them are limited to from six to eight students because I think that's an ideal number," Hatch said.

"I said there wasn't rigidity in those classes and there isn't, but there is discipline in all classes, as well as the grace, the poise, the enjoyment of the performing arts through dance."

Hatch has been taking her students to perform in Founders Festival every year since she's been teaching, and says they will be there again this July.

And she has her recital date scheduled for 8 p.m. June 27 in Wallace Smith Theatre of the Performing Arts on Orchard Ridge Campus, Oakland Community College.

Studio hours are from 4-10 p.m. weekdays where Hatch can be reached for inquiries by calling 478-7074. Her home phone is 471-2759.

Educators aid parents in aiding their children

A comprehensive set of materials to help parents prepare children and students to be successful in school is available from National Education Association.

The materials, developed by the NEA's Professional Library, fall into three main categories: A series of workbooks aimed at helping parents

prepare very young children for school; tips to help parents and teachers make the most of parent-teacher conference and series of pamphlets that give parents advice on a broad range of school topics.

The materials are part of an ongoing effort by NEA to get parents more involved in their children's education,"

said Mary Hatwood Futrell, president of the 1.7-million-member association.

The NEA school preparation materials include: "How to Prepare Your Child for School," "Learning the Alphabet," "How Letters Make Words," "Helping Your Child Read," "Shapes and Patterns," "Numbers and Count-

ing," "Learning to Add" and "Learning to Subtract."

The parent-teacher conference materials include brochures that brief parents on how they can have a successful conference with a teacher and recommend communication techniques for both parents and teachers.

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