

Ballet star turns to teaching

By Corinne Abatt
Staff writer

If enthusiasm, experience and skill count, the Center for Creative Studies new ballet program with Joanne Danto at the International School of Southfield should be a big bit.

Danto, who grew up in this area, was a member of the Frankfort Ballet, the National Ballet Company and was principal dancer with the Pennsylvania Ballet. She has been a guest artist with many other American companies including the Detroit City Ballet and the Chicago Ballet.

Since the birth of her daughter, now an elementary school student,

she has switched to a large extent from performing to teaching. Among the places she has given workshops and classes in the last few years are Interlochen Arts Academy, Marygrove College, University of Michigan, Teatro Filarmónico de Verona, Italy, and Gothenburg Ballet Academy of Gothenburg, Sweden.

HER CLASSES for CCS are held five days a week, from mornings when she hopes to attract adults who are interested in learning the moving and stretching exercises a ballet dancer would do as well as actual techniques and terminology, to after school hours.

"There is nothing better for toning the body and shaping the muscles than the ballet technique," she said. "I love to teach adults. It's so exciting. They tell me they are really aware of standing straight, having less tension and feeling strong."

Her classes in the afternoons from 4 p.m. on are geared to 9-15 year olds and youth and adult.

"This will truly be a very professional quality from beginning through advanced classes. I think there is a great need for this. I feel so fortunate personally that CCS is interested in providing a quality avenue in this area. There is a potential to build an advanced program that is really very, very fine."

"I would love to have master classes with guest teachers and a

program for teachers in this area. We have a lot of room here. We have hired two wonderful accompanists for all of our classes. We are hoping to hold a good, strong, serious workshop session this summer. I'm real excited about that."

DANTO SAID she doesn't want any children younger than nine in her classes and the students in her beginning ballet classes will be experienced beginners. No experience is necessary for the morning classes for adults.

Barbara Seaver is teaching classes for beginners in ballet on Saturday mornings.

Danto, who has given up what she calls her ballerina hundo for an attractive loose leathery cut, said, "I really want to produce something. I want to give back. I have studied with some of the most wonderful teachers in the world. I want to give it back. We owe it to our art. We owe it to society to keep the arts flourishing."

She said she's very happy living here now. She has family close by, enjoys teaching and building a program for Center for Creative Studies and will be doing occasional workshops in other cities.

For information on the CCS ballet classes, call Anne Stock, registrar, 831-2870. The International School is at 13 Mile and Evergreen, Southfield.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

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— Joanne Danto



Joanne Danto, pictured here in Act II of "Swan Lake," was a principal dancer with the Pennsylvania Dance Company and a guest artist with many others.

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