

Suburban Life

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Ballet

Dancer returns from career on Broadway to open dance studio in her home town

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

PICTURES OF Mickey Rooney, Ann Miller and "Sugar Babies" on posters herald the opening of Miss Carole's School of Ballet in downtown Farmington.

A closeup look at the posters shows Carole Cotter had second billing to the veteran stars for the long-

running musical burlesque while the show was on Broadway, on tour, and for a short time in Atlantic City hotels.

"I've done everything I wanted to do with my dance career. I had a fantastic career," Cotter said. She was the lead dancer in all the classical ballets, danced for TV commercials, in the movies and with symphony orchestras, did some choreography, directing and modeling that

took her from one end of the country to the other.

"I felt a need to be grounded. I bought a home in downtown Farmington so now I can walk to work to the same place I walked for dance lessons when I was growing up. It was a dream come true when I learned this space was available," she said.

The space she speaks of has been a dance studio for as long as memory

serves, on the second floor of the historic building at 33316 Grand River.

Cotter walked up the stairs to the spacious hardwood-floored room while it was known as Miss Busher's School of Ballet — the longest-running school that occupied that space — but only for interim lessons. More often than not during those growing-up years she was out of town cashing in her dance scholarships from New York City Ballet, Mary Day Washington School of Ballet or American Ballet Theatre.

COTTER WILL host an open house 2-5 p.m. Sunday to introduce herself and Miss Carole's School of Ballet. Classes for all ages and levels of expertise start the week of Sept. 5.

If she looks familiar to the guests it may be because they've seen her dance in a Pepsi commercial, the "I Love New York" TV commercial, or in the movies "This Was Burlesque" and "All That Jazz."

"Ballet is the tree. All else branches off the classical training," Cotter said. "It gives the movement, the presence, the finishing touches, and it's necessary to be a well-rounded dancer. I took a crash course in tap dancing after I got the part in 'Sugar Babies.' I just sort of fell into musical comedy. I was even part of an adagio troupe for a while."

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

She was known as Carole Cotter on Broadway. This fall she'll be known as "Miss Carole" to the youngsters who come to her for ballet lessons in downtown Farmington.



Area children who got a preview late summer lesson with their new teacher, Carole Cotter,

are Jasmine Hillawi (left) Paige Edan, Caroline Conway, Angela Austin and Jacqueline Austin.

Ritalin

Battle over the drug continues

By Amy Rosa
staff writer

TOPRESCRIBE drugs or not to prescribe drugs — that is the question.

Lately, that question has turned into a battle among some area health professionals, parents and others, over using the controversial drug Ritalin, a medication prescribed by doctors for the so-called "hyperactive" child.

"Ritalin is not like insulin or antibiotics, which are lifesaving," said Dr. Saul Margules, a family practitioner who is the metropolitan area's most vocal opponent of the drug. "People are using it to change disruptive behavior, to have an instant cure. The new behavior might be better for the parent or teacher, but it doesn't help the child learn."

"Margules, who went public against the drug just this year, said he stopped prescribing Ritalin after an incident with it 20 years ago. He said a patient in nursery school who was taking the drug for hyperactivity, appeared to be in a mental straight jacket of sorts. "I never used it after that," he said.

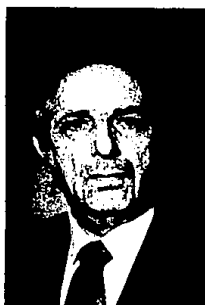
But proponents of Ritalin, or Methylphenidate, as it is known generically, say the drug is beneficial because it helps a child become more able to learn.

"It isn't a tranquilizer," said Dr. Sheldon Brenner, director of the Ambulatory Pediatric Clinic at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit. "It doesn't make them smarter, but it does allow them to think before they act and understand the consequences of their inappropriate behavior."

RITALIN IS a central nervous system stimulant that some doctors say can decrease a child's tendency to be easily distracted or increase his attention span.

Those trails, along with impulsiveness and moderate to severe hyperactivity, are associated with what is called Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), the disease for which Ritalin is primarily used.

"We don't give it to just anybody," said Dr. David B. Levy, a pediatrician who moved his practice from Livonia to Novi three months ago. "In medicine, everything is not black



Saul Margules

and white. When it's used properly, it's a good drug."

Doctors who prescribe Ritalin acknowledge with their counterparts that it can produce possible adverse effects, including such minor things as nausea, headache, loss of appetite and sleeplessness. Major effects could be an increase in the likelihood of seizures in those who are prone to them, and the onset of tics or spasms, which is called Tourette's Syndrome.

Kay, a suburban housewife, who asked that her name not be used, said pediatricians diagnosed her eight-year-old son with moderate ADHD and he was given Ritalin this past year. After his teacher noticed no improvement in his classroom disruptions and attention span, his dosage was increased.

"It turned him into a completely different person — one I hope I never have to see again," his mother said.

KAY SAID her son began making shouting sounds as he was coming off the medication "without realizing it," and developed a slight tic. But worst of all, she said, was his constant talk about death and dying.

"He had absolutely no self-esteem; he hated himself," she said. "At one point, he started crying and said he couldn't speak the words that his mind wanted to say." A pediatrician

took him off the drug immediately.

While she admits her son has some ADHD characteristics, Kay doesn't blame the three doctors they went to for starting him on Ritalin.

"The only reason he was put on it, was because we caved into what the school system wanted," she said. "They're the ones who brought up that our child should be on it, not the doctors. The doctors wanted to treat it with counseling."

"It was the biggest mistake we ever made. We'll never do that to him again."

Brenner, on the other hand, said the drug has benefitted thousands of children since it's approval by the Food and Drug Administration in 1957.

"Ritalin is effective on 80 percent of the children it is used on," he said. "This drug is helping a lot of children finish school, become productive on their jobs and lead happy lives."

Brenner said ADHD is a neurological problem caused by an under-stimulation of natural drugs found in the nervous system, either because of the system's slower than normal development, or through inheritance.

"It's not a behavioral problem; there is nothing these parents can do to prevent this disease," he said.

BUT MARGULES doesn't agree. In fact, he claims all the children who are said to have been helped by Ritalin could have been helped without it, because their problems were nothing more than disciplinary in nature.

"What these kids need is for someone to stand up and tell them who's boss," he said. "They're lacking constancy by both parents and teachers."

"That makes me angry," responded Leland Brenz, a Farmington Hills mother whose seven-year-old son has been on low doses of Ritalin for almost a year. "I have always had good discipline in my family. This (Ritalin) was the only thing for us to do."

Brenz said she had her son undergo extensive testing for ADHD after his first-grade teacher told her he didn't sit still and pay attention like

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