

Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300



(F11)

Student dancers warmly received in Soviet Union

By Corinne Abelt
staff writer

WHEN 10 Cranbrook Kingswood School dance students and their teacher, Jessica Sinclair, went to Russia last spring, they took their dance heritage with them.

And that all-American style program was warmly received wherever they performed — so much so that Sinclair has a standing invitation to do choreography for the dance department at the perform-

ing arts school in Tbilisi, capital of the province of Georgia.

The short term benefits of the two-week trip to Russia surfaced almost immediately. The long term ones may stretch over many years.

"It was so exciting to see historical and classical dance for which Russia is known," Sinclair said. "At the Bolshoi, we saw 'Raymonde.' The theater is so beautiful in red velvet and gold . . . and it was so wonderful to be able to perform for them and be so warmly received. The students exchanged addresses with many Russian stu-

dents and they were given flowers after every performance."

She said she wanted her program "to be very American." For one dance the students wore white T-shirts with greetings and phrases such as "everybody" dancing written in Russian in black and red with black biking pants. Also on their program were: a modern dance to musical figures by Orff; "Country," featuring the essence of country and hoedown style; and a dance to "Wake Him Up" from the musical "Purlie."

SINCLAIR SAID SHE included a very experimental work that she was "a little dubious about," but it created a lot of excitement in the viewers.

"They responded very warmly to that, and clearly Russian dancers are wanting very much to experiment in their own style."

At the Rinsky Korakov Theater in Leningrad, they gave a shared concert with dancers from Kirov Conservatory and found out how important American culture is to them. One of the Russian dancers did an interpretation of Michael Jackson's "Be Bad."

She said, "It was the kind of trip I had dreamed about. We performed in historic places. We met Russian dancers; we met all kinds of people. We made many friends and we visited a lovely, lovely city, Tbilisi in Georgia. The school there might be able to send us 10 dancers."

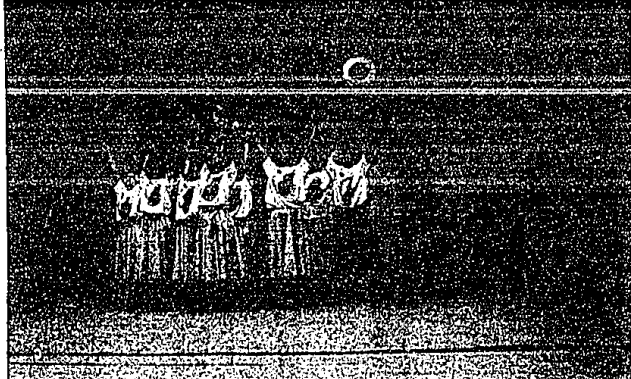
"Upon we arrived in Moscow, an American guide met us and he went with us everywhere."

She said that everywhere she went people were curious about her and all aspects of her life. "What kind of a house I lived in, what kind of a car I had, what I did for fun."

She said she made it clear when she planned the trip with the agent that her dancers in grades 9-12, were not to be put into any uncomfortable performing situations. She emphasized they were students, not professionals and that they should be regarded as such.

Sinclair is well versed in what student dancers can do. She keeps standards high while making it enjoyable and exciting, realizing that dance will be an avocation rather than a career for most of them.

Still those who have chosen



The All-American style that Cranbrook Kingswood dancers presented to Russian audiences was met with a great outward show of appreciation — from flowers and applause to hugs of

friendship. Below they perform at the Children's Palace in Moscow for children and parents.



dance as a way of life have done well. Gayle Eubanks, a successful dancer, came to mind immediately. "And Gordon White started to dance with me. He went to New York, auditioned for Jose Lemon — and they took him."

Sinclair said she came to Cranbrook 22 years ago to teach dance for two hours a day three times a week in the physical education department.

"Then we started to work on musicals, then I began to teach a class — it's taken 20 years to develop a department."

OVER THE YEARS she and her students have gone on performing tours to Portugal, Venezuela, Fin-

land, Belgium (2), France (2), Germany and Austria.

She said, "The Russian people are not afraid to express their feelings. They're not worried about telling people how they feel. There was a lot of hugging and holding and the students were very comfortable with that. I'd like to go back. I haven't decided when. I feel it's a great honor to be invited. Nureyev studied there as a young person, so this is a school of classical tradition. It is a school that selects the people they want and they come from various regions. It's like a performing arts school with an emphasis on dance."

Sinclair said that if she can arrange for a leave of absence from Cranbrook Kingswood, and she does go for a brief time, language won't be a problem. "Many speak English and they speak Georgian and Russian. I speak a little Russian. I spoke Ukrainian until I was 5. My mother was Polish and my father Ukrainian."

She said she noticed in the concert which they gave on their return "how much they had grown."

She said many of her student dancers are well-traveled, there were no problems, "these kids are very responsible," she added with a smile that conveyed both pride and pleasure.



Dance instructor Jessica Sinclair was invited back to the performing arts school in Tbilisi to do choreography. She models the T-shirts they took with them, which are printed with "everybody dancing" in Russian.

Gallery director diligently tracks treasure

By Corinne Abelt
staff writer

K.C. Larson Gallery opened in Birmingham last December with a modicum of fanfare. While it's on the second floor at 211 N. Woodward and still low profile, those who climb the newly carpeted stairs will be rewarded with an exciting, eclectic atmosphere that looks more like a beautiful home than a gallery.

Larson, (the K stands for Karen) had interior design studios in Washington, D.C., and Maryland before she married one of her clients, moved to Birmingham and combined families for a total of seven children. Now, with only her son, Joey Chase, still at home on a full-time basis, she has more time for running the gallery and doing all the traveling that goes with the territory.

Her design skills are clearly evident in the extent and quality of the renovation that she undertook for her gallery setting. She has two very large rooms with white walls, gleaming hardwood floors and lots of shelf and built-in display space for everything from room settings to choice antique jewelry.

FROM PRIMITIVE to pre-Columbian sculpture, from fine French and English furniture to African masks and English inkwells, Tiffany perfume bottles, Mycenaean pottery and shelves and shelves of antique books, she manages as they might be found in a tasteful home. It's an art in itself and she is meticulous about how each is displayed.

"It's a lot of fun, very challenging and a tremendous amount of work," she said. "Every time I find a new piece, I was in London last week.



Karen Larson pets a carved wood dog by Louise Kruger. She had the second floor of the building renovated from a dark, unattractive

"I'm doing a lot of buying right now. When you open up a business like this you don't know right away what people want."

Some of the things that sold surprised her, other things that have haven't been snatched up immediately, such as two very large jade green ceramic vases, leave her puzzled.

"I expected jewelry to be popular, but antique jewelry is getting to be such a hot ticket in the last couple of years that it's really difficult to find the good pieces." Now, after six months of testing the market, she can say confidently, "One of the major things we do is books. We specialize in leather-bound books with fine binding — all four centuries, but pri-

marily 18th century. We are expanding the books. All of them have to be found and individually selected."

LARRY RUBIN, who has a master's degree in art history, specializing in 18th century prints, is her resident expert on the books. Nancy Andersen, who has a master's in art history, also works at the gallery and



Staff photos by Jerry Zolynsky

Larson said all of them work on the extensive research that's done on everything in the inventory.

"I plan to spend the summer looking for things, mostly in the U.S. People are coming here from Europe to buy. There's a lot of stuff all over the United States. I may go to France and Germany in August, I'm not sure. . . . We also do searches

for people."

She said her daughter, Whitney Chase, 23, now working for Sotheby's in London may eventually go into business with her, probably as a buyer in Europe.

K.C. Larson Gallery is open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and until 8 p.m. Thursday.