The Farmington Observer-



CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING



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Dennis Nahat won a dance scholarship to Juilliard when he was a high school senior performing with the Detroit City Ballet Company.

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The role of the Swan Queen is considered Cynthia Gregory's signature role. She is shown here in the Cleveland Ballet's pro duction of that famous ballet.

Where ballet thrives Detroit-born dancer builds major company

By Corinne Abatt aff writer

PERVTHING DENNIS NATIAT did as a young-regroring up in Detroit belged prepare him for lis greatest achievement – Jound-er and artistic director of the Cleveland Ballet Company. Since he and Jan Horvath started in 1976, the company has grown to be the fourth largest in the coun-try.

to be the fourth largest in the coun-try. The performances of the com-plete "Swan Lake" ballet, March 8-11 at Masonle Temple as part of the Michigan Opera Theature sea-son, mark the first time the Cleve-land Ballet has performed here since its inaugural year perform-ance at the Grosse Pointe War Me-morial. Nahat's memories of that re-main forever vivid because he boldy borrowed the black velvet stage curtains from his alma mater, Grosse Follow ones at the War Memorial.

HE IS a handsome, intense man, who still has the dancer's body tone. He punctuates his animated speech with facial expressions and

speech with factor server body gestures. Ife jumps from his chair to illus-trate what he means as he speaks of the long field line of a dancer's body in "Swan Lake," or how to move on stage in full Elizabethan

move on stage in full Elizabethan costume. In his office at One Playhouse Square in downtown Cleveland, he was talking and eating a turna stand-wich (almost simultaneously). As he mentioned high school, he reached to the shelf behind for his high school and junior high abburns. "I never the shelf behind gaway." he sald with an engaging smile of satisfaction as he produced a yel-lowed newspaper clipping from a 1953 Grosse Pointe newspaper. It described how ho, a high school senior, had been invited to audition for the Juilliard School in New York City. MARTHA HILL from Juilliard

New York City. MARTHA HILL from Juilliard saw him with the Detroit City Bal-let Company in the Northwestern Regional Ballet Festival. He received a fuil scholarship in dance after at first inchading to major in music and minor in dance. The fact that he did his own choreography for the audition, the drummer boy solo from "Graduation Ball," iddn't hurt either. "I was in everything," he said as he reminisced.

he reminisced. He wasn't exaggerating — first viola at Barbour Junior High and Eastern High schools of Detroit, drum major of the Grosse Point High band (he completed his last two years there), only boy in the

uture Business Leaders Club pleture in the high school album, only boy in the typing class, piano ac-companist for the Madrigal Sing-ers, lenor in the chorale, accompa-nist of the Men's Glee Club of De-

troit. ON TOP of all that was dance. "I took the bus downtown every-day to the Ricardeau Dance Stu-dios at Woodward and Warren. I started dancing at 9, in the Macca-bees Building. I was teaching ballet at 11, 1 was doing it all. "I used to clean the studies cause.

Shifted builting at 3, in the macket bees Building: I was techning bailet at 11 was obing it all. I couldn't afford to pay for the classes," he said, settling in his deak chair. "So, every Saturday morning at for the said settling in his deak chair. "Boy oung teenager, I'd mop the floors, clean the mirrors and if front of the mirrors and make up my own steps. I actually got better because I made up my own steps. "Being in a studio alone is a dis-covery time. I could ask myself why I can't balance while doing this, why this wor't work. I accom-panied myself. I'd play a combina-tion at the plano and get up and do the goal". "Eiter gene breath. "I'd cleaning was a pleasure," he said quietly. 'I brought all that here." He remembered when a young student at the Cleveland Bailet School saw him cleaning the mir-rors. She thought he was the jani-or, unil he showed up later as the aristic director.

tor, unli he showed up later as the artistic director. HE GREW UP in the embrace of family strongly rooted in Middle Eastern culture, and background. His mother was born in Syria, his parents had a grocery at Fort by the bridge and later at Jefferson and Conner. "I learned a lot about business

"I learned a lot about business from them, how to meet people, how to sell . . . They were a very understanding, free family." He remembered seeing the local dance team of George Coury and his slater, Emella.

costumes. Cynthia Gregory, permanent guest artist with the Cleveland Bal-let and American Ballet Theatre star, will dance the Swan Queen, a role that is considered her signa-ture work on Friday, March 9, and the matinee on Sunday, March 11. Theaters restored

est theater restoration project in the world. Playhouse Square Foundation is the non-prolit organization that manages the theaters and develops, produces and presents mulicals. One of the musicals, "Geopel at Co-lous," played on Broadway and several others are on national tour. Playhouse Square Center is also a developer. It built a 750 parking garage on the complex in 1987, a 440 million office building last year and a 432 million hotel with a 1991 completion date. Detroit is just moving into the stage of theater restoration which Cleveland completed several years

Cleveland completed several years age. Playhouse Square Center in downtown Cleveland is home to three restored theaters, the Ohlo (1,035 seats), the State (3,069) and Palace (2,714) as well as the Cleve-land Ballet Company and five other resident companies. The res-toration of all three, built in the 1920s as vaudeville houses, plus a new stagehouse, took 6% years and cost \$37.7 million. This is the large-

principal dancer for the Joffrey Ballet and the American Ballet

Ballet and the American Ballet Theatre. He has choreographed more than 60 ballets for malor companies. On Broadway, he choreographed the Tony award-winning musical ver-sion of "Two Gentlemen of Vero-and" (Good Time Charlie" with Joel Grev.

and "Good Time Charite" with Joel Grey. He choreographed sequences for the movie, "The Turning Point," and played himself in a cameo role.

AUDIENCES AT the 8 p.m. per-formance Friday, March 8, and the 2 p.m. mathee Sunday, March 11, will be the hait the reio e Wolf-er day that the reio e Wolf-er day that the reio e Wolf-er an walk around and be very grand," he said, demonstrating. "He's major domo of the ballneom scene. It requires a mature person. These roise I'l alvaya do and must do so youngsters can see mature ty."

"I thought they were the most beautiful people I had ever seen — they were imagenablers. "In a conception of the seen — they beau of the seen of the seen and the ins, one grave me one. We always had a plano in the house, one (rela-tive) played the out (similar to a lute). At dinners and parties, there was always music and dancing." As a student in New York, Nahat sald he had the best of all teachers — Martha Hill, anthony Tudor, Anna Sokolow ... Later he became It started when he bought a school Ballet of San Jose formed a partnership that gave rise to the Cleveland San Jose Ballet with Nabat as sole artistic director. The partnership has resulted in many more yearly performances for the company, an increased budget and gener-ally a much broader scope of operations. It now has a 19 million a year budget and gives about 100 performances annually.

Cleveland Ballet first mounted "Swan Lake" in 1986 at a total cost of more than \$1 million. It took six months to build the six major sets, special effects and more than 250 costumes.

It was late in 1971 when Dennis Nahat and another dancer, Ian Horvath, stopped in Cleve land to visit Horvath's mother and learned a bal ete school there was for sale. They bought it and founded the Cleveland Dance Center which soon grew "from 40 lattices of the Cleveland Foundation that they who lunched, to 250 students..., The Baltet gould of Cleveland wanted to present us, so the company under way. In 1985, the Cleveland Baltet and City Center In 1985, the Cleveland Ballet and City Center

Local auditions in Rochester studio "Swan Lake:" 11 a.m. Thursday, March 8 (student matince); 8 p.m. Frlday and Saturday, March 9-10; and 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Sunday, March 11, Masonic Temple Audito-rium, Detroit.

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other. Single tickets go on sale today. For information, call the box off-ice, 874-SING.

Auditions for the school and company of the Cleveland Ballet will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 12 at Rochester School of Ballet, 109 E. 4th, Rochester. For information, call (216) 621-2260.



The School of Cleveland Ballet shares studio space with the ballet company,so students have a chance to watch rehears-als, become acquainted with the dancers and see how they live and work.

