

Don't Neglect Ballet Company's History

Written by Letter to Editor

Tuesday, 04 September 2001 18:00

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We read with great interest your article on Ballet Quad Cities (See River Cities' Reader, Issue 338, August 29-September 4, 2001). This article along with the June 10, 2001 Quad City Times article on the ballet company has prompted this response in order to clarify some inaccurate historical references.

In 1985, we – Susan Snider, Ilene Durham, and Lora Adams – opened City Center for the Performing Arts, which was located on Harrison Street in Davenport, Iowa. The mission and emphasis of the school was the correct training of the young dancer with the goal of becoming an artist of the dance. Because of the strong artistic leadership of founder Susan Snider, the school began to achieve recognition for turning out promising young dancers. These young people were being accepted as trainees to prestigious dance programs affiliated with the Joffrey Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, School of American Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Houston Ballet, and National Ballet of Canada, and as dance majors to colleges like Texas Christian, Hope College, and Northern Illinois, to name a few. Many of the CMBT dancers who trained at City Center went on to professional careers with Houston Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Orlando Ballet, Carolina Ballet, Columbia City Ballet, Alabama Ballet, Ballet Met, and Milwaukee Ballet

In 1987 and 1988 we staged our first *Nutcracker* in Geneseo and in 1989, our first full-length *Nutcracker* was presented at the Capitol Theatre, which was taped and aired three times on WQPT. In December 1989 we formalized our not-for-profit status and were known as City Ballet, as an offshoot of City Center. In the program from that performance, you would find the newly formed City Ballet with the following reference: "the official school of City Ballet is City Center for the Performing Arts."

During these early years we worked with Boston Ballet and presented its original choreography for *Graduation Ball*, as well as principal dancers from Milwaukee Ballet and the dance department at the University of Iowa.

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An article from the *Quad City Times* dated February 21, 1991, notes the change of name from City Ballet to Cassandra Manning Ballet Theatre.

I take nothing away from what Ballet Quad Cities (formerly City Ballet and CMBT) is presently achieving. I realize the only thing in life that is constant is change. However, I think that it does a disservice to those who actually founded the school and the ballet company to re-write its history and actually delete one of its founders.

You see, we remember beginning the company. The working for no pay in order to pay the bills and sharing a passionate belief that we could create a place where students could not only create through dance but also learn an important work ethic that would serve them well on and off of the stage.

The history of any business is just as important as its future, because from a committed beginning can come great things. Look at any Web site, such as the American Ballet Theatre's or many others, and you will find a complete history of their beginnings from their struggles to their successes. We created a foundation that has been built upon now with the help of community dollars.

At the end of the day, we believe it is important to recognize the hard work, artistry, and sacrifice from which this company sprang. No matter what new and exciting chapters Ballet Quad Cities writes, its origins remain the same.

Lora Adams
Hampton, Illinois

Ilene Durham
Moline, Illinois

Susan Snider
Des Moines, Iowa