

Marking a milestone with dance

Valley Ballet celebrates its 35th anniversary

by Alison Jalbert
Assistant Editor

Celebrating 35 years as a dance studio is an accomplishment in and of itself, but to Valley Ballet owner Gayle Micca, it also represents 35 years of preserving the purity of foundational classical ballet.

The Canton studio, located on Route 44, offers a variety of classes but focuses on classical ballet, the type of dance in which Micca trained.

"Each year, we perform a piece from a classical ballet," she said. "The ballet students are learning technique and learning a real ballet. We're not a competitive studio – we don't compete [in dance competitions]."

Opening her own studio "just sort of happened," Micca said.

Moving to Connecticut from North Carolina, she was enrolled in the Hartford Ballet Teacher Training Program, where she met Sharon Dante, the director of the Nutmeg Ballet. She began teaching classes for Dante and found her passion was teaching.

In 1980, she and her husband were driving through Collinsville when they saw the building on the corner of Bridge Street and Route 179 was for rent.

"We both thought it was the right thing to do," she recalled, so 51 Bridge Street became the home

of Valley Ballet for its first 25 years.

Initially, the studio offered classes in classical ballet, modern dance and jazz. Micca started with 50 students, a number she said has fluctuated throughout the years, peaking in the 1980s when enrollment reached 150. The focus of Valley Ballet has always been technique and training.

In 1994, Micca hired Linda Presnyakova to serve as the studio's ballet mistress. She trained at the Dance Academy and Ballet School of Moscow, taught at the Moscow School of Ballet and was a dancer with the Moscow Conservatory Dance Troupe. Before moving to the United States, Presnyakova researched studios in the area and sent out her resume, one of those studios being



Cameron McCauley, left, and Michaela Esteban portray Odette and Odile, respectively, in Valley Ballet's "Swan Lake and Fire and Ice," which commemorated the studio's 35th anniversary.

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