

BYDE ballet spotlights local dancers

By Barbara Benson

On June 18th I had the pleasure of attending the spring concert presented by the Barrington Youth Dance Ensemble under the artistic direction of Mary Brennan. What a delightful performance it was. Brennan, as usual, found a way to give almost all of her students from the Barrington Dance Academy a chance to shine.

The afternoon opened with “Gaité,” based on the ballet “Gaité Parisienne,” which was first produced by the Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo. Brennan did the choreography for her company, and it proved to be a charming and spirited version set to the traditional Offenbach music. The highlight of this ballet is the can-can, and I have rarely seen a better danced version. A slight and deft touched of flirtatiousness, smiles and that great music all combined with beautiful and tasteful costumes to make this performance outstanding.

The second ballet, “Scenes from Childhood,” also choreographed by Brennan, was set to the music of Robert Schumann and Johann Strauss the elder. In this dance many younger dancers took the stage with great self-confidence, performing in “Foreign Lands and People,” “Catch me if you Can,” “Frightening Dream,” “Almost too Serious,” “Birdcage Polka,” “Night of the Hobby Horse,” and lastly, “Fireworks at Dusk.” The latter brought all the cast on stage for the famous Radetzky March during which the audience claps with the music.

“Graduation Ball” was first danced in 1940 by the original Ballet Russes. Greg Merriman’s choreography for Barrington drew from the David Lichine original and brought out the charm, humor and entertaining interactions between the cadets of a military academy who visit a girls’ boarding school for their graduation ball. The young dancers, joined by guest artists, brought great professionalism and presentation to one of the most popular ballets in the repertoires of many of the world’s leading ballet companies.

Dancers in the performances from our northern Barrington area included Ana Argyros, Katie Brunner, Diana Donnelly, Tiffany Frankel, Hannah and Hayden Harris, Caroline Jensen, Juliana Nikolich, Sasha Rice, Eliza Seagrist, and Victoria Van Hollen. Annette Nikolich kindly sent me this information; she is a member of BYDE’s parent auxiliary committee and also did the program design.

These performances could not occur without the support of the parent committees, volunteers, and many generous donors – corporate, foundations, and individuals – many of whom have contributed since the company’s beginnings in 1989.

I know that I am an unabashed booster of BYDE and part of that comes from my appreciation that we are able to experience this level of dance professionalism in a suburban community. Perhaps I am not alone in finding the time to attend performances in Chicago somewhat prohibitive, and I am profoundly grateful that I can keep in touch with the world of dance right here in Barrington.