

Ithaca Ballet Blows out 50 Candles

By Anne Marie Cummings

This year the Ithaca Ballet is celebrating its 50th anniversary, and the dance troupe is doing something it's never done before; presenting a blockbuster season of full-length ballets, at The State Theatre, starting with "Cinderella" (Oct. 15-16), followed by "The Nutcracker" (Dec. 9-10) and concluding with Swan Lake (April 28-29).

Auditions for the season, open to all ballet dancers, are on Sept. 10 from 12:30-2 p.m. at the school, located at 504/506 N. Plain St. While the thrust of celebrating is on the performing season, a gala is in the planning stages, as well as performances, at various venues in town, in collaboration with community organizations and musical groups.

Cindy Reid, artistic director of The Ithaca Ballet, says that the 50th anniversary marks a time of change. Reid's mother, Alice Reid, founder of the ballet school and company, died on May 1. "She was the artistic director almost up to her death," says Reid. "The company was performing, for the first time, the full-length ballet of 'Sleeping Beauty.' My mother was in the hospital and hours after the curtain went down, she died. Her thinking was that even if she was dying...the show must go on."

In order to keep the show going on, Reid explains that the Ithaca Ballet is currently looking to hire an executive director, a position that was once referred to as general manager, and was held by Larry Brantley for 15 years. Also a choreographer and Reid's dance partner, Brantley died in 2006. "Since Larry passed, many of our 12 volunteer board members have taken on his responsibilities," Reid says, adding that the company continues to grow, now with an annual budget of \$100,000.

Interviews for the executive director role began last week. Reid says she's received more resumes

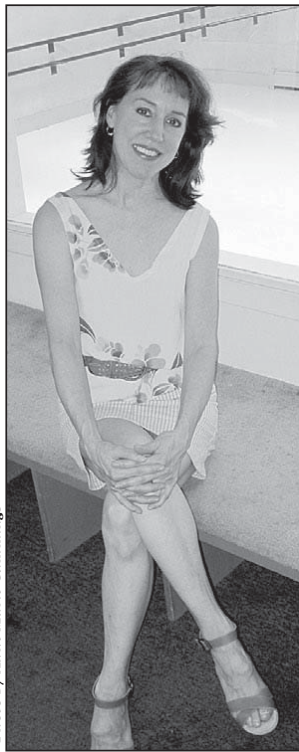


Photo by Anne Marie Cummings

Cindy Reid, artistic director of The Ithaca Ballet sits in the lobby overlooking one of the dance studios.

than she expected. "They're all fantastic candidates," she says, elaborating that the person hired for the job will work very closely with her, will hopefully match her working style, be artistic, computer savvy and have some knowledge of dance.

Linda Warner, president of the board and a board member for eight years, notes that since Brantley's death the ballet company has been working hard to prepare finances to fill his new posi-

tion. "We've known that we would conduct an external search to fill Larry's shoes, in addition to expanding his role," she says. "Right now Cindy is the primary employee. Soon it will be Cindy, the executive director, guest artists from out of town, and local dancers who are paid various fees depending on their levels of experience."

In 1968, Alice Reid found and bought the school for the Ithaca Ballet, the same location where classes and rehearsals are held today. She paid \$68,000 for the property, \$10,000 of which came from Bob Sprole, president and CEO of Therm Inc. On the property at the time was the Calvary Baptist Church, with a house next to it. "We tore down the house and it became an empty lot," Reid says. "Then we converted the church into a studio." By 1978, Alice Reid had a second studio built on the empty lot and a lobby between both studios, designed by Nan Reid, one of four of her daughters.

Prior to finding a home for their school and rehearsals, the Ithaca Ballet company rehearsed like gypsies. Like many artistic companies struggling to get established they found their footing all

over town. At one point they were rehearsing above the Home Dairy on The Commons. They also rehearsed at a location on Cayuga Street, even at St. Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church.

Warner commented that having the State Theatre as the location for performances, for the past decade, has stabilized Ithaca Ballet. "They've been very supportive of the ballet and very accommodating," she says. Before performing at the State, Ithaca Ballet also performed like gypsies greeting audiences at Ithaca High School's Kulp auditorium, spaces at Cornell University and various performance sites downtown.

Today, at 56 years old, Cindy Reid continues to teach ballet classes with the verve she had when she was in her twenties. In between teaching and reading fiction, on her spare time, Reid hopes that one day one of her students, whose gone on to be a professional ballet dancer, will come back to Ithaca and assist her at the school and with her company until the day she dies. "I don't have children; I've raised so many at the ballet," she says with a chuckle. "This is what I wish for."

Museum Prepares to Open Fossil Lab

On Sept. 24, the Museum of the Earth will celebrate the opening of its newly renovated fossil preparation lab with the unveiling of a large fossil-filled block on a two-year loan from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh. Visitors can see PRI scientists begin to chip away at the block, revealing the fossils inside.

"We don't know what we are going to find in the block, but that is half the fun. All we know is where and when the block was collected, as well as the types of dinosaurs already known from the site," Richard Kissel, director of theater programs, said.

The sandstone rock was original-

ly excavated around 1910 from the Carnegie Quarry in northeastern Utah. Now known as Dinosaur National Monument, the site has produced tons of 150-million-year-old bones from many "classic" dinosaurs in the Late Jurassic Period, including Stegosaurus, Apatosaurus, and Allosaurus.

After excavation, the fossils were enclosed in field jackets, burlap and plaster wrapped around the rock surrounding the fossils, and shipped back to Pittsburgh. Cleaning and analyzing the blocks is a time consuming process, and there are still blocks to clean. Visit the Museum of the Earth to see what the block reveals.

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