

Dance classes foster learning

NYC-BASED COMPANY: Rebecca Kelly Ballet owner says camp offers many benefits
By GABRIELLE HOVENDON, TIMES STAFF WRITER, THURSDAY, JULY 7, 2011



JASON HUNTER / WATERTOWN DAILY TIMES

Therese M. Wendler, Manhattan, leads a class Wednesday as part of the Rebecca Kelly Ballet camp at SUNY Potsdam's Dunn Dance Theatre.

POTSDAM — To the untrained eye, the commotion in SUNY Potsdam's Dunn Dance Theatre looked like a regular dance class, complete with ballet shoes, leotards, music and choreography.

To Rebecca Kelly, founder and artistic director of the New York City-based Rebecca Kelly Ballet, the hubbub was a versatile teaching moment.

"I think we've created dance lovers as well as dancers," she said. "They learn to dance and have great fun with music, but that's only one of about 10 take-aways. It's really about great dynamic listening, carefully responding to vivid music and working cooperatively."

Since Tuesday, five members of the Rebecca Kelly Ballet have been providing intensive dance instruction to north country students through SUNY Potsdam's annual weeklong ballet camp. This year's camp has seen the greatest student participation in its nine years, with classes offered to 53 dancers ages 5 and older.

In addition to original choreography, the students have been learning discipline, nutrition, memorization, awareness of space and classical ballet terminology throughout the week. Though the dances change each summer — this year's repertoire includes Irish, Hungarian and Turkish music as well as classical and contemporary pieces — Ms. Kelly said the underlying instructional methods do not vary.

"It's absolutely different every year," she said. "The structure is the same, but the artistic and creative material is fresh."

The students' week will culminate with a public recital at 7 p.m. Saturday at Dunn Dance Theatre. The show, which is sponsored by the Community Performance Series, will feature performances by the Rebecca Kelly Ballet company members as well as a range of new dances demonstrated by the students.

In her second year of attendance at the camp, 8-year-old Kyra M. Daly already had chosen a favorite dance routine by Wednesday morning. One of nine students from Watertown's In Motion School of Dance, which is owned by her mother, SUNY Potsdam alumna Shereen P. Daly, Kyra said she enjoyed learning the choreography from her new teachers.

"We've practiced our warm-ups, we've done the 'Across the Floors' dance and we did the dance with everyone," she said. "I like the 'Across the Floors' best."

Tickets for Saturday's event are \$5 for students and seniors and \$10 for adults. They can be purchased through the CPS box office by calling 267-2277, visiting the lobby of SUNY Potsdam's Sara M. Snell Music Theater or going online.

Community Performance Series: www.cpspotdam.org