

Photo by Photo Innovations David Rosen

Dance star Jeanne Alala Brings Broadway to the 'Boro

by CHERITH Mangum

Jeanne's closet is packed with shoes. A pair of scuffed pointe shoes is wedged beside glossy tap heels. Lyrical slippers sit atop her black jazz sneakers. In fact, Jeanne could probably fill a museum with her dance shoes. But her hands-down favorite is a pair of quaint Dutch wood clogs.

"I have no idea why I still have these shoes," laughed Jeanne. "But I've kept them for over a decade. They're a great set-around souvenir from my first World tour."

Jeanne Alala, professional dancer, is the classic Broadway performer. She's, well, "done it all:" three national Broadway tours followed by one World and one European tour and shows ranging from the classic elegance of *The Nutcracker* to the earthy energy of Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*. Jeanne has even performed at Carnegie and Radio City Music Hall, home to the Rockettes.

"I will never forget the feelings of pride, gratitude and honor I felt daily as I flashed my badge and passed through the stage door, knowing I had made it onto the stage at these world famous theatres as a professional dancer," Jeanne said, "It was the ultimate compilation of my life's hard work."

But after a decade of tap shoes and stage lights, Jeanne retired from professional theatre to fulfill another lifelong dream.

This summer, Jeanne opened The Dance Center of Greens-

boro, the city's one-of-a-kind performance studio. Unlike other local studios, the Center has instructor(s) certified by the Cecchetti Council of America to teach the Cecchetti Method of Ballet, an international dance program dating back to 1820

"Without question, Cecchetti is one of best systems of ballet education," said Jeanne, "It produces not only a skilled dancer but also a well-rounded student."

The Cecchetti Method leads students through a standardized syllabus, grades one through seven. In addition to learning pristine technique, students also study the theory and history behind each movement. And study hard! In order to progress, dancers must pass a national annual exam, both verbal and physical.

In addition to ballet, The Dance Center offers extensive year-round classes and summer camps in tap, jazz, lyrical, and acrobatics. (Yes, indeed, Jeanne was a New York State gymnastics medal winner age twelve and even landed a Dunkin' Donuts commercial with her black

flip. "You have no idea how many jobs I've gotten just because I could do a flip," Jeanne laughed.)

And for the student yearning for a taste of Broadway, the Dance Center offers classes and camps taught by Denise Johnson, an acclaimed Broadway dancer, and her husband, Marshall, a Grammy nominee. Together with the Dance Center, the couple provides complete training for the up-and-coming triple threat performer.

But for Jeanne, the Dance Center isn't just the next studio on the block. It's a gateway to endless opportunity.

"The opening of this studio is one way I can "pay forward" and pass on the opportunities that so many people provided for me," Jeanne said. "I'm doing this so I can be a vehicle to help any student reach their dream."

In fact, if students can't go to New York, Jeanne is determined to bring New York to the students. As a member of The Dance Masters of America program, Jeanne offers students access to national competitions and highly coveted scholarships.



All photos by Photo Innovations David Rosen

Much like Cecchetti, the DMA program provides a high-standard syllabus, but it encompasses a wide range of dance disciplines. Jeanne's own accolades hale back to age sixteen when she was awarded the "Top DMA National Overall Scholarship Winner" that afforded her a summer of study with the Atlanta Ballet. At seventeen, she was crowned with another DMA top honor, "Miss Dance of St. Louis"

"I want my students to benefit from the contacts I've made over my career," Jeanne shared. "Who knows! If I host a master class with Mark Goodmon, director of The Mark Goodman Tap Company in Los Angeles, one of my students might catch his eye and, 'bam!' suddenly find themselves off to California!"

Jeanne certainly has forged her own path to becoming a professional dancer. But she's also walking in the footsteps of her mother—a gifted dancer who owned two dance studios and taught for over forty years. It was with her Mom that Jeanne did her first plie and shuffle ball-change at age two.

Dancing is a family legacy for Jeanne, and she hopes to share this dream with dancers at any level. The Dance

Center welcomes students from ages "3 to 103"—from the aspiring professional ballerina to the working mom seeking exercise.

"I understand that not everyone wants to go professional with dance," Jeanne explained. "And I'm equally supportive of every interest level; it doesn't matter if you're here seven days a week or one day a week."


The Dance Center of Greensboro proffers an exceptional and well-rounded education in a bevy of dance disciplines. But more importantly, it celebrates the expression and joy of dance.

Whether seeking the lights of Broadway or simply the enjoyment of movement, Jeanne promises a meaningful and exciting experience.

Perhaps it's time for you to find out what shoes fit you best. ■

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The
**Dance
Center**

OF GREENSBORO

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Jeanne Alala - Director\Owner

SUMMER 2009

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www.dancecentergo.com

- The Cecchetti Council of America, a non-profit ballet intensive program
- Dance Masters of America, a non-profit dance scholarship & competition program

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