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If Walls Could Speak

by Phillip L. Sciarillo

We often muse that if walls could talk - Oh, the stories they would tell. Well, I've found walls that send a clear message of passion, nurturing and success. On a recent trip to Seiskaya Ballet's studios in St. James, it was impossible not to be impressed by the widespread press coverage the company has garnered over the years. There, on the hallway walls, are 15 glassed-panels filled with articles and press clippings spanning nearly thirty years. The most recent achievements are showcased at the main studio's entrance while less current items form a horseshoe wrapping the walls of the hallway that surrounds the studio. A dizzying array of plaques, commendations, national and international awards and photos adorn the inside of the studio.

Long gone are the sounds of machines whirling and the racket of mechanics' tools which were such a part of a building that originally housed a helicopter assembly plant. The huge open-bay spaces have been neatly subdivided into an eclectic array of art studios, gyms and businesses. Instead of machines, dancers whirl in pirouettes. The thundering of character-shoe-clad-feet pounding out a Russian rhythm now supplants the din of hand tools. The metal deck ceilings are the same and the lighting might also be a holdover, but few

vestiges of another lifetime remain. Although there are threads that tie the two together - the remotely piloted helicopters manufactured here by Seiskaya's father-in-law were on the leading edge of technology in their day - they were truly world class - as is Seiskaya Ballet.

The testament to that is on the walls. Dance is a rite of passage for many. Classical ballet at Seiskaya attracts a hardy breed indeed. The walls chronicle the lives of youngsters who have gone on to careers. Wide-eyed kids who have earned kudos from dance critics, audiences and teachers alike. Some have become dancers (nearly sixty), doctors, lawyers, ac-



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countants and countless other professions and all with one thing in common - these walls represent their stories, their memories and their passage through adolescence.

A sense of history opens the door to a wonderful heritage. The opportunity to strive and achieve gives each student the prospect of making some history of their own. To become part of the legacy on the wall is a chance to join the legends. And the message to the lay observer - for classical ballet - this is the place!



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