

*Second Position with Sara-Jane Measnor
and Sylvia Duncan*

Flo Beaudoin happens to be a longtime friend of another community dance mainstay—RoseAnn Sayler of the Menlo Park Academy of Dance. While Sayler retired four years ago, she left her legendary studio in the capable hands (and feet) of Artistic Director Sarah-Jane Measnor and Studio Manager Sylvia Duncan, both mainstays in their own right. Now equal partners and owners of the Academy, Measnor and Duncan’s respect for Sayler is palpable from the outset. “RoseAnn has been in this same building for 50 years,” explains Duncan, “and when she retired she was very adamant that the studio continue on with Sarah, and she sold it to us. And she still comes by to see us.”

“Miss RoseAnn,” as her students know her, is originally from Oklahoma. She spent her early dancing days in Vaudeville road shows. When she married, she landed in Menlo Park and started a studio in her garage, but soon moved to El Camino Real. Who would have anticipated that half a century later, little girls would still

be lining up in their tutus? Today they arrive for class with "Miss Sarah," also one of the Academy's two full-time instructors. Measor, who was born in England, trained with London's prestigious Royal Academy of Dance and danced professionally in London and Hong Kong. "I had the opportunity to come to California and I liked it so much I just stayed and stayed," says Measor, who has now been with the Academy for 15 years, serving as Artistic Director the last four.

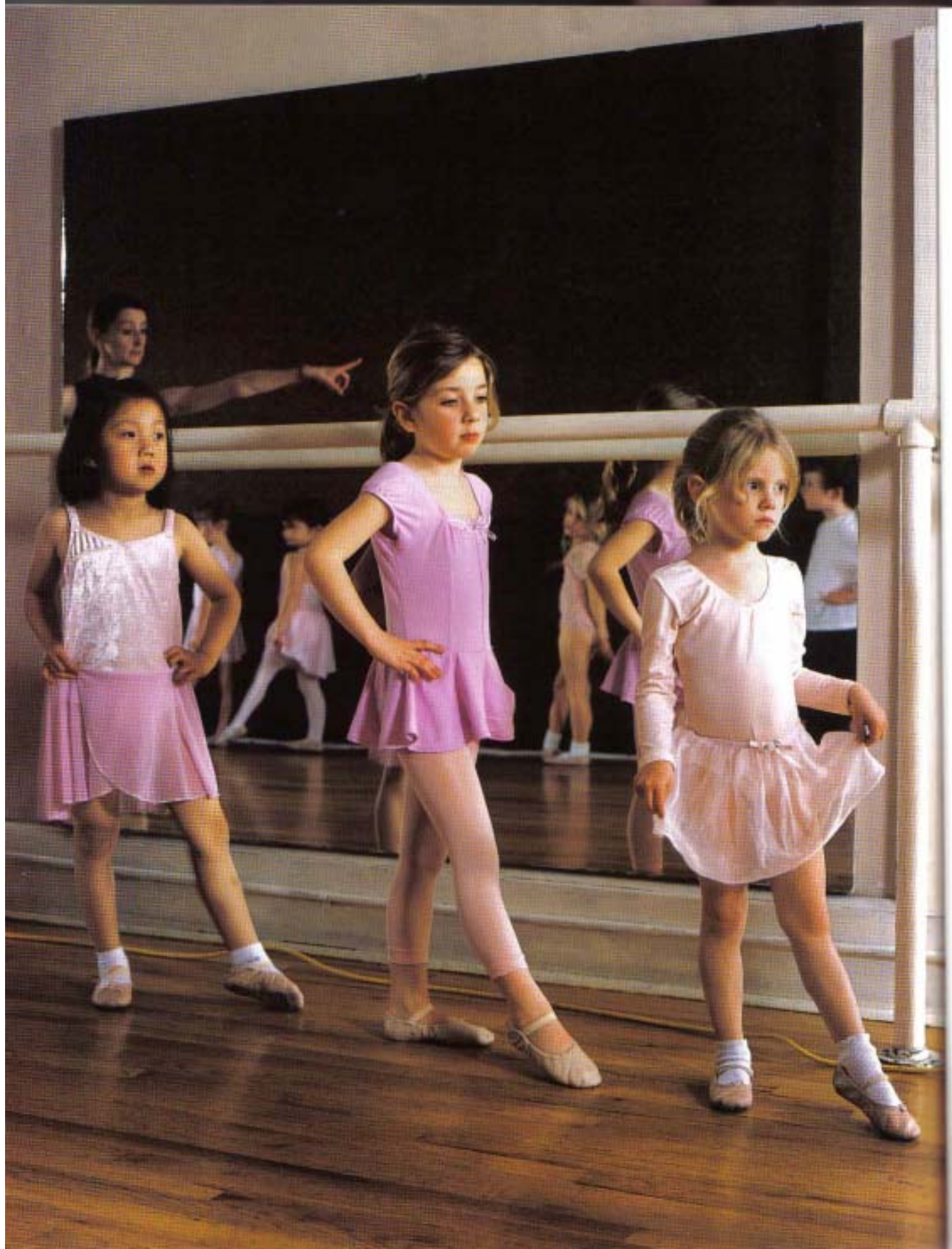
"I'm just Sylvia," Duncan jokes, and who the children call, "the lady who lives in the office." The joke has some merit—Duncan, who has lived in Atherton for 45 years, has managed the studio for

20. "My three girls all danced and came through the studio, and two of them, actually, were teachers," says Duncan. Four of her grandchildren have as well. Asked if she has ever taken to the stage herself, Duncan laughs, "No, I've always been in management. She [Sarah-Jane] does all the dancing, and I run the business end. It works out very nicely."

After 50 years, the studio has been something of a second home for the Academy's nearly 600 students, who take ballet, tap, jazz, lyrical, or hip-hop. Many of the advanced students in their late teens began when they were 3-, 4-, and 5-years old. (Now the Academy also offers Mommy & Me classes for 2 year olds.) "We give out 5-,



Sylvia Duncan and Sarah-Jane Measor
of the Menlo Park Academy of Dance



10-, and 15-year awards at the recital," says Measor. Some have followed their talent to prestigious companies such as the San Francisco Ballet and the San Diego Ballet Company, and several pursue their Bachelors of Arts in dance. "Three of our [current] teachers have come through the studio here," says Duncan, after earning dance certificates. "It keeps going full circle," Measor adds.

Part of that circle has included the International Dance

increased interest. "The schools don't offer dance in their sports programs," Duncan explains, and "parents are looking for another outlet for their children to be exposed to physical activity." Measor also points to the absence of art and music appreciation programs in curriculums today, adding that dance "makes them think as well. You're not running in place or doing jumping jacks. You're thinking. You're listening to music."



Top row and opposite page: Five-year-olds from "Miss Sarah's" Pre Ballet Class **Bottom row, from left to right:** On stage at the International Dance Challenge in 2004, when Sarah-Jane Measor's competition team took home top honors for the second year in a row

Challenge held in Las Vegas each July. Measor, tall, lithe, and all graceful limbs, is modest about her own accomplishments, yet glows discussing the feats of her competition team. "We won the overall title two years in a row [2003 and 2004], and in 2002 we were first runner-up. You can see the six-foot-tall trophies in the other room!" Measor, who no longer dances professionally, finds teaching more gratifying. She has that calm and composure about her—the kind that comes from doing what you love. As she puts it, "You just get hooked on teaching and seeing their little faces every week and seeing them grow up year after year."

When asked for their experienced insights into the state of dance today, both Measor and Duncan have observed an

The same can be said for the adult classes the Academy offers. "Some of the ladies in the tapping class have been there for 20 years, dancing together," says Sylvia. The Morning Tap Ladies, as they're called, all began with Miss RoseAnn.

Third Position with Ed and Lynda Moran

During their photo shoot, Ed and Lynda Moran looked every bit the part of perfection, from her magenta dress to his coordinating tie. For the Morans, who have led Menlo Circus Club's popular Wednesday night Cotillions (they switched from Fridays three years ago), poise and posture are vital