

## BEHIND THE SCENES

*Patti Payne's take on business beyond the headlines*



# Bold dreams for Renton dance company

*Kevin Kaiser, one of five brothers in dance, is thinking big for the Evergreen City Ballet*

Remember the movie "Billy Elliot," about a talented young boy whose life was all about dance? Kevin Kaiser, the new artistic director of Evergreen City Ballet (ECB) in Renton, could be the adult version of that famous young man, with four brothers all involved in the ballet world. Think Billy Elliot times five.

Roy Kaiser is artistic director with the Pennsylvania Ballet in Philadelphia. Ken Kaiser is artistic director with the Washington Contemporary Ballet in Tacoma, while Dan Kaiser holds that lofty position with the Delaware Regional Ballet. Russell Kaiser is a ballet master with the New York City Ballet.

Growing up in Federal Way, the boys started tap dancing when each turned 4 years old. "It was easier for our mother to drive us all to the same place," says Kevin Kaiser.

The boys got so good at tap, they signed on with "The Singing Angels" from Cleveland, and went on tour to places like Disneyland, Hollywood Bowl and other tourist spots in the country.

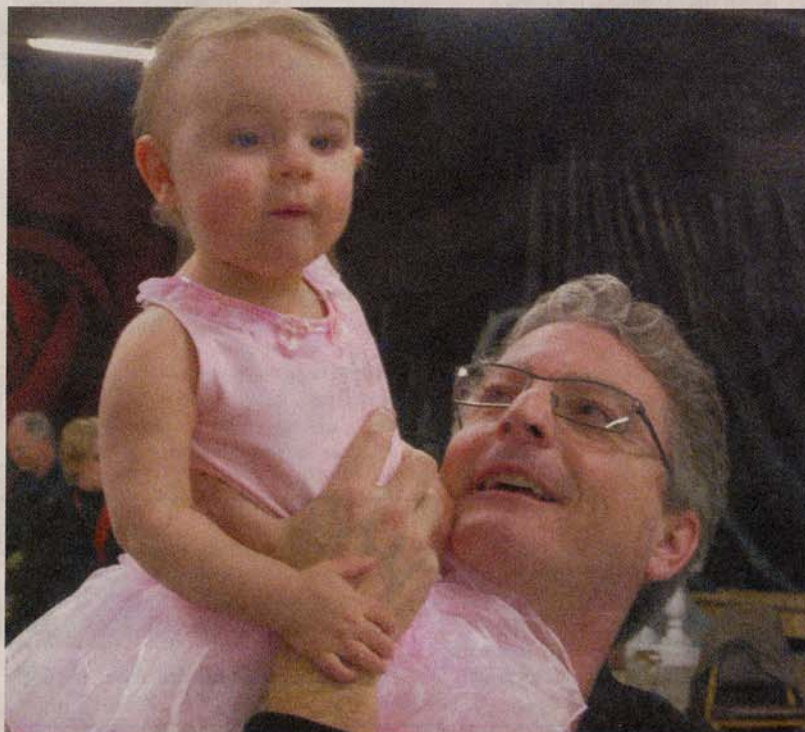
Their dance teacher eventually steered them to ballet. "Once we got over the tights, we really enjoyed it," Kaiser says, "and the rest is history."

He danced as a soloist with Pacific Northwest Ballet for 14 years under Kent Stowell and Francina Russell, and went on to Oregon Ballet Theater to become its associate artistic director.

Among his credits, Kaiser appeared in the 1986 movie "Nutcracker, The Motion Picture," performed with Wayne Newton when Newton was a dancer, and made the cover of Dance Magazine.

Returning to the Seattle area, he became a mortgage banker and taught ballet at ECB a few times a week.

Now as head of that dance company, he is calling on illustrious colleagues and relatives all over the country to help him elevate ECB to a new level of excellence and discipline. "I've put together a (six-week) summer program second to none," he says, with pride.



BIG CHEESE PHOTO | Katy VonBrandenfeld

EN POINTE: Kevin Kaiser, artistic director of Evergreen City Ballet, holds his daughter Ilaria at the ballet company's studio.

Gathering a world-class faculty, Kaiser has tapped former PNB principal dancer and colleague Patricia Barker, James Canfield with Nevada Dance Theater in Las Vegas, Kaiser's brother Roy from Pennsylvania Ballet, artistic director Donald Byrd with Seattle's Spectrum Dance Theater and choreographer for "The Color Purple" on Broadway, and Alison Epsom, ballroom dance teacher who danced in a Harry Potter movie.

Classes start June 23, with more than 100 young people signed up this summer, from 9 to 22 years old.

"We'll offer everything from tap to bal-

let to ballroom to pointe to modern dance. And this fall we open ballroom classes to adults," he says, pointing to the strong positive influence of ABC's hit "Dancing with the Stars."

So far the response is gratifying. "We've doubled our revenue from prior years. We're pretty much close to capacity for summer." There are a few openings left, most of them for the workshops for very young students.

Kaiser says what ECB offers is unique. "We will give our students a well-rounded dance education, even teaching them how to interview for dance jobs, learning the ability to work with professional choreographers. We'll put together their dance résumés, pictures and DVDs, and give them performance experience on stage where artistic directors could see them in action. This is a dream of mine. Something I've wanted to do for a long time."

Yes, Billy Elliot is alive and well.

### Shining clean

Exotic car dealer Park Place Ltd. in Bellevue threw a party recently that could have been right out of a James Bond movie, complete with champagne, Belvedere vodka, an ice luge, gourmet food and 300 guests dressed to the nines.

The event marked the Northwest unveiling of the Aston Martin DBS, this particular one painted Casino Royale dark gray, like the one in the 2006 Bond flick of the same name.

The price tag on this little beauty was \$300,000, and it was purchased by one Charles Bilash, a Vancouver, B.C., Realtor who was there for the unveiling. Two other Aston Martin DBS cars coming in to Park Place have been pre-purchased by New Yorkers at the same price.

The guests, including car guys Bruce McCaw, David Fluke, Peter Hageman, Tom Hazelrigg, Tom Armstrong and others, mingled among exotic cars — Lamborghini, Shelby Cobras and a Porsche Carrera GT, a techie's car selling on consignment for an eye-popping \$425,000.

The event also celebrated the opening of Park Place's "Auto Salon," a rare, open-to-the-public professional hand car wash, this one with its own comfort lounge.

"Everyone gets star treatment," says Park Place owner David Bingham. "You can go into the lounge and watch your car being hand detailed and washed or see the showroom through the other side. You can look at three flat screen TVs, or hook up to the internet and work. You can get food, shop in the boutique for car apparel and there will be an espresso booth in there as well."

On a recent sunny day, 50 cars drove up for the custom wash. The 17 people working there could wash more than 200 vehicles daily. Prices range from about \$19 to \$34.

This hand car wash adds another component to Park Place, which offers sales and service, a full detail shop, a wheel-and-tire division, and an upholstery shop.

### Coffee talk

- Crazy fun at the Moore Theater recently as "The Rocky Horror Show," to benefit Broadway Bound's inner city youth programs, had the audience rocking along, many of them dressed up as Transylvanians. Among the cast were venture capitalists Mike Slade and John Waechter, and mattress maven Sunny Kobe Murphy and her husband, John Murphy. "John trained for two months to do this role," says Sunny. "At 46, in gold lamé boy-shorts, that's a bold move."

- When Katrina Ho ties the knot with Peter Symuleski on June 28 at the Willows Lodge in Woodinville, a film crew from "The Today Show" will be on hand, adding to the entourage of 100 guests, four bridesmaids, five groomsmen and the family pooch, a rat terrier named Emerald, who will be the ring bearer. Apparently the show is doing a piece on friends who officiate at weddings. The friend, Robert Ciridon from New York, went online to get the credentials to perform the ceremony.

- I wrote about the recent passing of community leader, feminist and pharmacist Shirley Bridge, wife of Herb. Several of you wanted to know her name before she married: It was Shirley Selesnick, a strong, talented woman under any name.

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