



# It's time!

## Evergreen City Ballet prepares to grow under new director

Story by DANA E. BLOZIS

Professional Dancer Kevin Kaiser soars across the stage in Tarantella, choreographed by Kent Stowell.

Evergreen City Ballet is ready, its new artistic director is ready, and Renton is ready, says Kevin Kaiser, appointed last January to lead the 14-year-old ballet company and academy.

"In four to five years, Renton can have a significant professional ballet company," predicts Kaiser. "This community has the ability to take the company to a higher level, and Renton is ready for it."

Evergreen's board, which appointed Kaiser with an eye on his extensive experience, shares Kaiser's vision. Having served at ECB as an instructor since 2005, his resumé includes 30 years of dancing and six years in dance-related administrative positions.

Specifics in Kaiser's vision include expanding the company to 12 dancers on 26-week contracts (the budget doesn't currently allow for contracts) and three to four performances per year. He envisions an outreach program for schools and for students who couldn't normally afford to participate in dance.

"Our program teaches discipline to kids of all skill levels," Kaiser explained. "I want everyone to have the opportunity to learn this artistic form."

Kaiser dreams of an artists' community in Renton, with the ballet company playing a significant part. That, however, would require a permanent home. Evergreen's academy is currently located in the old McLendon Hardware building on 2nd Street, where it moved from Auburn two-and-a-half years ago. There isn't a long-term lease, but negotiations for a five- to 10-year lease are underway.

"Without a long-term lease, we are not able to grow and generate the necessary funding for our organization," Kaiser said. "We love our current facility and would like the opportunity to stay in Renton."

Originally from the Pacific Northwest, Kaiser comes from a family of talented dancers. One of the five Kaiser Brothers, Kevin performed across the country, working with

celebrities that included Wayne Newton.

At the age of 16, he began dancing professionally under world-renowned choreographers and performing an extensive repertoire: Paul Taylor's "Company B," George Balanchine's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and virtually every male role in Kent Stowell's "The Nutcracker." Kaiser also enjoyed a 15-year career with the Pacific Northwest Ballet and served as associate artistic director of the Oregon Ballet Theater.

He returned to the Seattle area to be closer to his family and, he says, to give back to the dancing community which is so important to him. In particular, Kaiser hopes to create opportunities for dancers to work with professional-level talent so that they are inclined to remain here.

"I want to keep the talent here in the Pacific Northwest," Kaiser said.

One way is to bring talented dancers like ballerina Patricia Barker to Evergreen's academy. Barker, who performs world-wide and is a former principal dancer for the Pacific Northwest Ballet, is participating in the school's summer intensive program – professional dance instruction involving well-known artistic directors and choreographers.

Barker is enthused about Evergreen Ballet's size.

"I'm looking forward to inspiring talent from a smaller school because both Kevin and I started our training in smaller studios," Barker said. "I think the more personal attention given by teachers is important and certainly the performance opportunities are invaluable for them."

Barker has worked with Kaiser in the past and is pleased to see him in the role of artistic director.

"Kevin's talents are numerous: his extensive background in some of the best dance organizations in the country, his relationship with colleagues and friends, and his charming, witty personality. Evergreen City Ballet is very fortunate to have such a person as its artistic leader."

### Coming June 7, 2008 to IKEA Performing Arts Center: New Northwest Works

This program will feature a mixture of dance performances, both traditional and contemporary. Except for three works developed by Evergreen City Ballet's founder Wade Walthall, all works are original including a work created by Kevin Kaiser featuring music of Etta James and Ray Charles. For more information, visit <http://evergreencityballet.org>