



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

October 24, 2016

MEDIA CONTACT:

Annarose Monroe

408.828.4285

annarose@losgatosballet.org

Elementary Students Inspired by Professional Ballet Dancers

Los Gatos, CA - It is not every day that 2nd grade students are instructed by professional ballet dancers but, this is exactly what the 2nd graders at Van Meter Elementary have been experiencing. Cindy Huang and Raul Salamanca are instructing both boys and girls in stretching, technique, choreography and dance appreciation. "I think it is an excellent way to introduce all students to the fun, challenge, and history of ballet, an activity that many may not have the benefit to experience; both as an option of a sport or exposure to a performing art.", said Ingrid O'Donoghue, Van Meter 2nd grade teacher. These classes are part of a 6-week outreach program sponsored by The Los Gatos Ballet Foundation.

The students are taught by Ms. Huang and Mr. Salamanca, both professional dancers and instructors at Los Gatos Ballet. Prior to joining the former Silicon Valley Ballet, Ms. Huang danced professionally with the Miami City Ballet and performed as a guest artist with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal. Mr. Salamanca has danced with Ballet Arizona, Boston Ballet, Les Grand Ballets Canadiens de Montreal, and Ballet San Antonio. "I saw my students get excited about ballet. Amazed by the fact that professional athletes use the exercises in ballet to strengthen and enhance their abilities in other sports. Ballet is physically strenuous and fun. The students were appreciative at how quickly they could come together for a performance. Another specific benefit was that in order to perform, each student had to follow directions and remember a sequence of steps. Each one had to do their part. I also really appreciated the professionalism of the instructors. Many dads emailed me after the first session saying how much their sons and daughters were talking about ballet. Parents really like it.", said O'Donoghue.

Students are being taught variations from the Nutcracker in which they will perform with their class this week. When asked about how the program benefited her students, Ms. O'Donoghue said, "Instruction in the arts provides children with freedom of expression within a structured and focused environment that they do not get in other types of activities. It requires mental focus and physical discipline. I loved watching my students get excited. I enjoyed watching as each one figured out what it was they were doing and how it fit into the whole piece. The instructors were very capable handling a group of children and they shared their love of their profession and it came across to the students."

This program, supported by The Los Gatos Ballet Foundation, is available to local and underserved schools and is headed up by Alison Ahmed. Ms. Ahmed was inspired by her daughter's participation in dance classes at Los Gatos Ballet. She built on her museum education experience to create the ballet's *Leaps and Bounds* Outreach program in the schools in 2008. The program provides professional dance instruction to students in order to foster the love of dance and contribute to the development of well-rounded persons.

The Van Meter 2nd grade classes will be performing their variations this week on Tuesday and Thursday morning, beginning at 9am.

###

About Los Gatos Ballet

Our mission is to inspire and cultivate an appreciation and love of dance within our local community by providing quality educational and training programs, superb performances, and collaboration with other artists and arts organizations. We are known for our delightful production of **The Nutcracker at the Flint Center in Cupertino**, have a repertoire of 5 full-length spring ballets and provide outreach programs in our community. For more information, visit: **LosGatosBallet.org**

Los Gatos Ballet Publicity Contact

Annarose Monroe, Marketing Director
408.828.4285 annarose@losgatosballet.org

LOS GATOS BALLE

630 University Avenue, Los Gatos, CA 95032 408.399.7577 LosGatosBallet.org