

Los Gatos Ballet

Marcie Ryken, Artistic Director

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Los Gatos Ballet Announced Raissa Chazova as Program Director

Los Gatos, CA - Los Gatos Ballet announced Raissa Chazova as their program director. As Los Gatos Ballet's 2016-17 season begins, Ms. Chazova will take the lead in directing the ballet program. She will work under the school's founder and artistic director, Marcie Ryken.

Ms. Chazova is a native of Almaty, Kazakhstan. She received her ballet training from renowned Vaganova schools in Almaty, Kazakhstan and Novosibirsk, Russia. Ms. Chazova sees her graduation from Almaty Ballet School, Kazakhstan with Chopiniana as being one of the most significant accomplishments in her dance career.

Ms. Chazova began teaching in 2009 as the artistic/program director of the Dance Academy in Kazakhstan. She also coached, choreographed and judged their rhythmic gymnastics team. She then moved to Portland, Oregon and became an instructor at the Sultanov Russian Ballet Academy. While in Portland, she also coached the Rose City Rhythmic Art and Collaboration as well as strength and conditioning for a competitive ice skating team. After a move to California in 2015, Ms. Chazova taught at Contra Costa Ballet in Walnut Creek and Los Gatos Ballet.

Ms. Ryken has seen significant growth in Los Gatos Ballet's program and believed that it was the time to bring on a program director. Ryken felt that Ms. Chazova was the right person. Ms. Chazova said, "From the first time I walked in the door, I could sense a fantastic energy from the school. I found it to be quite well organized, the students very attentive and inspired, and the staff to be a delight to work beside. Best of all, Marcie and I hit it off from the very beginning. I had not previously considered fully committing my time to one organization, but it didn't take me long to realize I was interested in working closely with Marcie and the staff to build on an already thriving program."

Ms. Chazova never had a specific goal of becoming a program director, but throughout her career has found herself desirous to provide a ballet education that would help to bring up, strong healthy dancers. "I'm excited to use my new level of influence to implement even more healthy development concepts into the training at Los Gatos Ballet. Mostly, I arrived at a perfect moment and happened to be the right fit for the organization and hopefully that will ring true long into the future.", said Chazova.

When asked what she believed was her most significant role as a teacher, Ms. Chazova replied, "I

usually end up remaining close to my past students and look forward to staying involved in their lives long after we've worked in the studio. I always really appreciated the role my teachers played as mentors in my development, both ballet, and life-related, so I am honored to have a similar influence."

Here is what Ms. Chazova's students at Los Gatos Ballet said of her. "What makes Raissa's teaching so unique is that she has a no-nonsense way of giving corrections. She is direct and clear, which can be really helpful when you're trying to pick up a new combo or step. Also, Raissa has taught me that you have to be flexible in order to improve. While this is especially true for ballet, it also applies to many different aspects of life. When you want to do something better, you need to humble yourself and be open to new ways of doing and thinking about things. She has also taught me that you always have to start with a strong foundation before you can progress to more advanced or complicated movements. Because of this, a good portion of our class is spent going back to the basics.", said Los Gatos High School sophomore, Sophie Ryvola.

"Raissa is an amazing teacher, who never fails to inspire and impress me. Her teaching is wonderful, and she always gives specific corrections. She sees the difference in every student, and makes sure to cater to those differences. Raissa has taught me to expand my views on ballet, and look at every step in a new way. She also has taught me a lot about the other cultures around the world and how they look at dance differently.", said Los Gatos resident and Sacred Heart High School freshman, Kelly Yu.

"Raissa is a very unique teacher. She is disciplined in her teaching methods, but always listens to each individual's needs. If you give Raissa respect in ballet class she will give you respect right back. What makes Raissa's teaching style so unique is that she progresses the class contingent upon the students' needs. If she feels that her students are picking up the combinations quickly and dancing efficiently, she usually decides to push them a little bit. On the contrary if her students are just returning back to class or are sore from rehearsal the previous day she will usually make the class a bit less challenging so that her students can recuperate. Also, Raissa has taught me that you may not be a perfect dancer but you can perfect the way you dance. She taught me that even if you don't have the "ballet body" it does not decrease the quality of dancing. She especially has taught me that your hard work and dedication will pay off, and it has for me.", said University of Nevada freshman and Presentation High School graduate, Mariah Ordaz.

When asked what Ms. Chazova hopes to bring to Los Gatos Ballet, she responded, "My first goal is to continue building relationships and trust with the students. Having that connection and level of trust is necessary to the foundation of technical success, emotional maturity, and the personal development of any dancer. I would love to build a program that can help the dancers understand themselves better; body and mind. I feel that whether a student desires a professional career in dance or just wants to dance a few days a week, the principles of ballet are applicable both in and outside the studio. Hopefully, everyone takes something away from the table at the end of the day. I would consider my work here a success if we can achieve that."

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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**

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