

Los Gatos Ballet

Marcie Ryken, Artistic Director

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Dancers Develop Skills for Life

Los Gatos, CA – Los Gatos Ballet Artistic Director Marcie Ryken takes special care in developing her dancers not just to shine at auditions, but to succeed in life. Auditions for lead roles took place last month as dancers prepare to gift our community with the classic ballet, Swan Lake. Students performed in front of a panel of judges consisting of former professionals, many of whom have danced in Swan Lake productions. “Before the audition, I teach the dancers the steps and the intention for the character. It is common for dancers to “try” to do what they think I want. My biggest challenge is to help them figure out how to find *themselves* through the process. They have to throw out the idea of “trying” and just do what feels authentic. As dancers are essentially a conduit of emotion, they will transmit what they feel to the audience.”, says Ryken.

Each dancer has their own audition routine, but one thing is certain, they hold to Ms. Ryken’s advice. “I try to take the advice from my teacher, Ms. Marcie, which is to go beyond the steps and show the judges that you are more than just technically qualified, but that you can transform into the character and bring the story to life.”, says Anna Whiting, Saratoga High School Junior. Ryken understands that to succeed in ballet requires the same skills that are necessary to succeed in life. Like everyone, dancers have their own personal challenges to overcome. “I have been told to walk into the audition as though I already have the part. This is definitely something that I struggle with as I am a naturally shy person, but I think that it is really important to be confident in what you are showing the judges. No matter the outcome, my main goal is to never leave an audition feeling like I held back or that I could have done more.”, says Caroline DiNapoli, Junior at Archbishop Mitty High School. “I definitely try to follow Ms. Marcie's advice to look for the feeling in the music and not just focus on the steps.”, says Mariah Ordaz, Presentation High School senior.

Swan Lake is an emotive and passionate ballet, thus requiring dancers to communicate a depth of character through movement. “During auditions, I tried to really tap into my vulnerable side, as White Swan is such an emotionally deep character. I want to be able to show this character’s authentic emotion.”, says DiNapoli. Upon reflection, Whiting said, “White Swan was definitely one of my biggest dreams to dance one day. There is so much depth to the emotional side of this role, and I am excited to explore this side of myself.”

Inspiring dancers to “find their own voice” through their ballet training is paramount to Ryken. “The skills developed at Los Gatos Ballet are beneficial throughout the dancers lives. Through focused intention, the dancers go on a journey of self-discovery and empowerment. I am passionate about helping the individual discover their own voice, and finding a true sense of self in the process.” remarks Ryken.

Los Gatos Ballet will be performing Swan Lake May 27-29 at West Valley College Theater. Tickets available at LosGatosBallet.org.

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About Los Gatos Ballet

Our mission is to inspire and cultivate an appreciation and love of dance by providing quality educational and training programs, superb performances, and collaboration with other 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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