

# Marie Ann Longlade School of Dance celebrates 50th Anniversary



Above: Marie Ann Longlade (centre) with daughters Lee-Ann Longlade-Poff and Gail Longlade-Kossel who teach at the school of dance and grand daughters Paige Kossel, Chloe Poff and Camryn Kossel.

Billed as, “the most welcoming dance school in Mississauga,” the Marie Ann Longlade School of Dance is celebrating its 50th anniversary from its second-floor location along the busy Dundas Street strip.

With 3,000 square feet of studio space, they offer instruction for 2-year-olds and up, in Kinderdance, Preschool, Pre-Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Acrobatics, Hip Hop, Classical Ballet, Pointe, and Special Needs Classes. Along with its competitive dance groups, they also offer classes for adults, vocal lessons, and Pilates.

Artistic director and principal Marie Ann Longlade-Link founded the school in 1965, with the focus on developing the dance skills, self-esteem, and high energy of her students. She has earned several awards in this regard, including the Mississauga Arts Dance Award in 2001, and the Dance Educator of America’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012.

“I do what I love, and I love what I do,” she says.

“I do feel it’s extremely rewarding to watch the children excel within themselves.”

Enrolled in the Robertson School of Dance by the age of 2.5, and a professional dancer at six, Longlade went on to study at the National Ballet School, also earning her teaching accreditation. She first launched her studio from a small Toronto space.

“I was in a show at the Royal Alexandra Theatre, and one of the fellows in the orchestra said he had a music store and wanted to know

if I’d be interested in opening a dance studio on the other side of it,” she recalls, with a smile.

She moved to her current location at 1650 Dundas Street East, in 1970. Her six children and two stepchildren have all passed through the school, and her daughters Lee-Ann, and Gail remain on staff as instructors.

The Longlade Dance Company takes part in various U.S., and Canadian dance competitions each year, with 16-year-old Tanya Christogu coming home with the title of Miss Teen Dance Educator of America Award in 2013. Many of its students have moved on to dance-related careers, including Krista Tamulionis- Saab, a member of the famed Radio City Rockettes.

Her dancers have performed at everywhere from seniors homes, to former Mayor Hazel McCallion’s Retirement Party in 2014, to the halftime show at the Harlem Globetrotters’ recent appearance at the Hershey Centre.

With this relatively small studio for a decade, Andrea Rosato, 13, says, “There are times it is competitive dancing, but at the studio it’s not. We’re basically a big family.”

“We will go shopping together. We will have a showcase, and afterwards have a sleepover – the whole school.”

Over 60 of its alumni will be returning for their annual year end recital (“Spring Melody”), on Saturday, June 13, 4:30 p.m. at the Living Arts Centre-Hammerson Hall, followed by a 50th Anniversary Reception.