

## Julie Barban Works to Mold Futures of Young Dancers

By Mark Arike, Marketing Associate

Photos by Ed Smolen and Kameron Anderson



Director Julie Barban with student Michelle Perry in last year's production of *The Nutcracker*.

With the age-old art form of ballet, it takes hard work, tenacity, and a bit of natural talent to gracefully pirouette and prance ones way across the stage. Spectators who take in this beautiful movement of the body are often bedazzled by what they witness and are inclined to attend future choreographed performances to get their fix.

For Julie Barban, an experienced local dancer and instructor, ballet has always been the most marvelous and beguiling forms of dance to learn, perform and teach.

"I started dancing when I was four, and I can remember that I always enjoyed ballet more than anything else," said Barban. "I did jazz and tap but ballet was always my favourite."

Barban was born and raised in Sault St. Marie but left the area when she was 19 to pursue a career in dance. For a time

she studied the dance program at Ryerson University. Soon after, Barban had a chance encounter with a woman in the city who ran a studio called DanceSpace (no longer in existence). This studio owner quickly became Barban's mentor and confidante.

"She took me under her wing and got me going on my teacher training", explained Barban.

With her sights set high and ambition peaking, Barban enrolled at the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) to get her teaching certificate. She soon left Toronto for Calgary and finished her studies with the RAD via correspondence.

In 1998, Barban made the move to Haliburton so that she could be closer to family in Ontario. Three years later, she took a chance and opened up the doors to her own dance studio, Heritage Ballet.

Over the years, the reputation of her Haliburton studio has grown and the quality of her students' work has attracted a loyal following.

As part of their dance curriculum, all classes participate in an end-of-year recital held in the spring. At the end of June, auditions are organized for students, and others, who would like to take a shot at starring in the grandiose, whimsical holiday spectacle that is *The Nutcracker*.

Barban's students (about 63 of them) began rehearsals for their big performances in mid-September. The classic tale they follow, adapted from the story written by E.T.A. Hoffman, captures the magic of childhood fantasies, otherworldly characters, vivid settings and timeless musical numbers.

In reflecting back on things, Barban recalls always having a desire to inject the magic of *The Nutcracker* into Heritage Ballet. With the assistance and encouragement of one of her former students, Rachel Regina, she turned that vision into a reality in 2004.

In addition to her student performers, several special guest stars have also made appearances in *The Nutcracker*.

"We've had Toronto singer Paul White play the role of The Nutcracker for the past two years, and parents have helped out in our party scenes," said Barban. This year's



**PICTURE PERFECT:** Spectacular costumes and graceful moves are aplenty in Heritage Ballet's production.

Nutcracker will be played by 13-year-old Thomas Mooney, a frequent visitor to the Highlands.

Seeing the spectacle that is The Nutcracker has become an annual holiday tradition for many, says Barban.

“I’ve had some people even say that they preferred our version to that of what they saw performed by the National Ballet of Canada,” she said humbly, offering an explanation for receiving such flattering comments. “I think the main reason for that feedback is because we have kids in our production. Everyone loves the kids.”



**This year you can catch The Nutcracker in all its glory at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion on Saturday, Dec. 12 and Sunday, Dec. 13. Show times are 7:30 p.m. on Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday. Ticketing is \$15 for adults and \$10 for children, and can be purchased at Cranberry Cottage in Haliburton and Pharmasave in Minden.**

**For all the details about dance classes offered at Heritage Ballet, call Julie at 705-457-1990 or email [julie.barban@gmail.com](mailto:julie.barban@gmail.com).**