

# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE NOVEMBER 12, 2019

## ACADEMY OF BALLET

*Application No.:* LBR-2019-20-010  
*Business Name:* Academy of Ballet  
*Business Address:* 2121 Market Street  
*District:* District 8  
*Applicant:* Zory Karah, Director  
*Nomination Date:* September 18, 2019  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Rafael Mandelman  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

The Academy of Ballet (the "Academy") was established in 1953 by Edward Sassoon and has operated continuously and at the same location since then. The Academy of Ballet is a ballet school offering training for children, adults, students preparing for a professional career and others who are studying ballet for its many benefits. Sassoon was a businessman and the father of the Ballerina Janet Sassoon, for whom he established the school. When Janet retired from her dancing career, she returned to San Francisco and directed the Academy of Ballet until 1989 when the business was purchased by Richard Gibson and Ezra (Zory) Karah.

Since its inception in 1953, the Academy has operated under the direction of several prominent figures in the world of dance. The first directors were Guillermo Del Oro and Carolyn Parks, both highly esteemed classical ballet instructors. In 1958, Alan Howard, a principal dancer of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, became the director. Upon his retirement, Janet Sassoon, a famous ballerina and the daughter of original business owner Edward Sassoon, assumed the direction until 1989 when Richard Gibson and Zory Karah, dancers and ballet masters of world renown, became the business owners and directors of the Academy of Ballet. Zory became the sole owner of the Academy of Ballet in 2013.

The business is located on the south side of Market Street between Church and 15th streets in the Castro neighborhood.

### CRITERION 1: Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes, Academy of Ballet has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

2121 Market Street from 1953 to Present (66 years)





SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes, Academy of Ballet has contributed to the history and identity of the Castro neighborhood and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The business is associated with the art of ballet.
The property has a Planning Department Historic Resource status codes of "A" (Historic Resource Present) due to its listing in Article 10 of the Planning Code as a local landmark. 2117-2123 Market Street (aka New Era Hall) is local landmark number 277. The building conveys its significant architectural qualities as the work of a master architect, August Nordin, while employing innovative structural techniques. The building is also significant for its association with the rebuilding of San Francisco after the disaster of 1906, the establishment of Upper market Street as a commercial corridor, and for its association with the Visalia Stack Saddle Company.
The opening of the Academy of Ballet in 1953 was featured in Dance Magazine. The magazine Dance World included an article featuring Richard Gibson and the Academy of Ballet in its 1996 issue. Zory Karah and the Academy of Ballet adult division were featured in Dance Teacher Now in its February 2011 issue. Scenes from the 1981 movie "She Dances Alone" were filmed at the Academy of Ballet. The movie was drama documentary about Kyra Nijinsky, the daughter of the legendary Russian dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. The Academy of Ballet was featured in Armistead Maupin's "Tales of The City" and more recently in the New York Time's best seller "The Immortalists" by Chloe Benjamin, herself a former student at the Academy. The Academy of Ballet has received resolutions from both the State of California and City and County of San Francisco honoring Richard Gibson and Zory Karah for their contribution to the arts.

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes, Academy of Ballet is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Academy of Ballet qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Ballet training for all ages and skill levels.
A professional program.
The high ceilings, many windows, and exposed trusses that define the interior.
Original paintings made for the Academy.





SAN FRANCISCO

## OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

### **CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS**

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Ballet school.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Academy of Ballet currently located at 2121 Market Street in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Program Manager  
Legacy Business Program



# Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE NOVEMBER 12, 2019

ACADEMY OF BALLET

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

*Application No.:* LBR-2019-20-010  
*Business Name:* Academy of Ballet  
*Business Address:* 2121 Market Street  
*District:* District 8  
*Applicant:* Zory Karah, Director  
*Nomination Date:* September 18, 2019  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Rafael Mandelman  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

## ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR ACADEMY OF BALLET, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2121 MARKET STREET.

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on November 12, 2019, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore





SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

BE IT RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Academy of Ballet in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Academy of Ballet:

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Ballet training for all ages and skill levels.
A professional program.
The high ceilings, many windows, and exposed trusses that define the interior.
Original paintings made for the Academy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Academy of Ballet on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Ballet school.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on November 12, 2019.

Regina Dick-Endrizzi
Director

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

- Ayes -
Nays -
Abstained -
Absent -





SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

**Legacy  
Business  
Registry**

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2019-20-010  
*Business Name:* Academy of Ballet  
*Business Address:* 2121 Market Street  
*District:* District 8  
*Applicant:* Zory Karah, Director  
*Nomination Date:* September 18, 2019  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Rafael Mandelman

**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?  Yes  No

2121 Market Street from 1953 to Present (66 years)

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?  Yes  No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?  Yes  No

**NOTES:** N/A

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** October 9, 2019

Richard Kurylo  
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program



Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 8



City and County of San Francisco

## RAFAEL MANDELMAN

Office of Small Business  
Attn: Legacy Business Registration Application  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, 94102

September 18, 2019

Re: Nomination of Academy of Ballet for the Legacy Business Registry

Dear Director Regina Dick- Endrizzi,

I am writing to nominate the Academy of Ballet for the Legacy Business Registry. Since 1953, the Academy of Ballet has served San Francisco and the Bay Area by providing professional programs for children and adults, funding non-profit organizations, and creating space for artistic, physical, and social dance activity in a supportive environment for all.

Currently, the Academy of Ballet is home to 320 students and offers a full professional program and a unique eight level adult program on a full curriculum. The Academy hosts several nonprofit organizations including Chamberdance, which provides free lecture demonstrations for schools, scholarships for low income students and a rehearsal space for many smaller dance companies that do not have their own rehearsal spaces.

The Academy of Ballet is an integral part of the character of San Francisco and the neighborhood, and I believe San Francisco would be well served by designating the Academy as a Legacy Business, which is why I am proud to nominate the beloved Bay Area institution. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rafael Mandelman".

Rafael Mandelman  
Member, San Francisco Board of Supervisors

## Section One:

### Business / Applicant Information. Provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address, and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title, and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

<b>NAME OF BUSINESS:</b>		
Academy of Ballet		
<b>BUSINESS OWNER(S) (identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)</b>		
Ezra Karah		
<b>CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:</b>		<b>TELEPHONE:</b>
2121 Market Street San Francisco Ca 94114		4155521166
		<b>EMAIL:</b>
		info@sfacademyofballet.com
<b>WEBSITE:</b>	<b>FACEBOOK PAGE:</b>	<b>YELP PAGE</b>
sfacademyofballet.com	https://www.facebook.com/A	https://www.yelp.com/biz/aca

<b>APPLICANT'S NAME</b>	
Zory Karah	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business
<b>APPLICANT'S TITLE</b>	
Director	
<b>APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:</b>	
2121 Market St. San Francisco CA 94114	
<b>TELEPHONE:</b>	
415 552-1166	
<b>EMAIL:</b>	
info@sfacademyofballet.com	

<b>SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:</b>	<b>SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):</b>
485033	

<b>OFFICIAL USE: Completed by OSB Staff</b>	
<b>NAME OF NOMINATOR:</b>	<b>DATE OF NOMINATION:</b>



## Section Two:

### Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

<b>ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS:</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>START DATE OF BUSINESS</b>
2121 Market St.	94114	1/1/1953
<b>IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	1953-2017	

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

## Section Three:

### Disclosure Statement.

#### San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified and a business deemed not current in with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for the Business Assistance Grant.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Zory Karah

6/12/2019

Name (Print):

Date:

Signature: 

# ACADEMY OF BALLET

## Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

### CRITERION 1

**a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.**

The Academy of Ballet (the "Academy") was established in 1953 by Edward Sassoon. It is located at 2121 Market Street in the New Era Hall building in the Castro neighborhood. It has been operating continuously and at the same location through the present, that is 66 years.

The Academy of Ballet is a ballet school offering training for children, adults, students preparing for a professional career and others who are studying ballet for its many benefits.

Edward Sassoon established the business in 1953 and was the sole owner until he passed away in 1969. Edward was a businessman and the father of the Ballerina Janet Sassoon. He established the school for his daughter. When Janet Sassoon retired from her dancing career, she returned to San Francisco and directed the Academy of Ballet until 1989 when the business was purchased by Richard Gibson and Ezra (Zory) Karah.

Richard Gibson (a former student at the Academy of Ballet in 1955-1960) is a former member of the Joffrey Ballet and the San Francisco Ballet. He began his teaching career in 1964 and, through the many professional dancers he has produced, he has built an international reputation as one of the most highly respected ballet masters in the United States. His experience includes the directorship of the Royal Conservatory in The Hague and the position of Ballet Master, company teacher for Nederlands Dans Theatre. He later became company teacher for the Joffrey Ballet and principal teacher for the Joffrey Ballet School in New York City. He held the position of company instructor for the San Francisco Ballet for six years. As a guest teacher, Mr. Gibson has worked with the Stuttgart Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, Scapino Ballet, Hungarian National Ballet, Irish National Ballet, Deutsche Opera Berlin, National Ballet of Canada, Frankfurt Opera Ballet, Aterballetto, Eliot Feld Ballet, North Carolina School of the Arts and both the Bat Sheva and Bat Dor dance companies of Israel.

Zory Karah received his early training at the school of the Israeli Classical Ballet and the Bat Dor Studios in his native Israel. He subsequently performed with the Israeli National Ballet. After leaving Israel, he was invited to the United States by Richard Gibson to further his training. He also studied with Raymond Franchetti in Paris, Maryon Lane in London, and Rosella Hightower in Cannes. Since coming to the United States, Mr. Karah has toured the country with Dance Express and performed as a guest artist with several American companies.

After retiring from the stage, Mr. Karah began teaching for the University of California and Carmel Hidden Valley Music Seminars. He served as a company teacher for the Smuin Ballet

and taught for School of the Arts in San Francisco. Mr. Karah's international teaching has included assignments in Israel, Argentina, Hungary and The Netherlands, as well as coaching and training in preparation for the Prix de Lausanne in Switzerland. He presently directs the Academy of Ballet, which he co-founded with Richard Gibson, and its performing company, Chamberdance.

Since its inception in 1953, the Academy has operated under the direction of several prominent figures in the world of dance. The first directors were Guillermo Del Oro and Carolyn Parks, both highly esteemed classical ballet instructors. In 1958, Alan Howard, a principal dancer of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, became the director. Upon his retirement, Janet Sassoon, a famous ballerina and the daughter of original business owner Edward Sassoon, assumed the direction until 1989 when Richard Gibson and Zory Karah, dancers and ballet masters of world renown became the business owners and directors of the Academy of Ballet.

Zory Karah became the sole owner of the Academy of Ballet in 2013.

**b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?**

The Academy of Ballet has not ceased operations in its 66 year history

**c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.**

The Academy of Ballet is not a family owned business.

**d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.**

The ownership history of the Academy of Ballet is as follows:

1953-1969: Edward Sassoon  
1969-1989 Janet Sassoon  
1989-2012: Richard Gibson and Zory Karah  
2013-2019: Zory Karah

**e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation of the existence of the business verifying it has been in operation for 30+ years is provided in this Legacy Business Registry application.

**f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.**

The Academy of Ballet is located in New Era Hall, which is a designated San Francisco landmark. The building has a Planning Department Historic Resource Status of “A” – Historic Resource Present. The property, located at 2117-2123 Market Street, was owned by the Open Bible Church. In 2012 the property was purchased by Crossroad Trading Company, CTC RE III, LLC.

Built in 1905, 2117 Market Street is a two-story, wood frame, commercial building designed in the Craftsman style. The rectangular-plan building, clad in wood flush board and channeled siding, is capped by a flat roof. The primary façade faces north and is three bays wide. The first floor features two identical storefronts with recessed entrances; modern metal frame, glazed doors; plate glass windows; and a divided, wood transom. The main entrance to the upper story is centered between the storefronts and fitted with double-leaf, glazed, wood doors. The door has a surround with flared jambs and a shallow hood on projecting members with beveled ends. The upper story has a single, double-hung, wood-sash window with transom in the central bay with three similar contiguous windows in the flanking bays. The window surrounds include a shallow bracketed hoods and bracketed sills. The primary façade terminates in a projecting cornice with oversize, paired, decorative brackets. The building appears to be in good condition and contributes to the potential Upper Market Street Commercial Historic District.

The building description and features can be viewed at <http://commissions.sfplanning.org/hpcpackets/New%20Era%20Hall.pdf>.

## **CRITERION 2**

### **a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.**

Currently, the Academy of Ballet is home to 320 students and offers a full professional program and a unique eight level adult program on a full curriculum. The Academy hosts several nonprofit organizations including Chamberdance, which provides free lecture demonstrations for schools, scholarships for low income students and a rehearsal space for many smaller dance companies that do not have their own rehearsal spaces.

The Academy of Ballet is an integral part in the character of San Francisco and the neighborhood. It is one of very few businesses that is still in existence and functioning since 1953. We wish to keep its integrity as a leading center for dance education for generations to come.

### **b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?**

The Academy of Ballet has been a member of Castro Merchants and the Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association for many years, and has participated in many neighborhood events.

### **c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?**

The opening of the Academy of Ballet in 1953 was featured in Dance Magazine, the major dance publication in the United States. The magazine Dance World included an article featuring Richard Gibson and the Academy of Ballet in its 1996 issue. Zory Karah and the Academy of Ballet adult division were featured in Dance Teacher Now in its February 2011 issue.

Scenes from the 1981 movie "She Dances Alone" were filmed at the Academy of Ballet. The movie was drama documentary about Kyra Nijinsky, the daughter of the legendary Russian dancer Vaslav Nijinsky.

The Academy of Ballet was featured in Armistead Maupin's "Tales of The City" and more recently in the New York Time's best seller "The Immortalists" by Chloe Benjamin, herself a former student at the Academy.

The Academy of Ballet has received resolutions from both the State of California and City and County of San Francisco honoring Richard Gibson and Zory Karah for their contribution to the arts.

Alumni of the Academy are dancing in major companies around the world.

**d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?**

Over the years, the most famous dancers in ballet history trained and rehearsed at the Academy of Ballet. They include Dame Margot Fontayn, Galina Ulanova, Maya Plesetskaya, Rudolph Nureyev, Eric Bruhn, Vladimir Vasiliev, Natalia Makarova and Cynthia Gregory, just to name a few.

**e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?**

The Academy of Ballet is home to 320 students and offers a full professional program and a unique eight level adult program on a full curriculum. The Academy hosts several nonprofit organizations including Chamberdance, Smuin Ballet, Liss Fain Dance, Sharp and Fine. The business has hosted free lecture demonstrations for the Harvey Milk and Claire Lienthal schools. The Academy and Chamberdance offer numerous scholarships for the underserved community. As part of Castro Merchants and the Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association, the Academy of Ballet has attended many neighborhood meetings. Zory Karah has been involved with the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission and attended their meetings.

**f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.**

The Academy of Ballet serves the population of San Francisco and the entire Bay Area. Students originate from the United States, Spain, Japan, Korea and Israel, among others. Students range in age from 4 to 90. Children are accepted into Pre-Ballet from age 4 to 7. Emphasis in these classes is on musicality, creativity, coordination and building a love of dance. Children may begin their formal ballet training at age 7. In these classes, emphasis is placed on posture, correct body alignment, strengthening of feet, legs, stomach and back. For those aspiring to a professional career, a full curriculum is provided. The Academy of Ballet also offers a

comprehensive adult program designed to meet the special needs of the adult student. The emphasis here is on toning, strengthening, stretching, and increasing flexibility using classical ballet to achieve these goals.

**g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?**

The architecture and the building housing the Academy of Ballet provides the Academy with a historic, artistic atmosphere and a pillars-free, light-filled space that cannot be duplicated in a modern settings. Original paintings made for the Academy in 1990 adorn the entrance.

**h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?**

If the Academy of Ballet were to close, the community of San Francisco would lose one of its most important training facilities which serves 320 professional and amateur students. Eight employees would lose their jobs, including some who have worked for the Academy for more than 30 years. With the loss of the Academy, yet another historical institution would disappear from the Upper Market/Castro neighborhood. The public school system would also lose the free lecture demonstrations the Academy of Ballet offers yearly. A host of artistic ventures would also lose their rehearsal spaces.

### **CRITERION 3**

**a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.**

Ballet is an art – an expression of grace and movement. The Academy of Ballet offers training both for the student preparing for a professional career and those who are studying ballet for its many other benefits. All classes are carefully graded both for age and technical level and each student is given the individual attention so necessary for his or her progress.

Children are accepted into Pre-Ballet from age 4 to 6. Emphasis in these classes is on musicality, creativity, coordination and building a love of dance, preparing the child well for the time when he or she is physically and mentally at the age to begin formal training.

Children may begin their ballet training at the age of 7 years. In these classes, emphasis is placed on posture, correct body alignment, strengthening of feet, legs, stomach and back.

For those aspiring to a professional career, a full curriculum is provided. Included is a technique class, pointe, classical variations, pas de deux and special men's classes. The professional program also includes rehearsals and coaching for performances with Chamberdance. Chamberdance is a nonprofit performing company created to give selected students performing experience in professionally produced seasons throughout the year. Students trained by Academy faculty have gone on to careers with: New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theater, Joffrey Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, Nederlands Dance

Theater, Paul Taylor Company, Houston Ballet, Ballet West, Stuttgart Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, National Ballet of Canada and others.

The Academy of Ballet offers a comprehensive adult program designed to meet the special needs of the adult student. The emphasis here is on toning, strengthening, stretching, and increasing flexibility using classical ballet to achieve these goals. Along with improving one's physique, the adult student becomes acquainted with and part of a great art form. The program is based on a curriculum especially designed for adults—starting at the New Beginning Adult level that will introduce the student to basic alignment and movement using music and classical ballet vocabulary extending to the more challenging Intermediate and Advanced levels. Adult students with prior training may join any of the levels for a trial class to determine the level at which they feel most comfortable. The adult program is a wonderful opportunity for an artistic physical and social activity, in a non-threatening supportive environment.

**b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)**

The Academy of Ballet is committed to maintaining its special historical traditional role as school of ballet, an institution of the arts and a beloved member of the community.

**c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).**

The Academy of Ballet is a unique space with extremely high ceilings, many windows, and exposed trusses to support the roof. When one walks into the space, one feels the rich history of its past. The architecture provides the Academy of Ballet with a historic, artistic, pillars-free, light-filled space that is rare and cannot be duplicated in a modern setting. Original paintings made for the Academy in 1990 adorn the entrance.

**d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation that demonstrates the business has been a ballet school for 30+ years is included in this Legacy Business Registry application.





eria  
Bar...

Red Jade

Thorough Bread  
and Pastry

SFTANGO

Ronald Wong, Phamd

Crossroads Trading

Verve Coffee Roasters

Academy of Ballet

Church

Market St

Market St

Market St



BUY + SELL + TRADE

ACADEMY OF BALLET

CROSSROADS



ACADEMY OF BALLET

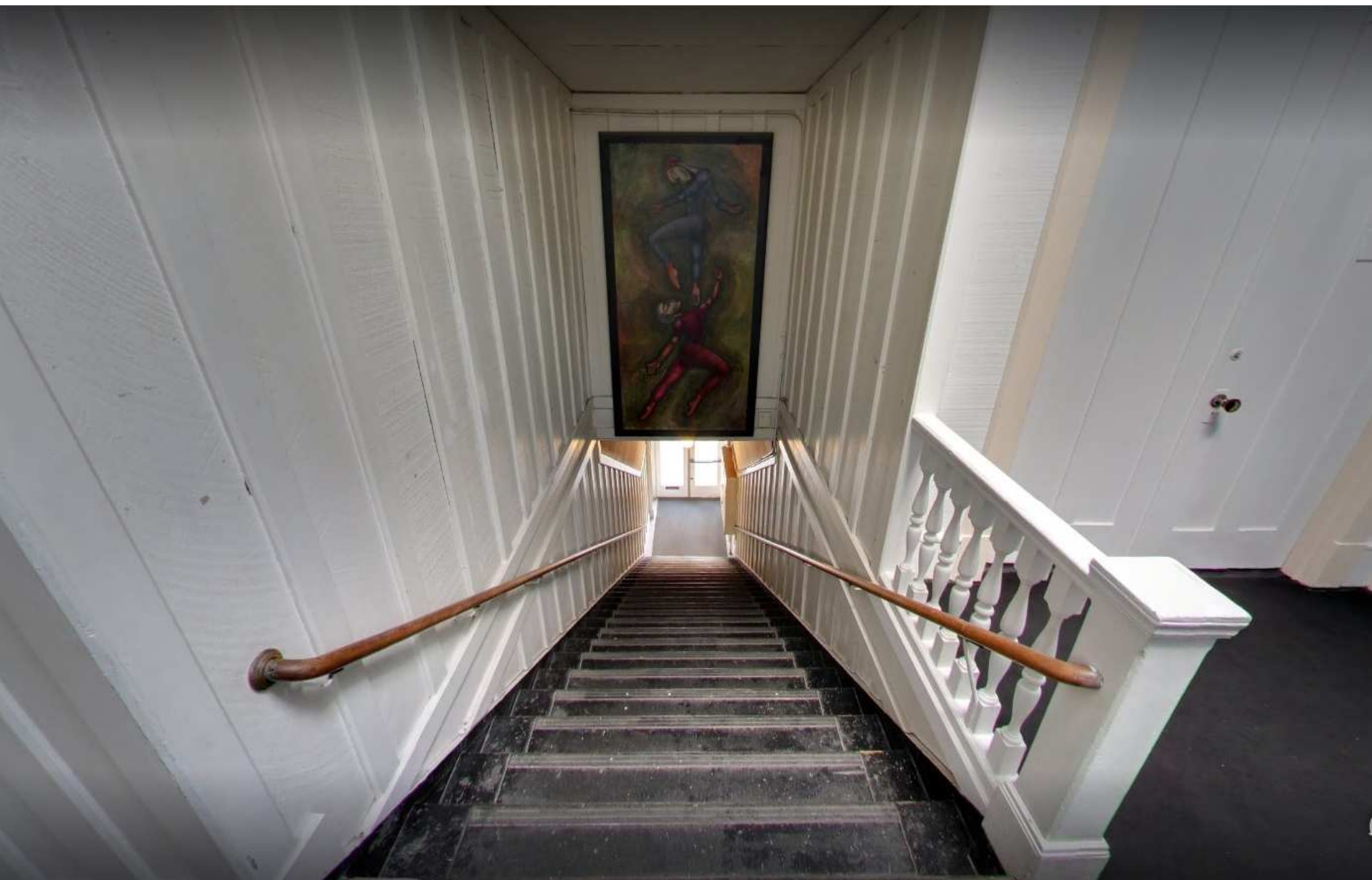
CROSSROADS

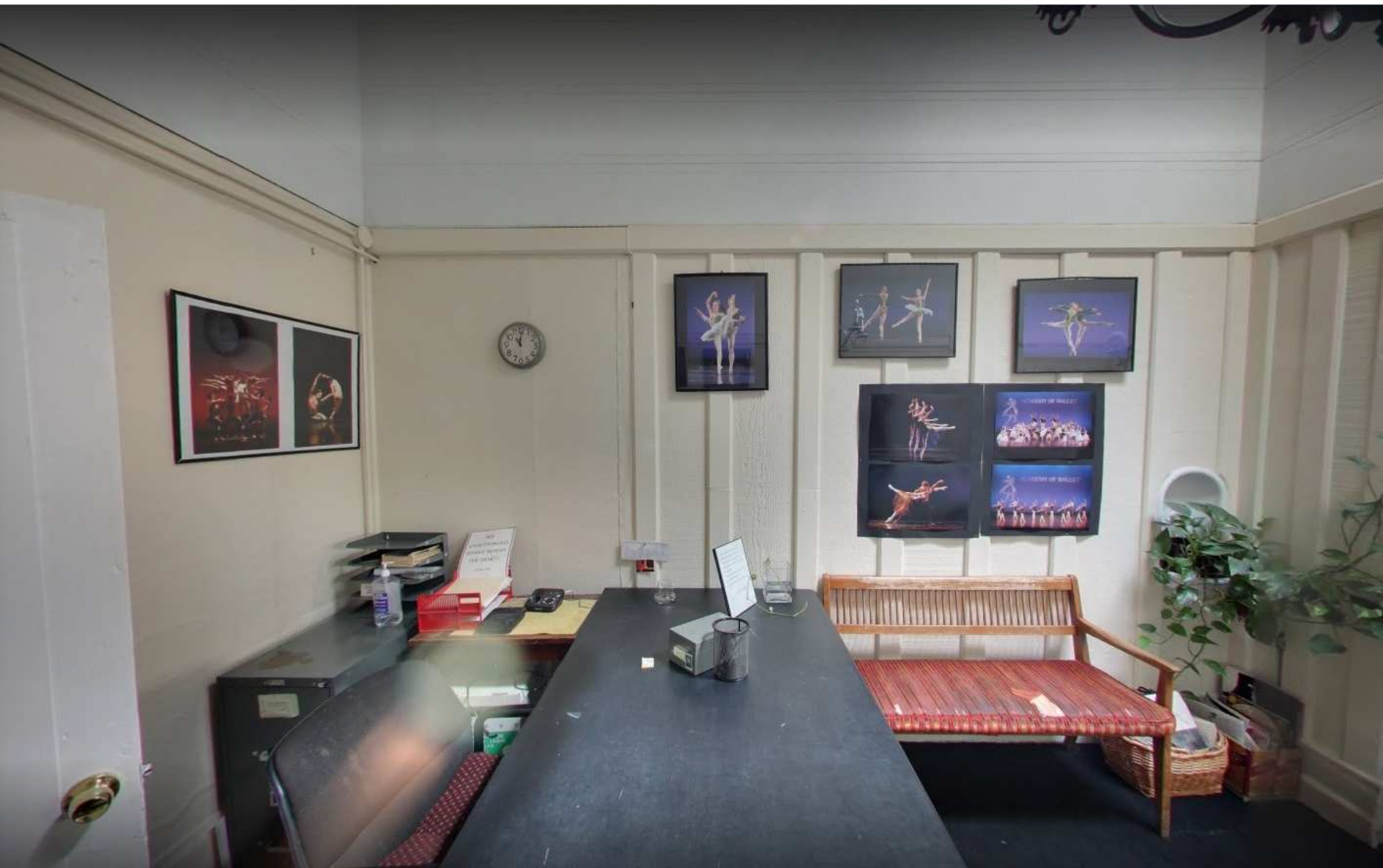
2121  
ACADEMY OF  
BALLET

ACADEMY OF  
BALLET

CROSSROADS

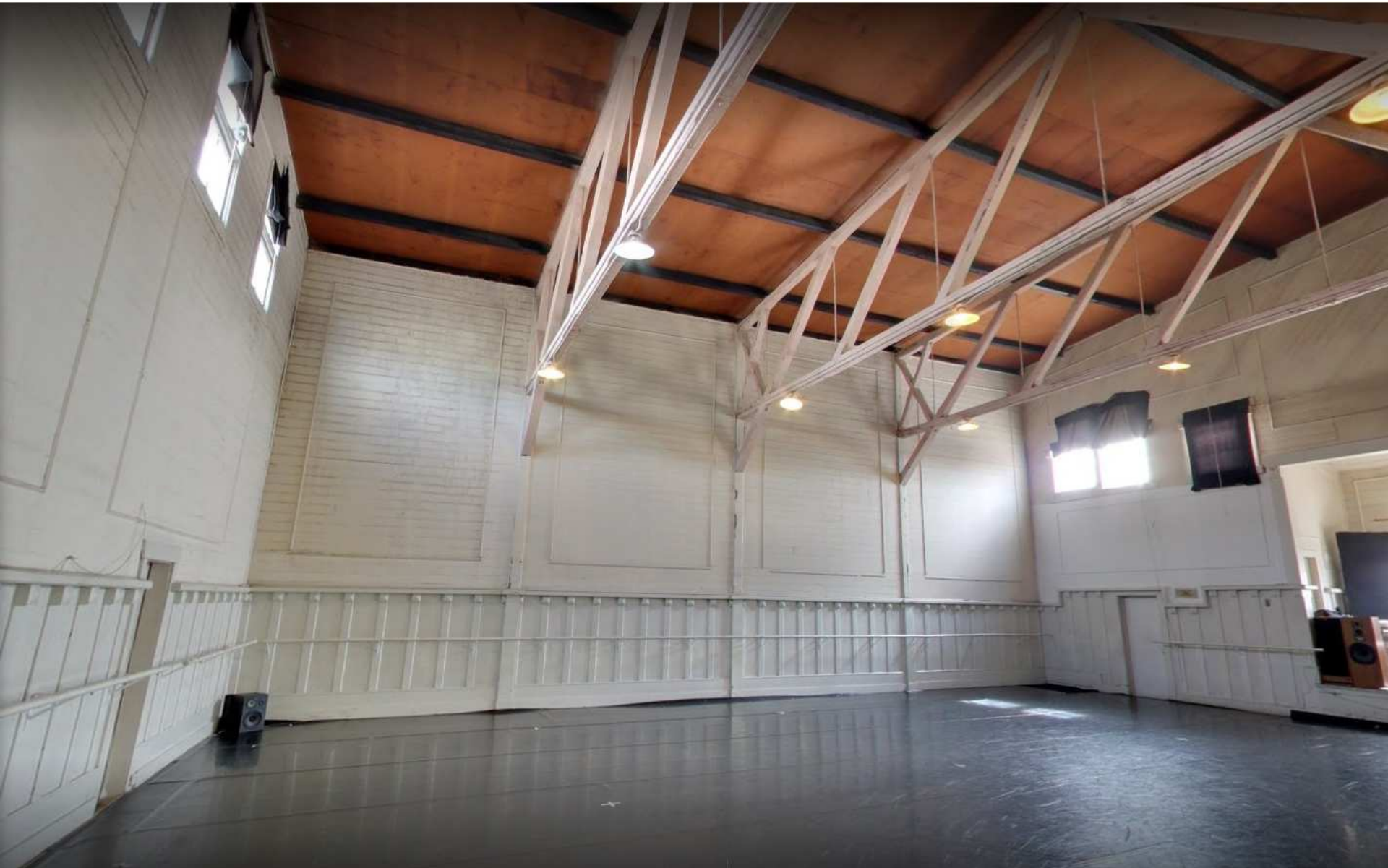
2121

















State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_  
HRI # \_\_\_\_\_  
Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_  
NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_  
Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 4 \*Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder) 2117 Market St.

P1. Other Identifier: \_\_\_\_\_

\*P2. Location:  Not for Publication  Unrestricted \*a. County: San Francisco

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: San Francisco North, Calif. Date: 1956 (rev. 1973)

\*c. Address: 2117 Market St. City: San Francisco Zip: 94114

d. UTM: Zone: 10 \_\_\_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_\_\_ mN (G.P.S.)

e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number (Map, Block, Lot): 3543-012

\*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries.)

2117 Market Street is located on a rectangular lot on the south side of Market Street, between Church and 15th Streets. Built in 1905, 2117 Market Street is a two-story, wood frame, commercial building designed in the Craftsman style. The rectangular-plan building, clad in wood flush board and channeled siding, is capped by a flat roof. The primary façade faces north and is three bays wide. The first floor features two identical storefronts with recessed entrances; modern metal frame, glazed doors; plate glass windows; and a divided, wood transom. The main entrance to the upper story is centered between the storefronts and fitted with double-leaf, glazed, wood doors. The door has a surround with flared jambs and a shallow hood on projecting members with beveled ends. The upper story has a single, double-hung, wood-sash window with transom in the central bay with three similar contiguous windows in the flanking bays. The window surrounds include a shallow bracketed hoods and bracketed sills. The primary façade terminates in a projecting cornice with oversize, paired, decorative brackets. The building appears to be in good condition and contributes to the potential Upper Market Street Commercial Historic District (see DPR 523 D form.)

\*P3b. Resource Attributes: (list attributes and codes) HP6: 1-3 Story Commercial Building; HP13: Social Hall

\*P4. Resources Present:  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other

P5a. Photo



P5b. Photo: (view and date)

View of north façade  
8/10/2006

\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:  Historic  
1905  
SF Assessors Office

\*P7. Owner and Address:  
Open Bible Church Of SF  
2135 Market St  
San Francisco CA

\*P8. Recorded by:  
Page & Turnbull, Inc.  
724 Pine Street  
San Francisco, CA 94108

\*P9. Date Recorded:  
8/10/2006

\*P10. Survey Type:  
Reconnaissance

\*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none") None

\*Attachments:  None  Location Map  Sketch Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure, and Object Record  
 Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  
 Artifact Record  Photograph Record  Other (list)

State of California & The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Primary# \_\_\_\_\_

HRI # \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

Page 2 of 4

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 2117 Market Street

\*Recorded by: Page & Turnbull

\*Date 8/10/2006

Continuation

Update



Detail of center entrance

# BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

Page 3 of 4

\*NRHP Status Code 3CB

\*Resource Name or # (assigned by recorder) 2117 Market Street

- B1. Historic name: New Era Hall
- B2. Common name: None
- B3. Original Use: Commercial, retail; Civic, lodge hall
- B4. Present use Commercial, retail and school
- \*B5. Architectural Style: Craftsman/Classical Revival

\*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)  
Constructed in 1906. Added store front in 1909. Add additional window to front and new entrance leading to main hall in 1929.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features: None.

B9a. Architect: August Nordin b. Builder: C.L. Wold

Reconstruction Civic/ Commercial

\*B10. Significance: Theme Development Area: Market Street Corridor, San Francisco

Period of Significance 1906-1953 Property Type Commercial Applicable Criteria 1, 3

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)  
The New Era Hall was constructed in 1906 for owner Edwin Bennett, and was designed by architect August Nordin. Edwin Bennett immigrated from England in 1886 and was employed as a metal polisher. The building was originally constructed to accommodate a single retail unit on the first story and a lodge hall on the second story. The second story was built with a set-back third story level, most likely to accommodate a stage. By 1929, the façade had been reorganized to include a second retail unit and a new, centered entrance to the upper story. From 1906 to 1936, 2117 Market Street housed the Visalia Stock Saddle Co. in both units on the first story, and the New Era Hall on the second story. The New Era Hall was listed in the San Francisco City directories as a public building and hall, most likely used as a meeting place for societies that did not have a building. No fraternal society, social society, or otherwise was found to be associated with New Era Hall. The construction of the building on Upper Market Street immediately following the 1906 Earthquake and Fire may have anticipated the need for meeting space for organizations left homeless by the disaster, or may have been part of the increasing civic and commercial development on Upper Market Street in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1954, the Bennett Family sold the building to the Open Bible Church, located immediately south of the property at 2135 Market Street. (continued)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP13. Community center/social hall

**\*B12. References:**

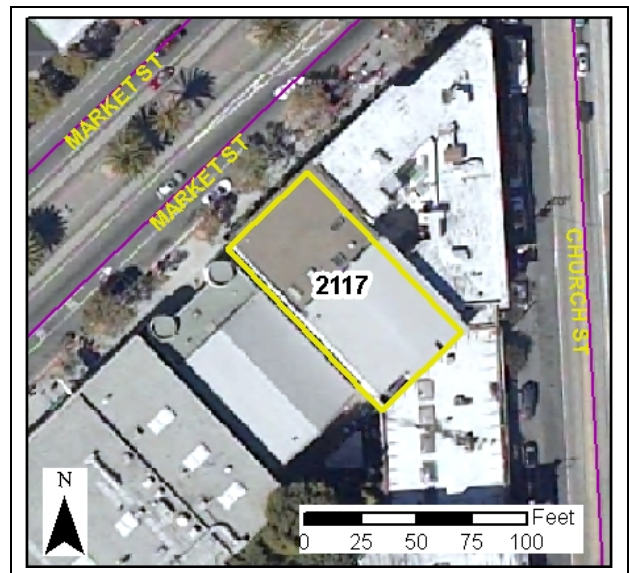
Assessor's Records  
Building Permits #1292, #23702, #92499

B13. Remarks: Market & Octavia Survey

\*B14. Evaluator: Karin Sidwell, Elaine Stiles; Page & Turnbull

\*Date of Evaluation: March 2007

(This space reserved for official comments.)



State of California & The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Primary# \_\_\_\_\_

HRI # \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

Page 4 of 4

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 2117 Market Street

\*Recorded by: Page & Turnbull

\*Date March 2007

Continuation

Update

**B10. Significance, continued.**

Visalia Stock Saddle Co. changed its name to Al Church's Western War Riding Habits in 1960, and vacated the property in 1966. The retail units have since housed commercial interests such as Alert Display Co. (1966); The Wish Center (1971); Valentine and Leon Photo (1980); and Hibernia International Travel (1980). The two stores on the ground floor remain in retail use. The lodge hall space was converted to a dance studio in 1953.

The New Era Hall was one of the earliest buildings constructed on this block along Market Street. The block was largely vacant until after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. By 1913, the block held several small, wood-frame commercial buildings housing both commercial and industrial uses. By 1950, the Market Street side of the block was well developed with commercial interests such as a large used car dealer, multiple-unit retail shops, and the Open Bible Church.

Slim biographical information is available about architect August Nordin. He was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1869. He opened his architectural firm in San Francisco in 1899. The firm was located in the Mills Building until Nordin's death in 1936. He is attributed with designing 300 structures in San Francisco, mostly residential homes, flats, and apartment houses, but also including residential hotels and commercial and civic buildings. Nordin designed the nearby Swedish American Hall (1907) at 2168 Market Street, as well as the Ebenezer Swedish Lutheran Church at the corner of Dolores and 15th streets (1903, destroyed by fire 1993). The Ebenezer Church gave refuge to the Swedish Society after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, which destroyed their original meeting place and all their records and substantial library.

The New Era Hall retains integrity of location, setting, and association with a commercial context, though it is no longer in use as a lodge hall. The building retains a fair degree of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling, with alterations limited to the installation of metal-frame storefront windows and doors on the first story, and replacement glazed wood doors on the primary entrance. The second-story and the main entrance surround on the first story appear to be unchanged.

2117 Market Street appears individually eligible for the National or California Register, or for local designation. The property is associated with the development of local civic infrastructure in the Upper Market Street area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, providing meeting space for numerous organizations seeking a venue for meetings and events, as well as commercial space. The building may also be associated with the rebuilding effort following the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, providing space for displaced organizations to meet. The building is also significant as a well-preserved example of a combination commercial and civic building designed in a combination of Classical Revival and Craftsman ornament. Character-defining features of the property include the flush wood siding on the façade; flared, crossette door surround with lintel on beveled joist ends; heavy supported sills and lintels on the upper story windows; bracketed, paired, beveled joist ends at the roofline; extended guttae; and deeply projecting cornice.

The status code of 3CB assigned to this property means that it appears eligible for the California Register individually and as a contributor to a California Register eligible district—the potential Upper Market Street Commercial Historic District (see DPR 523 D form.) This property was not fully assessed for its potential to yield information important in prehistory or history, per National Register Criterion D.

**\*B12. References, continued.**

Mayer, Tom. "August Nordin, Architect." <http://www.swedishamericanhall.com/history.html#Anchor-There-49575> (accessed March 2007)

Sanborn Maps 1899, 1914, 1950

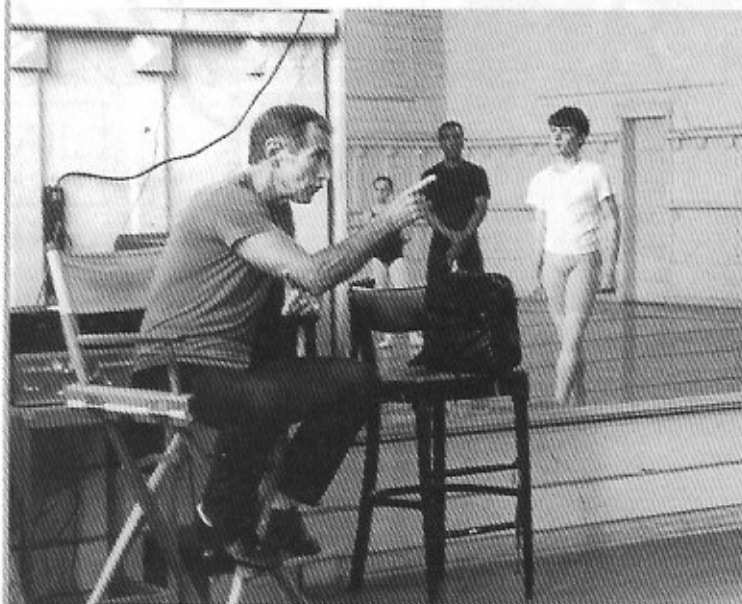
San Francisco City directories 1907, 1908, 1910, 1911, 1915, 1920, 1925, 1933, 1936, 1940, 1953, 1960, 1966, 1971, 1975, 1980

spotlight

on

Richard

Gibson



**LEFT:**  
"Don't dance like Raggedy Andy—make it more like Arnold Schwarzenegger."

**BELOW:**  
"When a student listens to what a teacher is saying, he or she should be like a fisherman trying to catch every fish that comes his or her way. Whatever I say, however, you should make your own."

*Photographs by John Mello*

# a lifetime of mentoring



by John Mello

**L**arge old photographs of Karsavina, Nijinsky, and Pavlova look down from the walls of the Academy of Ballet in San Francisco. Richard Gibson, who is known for always having kept himself stylishly thin, is still strikingly fit in his late fifties. He gave up smoking years ago, goes to the gym in the mornings, teaches three classes a day, and demonstrates what he wants to his students. They can see the way strongly turned out legs should look and work because his are amazing to watch. His directions of the body are clearly etched and pulled way up. He counts the music forcefully and holds a student's hand while clarifying the counts that he wants. He uses his foot to push a student's feet into the correct position. In pas de deux class, he will even demonstrate both the man's and the woman's parts in daredevil modern lifts and falls. His energy level is high and he creates an environment of concentration on serious, hard work that is nonetheless suffused with his characteristic warmth. The way he verbally describes the form and content of classical dance unlocks things in the dancers' bodies by engaging their minds. He is always close by, asking for more, bigger, better.

a consummate  
 educator, ballet master  
 teacher Richard Gibson  
 guides students from  
 barre to stage to the  
 front of a class.



**UPPER RIGHT:** "You have to work for your technique. Our bodies are like clay and we shape them."

**LOWER RIGHT:** "The breath must carry the arms—I should not see tension in the lungs."

**ABOVE:** "There should be no seams in your fabric—make it one long fabric of movement. This can become deeper, lighter, heavier—whatever—but make it all of a piece. There is an art to moving through steps as opposed to smearing them. In-between things have to be more dansant."

*Photographs by John Mello*

### showbiz background

Richard was the youngest of eight children, and so arrived too late to be part of the family troupe, the Gibson Review, that performed in vaudeville and toured county fairs during the summers. His father, a physical education teacher, had studied ballet with Andreas Pavley (a Dutch dancer who had earlier toured the U.S. with Pavlova) of the Pavley-Oukrainsky Ballet in Chicago and was also choreographer for the Twin Cities Opera Company in Minneapolis and St. Paul in the early 1930s.

A major influence in Gibson's youth was his older sister, Suzanne, an accomplished tap dancer who recalls the era he was born into. "We didn't have a home—we had a dance school in the living room. I remember watching dancers rehearsing over-



## SPOTLIGHT ON RICHARD GIBSON

head lifts for the bacchanal in *Samson et Dalila* and other opera ballets. I remember riding up in the elevator with Pavley in his blue tights and leotards, and sitting and watching my father take his class on Saturdays. I can even remember the barre he gave, which, once I became more discerning, I realized had been lousy. In those days people didn't know what good ballet technique was."

In the early 1940s, right out of high school, Suzanne became a choreographer, line captain, scenic designer, costumer, and music arranger in movie houses. Theaters in the bigger cities used to offer a live show with chorus girls before the movie. The show changed every week, so she always had to come up with new ideas. "I still know every tap routine I ever danced," she says. "Dick and I tap danced together at the Lake County Fair when he was little and we must have looked like Mutt and Jeff."

She went on to compile her own tap notation system and manual, and opened schools at Clear Lake and San Leandro, California. Her youngest brother was one of her students. "I thought I was a fabulous ballet teacher, teaching my father's method as he had learned it from Pavley. The scales were taken off my eyes at a performance of Mme. Olga Ziceva's students. I had never seen anything so beautiful. If you can tell the difference between art and craft, you're one of the luckiest people in the world. I feel so blessed that happened. I stopped teaching and took her classes for five years."

"Richard came along to watch one of my private lessons and Ziceva asked him to go to the barre and show her a *plié*," as she recalls. "He took off his shoes and he had a hole in his sock. Of course, he was excited that she was showing an interest in him. That was the beginning of his career."

### former Bolshoi member decisive

Gibson himself claims that he got the ballet bug after seeing Alicia Alonso and Igor Youskevitch perform. His usually strict parents allowed him to leave home at age 15 and work as a houseboy in a large Church of England rectory so he could study full-time with Ziceva, who had given

him a scholarship. He told the priests he could cook when he didn't even know how to crack an egg. His big sister had encouraged him, "If you're going to be a dancer, just go ahead and do it."

Ziceva had been a student at the Moscow Bolshoi, had fled the Russian Revolution, and danced with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. She opened her ballet school in a former vaudeville house in San Mateo, California. "Ziceva really taught the *whys* of ballet technique," as Gibson attributes it. "She told me that I would be a teacher. I loved teaching even when I wasn't sure I wanted to be a dancer."

David Hardie, a fellow student during the late 1950s who went on to the Ballet Russe, describes Ziceva as "The most caring teacher you could imagine. She gave attention to every student on every exercise in every class, and she was always very hands-on. She kept her barre simple so that everything was just right and could be perfected. She was most interested in mastering the torso. When Richard arrived, you could tell he was a tap dancer because his musical timing was flawless, and he picked up combinations right away. I remember him as bony kneed—an imp." Hardie is now on the faculty of the Phares Theatre Ballet in Sacramento, California.

### the Joffrey's salad days

Gibson made rapid progress in a few years with Ziceva. Then, "The Joffrey Ballet came through town and I went to

other way around. He was very thorough, very detailed. He helped dancers use their brains, so it was never as though we were just taking class. There are plenty of teachers who teach good classes, but Joffrey was a teacher who created dancers. That was his biggest talent."

Gibson thanks Joffrey for his mentoring as well. "Bob was very good to me and I admit I was kind of a brat when I was young. He also encouraged me to teach and I taught often for his company as a guest teacher. He flew out just to see my first ballet for the San Francisco Ballet, the *Adagio for Ten and Two*. I had lots of offers when I later left Holland, but I went back to the Joffrey Ballet out of respect for Bob. His death leaves a definite void in my life—I still miss him."

Gibson also studied at the School of American Ballet with Oboukhoff and Vladimiroff, who had been two of the best *danseurs nobles* of their time. He took Mme. Pereyaslavets's rigorous classes at the Ballet Theatre School, where she became notorious for throwing people out. "I remember being in her class with Fonteyn, Nureyev, Verdy, Arova, Tallchief, Lander, Kovach, and Rabovsky, and she would kick any one of them out for being slightly late, undisciplined, or not taking her class regularly enough."

In 1964, he returned to California and danced with the San Francisco Ballet in Poindexter's *The Set*, Lew Christensen's *The Nutcracker*, *Lady of Shalott* (with

Cynthia Gregory), *Diversissement d'Auber* (with Zola Dishong), and *Prokofiev Waltzes* (with Sally Bailey) among others. Ziceva then made him an offer and he purchased her San Mateo school, where he produced a crop of dancers who went on to companies all over the world. That school continues in Ziceva's original building

as Peninsula Ballet Theatre.

### Holland became center of dance activity

Benjamin Harkarvy made it a condition of his employment as artistic director of the Dutch National Ballet that they bring in Gibson to direct the state-run ballet school (which came under the Royal Conservatory of Music). Gibson was 32 and gave up the successful San Mateo school because, as

**"His kind of commitment to students is very rare. The big thing that I carry on now as a teacher is that caring I learned from him."**

New York where I was immediately taken into the company." He danced with that company for three years in such ballets as Balanchine's *Pas de Dix* and *Allegro Brillante*, Nault's *La Fille Mal Gardee*, Moncion's *Pastorale* and Lew Christensen's *Con Amore*. "Bob Joffrey taught company class every day and he was actually my biggest influence as a teacher. Thanks to his teaching, we would come home from touring improved, instead of the

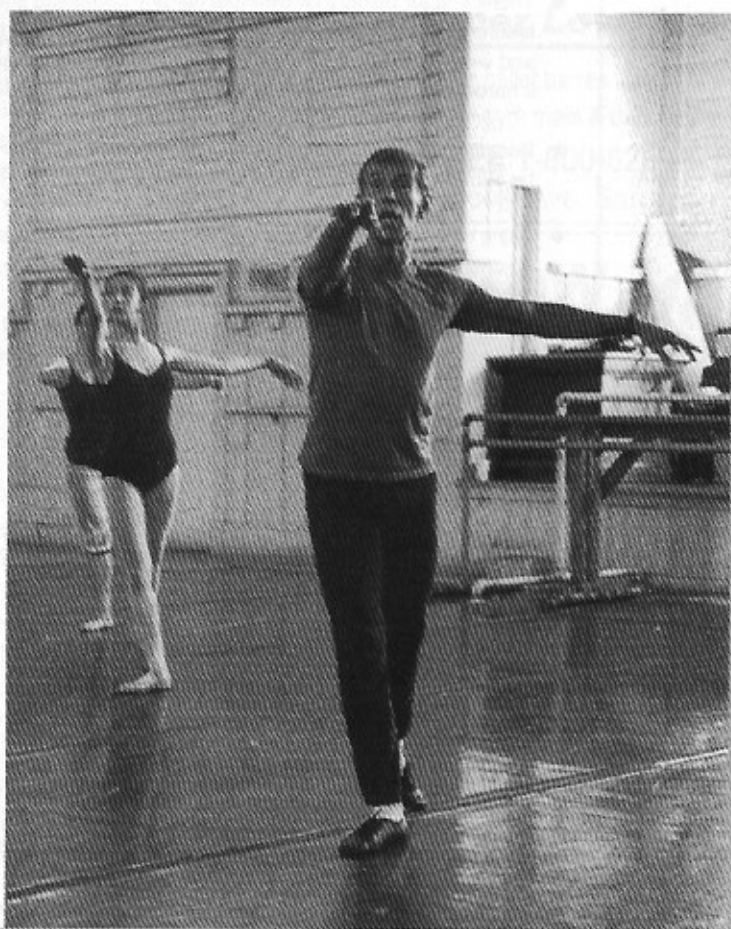
he explains, "After two years directing the Royal Conservatory, I joined the Nederlands Dans Theatre as ballet master since I was the least familiar with their modern style and felt that it would broaden me. Suddenly, I was receiving invitations to guest teach in Stuttgart, Berlin, Toronto, and many other places." At the Royal Conservatory, he also taught for the Netherlands Dance Theater, the Dutch National Ballet, and the Scapino Ballet. He brought in the Vaganova syllabus, which he had acquired in a Hungarian translation via Ferenc Nadasi.

There were very few Dutch dancers being produced then, and there were only two students in the school out of 75 in which Gibson could see potential when he arrived. "They missed a lot by looking at children's bodies when they were eight or nine years old without being able to predict how they would develop. A child with a nicely proportioned body for his or her age will look very different once they begin to develop." He explains, "When you look for talent, you first look for musicality and coordination, and at the instrument's proportions and flexibility. A lack of obvious turnout in a child may only mean that the muscles are simply not strong enough to hold turnout. Unusually long legs and a small head would be ideal."

Anxious to have more Dutch dancers employed in their ballet companies, the Conservatory's policy was one of "We're not training them to be dancers, we're training them to be teachers," according to Gibson. "Dancers should enter teacher training after their professional training as dancers, not in lieu of it. I've known many good teachers who were not professional dancers, but who got professional training." And so he set up the teacher's training program there.

Gibson was in charge of a curriculum that had to prepare the Conservatory's dancers for the Dutch style, an amalgam of classical ballet and modern dance, in a repertoire referred to as a "supermarket of

choreography" with works by van Dantzig, van Manen, and van Schayk, as well as the Americans, Balanchine and Tetley. Students studied and performed contemporary and classic ballets from all three Dutch companies during the last three years of their eight-year program. As he comments on the range



S.F. 1996: "In center, you need to be much freer in your movements—you've already done them at the barre, so now is the time to be freer and not so obedient."

Photograph by John Mello

required of these students, "The biggest thing missing in classically trained dancers, of course, is the weight into the floor that comes with modern technique."

### how times have changed

Gibson relates how his biggest lesson in musicality came from Margot Fonteyn. "Margot was in Stuttgart performing *Swan Lake* with the Stuttgart Ballet. She came to me one day and, very shyly, asked if she could take my men's class. I said yes, but warned her that the tempo was going to be slower, and that so much jumping could be very taxing on the day of a performance. Margot did the class better than any of the men through her musicality. She phrased her preparations, connecting steps, and finishes in such a way as to make you forget

that she didn't have the same elevation as they did. I saw what could be done with musicality—she made the steps her own. And she did a fabulous performance that night." Gibson remembers Fonteyn very fondly, "She was like a ten-year-old in class, with no pretensions and always eager

for help, yet still meticulous. In the films made of her it's a shame we cannot see the movement that goes beyond the body. I will never forget her in Cranko's *Poeme de l'extase* and the closing moment was her simply wrapping her arm around her head. That was worth anyone else's 64 fouettés.

"There's a preoccupation with technique nowadays," he laments. "We're not producing really interesting dancers like Fonteyn anymore because technique has advanced so much, but at the cost of the heart. This makes going to see ballets predictable—and predictable gets boring. When I think of the dancers I'd go out of my way to see—Margot Fonteyn, Carla Fracci, Evelyn Hart, Marcia Haydée, Violette Verdy—none of them had the level of technique that is the standard now. The quality that goes beyond technique is why I'm still excited by dance. Better to have a little less virtuosity and more of that aura that makes it a living art and not

spectacle. Dance is really a combination of things—so much of it is a feeling.

"Musical training appears to be lacking as well," laments Gibson. "Dancers must learn to be aware of musical options, of when to highlight certain steps, of how to give color to their movements. I try to construct enchaînements in such a way that the student has to phrase them." He may occasionally ask the accompanist to play an asymmetrical time signature such as a 5/4 or 7/8 to challenge them even more.

### students' careers

A short list of Gibson's most prominent students would include Deborah DuBow (Pacific Ballet), Kristine Elliott (Stuttgart Ballet, American Ballet Theater), Sheryl Ware (New York City Ballet), his niece,

Carmela Zegarelli Peter (Dutch National Ballet, San Francisco Ballet), and Kenneth Delmar (Stuttgart Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Aterballetto).

Deborah DuBowoy recalls that "When he did not have an accompanist, he would use wonderful classical ballet music as opposed to standard ballet class records. We always looked forward to the music. He also gave classes in music appreciation and dance history during the summer workshop. In fact, this appreciation for the historical importance of dance that he gave me has led to my current career producing 'Words On Dance,' which are live and documented on-stage dialogues with dancers. He introduced me to Violette Verdy and she was our first guest."

DuBowoy also comments, "Richard has an extremely special touch and a way of mentoring all the way through. I so admire his gentle, expressive way of teaching and the notable ways he describes movement through metaphors and adjectives. He is one of the most well-rounded teachers that I ever had and I still rely on his guidance and opinions."

DuBowoy started with Gibson when she was seven, and now her seven year old daughter studies with him. "He still does the cutest thing with the kids in center," she relates. "He gets down on one knee, telling them he's a Ken doll, and asks them to come and fix his faulty port de bras, head positions, or directions of the body. That's how he teaches them about line and how to think for themselves."

Kristine Elliott, who started with him at the age of 11, recalls one major decision that Gibson helped her make. "My parents took me to Europe when I graduated from high school, and one thing I did while on vacation there was to audition for the Royal Danish Ballet. To my surprise, they offered me a contract. It was marvelous because we had relatives in Denmark and it would have been such an honor for my family. My parents were aghast when Richard's assessment was that I wasn't ready to go. He explained that you may have been the best dancer in your school, but when you leave, you go to being the worst one in the company—especially in a state-run company like the Royal Danish Ballet because of its seniority system. You get to dance very little your first year, and when you do it's in the back row. He had seen enough

## Gibson's instructions to students:

- ◆ Thank you for being your own teacher and correcting yourself—don't depend on the teacher to correct everything. You have to work for your technique. Our bodies are like clay and we shape them. What I'll do is give you certain details in a combination that will make it harder for you to execute what's already become comfortable.
- ◆ Dancing is like following a recipe—once you have all the ingredients ready they still have to be stirred. Everything must be activated. Then I'll just sit and watch.
- ◆ Think of movement as destination with circulation. I want postures, not positions—I am against positions. Posing is superficial. Keep wind in your sails.
- ◆ In demi-plié, pull up to feel like you are wearing a parachute with the top of your head close to the ceiling. But still give me a parental plié—one that is firm, but gentle.
- ◆ In frappé, strike a match—the legs move more like executing a jump. And the taller the tree, the deeper the roots. Pull up your torso like squeezing toothpaste out of its tube. Turn out your legs like a big yawn.
- ◆ Take time to shape the foot and massage the floor on battement tendu. Tendus should feel like the meat sliding off a chicken drumstick. Put sparks in those feet on frappés. On frappé, give me a foot that goes out like steel with a leg that goes out like silk.
- ◆ The elbows bloom out when you prepare. Let the breath initiate the movement. The breath must carry the arms—I should not see tension in the lungs.
- ◆ Really send the arms and back on pirouettes. The closing arm keeps going past the other one in 1st position. Arms are actually not needed for only two or three pirouettes—your turnout should do it. If you do four pirouettes, make the fourth one the cleanest. The duration of turning is like singing a note—the breath must not stop. Attack the passé! Catch the top of the passé. And spot like a hummingbird.
- ◆ When balancing on toe, make it your sting, your Black Widow spider, into the floor—you won't balance if your foot is timidly saying "I'm sorry" when it steps onto full pointe.
- ◆ Use the full spectrum of the head. It should be inclined back a little, as though you were resting on a pillow, so that we have poetry . . . Are those poet's thumbs? In that case, your poem would read something like, "The witch went riding on her broom . . ."
- ◆ Make bourrees lustful.
- ◆ I almost said thank you for making me look so young when doing that combination because you looked so old doing it! Nothing will make me happier than to see you walking down the street someday with ballet posture.
- ◆ Use your arms to help and define your elevation. On tour en l'air, catch both feet after the tour. Look over the wall and see the people on the other side. On cabriole, pluck the strings of your legs as you beat the drum of your stomach.
- ◆ I think sissonne should be called sonne-sis instead—your steps should be linked sonne-sis-sonne-sis-sonne with the same liaison the words have in spoken French.
- ◆ Get off metronomic counting. Metronomes are not musical.
- ◆ Don't forget that a tombée in partnering is an embrace.
- ◆ If you try to do too much, you might wind up doing enough. The worst thing you can say about a dancer is that he or she is boring.

dancers go downhill in terms of technique during their first years in a big company to know how much that would set me back. His advice was to study with him for one more year so I would be that much better when I went out to audition. To this day I thank my stars that Richard had the wisdom to do that, because it's so hard for a teacher to have that kind of knowledge and to persuade eager parents that it's the right course of action. When the time came, he recommended that I go to the Stuttgart Ballet because they were the up-and-coming company. After that, I went on to American Ballet Theatre. Richard came to see my first *Miss Julie*. He coached me in New York for my first *Giselle* at the Met, and he coached me in San Francisco whenever we were there on tour. He has always been there for me through my whole career."

Elliott affirms, "His kind of commitment to students is very rare. The big thing that I carry on now as a teacher is that caring I learned from him—when I see what a student needs, I know what to do. I remember his careful eye and selflessness. I hark back to his phrases, his imagery, the sound of his words, and the way that sound worked your muscles in different ways, his joining of the steps and the music. The man is a poet." Elliott now teaches at Zohar School of Dance in Palo Alto, California, and at Stanford University.

Sheryl Ware, who came under his tutelage at age nine and went on to dance with the New York City Ballet, attributes much of her success to Gibson. "Richard basically gave me my technique and a foundation from which I was really able to take off. I couldn't have danced Balanchine's fast choreography without that secure foundation to back it up. His training is what allowed me to get where I got. As I teach now, the understanding of the body that he gave me and how to break down the steps is still ingrained." Ware is currently on the faculty of the School of American Ballet. She warmly remembers the experience she got while in San Mateo, "He choreographed incredible ballets for us—*Rococo Variations*, *The Door*—works that I hope he re-creates someday."

Gibson's niece, Carmela Zegarelli Peter, became a dancer of note. "He's been a great influence on me, even more so since we're related. I am proud to be his niece and student. I studied with him from the age of 11 to 18 and occasionally later as a professional dancer. It was always different for



# VICTORIA'S

## DANCE - THEATRICAL SUPPLY

New **Super Low** discount prices on:

- dance shoes
- ballet barres
- rhinestones and feathers
- dancewear
- gym mats & dance floors
- hats and stage makeup

**CALL TOLL FREE 1-800-626-9258 • FAX 1-408-286-7866**

1331 Lincoln Ave, San Jose, California 95125

## NEW! SHOW ME, TELL ME™



### Dance Flashcards System®

- Sixty laminated cards portray positions from ballet, stretching, tap, jazz & modern
- Black & white photos feature actual students performing positions with the terms printed on the back of each card
- Includes instruction booklet suggesting other creative uses for the cards



Show Me, Tell Me™ Dance Flashcards System® 1995 Donna Jagielski, all rights reserved

To order, send check or money order to:

Donna Jagielski, Post Office Box 466, Palatine, Illinois, 60078 USA  
(include name, address and telephone number)



Show Me, Tell Me™ Dance Flashcards System® \$ 34.99

Shipping and handling \$ 4.50

Apply state tax \$ .

(If you are a tax exempt organization, please provide a copy of your exemption form) \$ .

Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery

SHARE THE BORGIO SUCCESS WITH...

## The Borgio Method TAP SHORTHAND

A unique dance notation system for all tappers, complete with a dictionary of symbols and examples of how to use them.

- save on preparation time
- help students learn fast
- make steps easy to write
- clarify complex steps

ORDER NOW AND ALSO RECEIVE...

### The "Borgio Method PLUS"

A useful collection of teaching tips and dance routines.

- hold pupils interest
- benefit from new tap routines
- adjust routines to fit any student level
- enjoy new childrens ballet routines

(Routines not available in lower Michigan)

Only \$14.95 plus \$2.50 for shipping and handling

The Borgio Sisters, DMM, DMA.

P.O. Box 333, Royal Oak, MI 48068 1-800-399-0235

# BORGIO



EDUCATING DANCERS SINCE 1945

STEP

SHUFFLE

SHUFFLE STEP

HOP

BRUSH

FLAP

me—harder—because I was expected to set an example in his classes. One thing that made me learn how to jump properly was that he started calling me 'The Rolling Wiener,' which must have been how I looked in the air. I guess that was better than 'The Flying Boxcar,' which another student got nicknamed," reminisced Peter. "Jumping became my forte. I followed him when he went to Holland, where I danced with the Dutch National Ballet, and then I moved back to San Francisco when he started teaching for the San Francisco Ballet—that's how much his influence has always meant to me. He still helps me a lot with my questions or problems now that I have my own school." Peter feels that, "One of the best things he gave me is the foundation necessary for teaching any level, that ability to analyze from point A to point B. Richard taught me that movement and technique develop from an internal source and an understanding of why. So many teachers teach copying, a sort of 'monkey see, monkey do' training. He taught me to be a thinking dancer." Peter (married to dancer Zoltan Peter) now operates the Professional Ballet School in Belmont, California.

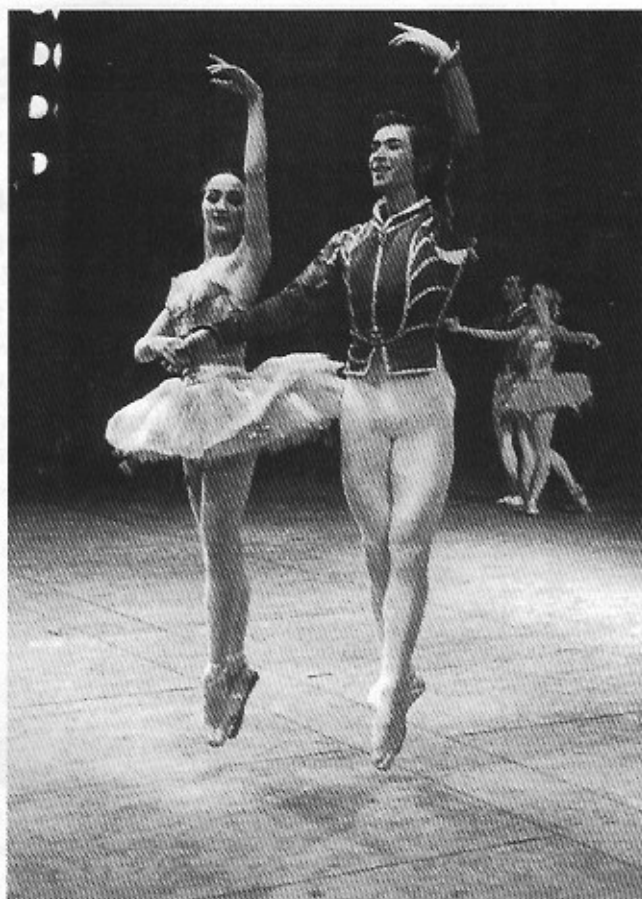
Kenneth Delmar, a protege from the age of 12 whose dancing was once compared to Nureyev's, admires Gibson as "The archetypal teacher, one of the best in the world. He lives and breathes to teach dance. He has an eagle eye and a sensitivity to the dancers' training, knowing exactly when to give the next thing that will challenge them. He molds dancers the way Michelangelo molded his sculptures. He is also one of the most giving people I've ever met. He gives a lifetime of support to his students and there are hundreds of them out there. He is a veritable priest of dance." Delmar is now teaching tango at San Francisco's Metronome Ballroom, performing with Tango San Francisco and leading trips to Buenos Aires.

Jean Dunphy, artistic director of Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre (an Honor Company of Regional Dance America), credits Gibson with the very existence of her school and company, with which she celebrates her

20th anniversary this year. "There simply would be no Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre if it weren't for him," she says. Gibson had taken the school over from his sister Suzanne and then passed it on to Dunphy, who acknowledges, "He has been incredibly generous to us over the years."

### having a home base again

Gibson built up a large ballet school in Palo Alto in the late 1970s, which he ran for seven years and which exists today as the Western Ballet in Mountain View. He and his partner, Zory Karah, then took over



CIRCA 1964: Gibson and Zola Dishong dance Lew Christensen's *Divertissement d'Auber* with San Francisco Ballet. Photograph by Henri McDowell

the historic old Academy of Ballet in San Francisco (founded in 1951 by Guillermo del Oro, a student of Cecchetti, and subsequently directed by Carolyn Parks, Alan Howard, and Janet Sassoon. Sassoon was Natalia Makarova's coach for 14 years and she still teaches there one day a week). The Academy has an enrollment of 250. "I prefer having a closed school; in a suburban area like the schools I had on the peninsula you would have 40 or so new children coming in per year. Here in the city, it's the adult program that's the strongest.

I love to teach, however, and if people want to study, I'll teach."

Gibson developed a special relationship with Israel's Bat-Dor Dance Company, guest teaching there every year for 15 years. For many years, he would spend half his time abroad guest teaching, but has stopped doing so for any longer than a week at a time. "Of course there comes a time when you need to get away from your own school and refresh, but you'll miss the continuity of watching your students develop if you're gone too much of the time."

Gibson says he enjoys teaching those talented ten-year-olds and watching them develop. He takes a special interest in restoring confidence to teenage students, but he believes in maintaining a balance in the classroom between discipline and being the students' friend. "The teacher must be a friend, but more like a parent, because being friends on an equal level doesn't create a productive work environment. It's human nature, however, and so school directors should watch their teachers for any lapses. I think my students are a little afraid of me. I don't scream or yell—they know to fear my silences."

Gibson's method is centered on the individual. It's interesting to note that he rarely, if ever, talks about muscles in his classes. He wants a quality of movement, an atmosphere of artistic endeavor and not a constant focus on the purely mechanical aspects of ballet dancing. As he explains it, "I try to do it—make that struggle—with them. I don't want the dancers to be good for my sake; I want them to share my pleasure in doing well. If they don't do well you must realize that they may never dance at a professional level, but they still deserve the pleasure and feeling of accomplishment. The science of teaching is easy—the difficult part is the art and the heart in teaching. That is what makes teaching as satisfying as performing because in both instances you're communicating and giving of yourself." ★

John Mello is a freelance writer and choreographer based in Sacramento, CA who had the good fortune to begin his ballet training with Suzanne Gibson Storti, who then took him to the American Ballet Center for further study with her brother, Richard.

# DanceTeacher®

## Night School

*What it takes to open your doors to adult students*

**Mary Ellen Hunt**

Feb. 01, 2011 03:53PM EST

"I'm a little nervous," murmurs a woman sitting with her legs carefully folded together in the lobby of San Francisco's Academy of Ballet. Another woman next to her smiles with a sympathetic nod as they peek through the door to watch a group of teenagers soar through a grand allégro. "Looks hard."

Though studios often build their core reputation around the training of young pre-professionals, many schools are discovering the benefits of expanding their adult programs, bringing a love of dance to generations of students who once thought the ballet bus might have passed them by.

At the Academy, where I teach, what started as a morning stretching class for women some 23 years ago has since morphed into a lively and bustling program serving some 150 adult students, with class levels that range from absolute beginner to advanced intermediate.

"When we first offered basic beginning classes, we never realized it would be that popular," says Zory Karah, co-director of the school. "We used to start a new beginning class only once a year, but we had long waiting lists every time, so we began them twice a year. Now it's so popular that we start new classes every September, February and July."

Some sign up because they did ballet when they were kids. Some always wanted to but never thought they could. And the demographic mix is wide-ranging. A beginning class I once taught included a software engineer, a rector of a local church and an OB/GYN—all successful professionals willing to shed their well-earned outer layers of competence to start at a humbling square one at the ballet barre.

“They teach me as much as I teach them,” says Dena Moss of the Joffrey Ballet School in New York and the co-author of a book about adult ballet education titled *The Joffrey Ballet School’s Ballet-Fit*. A practicing lawyer herself, Moss points out the enormous energy and therefore serious motivation that it takes to work all day and then take her class in the evening.

Like many teachers, Moss started out teaching children, but over the past 20 years she has gradually developed her own methods of training adult beginning students. The Joffrey Ballet School in New York, which recently expanded to include a second location for its studios, has had an adult program in place since the 1960s, says director Chris D’Addario. He adds that the program has grown 150 percent in the last year as the school has added weeklong seminars and intensive dance workshops into their curriculum. “We looked at a lot of other models,” D’Addario explains. “For instance, what does a gym do to attract clients?”

There are programs throughout the day—morning and early afternoon time slots are generally given to the children’s program, but adult classes are primarily in the evenings from 6:30 to 9 pm, when people get off work—a typical schedule for most studios with adult programs. And the school gets the word out through e-mail lists and social review websites like Yelp. Ultimately though, says D’Addario, much of the success of the adult program is teacher-driven. “Just like you have personal trainers whom you love,” he says, “we find that successful adult classes are personality-driven.”

“A big part of teaching adults is like performing onstage,” says Acia Gray, the director of Tapestry Dance Company in Austin, Texas, which sees some 300 adult students regularly taking classes in their academy. “You have to be really on. With kids you can be a little more academic—they’re used to being professional learners. With the adults there has to be an element of entertainment.”

A combination of double frappés has caused minor chaos at the barre. Students are gritting their teeth with concentration, but the coordination of flex and pointe is just eluding them. “Well, it’s not . . . bad,” I begin slowly, and there are giggles from around the room as if they were kids. “But I definitely think we can make that one better. Shall we see how we can improve it?”

Teaching adults, observes Karah, requires a high degree of sensitivity. “This may be the first time in a long time that they’re being challenged,” he says. “It’s in front of other people and it’s physical. So you have to make sure that you keep them feeling that it’s constructive and not personal criticism.”

“Ballet can be extremely infantilizing,” says Moss. “We call everyone boys and girls; teachers are always telling you what to do. But adults have an intellectual awareness that’s different from young dancers and you have to keep that in mind.”

Paramount of importance in adult classes is making sure that students are working safely. “With adults students, every body is different,” says Richard Gibson, who co-directs the Academy in San Francisco. “An 8- or 9-year-old child is still pliable, but an adult must not be forced beyond what they have. So a teacher must know what flexibility they have and what rotation they have. Now, they may not be in that same place in a year, but you should know where the adult student is, and then strengthen them so they can go beyond. An adult body can evolve, but each one will be at a different pace.”

At Joffrey, Moss has developed a one-hour introductory class format adapted from her children’s curriculum. “We start on the floor with pointing and flexing the feet—we isolate the feet, the hands, the arms, the shoulders, to get them to feel what it’s going to be like when they stand up,” she explains. “We learn how to pull up without the pressure of doing it standing. They come to understand what turnout is, they learn how to isolate the hip, essentially they learn how to work correctly. Then when they stand up, they don’t look at their feet and say, ‘Oh, I’m not turned out’—they can feel it from the correct place.”

Strengthening the core and protecting the joints is even more important for adults than for youngsters, and many teachers prefer longer barres, often paced for a slower warm-up. “You want an emphasis on strengthening,” says Karah. “So, by the time they start doing jumps, their stomach is strong and there is less impact on the knees. The adults in our classes won’t do anything high-impact until perhaps their third year of training.” (He starts with jumps on two feet and gradually introduces jumps onto one foot or off one foot. Grand jetés are reserved for the beginning intermediate level.) “That’s longer than would be the case for kids,” he says, “but we’re trying to create an instrument that is intelligent, so they know how not to hurt themselves.”

Which is not to say that those beginning years need be boring—quite the opposite, in fact. “To keep it interesting, I teach some combinations that aren’t going to hurt them or give them bad habits if they don’t do it perfectly right away,” says Gibson. “I give them simple waltzes, more like a triplet, and balancés, chassés, steps to get them moving and thinking about coordination.”

And connecting personally with the students keeps the interest-level high. “Try to get to each and every one of them individually,” says Moss. “Every student has something they do well, and everybody has something that needs correction. Learn their names and try to get the pronunciation right. They feel their names are them and it helps them feel special and welcome in the class.”

For most studios, the ideal class size will depend on a variety of factors, including the space available and the level of the class, but most of the directors agree that you don’t want to have too large a class. “We don’t want it to be an en masse experience,” says



Gray (Tapestry Dance's average class size is around 20 people). "We want everyone to feel like they've got their own space and one-on-one attention."

At Tapestry, Gray notes, the price for an adult class runs about \$5 less than the price for children, whose coursework demands more paperwork, more evaluations and an end-of-year demonstration to administer.

Gray, who has experimented with scheduling classes for moms coordinated to classes for their young children, says that understanding the needs of your market is key. Gibson, for instance, notes that the nature of San Francisco is that people are transient, often changing jobs or moving, meaning that new students may not stay for long. Thus the Academy's classes change in size, and starting new adult beginning classes frequently helps keep the number of students in the program high. D'Addario also tracks seasonal trends, observing that in warmer weather adult enrollment is lower—"people would rather be out in the park, or on vacation spending time with their families."

"The key is that we want to have a safe place for adults to train," says Gray. "It takes a lot of guts just to walk into an adult dance class. They're not coming to just learn the technique of a dance—this is their 'me' time. They don't want to be pushed to the limit where it's not fun."

My student looks dubious, maybe even slightly panicked, as I take her hand and we break down a *balancé*.

"Let's do this all together," I say to the rest of the class. The group-sway sweeps up the single student and suddenly her eyes light up as she realizes that she's got it.

"It should be a comfort zone—no pressure, low stress," says Moss warmly. "It's a lesson—maybe a hard one—that you don't have to excel at everything to enjoy it. The process itself can be enjoyable, and if it's satisfying to them, I'm perfectly happy."

### **Adapting to Adults**

Teaching adults requires a slightly more nuanced approach than teaching youngsters. Richard Gibson offers this advice: "I encourage the child within. I don't speak down to them, of course—adults are more intellectually developed—but I find that same innocence and desire to do things as you would in a child."

Although you might find yourself using the same imagery and approach, here are some do's and don'ts to consider for older students.

\* Appeal to the intellectual side of adults by recommending enrichment. Adult students enjoy getting book recommendations or advice on performances to see.

\*Don't push adult students, especially beginners, to perform steps that are stressful on joints, such as grand pliés or large jumps. Adult joints do not have the elasticity and ability to recover of younger bodies.

\* Encourage them to release tension through breathing and coordination, especially while doing an exercise or combination.

\* Don't criticize, but do correct. Adults are much more sensitive to tone than kids and can tell the difference between criticism and correction.

\* Don't let disparaging remarks among adult students breed negativity in class. Many teachers agree that they'd rather ask a student to leave than allow them to create an unfriendly environment in the studio.

\* Keep the atmosphere in the class light and encourage a sense of humor in students.

“Make dance a positive, enjoyable thing, not an unattainable goal,” says Gibson. “To some degree, every person can attain something and they should feel that.”

*Former dancer, now teacher, Mary Ellen Hunt writes about dance and the arts for the San Francisco Chronicle and other publications.*



# Juilliard

THE JUILLIARD SCHOOL  
60 LINCOLN CENTER PLAZA  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10023-6590

DANCE DIVISION

TELEPHONE 212-799-5000  
EXTENSION 255  
FAX 212-724-0263

July 27, 1998

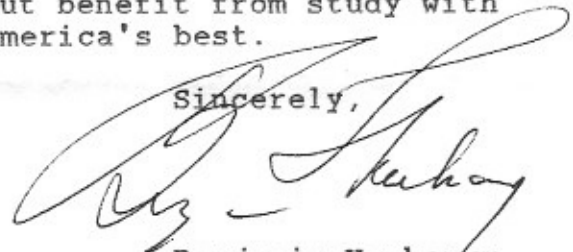
To Whom It May Concern:

I am so very frequently asked to recommend schools and teachers of dance. One of my first responses is always to say, "you should study with Richard Gibson at his Academy of Ballet in San Francisco."

I have known Mr. Gibson, first as a dancer, then as a pedagogue, coach, choreographer and director. When I was director of The Netherlands Dance Theater (1958-1970), Richard Gibson is the person I suggested that the Dutch Ministries of Culture and Education engage as the Director of the soon-to-be completed Royal Conservatory. He did superb work there for a number of years and wherever he has taught in more recent years.

Mr. Gibson is one of the finest teachers I know who can produce a professional dancer from start to finish. His deep knowledge of his craft, plus his own artistry, make him an invaluable colleague. American and European Companies are filled with dancers he has trained. Therefore, it is a pleasure for me to give my highest and respectful support to all his activities. Any foreign dancers could not help but benefit from study with Mr. Gibson's school. He is one of America's best.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Harkarvy  
Artistic Director  
Dance Division



1314 - 34th Avenue  
 San Francisco, CA 94122  
 Tel: 415-665-2222 Fax: 415-681-1130

Michael Smuin  
 Director  
 Daniel Levenstein  
 Executive Director

Artistic Advisory Board  
 Brian Boitano  
 Joel Grey  
 Gregory Hines  
 George Lucas  
 Lotfi Mansouri  
 Arthur Mitchell  
 Michael Ritchie  
 Linda Ronstadt  
 Luis Valdez  
 Tony Walton

Board of Trustees  
 Patti Hume  
 President  
 Vicki Fleishacker  
 Secretary  
 Robert Challey  
 Treasurer  
 Thomas Aden  
 Anthony Frank  
 Bill King  
 Harlan Kleiman  
 Howard Nemerovski  
 Linda Rawlings  
 Edwin Schwartz  
 Sue Steinberg  
 Susan Stitt

October 19, 1998

To Whom It May Concern:

In answering the question, where is a good school to study dance, I would like to recommend Richard Gibson and his Academy of Ballet in San Francisco.

During my tenure as Artistic Director of San Francisco Ballet from 1973-1985, Mr. Gibson was a member of the faculty teaching not only in the school but also the company. I relied on his thorough knowledge of the craft to keep my "Company" in top form not only technically but artistically as well. I was able to observe his molding of a dancer from the very beginnings to an accomplished professional.

It is a pleasure for me to recommend Mr. Gibson and his school as a superb training ground for dancers seeking to become professional. Companies around the world are filled with dancers he has trained. His dedication and artistry enable him to craft a knowledgeable and well rounded dancer.

Sincerely,

Michael Smuin  
 Director  
 Smuin Ballets/SF

*Filing Date:* October 9, 2019  
*Case No.:* 2019-020087LBR  
*Business Name:* Academy of Ballet  
*Business Address:* 2121 Market Street  
*Zoning:* Upper Market NCT (Neighborhood Commercial Transit) Zoning District  
40/50-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 3543/012  
*Applicant:* Zory Karah, Director  
2121 Market Street  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Rafael Mandelman  
*Located In:* District 8  
*Staff Contact:* Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625  
[shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org](mailto:shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org)

## **BUSINESS DESCRIPTION**

The Academy of Ballet (the “Academy”) was established in 1953 by Edward Sassoon and has operated continuously and at the same location since then. The Academy of Ballet is a ballet school offering training for children, adults, students preparing for a professional career and others who are studying ballet for its many benefits. Sassoon was a businessman and the father of the Ballerina Janet Sassoon, for whom is established the school. When Janet Sassoon retired from her dancing career, she returned to San Francisco and directed the Academy of Ballet until 1989 when the business was purchased by Richard Gibson and Ezra (Zory) Karah.

Since its inception in 1953, the Academy has operated under the direction of several prominent figures in the world of dance. The first directors were Guillermo Del Oro and Carolyn Parks, both highly esteemed classical ballet instructors. In 1958, Alan Howard, a principal dancer of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, became the director. Upon his retirement, Janet Sassoon, a famous ballerina and the daughter of original business owner Edward Sassoon, assumed the direction until 1989 when Richard Gibson and Zory Karah, dancers and ballet masters of world renown became the business owners and directors of the Academy of Ballet. Zory Karah became the sole owner of the Academy of Ballet in 2013.

The business is located on the south side of Market Street between Church and 15<sup>th</sup> streets in the Castro neighborhood. It is within the Upper Market NCT (Neighborhood Commercial Transit) Zoning District and both 40-X and 50-X Height and Bulk Districts.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

### *Review Criteria*

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1953.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Academy of Ballet qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- i. Academy of Ballet has operated continuously in San Francisco for 66 years.
- ii. Academy of Ballet has contributed to the history and identity of the Castro neighborhood and San Francisco.
- iii. Academy of Ballet is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with the art of ballet.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Yes. 2117-2123 Market Street (aka new Era Hall) is local landmark number 277. The building conveys its significant architectural qualities as the work of a master architect, August Nordin, while employing innovative structural techniques. The building is also significant for its association with the rebuilding of San Francisco after the disaster of 1906, the establishment of Upper market Street as a commercial corridor, and for its association with the Visalia Stack Saddle Company.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

Yes. The property has a Planning Department Historic Resource status codes of "A" (Historic Resource Present) due to its listing in Article 10 of the Planning Code as a local landmark.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. The opening of the Academy of Ballet in 1953 was featured in Dance Magazine. The magazine Dance World included an article featuring Richard Gibson and the Academy of Ballet in its 1996 issue. Zory Karah and the Academy of Ballet adult division were featured in Dance Teacher Now in its February 2011 issue. Scenes from the 1981 movie "She Dances Alone" were filmed at the Academy of Ballet. The movie was drama documentary about Kyra Nijinsky, the daughter of the legendary Russian dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. The Academy of Ballet was featured in Armistead Maupin's "Tales of The City" and more recently in the New York Time's best seller "The Immortalists" by Chloe Benjamin, herself a former student at the Academy. The Academy of Ballet has received resolutions from both the State of California and City and County of San Francisco honoring Richard Gibson and Zory Karah for their contribution to the arts.

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business*

**Location(s) associated with the business:**

- 2121 Market Street

**Recommended by Applicant**

- Ballet training for all ages and skill levels
- A professional program
- The high ceilings, many windows, and exposed trusses that define the interior
- Original paintings made for the Academy

**Additional Recommended by Staff**

- None





# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

---

## Historic Preservation Commission Draft Resolution No. ###

HEARING DATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2019

*Filing Date:* October 9, 2019  
*Case No.:* 2019-020087LBR  
*Business Name:* Academy of Ballet  
*Business Address:* 2121 Market Street  
*Zoning:* Upper Market NCT (Neighborhood Commercial Transit) Zoning District  
40/50-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 3543/012  
*Applicant:* Zory Karah, Director  
2121 Market Street  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Rafael Mandelman  
*Located In:* District 8  
*Staff Contact:* Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625  
[shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org](mailto:shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org)

1650 Mission St.  
Suite 400  
San Francisco,  
CA 94103-2479

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

Fax:  
**415.558.6409**

Planning  
Information:  
**415.558.6377**

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR ACADEMY OF BALLET CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2121 MARKET STREET, BLOCK/LOT 3543/012.**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on November 6, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that the Academy of Ballet qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for the Academy of Ballet.

***Location(s):***

- *2121 Market Street*

***Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:***

- *Ballet training for all ages and skill levels*
- *A professional program*
- *The high ceilings, many windows, and exposed trusses that define the interior*
- *Original paintings made for the Academy*

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations** are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2019-020087LBR to the Office of Small Business November 6, 2019.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: