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Santa Clara Ballet Founder Josefa Reyes Honored for 4 Decades of Dedication to Young Dancers

By Carolyn Schuk



For almost 40 years the Santa Clara Ballet has been an integral part of the South Bay arts scene, thanks to the dedication and perseverance of the company's founders, Josefa Reyes and her late husband Benjamin Reyes.

The Reyes' hard work hasn't gone unnoticed. Earlier this year, the San Francisco-based Isadora Duncan Dance Awards – the "Izzies" – Committee honored Josefa Reyes with its Sustained Achievement award ... for offering instruction and training in classical ballet and ...performance opportunities for children and Bay Area professional dancers."

Originally from the Philippines, Reyes danced and taught ballet in San Francisco in the 1960s. Her background includes stints with the Celeste Ballet of San Francisco, the San Francisco Opera Ballet, and the San Francisco Ballet.

In 1972 the couple moved to Santa Clara where they raised their family and established the Santa Clara Ballet School. Today the school is one of only two classical ballet schools in the city. Reyes stresses the value of a small, community school for young dancers. "Early training is key in ballet," she says "We give personal attention to the development of each and every student." This nurturing environment fostered several professional careers. Reyes's son, Andre Reyes, went on to become a principal dancer with the San Francisco Ballet and the Pacific Northwestern Ballet. Other students have gone on to found their own dance companies in addition to dancing professionally.

The company's annual Nutcracker productions provide many opportunities for students, young dancers, and even non-dancers to get on stage and work with professionals, according to Villanueva-Reyes. The company's open auditions draw dancers from across the Bay Area.

"She and Mr. Reyes have given countless opportunities for children to realize their dreams," says Marite Paras, Secretary of the Santa Clara Ballet Board of Directors. "These children have sent their children and their children's children to her for the same experience. Her training is impeccable. We are a family here and we are so privileged to be with her."

Established in 1984, the Isadora Duncan Dance Awards Committee recognizes exceptional creative achievements in nine categories of dance performance and presentation in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. The awards are named for the early 20th century modern dance pioneer Isadora Duncan (1877–1927) whose focus on a more natural and emotive style of dance had an enduring influence on all forms of Western performance dance.

For more information about Santa Clara Ballet, visit www.santaclaraballet.com, email: info@santaclaraballet.com or call (408) 247-9178. Carolyn Schuk can be reached at cschuk@earthlink.net.

The Santa Clara Weekly | 3000 Scott Blvd. Suite 105, Santa Clara, CA 95054 | 408-243-2000

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