

# HAPPY FEET

Krugersdorp's Carla Turner is an award-winning choreographer and ballet teacher who believes that the most important lesson her students can learn is to smile.

If sugar and spice and all things nice are what little girls are made of, then ballerinas must be made of all things nice, hard work, stamina, the right training, graceful arms, long strong legs, a short torso, beautiful turnout and good feet. As a tiny two-year-old, Carla fell in love with the magic of dance when she accompanied her older sister and mother to her sister's ballet lessons. You could call it love at first dance.

She has not stopped dancing since, but these days she is the one showing dancers the ropes at her very own dance studio, which is already in its 12th year of existence. As a teacher she strives to teach her students more than just the ways of dance. "I always try to encourage my students to love and take care of their bodies, appreciate the amazing things that it can do and to remember that it must last them a lifetime. One of the other lessons that I teach is that good team work is vital and that triumph is just the 'umph' added to try. The most important lesson that I wish to impart is the importance of smiling – I'm sure I must sound like a broken record with all the smile reminders!" Carla tells jokingly. Sometimes she comes across the misconception that ballet teachers are sombre and strict. You rather get the impression that she tries to inspire her students to greatness and what dizzying heights they have reached so far.

"This year alone, one of my students, Beate Lindes, was chosen as the best dancer in her age category (Grade 1 to Grade 3) at Randfontein Arts and Culture Association's (Raca) Eisteddfod. Other students who performed incredibly well are Justine Pretorius and Ilse Basson, who received second and third place respectively at the Stars Talent Competition in November. The students from my dance school, Dance Incorporated, won 11 gold medals, 27 silver medals and five bronze medals from the American Academy of Ballet Performance Awards, as well as Mia

Beaumont being awarded a gold medal with distinction." It is not only Carla's students who have garnered awards for their work. She has also won an award as best choreographer for a piece called *Ariel in the Underworld* for the 2011 Roodepoort Dance Festival.

"Most choreographers have one muse that inspires them - I had a whole ballet school of gorgeous girls who helped me get the creative juices flowing. I wanted to do something that all the dancers would find exciting, from four right up to 19-year-olds. "I knew the little ones would identify with the characters of Ariel, Sebastian and Nemo, as well as Spongebob and Patrick, and that the senior dancers would enjoy dramatising the storyline and becoming the characters that they were asked to portray. The production gave me the opportunity to be inventive with costuming, and when I found the music by Benjamin Britten – I just could hear little mermaids frolicking and see seaweed, coral and jellyfish. It was also possible for me to portray a villain in the form of the evil Ursula." Winning this award meant a lot to Carla. To her it was a reward for all the hard work she put into the production.

"When I won the award I was moved to tears. It was a lot of work to coordinate such a large cast from various age groups. Thus it was tremendously gratifying to have the audience and then adjudicator appreciate it enough to honour it in that way." It must have been an extra special honour to win the trophy for best choreography during the Roodepoort Dance Festival, as Carla herself used to take part in this yearly event.

"When my family moved to Johannesburg I was always fortunate to enjoy participating in an annual performance at the Johannesburg Promusica Theatre (formerly the Roodepoort City Theatre) during the Roodepoort Dance Festival." After all the competitions and lessons are done, Carla returns home to a close-knit

and loving family.

"I am very blessed to live in a beautiful old house in Krugersdorp North – just a few minutes from my folks – who are the most attentive grandparents, enormously supportive and my business mentors. "Our home has wooden floors and drop-dead-gorgeous pressed ceilings. My husband Guy and I began searching for it in October 2009 when we learned that our second child was on the way and we would need more space.

"We moved in on 9 January 2010. Like any normal mother, my days revolve around my children. A normal day starts whenever our youngest, Chloë (18-months-old), wakes up, followed by her brother Chad. Not every morning is picture perfect, but no matter what, we read a few verses of Scripture and have a family prayer, all while our toddler says her gobbledygook. Then we kiss each other and daddy takes everyone to pre-school."

It would be natural to assume that her children would have an interest in ballet too. For Carla it was a joyful experience when her son took part in one of her shows. This four-year-old performer was definitely his grandmother's favourite! This year, Carla is looking forward to starting a new venture in the form of Mogale Youth Ballet with a new work called *Faerie Fantasia*, which will be brought to light in August 2012.

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