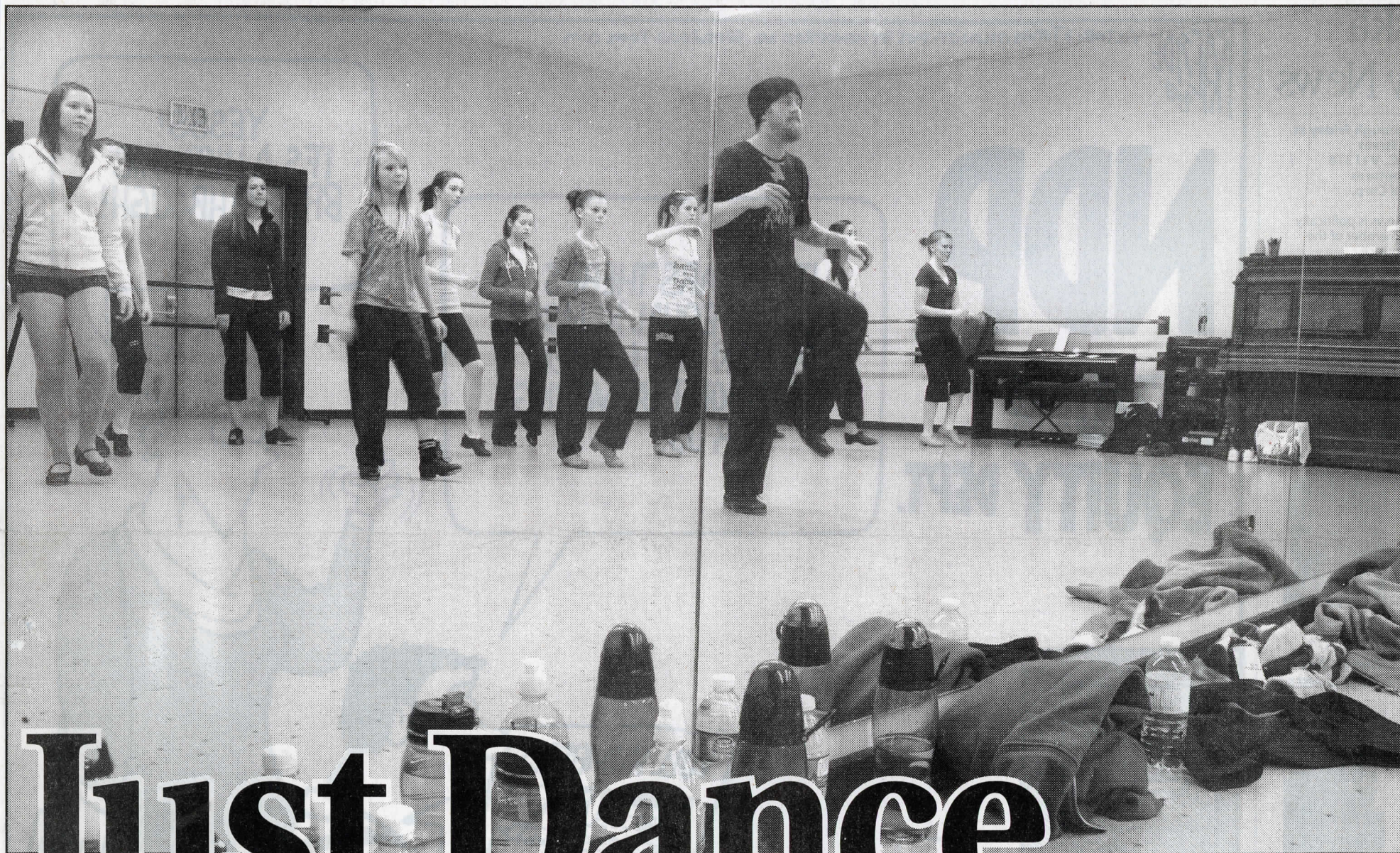


LOCAL NEWS



Professional dancer and former Fort St. John resident Brock Jellison leads a group of local dancers from Studio 2 Stage and The Move.

This tap dance routine was practiced during a weekend-long workshop at The Move Dance Centre.

(Aleisha Hendry Photo)

Just Dance

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Staff Writer

Nearly a year has past since former Fort St. John resident Brock Jellison wowed the world at the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

He returned to the Energetic City this past week to host a dance workshop to, in his words, "light a fire" under some local dancers and get them thinking about their futures in the dance world.

"It's been a long time since Fort St. John had a professional dancer come out of it. A very long time, actually," Jellison said.

Jellison taught tap and contemporary dance routines to a number of local dancers from Studio 2 Stage and The Move Dance Centre, ranging from just starting out to those thinking about where they'd like to take their craft as they go on.

"It makes no sense to me for you to train for 12 years and not at least go to a couple of auditions and try and do something. You have to taste it a little bit before you decide you're just going to move on," he said.

Jellison has been dancing since he was two years old, spending much of his childhood at his mother's dance studio, Jellison Studios.

"It was cheaper than a baby-sitter, just bringing me along to her classes," he said.

By the time he was 12, he was teaching his own classes.

It wasn't always easy for Jellison – being a male dancer in a small industry town, he was a victim of taunting and bullying from his classmates.

Once he graduated high school, he left Fort St. John to pursue his passion for dance.

His perseverance paid off and, after working as a professional dancer in Vancouver, Jellison was tapped to choreograph the opening ceremonies at the Olympics.

After working for months to prepare, and the rush of actually doing the performance,



Jellison said he wasn't expecting the onslaught of emotions that came with being done.

"There was a definite crash after the Olympics. There was nine months of a lot of work and I was in charge of 120 volunteer tap dancers and 27 professional tap dancers – not to mention trying to get my solo together at the same time – and after nine months of go, go, go, go, go, two days later the interviews were done and I was sitting on my couch thinking 'okay, I need to go for a walk.'" he laughed.

"This is what they were talking about, this is why they said, 'oh, make sure you have your friends around you when you're all done' and now I understand fully why the Olympic teams, with their athletes, all have counsellors after they're done their event. You can imagine training your whole life for that one event and going out, win or lose. It's done. You did it. Now what?"

The "now" after the Olympics involved doing freelance cultural coordinating for various cor-

porations in Canada and the U.S.

For Jellison, 'now' includes playing with his newly formed band, Clapping Monkeys, and looking at dance opportunities in Montreal – Jellison was contacted by Cirque de Soleil and was asked to send them a resume.

"I would really love to become an artistic director for a large company like that," he said.

Over at the workshop, Jellison had the dancers doing tap routines to rock music, showing them that there are many facets to the dance world beyond the traditional.

Jellison isn't known for his contemporary work in Fort St. John, but he is known for it in Vancouver.

"Contemporary is fun because you can really do whatever you want and if you can actually get inside their head and get them to let go and shed that tight withdrawn stance – turn around, don't face the mirror, nobody's watching you –

you just move," he said. "Dance is a pretty amazing thing for that. It's so cathartic. You could just be doing a regular day, turn the lights down low, turn the music on and start moving, and all of a sudden you find yourself bawling your eyes out and you don't know why until you think about it for a second – I just really needed to move."

For those dancers who want to move on to the professional level, Jellison has some advice.

"Catch a plane to Toronto, go do an audition. Take the train to New York, go watch a show on Broadway, get inspired. Because as tough as life is for a dancer, it's also very rewarding as an artist if you can actually be glad with what you're doing," he said.

"It might not be the highest paying job and it might not be the most rewarding job of all time, but there's nothing like being on stage, there's nothing like holding an entire crowd of people and their emotions – being able to control anything that you want."

Dancers having a successful season so far

Submitted by The Move Dance Centre

Dancers at The Move Dance Centre are in the middle of their festival/competition season, and so far, have been very successful. The dancers have been working hard since September on learning new dance steps, techniques, choreography and studying very hard for ballet, tap and jazz exams.

The first two festival/competitions were held in Quesnel, BC and Peace River, AB. In Quesnel, there were 16 dancers who attended the competition. They earned 30 first place, 10 second place and 13 third place standings.

They brought home five trophies for groups and duos and seven solo trophies. Keily Stewart won a Top Award for Stage Performance and a place as a Provincial Representative to compete at Provincials in June. And, to add more, 9 other dancers also were presented with individual scholarships.

In Peace River, six dancers had another successful weekend and a highlight was attending a workshop taught by Miles Faber - from So You Think You Can Dance!

The weekend of the Peace River North Festival, dancers made their teachers proud with all the hard work they presented on stage. With 33 dancers participating, they earned 55 first place, 29 second place and 16 third place standings. They also celebrated nine trophies for groups & duos and 14 solo trophies/scholarships. More awards were presented at the end of the festival that were chosen by the adjudicators - Tristen Jackman was awarded the Adjudicators Award, Keily Stewart earned the Dance Excellence Award for 12 years and under and Tennielle Johnson was presented the Most Promising Award for 13 years and over.

One other part of the week long music/dance festival, is performers can earn the marks to advance them to compete in the Provincials that are being held in Kamloops June 5 - 9. The Move has five dancers who have qualified: Stage 1 - Keily Stewart, Ballet 2 - Shiau shan Kao Phan, Stage 2 - Katherine Grimes, Modern 2 - Milanne Desfosses & Modern 3 - Tristen Jackman.

With two festivals still to attend, one in Grande Prairie, AB and one in Fort Saskatchewan, AB, dancers are still hard at work, rehearsing and fine tuning their routines so when they take their next opportunity to go on stage they will have that much more confidence.

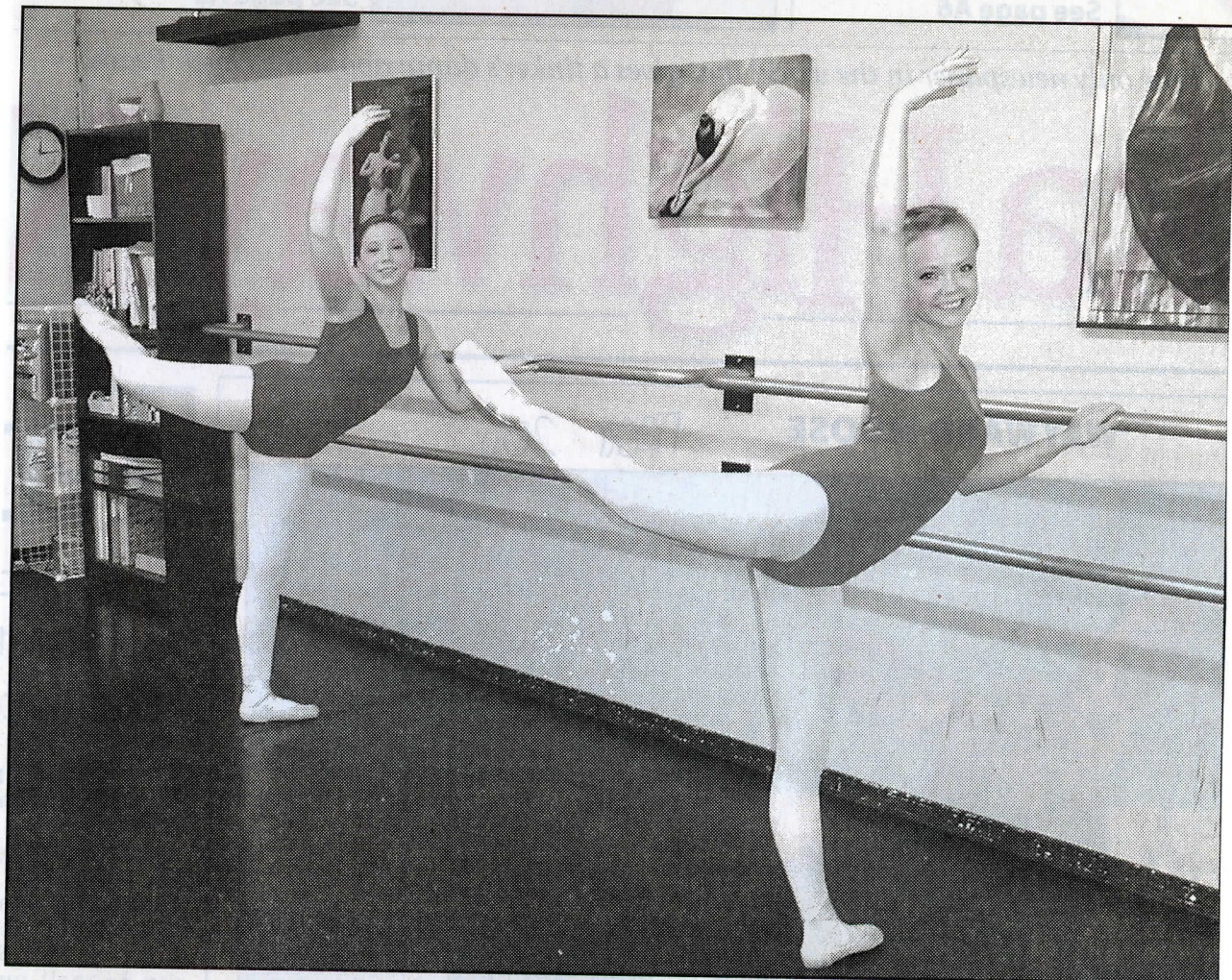


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SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Junior Company at The Move are rehearsing their ballet routine to perform in Grande Prairie for their next festival.

DANCERS ON THE MOVE



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sonja Beale (left) and Tristen Jackman are two of the thirteen dancers from The Move Dance Centre who will be travelling to Edmonton this week for their Vocational Ballet Exams conducted by The Royal Academy of Dance. The dancers, who have been preparing for a year now, range in levels from Intermediate Foundation to Advanced 2.