

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

By ROBERTA HERSHENSON

MAMARONECK

REBECCA ERDE is known for dancing through the halls of Heathcote Elementary School in Scarsdale, where she is a fifth grader. At 11, she is an eight-year veteran of private dance lessons and looks up to leading ballerinas the way some others her age get giddy over pop idols. "It's kind of my special thing," Rebecca said. "I dance so much in my school that they get annoyed."

But Rebecca fits right in at Dance Cavise in Mamaroneck, where she takes two ballet and two jazz dance classes a week. With her red hair pulled back in a bun, wearing a maroon leotard, pink tights and ballet slippers, she matches the other students in concentration. One recent afternoon, the teacher, Olimpia Hernandez, demonstrated how to achieve good balance, or good "turnout" in the language of ballet. "You have to be able to hold a glass of water on your heel," Ms. Hernandez said, as the students imitated the position. Sunlight and classical music filled the room, lending the studio a timeless feel; Degas would have felt right at home.

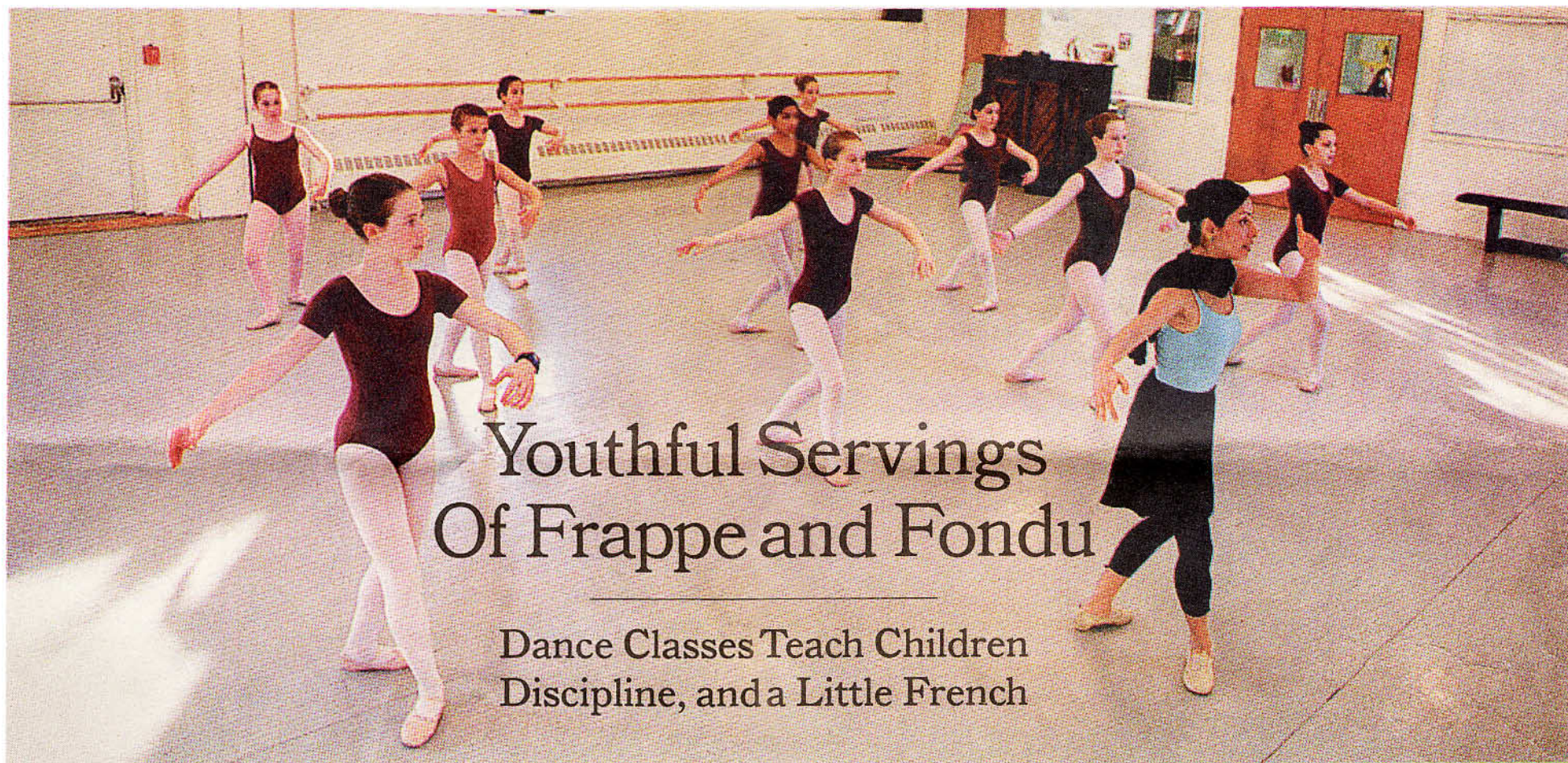
An hour later, the students - their hair loose and their feet bare - were dancing to a modern jungle beat in a jazz dance class taught by Joe Anthony Cavise, the school's co-founder and director. Like many dance instructors in Westchester, a county rich in year-round dance opportunities for children and teenagers, Mr. Cavise makes ballet the cornerstone of all other dance forms. "They love jazz and modern, but they understand that you can only get so far in my world without ballet," said Mr. Cavise, who danced on Broadway for five years in "Cats," including a stint as the leading character, Mr. Mistoffelees. "My jazz is based on classical training."

A child who just wants to cut loose to the music may find less formal classes at a local community center, but Westchester's major dance schools take their education missions to heart, whether the focus is on modern dance, jazz, tap, Broadway dancing or ballet.

"We have a reputation for being structured and strict, but everything we do has a meaning," said Diane Clark, the preschool director and student affairs coordinator at the Westchester Theater Dance Academy in Bedford Hills, which was started in the 1960's by two former Rockettes, who still run the school. "We believe that students should be lovingly disciplined. Dance is a disciplined art."

The discipline extends to the language of dance, which is mostly French. At Dance Cavise, 3-year olds may get to "walk like a dancer on your tippy-toes," Mr. Cavise says, but by age 5 they know that "frappe" is a dance step, not a frothy drink, that "fondu" is a dance position, not a melted cheese dish, and that "attitude" is the French word for pose, not spunky behavior.

Mr. Cavise, who also takes dance to



## Youthful Servings Of Frappe and Fondu

### Dance Classes Teach Children Discipline, and a Little French

Roberta Hershenson for The New York Times

Students attend a ballet class at Dance Cavise in Mamaroneck. Westchester County is rich in year-round dance opportunities for children and teenagers.

schoolchildren with performances by his professional group, the Off Center Dance Theater, insists that all students in the school use the time-honored dance lingo. "As a creative art, unlike math and science, dance is supposed to be fun," he said. "But it can't be fun at the expense of proper learning."

Dance classes in Westchester cost up to \$600 a year for one lesson a week during the school months, with extra costs for the appropriate shoes and, sometimes, costumes. Some schools pay for costumes, and offer scholarships for those who cannot afford the fees. Dance directors say that the benefits can be measured in more than children's enjoyment, or in the pride parents feel when a child blossoms on stage. For one thing, dance is exercise, they say.

"It's physical activity, and most of our children are woefully underserved in that area," said Judith G. Ross, a spokeswoman for the Steffi Nossen School of Dance in White Plains, which specializes in modern dance. "It's a way of using your body to express creativity. It helps develop a good body image." The school also offers ballet "for alignment purposes and for muscular development," Ms. Ross said, referring to the underpinnings of good dance form.

At the Tappan Zee Dance Group in Tarrytown, where modern and jazz classes are

Good exercise, and  
something to put on  
college applications.

also rooted in ballet technique, Jane Alexandre, the school's founder and director, wants children to know not only how to perform, but also how performances are put together. At rehearsals, students learn about stage lighting, sound cues and the role of the stage manager.

Immersion in dance also looks good on a college application, said Jayne Viltz, the director of the Dance School of the J.C.C. of Mid-Westchester in Scarsdale, where ballet is emphasized and advanced students are offered "partnering" workshops with young male professional dancers.

"Dance helps students get into college," Ms. Viltz said. "The discipline of being committed to something five or six times a week shows a sense of dedication, which is always very positive."

Girls are usually the overwhelming majority in dance classes, but boys also study

dance in Westchester. "We matriculate them with the girls," Mr. Cavise said. "By middle school they go into tap or hip-hop, which is nonballet based."

Children and teenagers who want to dance this summer have a wide variety of choices. Dance Cavise will offer seven-week workshops in dance and theater from June 28 through Aug. 12. The Tappan Zee Dance Group will offer workshops at several age levels beginning June 28. The Logrea Dance Academy in Ossining, the school of the Westchester Ballet Company, will hold classes from July 5 through Aug. 5. Scarsdale Ballet Studio in Scarsdale will offer workshops for children from June 28 through July 30, while the J.C.C. of Mid-Westchester will offer both ballet and ballroom dancing for teenagers from June 28 through Aug. 13 (younger children can also learn to dance at the J.C.C.'s summer arts camp).

Steffi Nossen will run a program in wheelchair dance from June 21 through June 26 as well as a dance camp and "story ballet" class from June 28 through Aug. 5. Youth Theater Interactions, a performing arts school and repertory company in Yonkers, will offer African and Haitian dance, ballet, tap and hip-hop classes from July 7 through Aug. 20. The Scene Stealers, a new community theater group based in North Salem,

will teach children the theatrical production process - including dance - the first three weeks of July.

Irish step dancing will be taught at the Yonkers-based Margaret Pike School of Dance starting June 28. The O'Rourke Academy of Irish Dance in White Plains offers step dance classes during the school year. Tap Kids in Tarrytown, a division of New York Stage Originals, will hold its annual summer program for nationally selected children ages 9 through 19 from July 18 through 24.

Mindful that children are not only the dancers of tomorrow but also the audiences of tomorrow, many dance organizations design performances especially for children. The Corner Store Dance Company, directed by Pam Finney, who teaches at the Modern Dance Center of Westchester in Bronxville, will give a free performance, "Step Right Up," for children ages 3 through 9 on June 26 at 3 p.m. at the North White Plains Library.

The Chamber Dance Project, founded by Diane Coburn Bruning of Sleepy Hollow, will hold a student performance on June 4 at the Tarrytown Music Hall. And the White Plains-based Grupo Folclorico Nuevo Mile-nio, which offers Latin American folk dancing classes for children and adults during the school year, will perform this summer at the Kensico Dam.