

She knows the way to ballet

Nicholson leaving Coeur d'Alene school to train dancers in San Jose



The owner and director of Ballet Coeur d'Alene dance school has been recruited to lead San Jose Dance Theatre's professional training division. Brooke Nicholson will step into the position Aug. 1 Since coming to Coeur d'Alene four years ago, Nicholson has coached dancers for the Youth America Grand Prix and Switzerland's Prix de Lausanne. She was twice awarded "Outstanding Teacher" and "Outstanding School" at the Youth America Grand Prix.

"I am thrilled to welcome Brooke Nicholson ... who brings a wealth of talent, information, experience, and a proven track record of training dancers

for major ballet companies," San Jose Artistic Director Linda Hurkmans said. Though downtown strollers will no longer see young dancers practicing behind the long windows of Ballet Coeur d'Alene, Nicholson keeps a strong tie to the Lake City. One of her two children was born here, and husband Aaron Nicholson will continue as General and Artistic Director of Opera Coeur d'Alene. According to him, "nothing changes" in his role. He commuted when he was first hired and travel is part of a performer's life.

Nicholson began her earliest training in San José where her parents still live. She received her first professional contract at age 17 with Boston Ballet where she worked with Tony winner Christopher Wheeldon choreographing his first ballet, "Firebird." She danced lead roles with San Francisco Ballet and New York City Opera before coming to Coeur d'Alene. Now, as she has come full circle to the school where she began, she says it is a "fantastic" professional opportunity and a chance to encourage outstanding students in the work and art she loves.

Prix de Lausanne competitor Chelsea Thronson attributes Ballet Coeur d Alene with helping make her the dancer and person she is today. "The professional yet encouraging atmosphere provided opportunities for me to improve and succeed, as well as instilling qualities of dedication and discipline," Thronson said. "I am very excited for Brooke."

After the last day of classes and an in-studio recital May 25, friends, students and supporters will hold a reception for Nicholson and her family.