

# New York City instructor teaches art of choreography to local students



Rebecca Kelly, artistic director for Rebecca Kelly Ballet, New York City, gives instruction during a workshop she conducted at Guibord's North Country School of Ballet in Plattsburgh.

Photo by Jeremiah S. Papineau

By Jeremiah S. Papineau  
[jeremiah@denpubs.com](mailto:jeremiah@denpubs.com)

PLATTSBURGH — If Shakespeare was right when he said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," then there have to be choreographers to make sure the show goes on.

Guibord's North Country School of Ballet recently hosted a workshop conducted by Rebecca Kelly, artistic director of Rebecca Kelly Ballet, New York City. The workshop centered on teaching choreography to students of Debbie Guibord-Stay, the school's director and artistic director of the North Country Ballet Ensemble.

The workshop is the most recent one hosted by Kelly at Guibord's North Country School of Ballet, with which she's had a partnership for nearly a decade. Kelly became acquainted with the school while conducting "On Stage," a dance performance summer day camp in Lake Placid. During the 1990s, a student from Guibord's came to one of the camps and the connection between Kel-

ly and the Plattsburgh school was made from there.

"We eventually were invited to do projects with them," said Kelly. "It was about six or seven years ago, Debbie urged me to think about teaching choreography to youths."

Having traditionally taught choreography to adults, the concept was new to Kelly. She decided to take on the challenge and was pleased with the results after working with her first group of students. Several of the students, with whom she worked for about six years, have gone on to either pursue choreography, dancing or dance instruction professionally, she said.

With that track record, Guibord-Stay was excited to have another group begin receiving instruction from Kelly this summer.

"It's exciting for me because we've already been successful with one group," said Guibord-Stay. "As a director, you always strive to bring new experiences to your students, to widen their horizons and bringing someone in like Rebecca Kelly does that."

Throughout the course of the summer workshop, Kelly was able to help the students choreograph their own dances and better understand what it means to be the one in charge of giving direction to fellow dancers.

"Some students come in with the assumption that they can't wait to tell everyone what to do, but it isn't really like that," said Kelly. "When you work in choreography you're really engaging all the senses. You're working collaboratively and cooperatively and you're bringing together every aspect of the art of dance."

"It's not always understood that choreography is an art form," Guibord added. "It's not something you can just walk in and do. You really do study it."

Lauren Grand of Plattsburgh, one of the students who attended the workshop, said she learned a great deal from Kelly's instruction.

"I thought it was wonderful to have Rebecca Kelly here," said Grand. "She taught me so much that I didn't know. I learned how to space my dances and how to direct people so they look better to the audience and to me; to make my dances more powerful. I learned so much."

"I really enjoyed the workshop," said fellow student Kelly Van Alstine of Peru. "It really made me think more about dance than I have before. We all had to work together in order for the dances to work, so it definitely shows you have to cooperate and work with everyone."

Katherine Hausrath, another of Guibord-Stay's students from Plattsburgh, said Kelly's workshop made her think more about becoming a choreographer.

"I really enjoyed looking at dance in a completely different way than I had before," said Hausrath. "[Choreography] is really fun and interesting to me."

"Choreography is really about working together and I have to say I love working at Guibord's because the kids work together beautifully," said Kelly. "Debbie just creates an environment that's conducive to collaboration, which is great for teaching choreography. And, in my opinion, the world might be better on if there were more choreographers in it."