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Youth Ballet to offer low-cost classes in Miami Gardens

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Students with the Thomas Armour Youth Ballet performed in a December production of the Nutcracker, presented by the youth ballet and the New World School of the Arts at Miami Dade County Auditorium. The program expands to Miami Gardens this month.

One of Miami's oldest dance companies is extending will soon begin offering low-cost classes in Miami Gardens.

The Thomas Armour Youth Ballet dance company will offer kids ages 5 to 10 an opportunity to learn ballet and tap dancing starting Tuesday at the Betty T. Ferguson Center, 3000 NW 199th St. Classes are \$10 per month.

"Our goal is to bring high quality dance education to kids all over Dade County," said Director Ruth Wiesen, "and to get them into magnet schools or "A" schools.

The non-profit dance company, whose students have gone on to perform in top-notch troupes such as Alvin Ailey, will provide kids with leotards, tights and ballet shoes.

Wiesen said the company also offers classes to kids in Coconut Grove, Homestead, Little Haiti, and South Miami, "but we wanted to reach kids further north."

The dance classes will be led by tap dancer Natasha Williams, a graduate from New World School of the arts who also teaches ballet and jazz, and ballerina Kareen Camargo who was a rehearsal instructor for the Miami City Ballet's production of the Nutcracker.

Williams said she is excited about teaching in the area because she will get a chance to "introduce kids to an art form that isn't so commercialized."

"Most people don't know about tap," said Williams, 25. "I'm going to love teaching in Miami Gardens because I feel the kids will really appreciate it because they haven't seen a lot of the new stuff that's happening in tap dancing."

The Thomas Armour Youth Ballet dance company was founded in 1951 and now provides training to 1,000 students each year. The company is named after classical ballet dancer Thomas Armour who was trained in Paris by world famous ballerina Olga Preobrajenska.

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