

Dance for Joy! ACDS students receive ballet dresses

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Owner of the Bronxville Ballet School, Ana Dimas presents a young girl with her very own custom-made, sensory-friendly dance dress.

Love was in the air for a group of girls, ages 3 to 5, who attend ACDS Westchester, a preschool in Scarsdale for children with special needs. The girls gathered excitedly to perform their ballet routine, which was the culmination of a 10-week introduction to ballet program in partnership with Bronxville Ballet Not For Sale, a non-profit founded in 2019 by Ana Dimas, owner of Bronxville Ballet School. The organization provides free classes to children with special needs and to underprivileged kids as well. To the

children's delight, they also receive a complimentary custom-made, ballet-inspired dress.

The adorable mini ballerinas, each accompanied by an aide or therapist, danced around the room to "Hooray for Chasse" by Marie Barnett and to music from the album "Fairy Tale Music" by Nina Miller. They followed the movements of Dimas, their teacher, who is a classically trained ballet dancer with 25 years of experience. During the class, Dimas gave each child a bright pink, sensory-friendly ballet dress with a tulle skirt. One by one, they put on their new dresses, their faces lighting up as they gracefully twirled around, proudly showing off their beautiful new outfit.

Before owning a dance studio, Dimas taught movement and music classes to autistic kids in the Readiness Program at the New York Institute for the Deaf and the Blind. Teaching these children had a huge impact on her and after deciding she wanted to do something where she could give back to the community, she set up Bronxville Ballet Not For Sale. "As well as giving free classes to those in need, I wanted to create ballet dresses that the children could wear every day," says Dimas. "I want to give each kid the chance to feel like a princess and can keep the joy of dancing alive." So far, they have given more than 200 of these specially made dresses to children across New York, as well as to schools in Tanzania and Kenya.

ACDS Site Director, Rich Scotti, says, "We have 162 students at this preschool. They enjoy and need activities just like any other kid. We aim to provide them with the same kind of enrichment that other children get, all in one location. Our programs include art therapy, music therapy, and now ballet, which was introduced at the start of the school year."

"Ana and Bronxville Ballet Not For Sale has brought so much joy to our school. The little girls look forward to ballet all week and after class happily dance down the halls back to class. The look of wonder and amazement on their faces when they received their dresses is something we will never forget. We cannot thank Ana enough for generously sharing her love of dance with our students and look forward to a long partnership," he continued.

At present, the ballet program is only available for girls at ACDS due to high demand, but the preschool plans to introduce it for boys in 2021. They also intend to incorporate a musical element with the goal of doing a recital at the end of next year.