

Dancer will perform and teach in city

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When ballerina Jillian Vanstone is in Nanaimo next week she plans to more than simply thrill ballet fans with her work in the National Ballet of Canada's show at the Port Theatre on Monday night.

Vanstone is also returning to her roots to offer a workshop for the KYDC dancers (KYDC is a Kirkwood Dance Company that provides enrichment in many styles of dance, workshops, performances and volunteer performances in the community, etc.)

Vanstone started dancing at Kirkwood Academy when she was six years old. Her first role in the Nutcracker was that of a Baby Rat. Over the years as she pursued her professional career, she has been back several times to guest as The Sugar Plum Fairy in Kirkwood's Nutcracker. The NBC first soloist would then fly back to Toronto and performance in James Kudelka's The Nutcracker with the National Ballet of Canada.

Vanstone has maintained contact with Kirkwood throughout her career and she is looked up to as a role model by the students. Her parents Jim and Joan Vanstone live here and Joan has been assisting with "Baby Ballet" at Kirkwood ever since Jillian left for Toronto at age 12.

Joan is a combination of mom and teacher; she's the one who cuddles the little dancers when they have fallen down, ties their shoes, helps them choose their props and holds their hands when they're learning new steps.

Nanaimo is where Jillian's roots are and she and her family are pleased to give back to local dancers.