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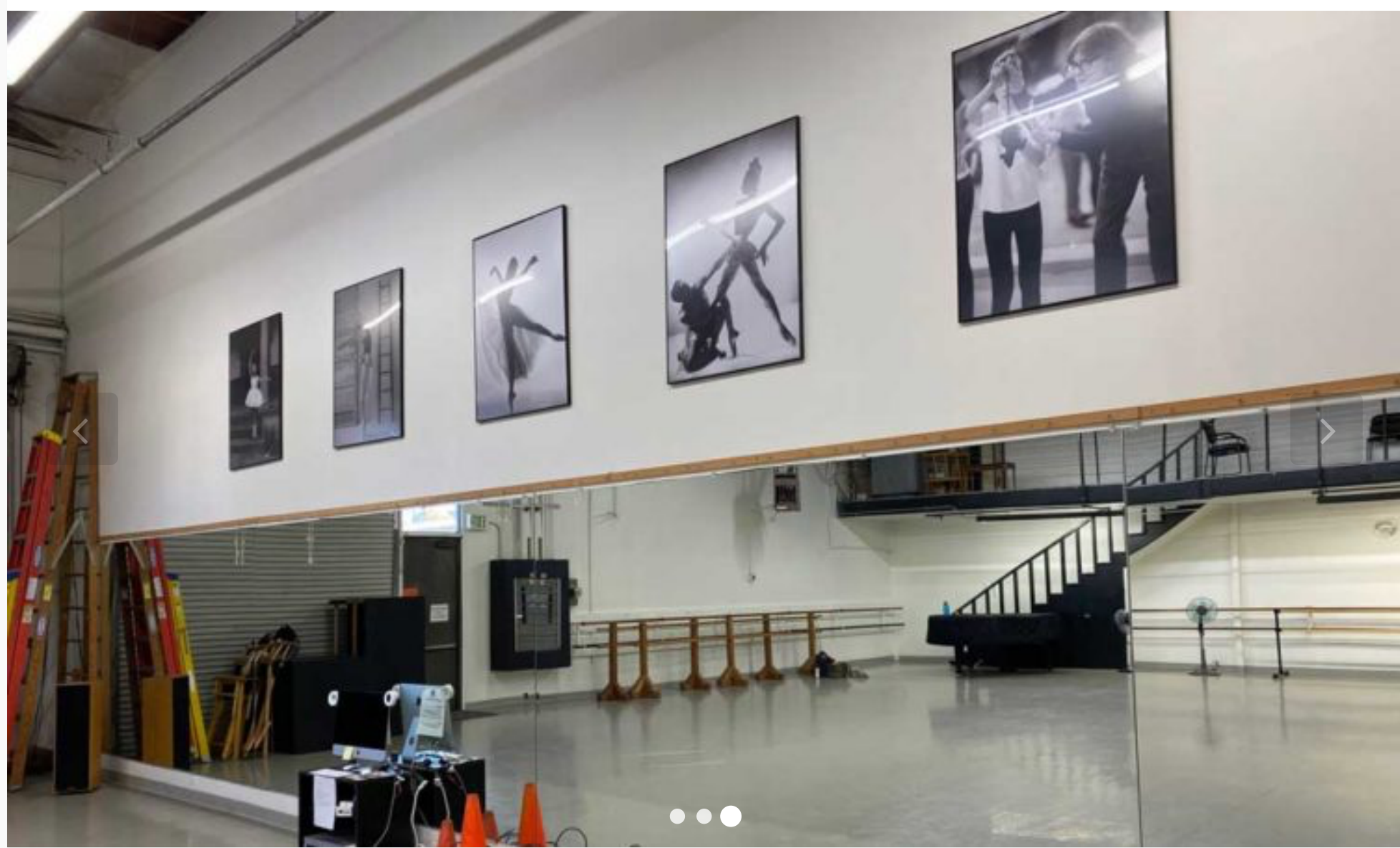


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# Westside School of Ballet in danger of closing

**Brennon Dixon** · 3 months ago · closing , Westside School of Ballet



After 53 years of serving community members with dazzling displays of dance, Westside School of Ballet is in danger of closing.

Founded in 1967 by New York City Ballet’s principal ballerina Yvonne Mounsey and Westside Ballet co-founder Rosemary Valaire, the school distinguishes itself as a non-audition academy where all are welcome to study ballet and other dance forms.

Mounsey’s daughter Allegra Clegg now serves as the Westside’s owner and Executive Director of the renowned ballet, and she explained Tuesday that the school is in its ninth week of offering more than 50 online ballet and conditioning classes a week via Zoom and Instagram Livestream as well as a weekly “Dance Talks” series. And even though the ballet is operating at an expense budget that’s a third of its normal operating costs, Clegg said it is not in a stable fiscal position to remain open much longer if it doesn’t receive assistance or is allowed to open its doors to the public.

Normally, students and staff would be preparing for the school’s annual Spring Performance, but this year will be the first “Show that wasn’t” in 47 years. Current Artistic Director and Westside Ballet alumna Martine Harley added this year’s Spring Performance had dancers that had trained since early childhood for the coveted roles.

But things are so dire at the Westside Ballet that its volunteer Guild and the nonprofit’s Board of Directors have launched a GoFundMe campaign in recent days that aims to raise funds, which will supplement the revenue from the ballet’s online classes and hopefully keep the studio doors open.

“I never thought it’d come to this,” Clegg said. “I’ve always been involved in (the ballet) and I was a student myself, so I know the value of this place because it taught me so much more than dance. There are the most amazing life lessons to be learned here.”

Clegg became emotional as she imagined a future without Westside School of Ballet but added she’s holding strong because she knows she has supporters on her side.

The GoFundMe, which can be found by visiting [bit.ly/westsideballet](http://bit.ly/westsideballet) has currently raised a little more than \$5,500, and Clegg said the property’s landlords are willing to work with them because they have been such longtime tenants and remain closely connected with each other.

School administrators have also reached out to city and government officials about a clear path for opening but haven’t received an official go-ahead to open as of Tuesday.

“I personally hope that we’re allowed to open up; one for the business side of it to start receiving some type of income again, but I also think it’s really important for the kids that they get back to working out and moving their bodies because you can only do so much through Zoom,” Clegg said. “I’m at a point, personally, where I feel they should let us make our own decisions. And if people don’t feel comfortable coming to the studio, then they won’t have to. We’ll still offer online classes, but there are a lot of adults and a lot of parents who’ve reached out to ask us to please open up again because they say they aren’t fearful and want their kids back in the studio. They’re ready for it.”

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