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Real Estate

Ballet conservatory settles into custom Automobile Alley space

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OKLAHOMA CITY – Ballet has taken Alexa Danièle Fioroni around the world, but the opportunity to share her passion with young dancers in Oklahoma brought her home. In 1998, fresh from a stint in Switzerland, Fioroni found herself at a professional crossroads between teaching and performing ballet, which ultimately led her back to Oklahoma.

Fioroni, the founder and facility director of the newly formed Oklahoma City Ballet Conservatory, moved into her own unique studio in April on the third floor of an historic building on Automobile Alley to begin teaching ballet.

“I’ve been doing this since 1998,” she said. “This is just the next step into developing my business.”

The ballet conservatory is in 6,500 square feet of space on the third floor of a 1923 building at 914 N. Broadway Ave. The construction budget for the project was about \$750,000.

TAParchitecture was the architect and designer of record for the project.

“The reason I went to TAP is because upon my first meeting with Hans Butzer, within two minutes he had a vision based on what I was talking about,” Fioroni said. “When I saw what he drew, and a cardboard model he made the next day I thought ‘that’s it.’” Butzer, principal of design with TAP, said the real inspiration for the design was Fioroni’s lively personality and love of all things ballet.

The finished space features a comfortably appointed main lobby, conference room and offices, as well as the actual ballet practice areas grouped in a rectangle at the center with hallways around the perimeter.

“I give credit to her for having such a clear vision in her own mind,” Butzer said. “For us it was really trying to capture the energy that she presented through the ballet conservatory and this beautiful old building.”

Work began about a year ago to bring Fioroni’s vision to fruition. Prior to the new space, she taught ballet around the Oklahoma City area for several years, but never in her own dedicated studio.

Fioroni, who trained as a youth at the Paris Opera Ballet School in France, takes students beginning at age 12 and works to fulfill their individual dancing goals.

The program works to nurture the children, as well as teaching them responsibility and respect. The school currently has 13 students with the ability to instruct as many as 40 in varying levels of ballet performance.

To help give the conservatory its inviting and comfortable look, Cynthia Harrison and Bethany Jackson, owners of Tandem Design Studio, helped with lighting and design as well as helping select furnishings, fixtures and paint finishes throughout the space. Butzer said he wanted a design that would meld Fioroni's energy and passion with an old building into a work of art that would complement both the dancers' work and the structure.

"Really the magic that takes place in that space and the overall design concept is the magic between this new program and this old building," he said.

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