
Influencer: Chan Hon Goh

Laura Goldstein / Vancouver Luxury Living

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Vancouver ballet dynasty raises the barre for dance training and education in Canada.

Perhaps her breathless exuberance is partially a consequence of a *grande jeté* (that's ballet parlance for "big leap") into a Toronto cab, but Vancouver's Chan Hon Goh, director of the Goh Ballet Academy is always a force of nature. She's about halfway through her annual, albeit frenetic, outreach program giving master classes to ballet students across Canada and Seattle. "I keep adding more and more cities," laughs the vivacious former prima ballerina of The National Ballet of Canada by phone. "I was just in Whitehorse in a very small community. We had a fantastic opportunity to see what the dance scene was like up there. I'm so excited because our charitable entity, the Goh Ballet Vancouver Society offers a national, \$5,000 scholarship to gifted young students we assess as they take the masterclass in each city," she explains.



Chan Hon Goh stands with ballet dancers at the Goh Ballet Academy on Main Street.

Both Goh's parents were celebrated principal dancers with The Beijing International Ballet in the '60s but when Western classical ballet was forbidden during the Cultural Revolution, they immigrated with Chan in 1976 for a better life in Vancouver. They started a ballet school in her aunt's basement in 1978 that evolved into the Goh Ballet Academy, currently located inside a refurbished bank at Broadway and Main.

Goh joined the National Ballet of Canada in 1988, climbing the ranks behind Veronica Tennant and Karen Kain to become principal dancer in 1994. Performing internationally, she received critical raves for her emotional depth and elegant interpretations of title roles in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Giselle*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Firebird*, *Madama Butterfly* and *La Sylphide*.



When her parents retired in 2010, Chan Hon accepted the directorship of Goh Ballet Academy, collaborating with her husband, choreographer and former principal dancer, Chun Che.

Their annual production of *The Nutcracker*, underwritten by the Goh Ballet Vancouver Society, is a much-anticipated holiday highlight, with a cast of 200 dancers from the Lower Mainland, one of whom is Goh's 12-year-old son, Aveary. For their 40th Anniversary Gala, Goh Ballet is presenting a world premiere of *Cinderella*, June 1st and 2nd at The Centre Theatre for Performing Arts.

Their next iteration is moving into state-of-the-art premises as part of the Oakridge Centre redevelopment in six years. "25,000 square feet of rehearsal and production space—that's a dream come true for our students and dancers," enthuses Goh.

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