



Thursday, February 11, 2010

## Vancouver Sun

Business, E3

By Malcolm Parry

**GOH GOES ON:** National Ballet of Canada principal dancer Chan Hon Goh hung up her pointe shoes last June after starring in *Giselle*. She promptly ramped up production of dance footwear at the Principal Shoes firm she and husband Chun Che founded a decade ago to ease professional tootsies worldwide. More publicly, she assumed day-to-day management of Goh Ballet Academy, the facility father Choo Chiat Goh and mother Lin Yee founded in 1980 and that, six years later, acquired a 9,000-square-foot heritage building and adjacent 3,000-square-foot structure at Main Street and Eighth Avenue.

Likely worth \$3 million now, that facility isn't bursting at the seams -- yet. Maybe 100 more students could join the 500 who attend yearly, paying from \$800 for beginners' classes to \$5,000 for professional and postgrad tuition. Others zip through for "tune-ups," including the 20 former National colleagues Chan will handle Friday.

Such for-profit operations are literally half a world away from Chan's upbringing in Beijing during Mao Zedong's repressive, sometimes murderous and essentially futile

Cultural Revolution. But her father, himself a former ballet star, landed here near penniless in 1976. When the family was reunited a year later, the now important academy was shaping. It would train many future professionals, including Chan herself and the likes of National Ballet second soloist Noah Long, who'll be in her class Friday.

The class Chan aspires to would put 1,000 students, professionals and staff of a not-for-profit foundation, the Goh Ballet Vancouver Society, in purpose built quarters within a larger complex. Chan plans boarding facilities for the full-time international students, who account for 10 per cent of enrolment, and visiting mid-career artists.

The foundation helps fund efforts like Goh's production of The Nutcracker, which filled the 1,850-seat Centre For The Performing Arts for five nights in December. "That was a nice vote of confidence for me," said Chan, who for six months had focused on staging a show with magicians, gymnasts, balloon and Ukrainian dancers in its cast of 197. "We want to make it a Vancouver tradition."

As for an expanded, relocated and always self-sufficient Goh Ballet Academy, "I'd like to see a developer involved in this, because it could be so important for the city." Names from Audain to Wall immediately spring to mind. There are others, no doubt.