

PRESS RELEASE

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A NEW BALLET COMPANY FOR HAMPTON ROADS

Formation of a new regional ballet academy and theater with the name *Ballet Virginia* was announced today by Hope Paryzek, president of Parent Connection, a group representing parents whose children have been studying at *Virginia Ballet Theatre* in Norfolk. Offering year-round instruction for youth and at least three classic productions annually, the new company expects to employ experienced professional instructors in classical ballet, with a focus on pre-professional preparation for the teenage students.

“We have always been very pleased with the instruction at *Virginia Ballet Theatre*,” Paryzek stated, “but we have become seriously concerned at its declining financial condition and the unwillingness of many of the board members and officers to organize or do any fundraising over the past two years despite the urging and planning offered by management.” Paryzek explained that VBT undertook an expansion eighteen months ago using borrowed money while setting aside staff’s fundraising plans, with the result that large operating losses were incurred last year and this year.

In January, Paryzek said that certain board members of the *Virginia Ballet Theatre* considered cancelling a Company production at the last minute but decided to proceed when assured by management that the show would at least break even financially. Shortly thereafter the board discharged Virginia Ballet Theatre’s Marketing Director, citing lack of funds to pay her, at which point the parents decided to form. The parents requested seats on the board to help with fundraising. To back their offer, a number of the parents pledged to raise \$3,000 each, the same requirement cited in a written board policy which they note has not been enforced. An initial \$60,000.00 was offered as support but was rejected in a face to face meeting with two board officers.

Ballet Virginia will begin its own fundraising among its expected customers, whose tuition payments will support the academy. Additionally grants and sponsorships will then be sought to outfit the studio and mitigate expenses of the theater productions not covered by ticket sales or program ads.

“*Virginia Ballet Theater* has been a mainstay of classical ballet in Hampton Roads since 1961, commented Paryzek, “and we are sad about parting company, but we found the declining VBT left us no other choice for the children.”
