

St. Paul Irish Dance School to Hold Recital

Rince Na Chroi, a St. Paul-based Irish dance school, will present its second annual recital Saturday, March 3 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 4 at 2 p.m. It is open to the public.

"From the Stage to Your Heart" will feature traditional Irish dance numbers that students have been practicing since fall. After an enormously successful show last year, which oversold by almost 20 tickets, the school is aiming to sell out two shows instead of one.

Founded by Katie Stephens, 27, who opened the school in 2003, Rince na Chroi (pronounced Rink-ah nah Cree) started with just 15 students in its first year. In 2005, its enrollment totaled 100 students, and in just the last year it has added another 30 students to its roster. Stephens now offers classes four days a week to accommodate all of the students, who range in age from 3 years old to adults.

Stephens is a Milwaukee, Wis., native and a graduate of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, where she now works full time for the Alumni Association. Juggling a full-time job and the demands of a successful dance school can be a lot to handle, she admits, but it is worth it to do something she loves.

Her love for Irish dance comes from her 19 years of experience as a student and a teacher, 11 of which were spent traveling the world as a competitive dancer. She ended her career at the championship level, the highest level in Irish dance competition.

Stephens' expertise and teaching style are what attract many of her students.

"Katie is honest and has a great sense of humor," says Kate Ortman, 25, a dancer for a year. "She does a great job of balancing constructive criticism and positive reinforcement. Plus, her technique is incredible."

Stephens says the growth is mainly due to word of mouth. Ortman says it is also due to Stephens' broad networking base.

"I went to school with Katie," she says. "I am in this because of her and I didn't even know her that well. It's the first thing I've committed so much time and money to since I started working and I'm so glad I did it."

Classes at Rince na Chroi are offered Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and Sunday afternoons, depending on level. Prospective dancers are welcome to visit classes throughout the year. Tickets to "From the Stage to Your Heart" are \$15 and can be purchased through Ticket Works at 651-209-6689 or on their Web site, www.ticketworks.com. For lesson or show inquiries, call (651) 645-4292 or visit www.rincenachroi.com.