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Gotta dance? This is for you

ANDRÉ GENSBURGER
 Clayton Pioneer

"Gotta Dance", in Concord, is a different kind of dance studio. While offering a wide variety of classes in all the favorite forms, the school offers far more; this is a safe and nurturing place where creative expression goes a long way.

Terry Davis and Andrea Gedosh make it all happen. Gedosh, the owner of the school in its prior life as The Clayton School of Dance, now helps Terry in the operations of the school while teaching classes.

"We've known each other for seven years," Davis said.

"Terry started as a teacher here," Gedosh added.

The chemistry in their professional relationship makes working together very easy.

"We compliment each other," Davis said.

Eva Chena, mother of two of the studios' students, Vanessa (8) and Ana Karen (10) believes that "Gotta Dance" offers much more than just dance.

"They are so much more organized and clean," she said, "and the teachers are very nice, kind to the students and they have fun."

"The thing I like most is the

Hip-Hop dance," Vanessa said. "It's fun and there is a lot of laughing."

Ana agreed. "I really like the teachers. We discuss the dance a lot and it is funny."

"We have so many programs," Gedosh said, "that it is hard to just focus on one or two."

The studio primarily focuses on Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Hip-Hop and has a blossoming preschool program, as well.

"Every student is important, regardless of their skill level," Davis pointed out, stressing that this is not usually the case in the competitive studio environment elsewhere.

"We know all our kids by name," Gedosh said. "It's at a very personal level."

"The kids feel comfortable."

"We also get to know the parents on a very personal level," Gedosh added.

The school teaches kids as young as 2 1/2 through the senior adult level.

"We teach a combination class - ballet, tap, creative movement, and tumbling," Gedosh said. "It's a good way to get a dance foundation and we do it to fun music. It's such a positive environment. And our fees are very reasonable."

"Everything is age appro-



André Gensburger/Clayton Pioneer
 Andrea Gedosh, Heather Stroh (teacher) and Terry Davis enjoy a moment between classes.

ropriate," Davis said. Most classes are 45 minutes to 90 minutes.

"We offer a dance and play class," Davis said, "with 45 minutes of dance, a snack, as well as some arts and crafts."

"We call this Mother's Morning Out," said Gedosh. "It gives moms the chance to drop their child in a safe place where they will be well taken care of, get to dance, have fun, while mom gets a few hours to herself."

Family Week is scheduled at the studio December 14-20. "Parents can come and see what

we offer," Davis said, "and get more information on our New Year classes." The school will also put on a mini-performance during Family Week.

Unlike other schools, students can begin classes at any point, although both Davis and Gedosh are quick to point out that January is a great starting month as February begins the rehearsals for their Spring Recital on June 7, 2008.

For more information, contact "Gotta Dance" at 4743 Clayton Rd., #4, Concord (behind NY Pizza) (925) 825-PLIE (7543).

'Dinner Party' takes readers through the Chinese Revolution

"A revolution is not a dinner party... A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another."

- Mao Zedong

"Revolution is Not a Dinner Party," the title of Chang Compentine's first novel, is nothing

short of brilliant irony.

Compentine, like her protagonist Ling, survived Mao's Cultural Revolution (a time marked by constant hunger) to become the author of three cookbooks and an authority on Chinese cooking and culture.

It's hard to pick a place to begin in recommending this book. First of all, it is a "cross-over" novel, which means a book for both young adults (10 years and up) and general readership. I cannot think of a better book to be read by everyone in the family.

China and all things Chinese are a big part of our lives and will be an even larger part of our children's lives. This is as fine a start as any to better understand China's recent past.

The story begins in 1972 and ends shortly after Mao's death in 1976. Ling is almost 9 years old in 1972, and it is through her eyes that we experience the fear and terror when "danger began knocking on doors all over China."

Ling is a bright and vivacious only child. She is the great joy of an easy-going father and the consternation of a perfectionist mother. The family lives in a hospital compound where her father

practices Western surgery and her mother practices traditional Eastern medicine.

The tie-in to our Bay Area is a picture of the Golden Gate Bridge given to her father by his teacher, a visiting American doctor. It is her father's hope that some day Ling will travel to see the Golden Gate Bridge.

The picture of the bridge, which would be perceived as a bourgeois symbol to the marauding Red Guard, is finally hidden behind Mao's picture on their mantle. When Ling's parents burn letters, old photographs and other family mementos, the hidden picture of the Golden Gate Bridge becomes their icon of resistance.

Ling's creator not only came to America, but on a clear day, she can see the Golden Gate Bridge when coming through the Caldecott Tunnel from her home in Lafayette.

Compentine tells Ling's story in language both youthfully direct and emotionally honest. In her father's eyes, Ling could do no wrong. With her mother, it was different: "I believed Mother was unhappy with me because she had never wanted to have a daughter." She wishes her mother



SUNNY SOLOMON FOR THE BOOKS

loved her "the way I was, like Father did."

When Ling's father is taken away by the Red Guard as an enemy of the people, we hear of her anguish: "How could I learn every one of Mother's rules so I wouldn't upset her?" Mother and daughter must build a relationship to survive.

In the ensuing four years, Ling experiences loss, hunger, betrayal, fear and confusion, all topics worth generating lively family discussions.

After each member of your family has read the novel, I recommend you go to your favorite Chinese restaurant. Talk about what is familiar in the story, what is surprising or how you might have reacted if it had been your family. Go out and celebrate your family, celebrate your freedom

Sunny Solomon is the BookLady and manager of Clayton Books in the Clayton Station. She holds an MA in English and Creative Writing from San Francisco State University. Sunny is a poet and loves to "talk books." Reach her with questions or comments at 673-3325.

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