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**SCHOOL OF THE GLOUCESTER  
TOWNSHIP BALLET, INC.**  
t/a Dance by Debra DiNote,  
Plaintiff,

v.

**FARRAH JOY FERRIS,  
& JANE DOES 1-10,**  
Defendants

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: SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY  
: GLOUCESTER COUNTY  
: LAW DIVISION  
:  
: DOCKET NO.  
:  
: CIVIL ACTION  
:  
: **COMPLAINT**  
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:  
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Plaintiff, School of the Gloucester Township Ballet, Inc. t/a Dance by Debra DiNote (“Plaintiff”) by way of Complaint against Defendants, Farrah Joy Ferris and Jane Does 1 through 10, alleges as follows:

**PARTIES**

1. Plaintiff is a New Jersey corporation that provides dance instruction with a place of business located at 208 East Holly Avenue in Sewell, New Jersey.
2. Defendant Farrah Joy Ferris (“Defendant” or “Ferris”) is an adult individual with a residential address of 2 Timber Hill Court, Turnersville, New Jersey 08012.
3. Defendants Jane Does 1 through 10 are not yet identified but are believed to be the relatives of Defendant and/or her husband and will be added by name after service of the Complaint.

4. Unless otherwise specifically stated, “Defendants” herein shall refer to Defendant Ferris and Defendants Jane Does 1 through 10.

**FACTS**

5. Plaintiff corporation was formed by Debra DiNote in 1973 when she was only eighteen (18) years of age.

6. Ms. DiNote founded and opened the Plaintiff corporation in Gloucester Township, New Jersey.

7. In 1990, Ms. DiNote saw an opportunity to expand Plaintiff corporation and help more students, and the studio moved into a shopping center in Washington Township.

8. In 2014, the studio purchased the vacant town library and renovated it, expanding and moving the studio once again.

9. This move helped not only students of the dance school, but also the town itself by bringing economy and traffic back to a part of town that had been forgotten.

10. To this day, Plaintiff corporation continues to be owned and operated by Debra DiNote and her family.

11. At all times prior to the Defendants’ smear campaign, Plaintiff corporation has enjoyed an exemplary reputation.

12. Most recently prior to the Defendants’ smear campaign, Plaintiff corporation had approximately 370 students.

13. Defendant Ferris enrolled her daughter in Plaintiff corporation’s dance school in 2015 and again in 2017.

14. At the time of her 2017 enrollment, Defendant Ferris’s daughter was six (6) years old.

15. Plaintiff corporation's classes are divided by age groups.

16. In September of 2017, Defendant Ferris' daughter began a class that was designated for children ages six (6) through eight (8); although the class did not have any eight (8) year old children enrolled.

17. Defendant Ferris' daughter was doing well in her class.

18. On October 9, 2017, Defendant Ferris moved her daughter to a different class because the time was more convenient for the family, and her daughter thought the new instructor was more fun.

19. The new class was also designated for children ages six (6) through eight (8), however Defendant Ferris' daughter was the only six (6) year old enrolled.

20. After a few weeks, the instructor noticed that Defendant Ferris' daughter was having some difficulty keeping up with the rest of the class.

21. The instructor thought it would be best for the young dancer to move back to her original class, or perhaps even to a class designated for a younger age group, ages four (4) through six (6), where she could have more fun.

22. The instructor discussed her concerns and recommendations with the studio's office manager, who then attempted to discuss the issue with Defendant Ferris.

23. The office manager was met with nothing but outrage from Defendant Ferris.

24. Plaintiff corporation explained to Defendant Ferris that it is not an uncommon practice to move children to different classes and/or groups that may be a better fit based on age and skill level.

25. Defendant Ferris indicated that her daughter was "kicked out" of the class.

26. After the office manager spoke with Defendant Ferris twice, Ms. DiNote herself reached out in an attempt to help better explain the situation and alleviate her concerns.

27. Immediately after her first conversation with Ms. DiNote, Defendant Ferris turned to Facebook and began posting defamatory remarks about the Plaintiff corporation, Ms. DiNote, and the dance class instructor.

28. Ms. DiNote called Defendant Ferris after the post was made, again attempting to resolve the situation amicably.

29. Defendant Ferris's response was to update her Facebook post – only adding more defamatory remarks.

30. Defendant Ferris not only made these posts about Plaintiff, Ms. DiNote, and the instructor; but she also went out of her way to pre-announce that she would be making a “Public Service Announcement.”

31. Defendant Ferris defamed the Plaintiff corporation.

32. Defendant Ferris refused to remove the defamatory post(s), which has now been disseminated to tens if not hundreds of thousands of people via social media – there were comments on her post(s) from users as far away as in the UK.

33. Defendant Ferris was visceral in her attacks on the Plaintiff corporation, which were contained language and allegations that were shocking and disgusting.

34. As just an illustrative example, but by no means an exhaustive list, Defendant Ferris has posted the following about Plaintiff corporation on social media:

- a. The Plaintiff corporation bullies children;
- b. The Plaintiff corporation is closed;
- c. The Plaintiff is corporation bankrupt;

- d. That Plaintiff corporation runs a competitive dance school;
35. In addition to those postings, Defendant Ferris has also:
- a. Threatened to tear the place apart;
  - b. Used the trademark image owned by Plaintiff corporation; and
  - c. Encouraged all readers to write additional negative reviews online about the Plaintiff corporation based just on what Defendant Ferris had posted.

36. In addition to the posts Defendant Ferris has made herself, she has also publicly supported other posts, including those that refer to the dance instructor as a “**monkey**”, and others that promote and encourage violence against the owners, members, and/or employees of Plaintiff corporation, such as “**I would kill someone**”.

37. Defendant Ferris has posted, “oh it is not over”, causing Plaintiff corporation to fear that the smear campaign, including the threats against its owners, members, and/or employees will continue – or worse, become more than threats.

38. The threats made by Defendant Ferris and/or Defendants Jane Does 1 through 10 and/or and their followers on social media have placed the owners, members, and/or employees of Plaintiff corporation in fear of serious bodily injury.

**COUNT ONE**  
**Defamation**

39. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation contained in the preceding and following paragraphs of this Complaint as if repeated here in their respective entireties.

40. The Defendants acted out of a malicious bias against Plaintiff, with the intent to injure Plaintiff.

41. The public statements made by Defendants have no legitimate purpose or basis in reality.

42. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' statements, Plaintiff has been exposed to public hatred, contempt threats, and ridicule.

43. The untrue statements made by Defendants have been a source of great embarrassment and humiliation to Plaintiff.

44. Plaintiff continues to suffer a great wrong and injury on account of the above-mentioned actions of Defendants.

45. The Defendants should be punished by assessment of punitive damages.

46. Because Defendants' conduct in disseminating false and defamatory statements as described above, was undertaken, knowingly, willfully, maliciously, and in conscious disregard for Plaintiffs' rights, Plaintiff is entitled to injunctive relief and an award of compensatory and punitive damages.

**WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff demands a judgment against Defendants for:

A. General damages;

B. Punitive damages;

C. Costs of suit; and

D. Such other and further relief as this court may deem just and proper.

**COUNT TWO**  
**Defamation Per Se**

47. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation contained in the preceding and following paragraphs of this Complaint as if repeated here in their respective entireties.

48. The Defendants' act as outlined above constitute Defamation Per Se.

49. Defendants disseminated the aforementioned statement(s) either:

- a. Negligently in failing to ascertain the truth or falsity of the statement before communicating the statement publicly; or
- b. Knowing that the statement was false; or
- c. Acting in reckless disregard for its truth or falsity.

50. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' actions, Plaintiff has suffered and will continue to suffer embarrassment and humiliation.

51. Because of Defendants' conduct as outlined above was undertaken, knowingly, willfully, maliciously, and in conscious disregard for Plaintiff rights, Plaintiff is entitled to injunctive relief and an award of compensatory and punitive damages.

**WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff demands a judgment against Defendants for:

- A. General damages;
- B. Punitive damages;
- C. Costs of suit; and
- D. Such other and further relief as this court may deem just and proper.

**COUNT THREE**  
**False Light**

52. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation contained in the preceding and following paragraphs of this Complaint as if repeated here in their respective entireties.

53. Defendants' actions as outlined above place Plaintiff in a false light.

54. Defendants' actions as outlined above would be highly offensive to any reasonable person.

55. Defendants' false and defamatory statements were made with knowledge of or with reckless disregard for their falsity and the false light in which Plaintiff has been placed.

56. As a direct and proximate result of the knowing, willful and malicious publication by Defendants of the false and defamatory statements that place Plaintiff in a false light, as described above, Plaintiff has suffered injury and is entitled to injunctive relief and compensatory and punitive damages.

**WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff demands a judgment against Defendant for:

- A. General damages;
- B. Punitive damages;
- C. Costs of suit; and
- D. Such other and further relief as this court may deem just and proper.

**COUNT FOUR**  
**Violations of the Lanham Act**

53. Plaintiff incorporates each and every allegation contained in the preceding and following paragraphs of this Complaint as if repeated here in their respective entirety.

54. The use of the Plaintiff's trademark was malicious.

55. The use of the trademark was not authorized.

56. The use of the trademark in such a negative manner has forever damaged the Plaintiff.

57. Plaintiff requested and gave Defendants an opportunity to remove the posts and the trademark.

58. As a direct and proximate result of the malicious use, Plaintiff has suffered damages including severe mental anguish, attorney fees and costs.

**WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff demands a judgment against Defendants for:

- A. General damages;

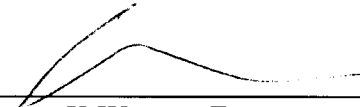


B. Punitive damages;

C. Costs of suit; and

D. Such other and further relief as this court may deem just and proper.

**Dated:** December 13, 2017



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**CERTIFICATION PURSUANT TO RULE 1:38-7(b)**

I hereby certify that confidential personal identifiers have been redacted from all documents now submitted to the Court, and will be redacted from all documents submitted in the future in accordance with Rule 1:38-7(b).

**DESIGNATION OF TRIAL COUNSEL**

Pursuant to R. 4:5-1, Bruce K. Warren, Esquire is designated as trial counsel on behalf of Answering Defendant.

**CERTIFICATION PURSUANT TO R. 4:5-1**

I certify that the matter in controversy is not the subject of any other action or arbitration proceeding, now or contemplated, and that no other parties should be joined to this action pursuant to R. 4:5-1.

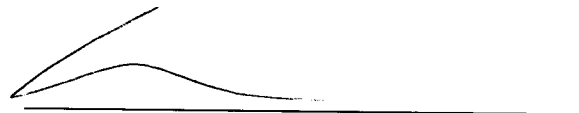
**CERTIFICATION PURSUANT TO RULE 4:6-1**

I hereby certify that the within pleading has been filed and served within the time prescribed by R. 4:6-1.

**JURY DEMAND**

Pursuant to R. 4:35-1, Plaintiffs hereby demand a trial by jury as to all triable issues.

**Dated:** December 13, 2017



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