

Q&A:
Artistic Director
Ib Andersen

Letter From the
Executive Director:
Jami Kozemczak

Education Spotlight:
Class Act

Production Feature:
New Works

TURNING POINTE

Magical Moments

How you create magic
in people's lives.



Eric Hipolito Jr. & Mimi Tompkins in Alejandro Cerrudo's *Second to Last*. Photo by Alexander Izilliaev.



Thank you for being the reason our mission continues to drive great art and create life-changing moments.

Welcome to Ballet Arizona's 2022-2023 season! This time of year always feels so special; our studios are once again filled with company dancers rehearsing and students training, but more so, it is the energy that surrounds each moment and the excitement of starting something new.

In the spirit of celebrating the 'new', this season will introduce audiences to new ballets, new venues, and new leadership. Speaking of the latter, I am thrilled to welcome Jami Kozemczak as your new executive director and I look forward to her sharing her vision for this company with all of you!

I hope you were able to join us for another year of *Ballet Under the Stars*! These performances are proof that magic happens when you combine the beauty of the performing arts and the power of community. Going out to parks around the Valley, we are met with new and returning faces, coming together to enjoy a night filled with dance for free. From our company dancers and the students making their stage debut with Class Act, to the audience, you can feel the joy radiating throughout the parks.

I know this edition of *Turning Pointe* will leave you feeling just as inspired as I am. Thank you for being the reason our mission continues to drive great art and create life-changing moments.

Gratefully,

Ib Andersen, Artistic Director

BEHIND THE SCENES

with Ib Andersen

Q: What can audiences expect from this season?

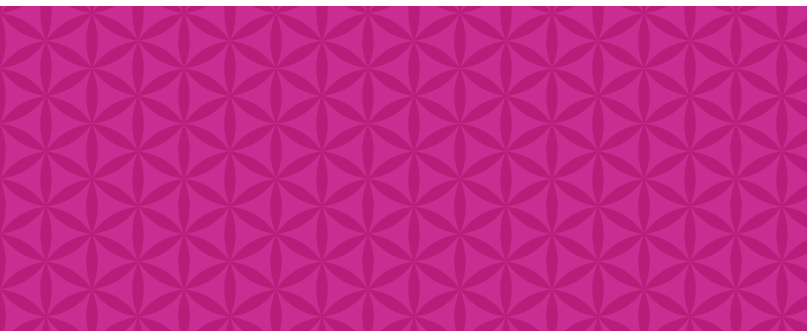
A: This season is going to be full of incredible music combined with a mixture of repertoire that is dynamic and enticing. For classical ballet lovers, we are bringing *Giselle* back after 10 years and at a new venue, Madison Center for the Arts! Audiences will also see the Arizona premiere of two ballets, *Within the Golden Hour* by Christopher Wheeldon and George Balanchine's *Raymonda Variations*. There is something for everyone... I am very biased but people should see it all!

One of the things I am most excited about is my new work for Desert Botanical Garden. I will be choreographing to Igor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps – The Rite of Spring* – and you are the very first to know! This is one of the most challenging pieces you can do musically. I performed this ballet in the seventies and know the music inside an out – it's been in my brain since then and I think this is the right time to do it. The score is so impactful, it actually caused a riot when it premiered in Paris in 1913... people were literally fighting! At the time, what Stravinsky was doing was so radical and I don't think there has ever been such a strong reaction to a piece of music.

Over the summer, I went to the south of France and my first night there, I had a dream that cemented it all. I am envisioning the stage in a very sculptural way, set against the desert landscape, and combined with the intricate lighting by our designer Michael Korsch, this ballet will be just as vibrant as the music itself.

Q: Tell us a little bit about what it's like putting together a season.

A: It's complicated putting a season together, almost like a puzzle, or for me, making an interesting meal, where you have all these different ingredients that need



to be perfectly balanced. For new works, especially, there is always the question of *how does this fit in with everything? Does it make sense?* It's like playing the lottery, there is always the possibility of getting a 'dud' but I think Ballet Arizona has been pretty lucky in that sense. Our odds have been better because we are choosing talented choreographers; however, it doesn't make it any less complicated. Outside of what our audiences are craving and of course, what we are able to do financially, I also have to think about the dancers. They are all young and part of my job is to help them grow and develop.

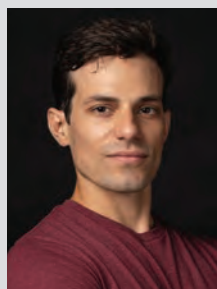
Q: Looking at *Contemporary Moves* specifically, why this mixture of ballets?

A: For Cerrudo's pieces, especially *Second to Last*, there is something special about performing a ballet that was created for your company – like a fingerprint, it's uniquely yours. *Pacopepepluto* set to Dean Martin's music is impossible not to love. It perfectly displays a dancer's artistry and athleticism.

I have had my eye on Christopher Wheeldon's *Within the Golden Hour* since I saw it in San Francisco after the premiere. I think it's one of the best ballets created this century – it's a challenging piece for dancers, so I hope we do it justice. Wheeldon is a big name in the ballet world and I am thrilled we are finally performing one of his works. We are also creating new costumes for it, which will be just as striking as the choreography.

Nayon, Ballet Arizona's newly named resident choreographer, will premiere his latest work *Tierra de Ángeles*. He has proven his talent in the many years he has been choreographing, earning him this role.

All of these ballets will show how demanding it is to be a dancer now. They will also allow the audience to see how this art form continues to evolve... which it must.



Ballet Arizona is excited to announce Nayon Lovino as the company's resident choreographer!

Nayon joined as a company dancer in 2012 and created his first ballet the following year. Since then, he has choreographed nine new works for Ballet Arizona, including the upcoming world-premiere of *Tierra de Ángeles* for *Contemporary Moves*.

"It has been an amazing experience creating new works for this company. I have discovered a whole new facet of ballet which I feel deeply connected to. I'm excited to continue exploring my creativity and would love the opportunity to put together some bigger ballets for the company."

– Nayon Lovino



Class Act

As one of Ballet Arizona's oldest educational programs, Class Act provides children in local schools the opportunity to dance, choreograph, and perform for a live audience.

For three weeks, students from four schools across the Valley, learn from our company dancers and create their own dance using classical ballet technique that culminates in performances for their families and communities on the *Ballet Under the Stars* stage.

The program plays a vital role in the ever-changing landscape of arts education. *Class Act* gives children the opportunity to discover new and creative ways of thinking, connect with their peers, and engage with the world around them through dance and choreography. Students are encouraged to use their imagination in an environment that builds their confidence and cultivates their team building skills.

This year, a combined 100 students from McDowell Mountain Elementary in Fountain Hills, Don Mensendick School in Glendale, Wilson Elementary in Phoenix, and Estrella Mountain Elementary in Goodyear, received firsthand experience at how possibility can become reality, a necessary lesson for our future dreamers, thinkers, and innovators.



We are honored to announce Class Act was fully funded for the first time ever thanks to the generosity of Joan Benjamin & Laurence Cherkis.

Ballet Arizona's official
community engagement
sponsor:



Joan Benjamin & Laurence Cherkis

You are both long-standing supporters of the performing arts. What inspired this commitment?

We relocated to Arizona and wanted to continue our practice of supporting the performing arts. We came to realize Ballet Arizona is an institution of national quality, reputation, and is a cultural treasure that deserves all the support we can provide.

We are impressed by the way in which the ballet has bridged the divide between an exceptional cultural institution and the general community which it serves. Through its several community programs, it

has become part of its broader cultural environment rather than standing apart from it.

Because of you, our Class Act program is fully funded for the first time ever! What sparked your passion for arts education?

We have supported a program that provides musical instruments and instruction to a substantial number of children, starting in grade school and continuing through high school. It is extraordinarily successful, and has been life-changing for many of these kids. Several of them have gone on to further their musical education in higher institutions of learning — something that probably would not have happened without their participation in the program.

We believe that the *Class Act* program can result in similar outcomes. We are not saying it will produce a slate of premier dancers (though you never know!) but it will expose students to cultural experiences and opportunities they probably would not have had otherwise. There is so much upside potential out there — we just need to give it a chance to flourish!

How do you see the role of the arts in our communities?

Every community has its own history and culture, which is represented in part by the art that it produces. The role of the arts in our communities is, among other things, to expose each person to that history and culture in order to provide a sense of participation in the society in which that community functions.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jami Kozemczak

Magical Moments...

There is not a single day that passes without one of us experiencing the magic that stems from our work. If Ballet Arizona is anything, we are certainly in the business of making magic happen – for our audiences, our dancers, our students and our community.

For my first feature article in *Turning Pointe*, it is my pleasure to take this moment to reflect and put pen to paper. You see...this is a *Magical Moment* for me personally...my first opportunity to share some of our stories with you as your new Executive Director. This role is such an esteemed honor and I am in awe of the overwhelming encouragement from all that have supported me along this journey.

I want to share just a few of these magical moments with you...

Today, I watched guided tours for groups of grade school students that were wide-eyed at the grandeur of our dance facility, costume shop, and Dorrance Theatre. Not only did we perform for these students, but they took an introductory ballet class, and we taught them about the many different careers one might achieve in the arts, opening their eyes to a world of new possibility.

The last time we held this *Performance Hour* program, we hosted a sensory friendly performance for residents of The Centers for Habilitation. Individuals with mobility issues were no longer limited by the confines of their wheelchairs; they were participating and taking an adapted ballet class along with everyone else.

We welcomed back the dancers a few weeks ago from their summer break and there was an overwhelming sense of joy hearing music fill our hallways once again. I am immediately drawn back to the memory of our opening night performance of Ib Andersen’s *Juan Gabriel* last May – such exuberant applause and ovation!

But my favorite magical moment came to me as a surprise. I took my mother to see *The Nutcracker* for the very first time, and as I leaned over in the seats to explain the story to her, I saw the same sparkle and magic lighting up the eyes of this woman, 67 years young, in the same way the eyes of an eight-year old sparkle. I will forever cherish that beautiful memory.

When I relive all of these memories, I wonder... what magical moments will this season hold for us? I encourage you to share yours with me, with your friends and with your families. Let’s spread the beauty of ballet even further into our community for all to experience.

Thank you for allowing me to work in this space of gratitude and generosity every day. With each day holds the purpose of inspiring others inherently close.

You are simply magic...

Gratefully,

Jami Kozemczak, Executive Director



Ballet Arizona dancers in Ib Andersen’s *Cinderella*. Photo by Alexander Iziliaev.

THE IMPACT OF NEW WORKS

Since the launch of our New Works Initiative, Ballet Arizona has brought over 25 new ballets to the stage.

From Artistic Director, Ib Andersen's pioneering ballet *Juan Gabriel* and works by world-renowned choreographers like Justin Peck and Christopher Wheeldon, to contemporary pieces by our very own Nayon Iovino, this initiative is not just an investment in the future of ballet, it is an investment in our community.

Ballet is an art form that has spanned centuries and like most art forms, continues to evolve, due to new voices, creative minds, and most importantly, out of necessity. When one hears the word *ballet*, classics like *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Giselle* are often the first to come to mind. While we believe in honoring their evergreen beauty and historical significance, it is imperative that ballet, just like every other art form reflects the current times.

"New works are an effective way to represent a society in a point in time."



Amber Lewis & Helio Lima in Nayon Iovino's *Threads*.
Photo by Alexander Iziliaev.

"When we look back on how ballet has evolved, both in the way it was danced and in the costumes worn, we can get a taste of what life was like and how people thought and felt. It's like a fingerprint in time," says Resident Choreographer, Nayon Iovino. *"It is now our duty to continue this tradition of story telling through dance movements, even in an abstract form. This way, in the future, people may know about us in a deeper sense beyond historical facts. New works also create a foundation for the next generation to continue building upon."*

It is through commissioning new works that Ballet Arizona upholds two critical aspects of our mission, to create and perform innovative ballets and to serve the people of Arizona. Last season's world-premiere of *Juan Gabriel* was the perfect embodiment of our mission come to life on stage. What culminated in night after night of standing ovations and record-breaking ticket sales, was the dedication to understanding what our community wanted and needed from Ballet Arizona. New works, yes, but works that reflect who we are as people and works that push the boundaries for how we see ballet in today's world.

The most crucial part of all this, however, is *you*. We have said this before, visionary support leads to visionary art. In the case of nonprofits and performing arts companies, like Ballet Arizona, it is you, your passion, and your investment that allows art to flourish. You are helping shape the future of ballet, by what we see on stage and by who is in the audience. Thank you for being our reason all of this is possible.



Ballet Arizona dancers in Ib Andersen's *Juan Gabriel*. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.

We would love to hear from you! Please send any comments or suggestions to Annual Fund Manager, Elyse Salisz at esalisz@balletaz.org or call 602.343.6510.

COMPANY CONNECTION



Isabella Seo

Los Angeles, California
Joined Ballet Arizona: 2021

What inspired you to become a dancer?

When I was younger, my mom had me participate in my ballet studio's Nutcracker every year and I gradually began to love performing on stage. The

process of long rehearsal hours and then performing in front of my friends and family is an extremely rewarding and inspiring experience. Realizing this, I knew I wanted to pursue dancing as my life-long career.

This is now your 2nd season in the company! Do you have highlights from last year and things you are looking forward to this season?

Last year's highlight was the first program, *Contemporary Moves*. Since it was my first season with Ballet Arizona, my first professional company, and my first performance, it will always feel special in my heart. As for this season, I am very excited for the entire upcoming repertoire!

Last season, you performed the role of Juliet in *Romeo & Juliet*. Tell us about that experience and what it was like to take on such an iconic role!

Performing Juliet was such a dream! *Romeo & Juliet* is an acting ballet – something I am definitely not experienced in, so it was a learning process. I was very fortunate to have Ib as my guide, to truly make this role come alive on stage, as well as other dancers who have inspired me.

Do you have any other dream roles you want to perform?

Princess Aurora from *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Giselle* – they are just classics! *Le Corsaire* is also one of my favorite ballets ever. I love the story, the choreography, and most importantly, the music.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

Whatever choice you made in the past, you made the best choice that you could, given the circumstances. Instead of living with regret and saying, "that was stupid of me," shift that into "I made the best decision I could have at the time and I grew from it."

Do you have any current obsessions?

I recently re-watched episodes 1-6 of *Star Wars*, which led to me bingeing the *Clone Wars* series.



Isabella Seo & Helio Lima in Ib Andersen's *Romeo & Juliet*. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ARTS



The arts & culture sector contributed
\$10.9 BILLION
to Arizona's economy in 2019.

Audiences alone generated
\$237.2 MILLION
in economic activity for the City of Phoenix

Arizona arts employ more than
90,000 PEOPLE



*State statistical information provided by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis.

A special look at **JUAN GABRIEL:**

- Contributed more than \$1.2 million to Arizona's economy.
- Supported 79 Arizonan jobs from our costume shop to our dancers.
- Welcomed over 1,400 in new households to the ballet.

BALLET ARIZONA 2022–2023 SEASON UPCOMING DONOR EVENTS

September 21 (\$3,500 & Up)

Contemporary Moves Dress Rehearsal Viewing

September 22 – 25 | Orpheum Theatre

Contemporary Moves

September 22 – 25 (All Prima Circle Members) | Orpheum Theatre

Intermission Receptions at *Contemporary Moves*

October 7 (All Prima Circle Members)

Cinderella Studio Spotlight & Reception

October 13 (All Members)

Legacy for Dance Rehearsal & Luncheon

October 19 (\$3,500 & Up)

Cinderella Dress Rehearsal Viewing

October 20 – 23 | Symphony Hall

Cinderella

October 20 – 23 (All Prima Circle Members) | Symphony Hall

Intermission Receptions at *Cinderella* (except Sunday evening)

November 10 (All Prima Circle Members)

Prima Circle Rehearsal & Luncheon

November 15 (\$500 & Up)

Corps de Ballet Rehearsal Viewing & Breakfast

December 9 – 24 | Symphony Hall

The Nutcracker

January 19 (\$2,500 & Up)

Company Class Viewing

January 27 (All Prima Circle Members)

Prima Circle Evening & *Giselle* Studio Spotlight

BALLET
ARIZONA

IB ANDERSEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

2835 E. Washington St.

Phoenix, AZ 85034

Non-Profit Org

US Postage

PAID

Phoenix, AZ

Permit No. 1858

Ballet Arizona presents

CINDERELLA

October 20 – 23, 2022

with *The Phoenix Symphony*

at *Symphony Hall*

This beloved fairy tale steps on to The Symphony Hall stage this October with brilliant choreography, unforgettable characters, and a wonderful dose of humor! See this romantic story come to life alongside Prokofiev's iconic score, played by The Phoenix Symphony.

Tickets:

balletaz.org | 602.381.1096

Ballet Arizona dancers Jillian Barrell and Nayon Iovino in *Cinderella*. Photo by Alexander Iziliaev.

Opening Night Series Sponsor



F. Francis &
Dionne Najafi

