

Donor Spotlight:  
*Gwen Hillis*

Foundation Spotlight:  
*Virginia G. Piper  
Charitable Trust*

Letter From the  
Executive Director:  
*Samantha Turner*

Q&A:  
Artistic Director  
*Ib Andersen*

# TURNING POINTE

*A performance  
can change a life.*

As donors, you've helped  
change more than a million  
lives with your support.

Ballet Arizona dancer Ricardo Santos. Photo by Tim Fuller.

WINTER 2020



**Thank you for your continued support and for being a part of our story.**

Cheers to 2020! I am excited to begin this new year with the Shakespearean classic, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It has been a decade since our company last performed this ballet and I can't wait to welcome it back onto the Arizona stage with a fresh, new perspective for all of you to enjoy.

I want to extend a special thank you to our Board of Directors, without whom, the incredible new costumes designed by Fabio Toblini for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, would not be possible. These costumes are all works of art in and of themselves and I am honored our company can continue to share this beautiful, hand-crafted artistry with our audiences.

In this issue, Executive Director Samantha Turner contemplates Ballet Arizona's last 20 years and everyone who has made this company possible, and frankly what it is today. For myself, looking back on these past 20 years as Artistic Director, I am reminded how much we have accomplished together. From bringing world-class choreographers and works to the Valley, to performing at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., and of course seeing my own works being brought to life, it has been quite the journey and I look forward to what's yet to come.

The School of Ballet Arizona faculty member, Kay Price, shares her insights on our incredible Adaptive Dance for Down Syndrome program that has helped transform Valley students' relationships with the performing arts. Each semester, every school year, we are honored to create a safe and interactive environment where the beauty of ballet comes to life for our students and their families.

From myself and all of us here at Ballet Arizona, thank you for your continued support and for being a part of our story. I hope you enjoy this issue of *Turning Pointe!*

Gratefully,

Ib Andersen, Artistic Director

## BEHIND THE SCENES

**with Ib Andersen**

**Q: Tell us all about this new production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We want to learn more about how this came to life.**

**A:** Well, we have never undertaken a project this massive in our own shops before, of which something I am very proud! To witness what we are able to do and build here is beyond anything I ever thought possible. We learned so much when we produced *The Firebird* premiere, and what we were capable of doing. We have not had to outsource any of it to New York or LA which is extraordinary. I must say I am humbled by the generosity of our board members who all made contributions to help fund the creation of the new costumes. They made this happen. I am also working with our production team on the set builds and designs, and to say we are able to create all of this within our very own walls is a 'dream' unto itself.

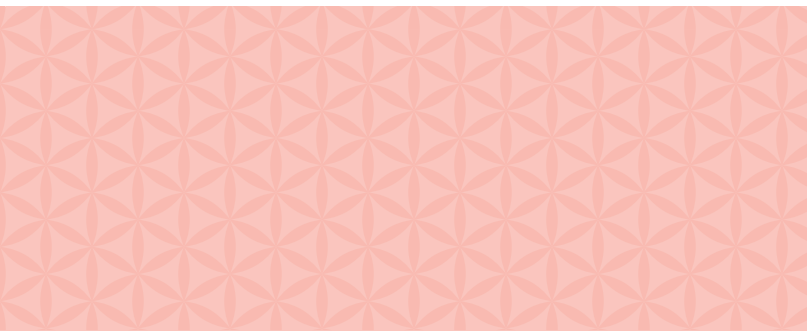
**Q: What inspired your costume design?**

**A:** I had an idea of what time period I wanted and have been working very collaboratively with costume designer Fabio Toblini on my vision for the design. I was inspired by a Venetian painter named Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770). His color palette is what inspired me. He is an amazing painter — such light. I believe his work is considered Rococo style. Is it Baroque or is it Rococo? That is the question. The ballet is not set during that same time period though — it is much more all over the place. We have been building about 85 costumes from scratch and started early last summer. At this point we are five weeks out. We are about halfway there, but the clock is definitely ticking.

**Q: The scenic elements?**

**A:** We have just started to receive drawings from Michael Korsch, our resident lighting designer and also the set designer for *Midsummer*. What we see so far in the design is an archway with layers of curtains that are covered with hanging Spanish moss. This provides a very translucent effect. The moss is hanging all over in such a way you can project on it from the front, the back, and from above. This will create a very textured look.





Some of the projections come from behind and many of the projections come from within the house. This means that the design becomes more 3-dimensional in nature and can create environments that could look like a palace, a ballroom, or even a forest. It gives more depth and texture. The lighting and projection provide a 3-dimensional scenic element that is different from the flat 2-dimensional scenery you usually see. That is the great benefit of embracing technology for these new productions.

And... I must warn everyone, the pink clam shell that Titania is found asleep in is actually changing. Our technical director is building something new and it will be a surprise!

### Q: How is the play different from the ballet?

**A:** I have not read the play in quite some time actually, since I premiered it originally in 2008. But I do remember that when I was in the studios choreographing this originally, I was practically holding the play in one hand while choreographing with the other. It is definitely following the story pretty straight. We haven't done this in over ten years, so I am sure we are going to change some things. I remember it being very straight forward, but not necessarily easy. I am staying very literal to the play for this. But of course, it is always up to the spectator to interpret what is reality and what is the fairy tale world, or rather, are they both one and the same?

There are a few famous *Midsummers* out there. One by Ashton that is just a one act, and then there is Balanchine's version. I actually performed Oberon in Balanchine's version. I was inspired by the forcefulness of his character and his performance. There are a few differences in my version. For instance, in Act II, the play of Pyramus and Thisbe is actually performed in the celebration. In Balanchine's version, it is not performed.

With Mendelssohn's *Midsummer*, he originally composed the famous overture but the eventual other pieces he created were incidental music. It would never stand alone as a full length ballet, so I had to find music from many different places and piece it together in a cohesive way. That took a long time and was a challenge to compile and arrange so it made musical sense. I am using the first movement from a very famous symphony which leads right into the wedding march, then it goes into the play – one famous piece of music after another.

I am very curious and excited to see how this all comes together. What we produced 10 years ago might be completely different because we have an entirely new company of dancers. Sometimes you have to adapt, compromise, and/or change your vision.



Ballet Arizona dancers Ricardo Santos and Jillian Barrell. Photo by Tim Fuller.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Fun Facts about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

- This production has been completely reconceived by Artistic Director, Ib Andersen, and will use a mix of traditional ballet scenery known as "wing and drop" alongside new technology that will feature creations by Michael Korsch, our resident lighting designer.
- Titania's "throne" is getting a revamp...but we're not giving anything away until the curtain goes up! What we will tell you is it took one week to build by our production crew using metal and plywood that they were able to bend and manipulate to create the shape.
- Over 1,000 hours of work have gone into creating this production, from the costume shop starting construction in June 2019, to the weeks spent researching and creating sets, and of course to the many days spent rehearsing.



## Donor Spotlight

Gwen Hillis

**You are such a longstanding supporter of the arts in Arizona and Board Chair Emerita. What inspired such generosity, passion and commitment to ensuring that Ballet Arizona thrives and grows?**

The dancers have been my biggest inspiration over the past 20+ years that I have been involved with Ballet Arizona. Their incredible talent, passion and dedication to their art has inspired and challenged me to do whatever I could to support them.

### Why do you give?

The arts are a pillar in a vibrant community. It has taken almost 40 years to build Ballet Arizona to the outstanding dance company it is today. It wouldn't have been possible without the support of generous donors, foundations and our local government. I feel we have a responsibility to protect their investment and build on what they have contributed to ensure Ballet Arizona's future.

### What ballets, classic or contemporary works, have inspired you the most?

I don't think any work of art could have an impact on me like *Topia*. It is such a unique and breathtaking experience. The power and elegance of both the dancers and the music in the desert setting at sunset, literally takes your breath away. I love how *Topia* amazes and touches everyone who sees it. It has a universal appeal that few ballets can match.

### What are you most looking forward to next season?

I love Twyla Tharp's *Sinatra Suite*. I love musicals and I love ballet and this combines the two for me. Our dancers bring just the right touch of grace and theatre to their performance and it is such fun. I plan to see it more than once and as a Prima Circle member I will probably take advantage of seeing it in rehearsal too.

### You and Ib Andersen are being honored at the next Dance With Me Gala ...

It is very special to be honored with Ib. I was the Board Chair 20 year ago when we hired Ib and few people know better than I the miracles he has performed.

Before Ib, we could almost sell patrons a season row not just a season ticket in the little Herberger Theatre. This year, *The Nutcracker* broke a record with a sold out performance at Symphony Hall! Ib has also hired a wonderful team that helps create the magic on stage including; Leonor Texidor, who is responsible for the fabulous costumes, Director of Production, Michael Panvini, and of course Maria Simonetti (the glue) who now leads The School of Ballet Arizona.

I think our gala is the most fun event of its kind in town. It really is a party, not a fundraiser with the torture of paddle raising and a live auction. The involvement of the dancers really makes it unique and fun. You might have a fascinating dinner partner from Cuba or if you've ever dreamed of dancing with a star, this is your night. Our dancers are the best sports and will dance all night with guests.

### Any other comments?

It was so much fun to see Nayon Iovino's *Mambaz* ... WOW! The combination of the jazz band on stage and the dancers' performance rocked the Orpheum Theatre.

## Sneak Peek

# A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM COSTUMES

Designs by Fabio Toblini

A total of 85 costumes have been made from scratch by Ballet Arizona's costume shop under the direction of Leonor Texidor. Designed by Fabio Toblini, the line-up of costumes includes a gradient of 14 women fairies, 14 children fairies, and two of each leading character, which makes for 18 costumes alone!





## Foundation Spotlight

### Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust

Ballet Arizona is honored and thrilled to be selected to participate in Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust's two-year program called AGILE. Launched in 2017, AGILE is a Trust-initiated capacity building program designed to strengthen and reinforce the operations of arts and culture grantee organizations with operating budgets of at least \$1 million. The goals of AGILE's capacity building are to increase the operational skills of the participants and the overall strengths of each organization and additionally, to examine and improve the habits and practices which inform current decision-making. Ballet Arizona is proud to be among one of four organizations participating in the second cohort of AGILE alongside the Herberger Theater Center, the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, and ASU Art Museum.

The AGILE program is unique as it couples organization-specific capacity building with a significant financial investment. This approach helps build the organization's operating capacity and strengthen their artistic vision. Over the next two years, Ballet Arizona will work one-on-one with a nonprofit lifecycles expert, complete a comprehensive Lifecycles Self Assessment\*, and develop a business plan to address the issues identified.

*"An invitation to participate in AGILE is a vote of confidence in Ballet Arizona and recognition of its artistic excellence and benefit to our community.*

*AGILE aims to build the Ballet's financial resilience by supporting the vision of its world-class artistic director, the health and future of its dancers, and the development of professional staff—all of whom devote themselves to Ballet Arizona and its audience of almost 90,000 people a year. It is Piper Trust's privilege to collaborate with the Ballet in this effort."*

– Ellen Solowey, Senior Program Officer

*\*To learn more about nonprofit lifecycles please reference the book *Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-Based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity* authored by Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens.*

Over the course of two years, Ballet Arizona will be awarded two grants from Piper Trust totaling up to \$500,000. These investments will support areas the Ballet needs to strengthen such as its financial accounting systems, marketing/fundraising efforts, or donor management, for example.

"We are so grateful and proud to be selected for participation in AGILE," said Samantha Turner, Executive Director. "This opportunity could not come at a better time for Ballet Arizona, as we feel our organization is on the verge of something transformational. We have been trying to maintain healthy operating budgets over the past five years while continuing to produce interesting and relevant art for our community. To have a local foundation recognize the challenges that arts organizations face today is a tremendous gift. We will undoubtedly benefit from Piper Trust's strategic investment in the financial health of our organization and strive to become more resilient and capitalized. It has been a lot of work for our board, staff, and Piper Trust to take a deep look into our business model operations, financials, and systems to assess where we are to determine how far we can go."



# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Samantha Turner**



In celebration of Ib Andersen's 20th anniversary season, I'd like to take this opportunity to look back at the many achievements Ballet Arizona has realized thanks to the tremendous support we've received from our community, our champions — *our family*.

Over the past 20 years, Ballet Arizona has grown and accomplished so much that I wonder if anyone could truly understand what they were helping to create. In that time, Ballet Arizona's artistry has become nationally recognized, on par with the largest ballet companies in the country. We've been able to give more than 100,000 people the gift of live performance through the Community Angel Night program. We've produced more than 100 free Ballet Under the Stars community performances for nearly 300,000 Valley residents. And through the School of Ballet Arizona, more than 10,000 students have had their lives changed through the time-honored tradition of classical ballet training.

Ballet Arizona has a philosophy that a performance can change a life. As donors, you've helped change more than a million lives with your support.

Do you wonder what outcomes your support today will create over the next 20 years? What innovative new works could premiere at Symphony Hall? How many more people we might reach through our Education & Community Engagement programming? How classical ballet will evolve over the next two decades? What impact will your gifts create that we cannot even fathom today?

It's incredibly exciting to think about what the future might bring and where we can go from here. Thank you for providing the support that makes today and tomorrow possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samantha Turner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Samantha Turner, Executive Director

## THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF DANCE

At The School of Ballet Arizona (SBAZ), our instructors aim to create an atmosphere where every student is appropriately challenged, engaged, and supported as they learn the classical ballet art form. We recognize the importance of educating the whole child, and for children of all ages and abilities, dance is a wonderful way to educate their whole being, broaden their minds, and engage their spirits.

Instructor Kay Price couldn't agree more. She leads our Adaptive Dance Program, which helps students with neurodiversities learn classical ballet. Though her students face all kinds of unique and varied challenges, Ms. Price's philosophy is to meet students where they are and create an environment that allows them to learn from each other as well as from the teacher and classroom mentors. She says, "For students with neurodiversities, it is very important to create an environment that allows for safe exploration and interaction at each individual's pace. In our Adaptive program, it is an essential goal to provide avenues of opportunity for such growth."



As is true for every class at SBAZ, the Adaptive program naturally and strategically cultivates students' abilities through thoughtfully designed technique progressions. Ms. Price comes prepared with lesson plans based on

observations from previous classes but always has options to venture off should the class move in a different direction. "The students reveal over time what they are ready for" she says.

The students that participate in the Adaptive program are able to experience not only the tradition of learning technique in the studio, but also the magic that occurs backstage at a performance. Ms. Price recalls during a recent performance opportunity with SBAZ, one of her students found a hidden talent. "A student who has been in the program for 5 years, recently discovered an interest in costuming. After being fitted in Ballet Arizona's costume shop, they became intensely interested in how the costumes were constructed and how they were fitted and modified for each dancer who will be using it. As a result, this student ended up dressing their fellow classmates for the rest of the dress rehearsals and performances. It's moments like these, where students can uncover and identify hidden gifts and abilities that reinforce my belief in the transformative power of dance."

[Visit \*balletaz.org/school\* to learn more.](https://www.balletaz.org/school)



# COMPANY CONNECTION *Meet dancers Colleen & Serafín*



## **Colleen Buckley**

Hometown: Rochester, New York  
Joined Ballet Arizona: 2017

### **What inspired you to become a dancer?**

I don't really remember a time when I wasn't dancing! According to my mom, I started asking if I could take dance classes when I was two years old. She told me I had to wait until I was four and hoped that I would forget, but then I started asking if I was four yet. I started out in tap dance class and as I got older, I got to do

jazz and ballet. After dancing in a kid's version of *The Nutcracker* at my local community center, ballet became my favorite style of dance and I changed dance studios so I could study ballet more seriously. My new studio was connected to a professional ballet company, the Rochester City Ballet, and after seeing the professional dancers, I knew I wanted to dance professionally too!

### **What has been your favorite role to dance & why?**

Usually whatever roles I am rehearsing at the moment become my favorites! One role that felt extra special to me this season was dancing the "Ballabile" section of *Napoli*. The first act starts with a scene of a busy afternoon by the harbor, so there was a lot of time to explore the stage, interact with the other dancers, and live as the character without doing specific choreography. Every show was different and new! Ib explained that the "Ballabile" was meant to celebrate the joy of life. Dancing with all the other company dancers and the beautiful music made it easy to express that. As a bonus, the dance was all jumps – my favorite step!



## **Serafín Castro**

Hometown: Villa Clara, Cuba  
Joined Ballet Arizona: 2018

### **What inspired you to become a dancer?**

My biggest influence is my family, especially my sister. She is a former ballet dancer, and I remember when I was a little boy, she inspired me a lot. Later at school in Cuba, I learned that becoming the best ballet dancer in my country meant an opportunity to travel and dance throughout the world.

### **What is your favorite ballet?**

Definitely *Giselle* if we are talking about classical ballet. It is such a tradition in Cuba thanks to my ex-director Alicia Alonso. I love the romanticism and style of *Giselle*; especially the precision and elegance

### **What's in your dance bag?**

I probably have a lot of things I don't really need, but I like to be prepared! I have tan ballet flats, pink ballet flats, at least three pairs of pointe shoes, toe pads, back-up toe pads, 3 pairs of scissors in case someone needs to borrow them, toe tape, band-aids, KT tape, tiger balm, exercise bands, snacks, a water bottle, extra skirts, a notebook, too many markers and pens, and a sewing kit. I also always have my copy of Gail Grant's *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet*. One of my college professors would quiz us on obscure ballet terms she knew we wouldn't know and then tell us to "look them up" in the Gail Grant Manual, so I got in the habit of keeping the book nearby.

### **Do you have a pre-performance ritual?**

My preference for performance days is to be ready extra early because you never know what can happen! I like to get to the theater about an hour before warm-up class to do my hair and makeup and get ready for the day. During class, I like to test out the pointe shoes I am planning to wear for the performance. After class, I go back to the dressing room to get my costume on and touch up my hair and makeup. I like to go backstage ten to fifteen minutes early so I can put rosin on my shoes, review the choreography and corrections, and say a prayer for the performance.

### **What do you do outside of dance?**

Outside of ballet, I like to explore Arizona, go hiking, read books, and spend time with friends and my fiancé!

from the corps de ballet in Act II. On the other hand, I have to say *Bella Figura* by Jirí Kylián. I'm a huge fan of neoclassical ballets and that piece is so strong. Every single line matches perfectly with the music.

### **Do you prefer modern or classical ballet?**

I have to say both. I love classical because it's so refined and exquisite. But, I also love modern because it gives you freedom to move and imprint your own expressions and feelings.

### **What do you do outside of dance?**

It's hard to disconnect, I'm always working out so I can keep-up my technique. However, I have to say that I love to cook. I actually have a great reputation among my friends and family. They love my food. I would love to open a restaurant one day.

BALLET ARIZONA 2019–2020 SEASON  
UPCOMING DONOR EVENTS

**February 12** (\$3,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall  
Dress Rehearsal Viewing of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

**February 13 – 16** (All Prima Circle Members) | Symphony Hall  
Intermission Receptions at *A Midsummer Night's Dream*  
(except Sunday evening)

**February 13 – 16** (\$5,000 & Up)  
Backstage Tour at *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

**February 29** (All) | Ballet Arizona  
Artist Relief Fund Performance & Reception

**March 3** (\$500 & Up)  
Corps de Ballet Rehearsal Viewing & Breakfast

**March 5** (All Prima Circle Members)  
Studio Rehearsal Viewing & Luncheon

**April 3 – 5** (All) | Ballet Arizona  
The School of Ballet Arizona's *Coppélia*

**April 18** (All) | The Camelback Inn  
Dance With Me – A Ballet Arizona Gala

**BALLET**  
ARIZONA

IB ANDERSEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

2835 E. Washington St.  
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Non-Profit Org  
US Postage  
PAID  
Phoenix, AZ  
Permit No. 1858

DANCE WITH ME | GALA



SATURDAY, APRIL 18TH  
**2020**

BALLET ARIZONA'S ANNUAL GALA RETURNS WITH A NEW THEME THAT CELEBRATES ITS **PAST**, WHILE LOOKING TOWARD ITS **FUTURE**.

**Camelback Inn**

**Honorees:** Gwen Hillis & Ib Andersen

**Co-Chairs:** Miranda Lumer, Molly Greene and Salvador A. Bretts

**Attire:** Black Tie

For additional information, contact Natalie Salvione, Development Operations Manager, at [nsalvione@balletaz.org](mailto:nsalvione@balletaz.org) or **602.343.6522**.