

Q&A:
Artistic Director
Ib Andersen

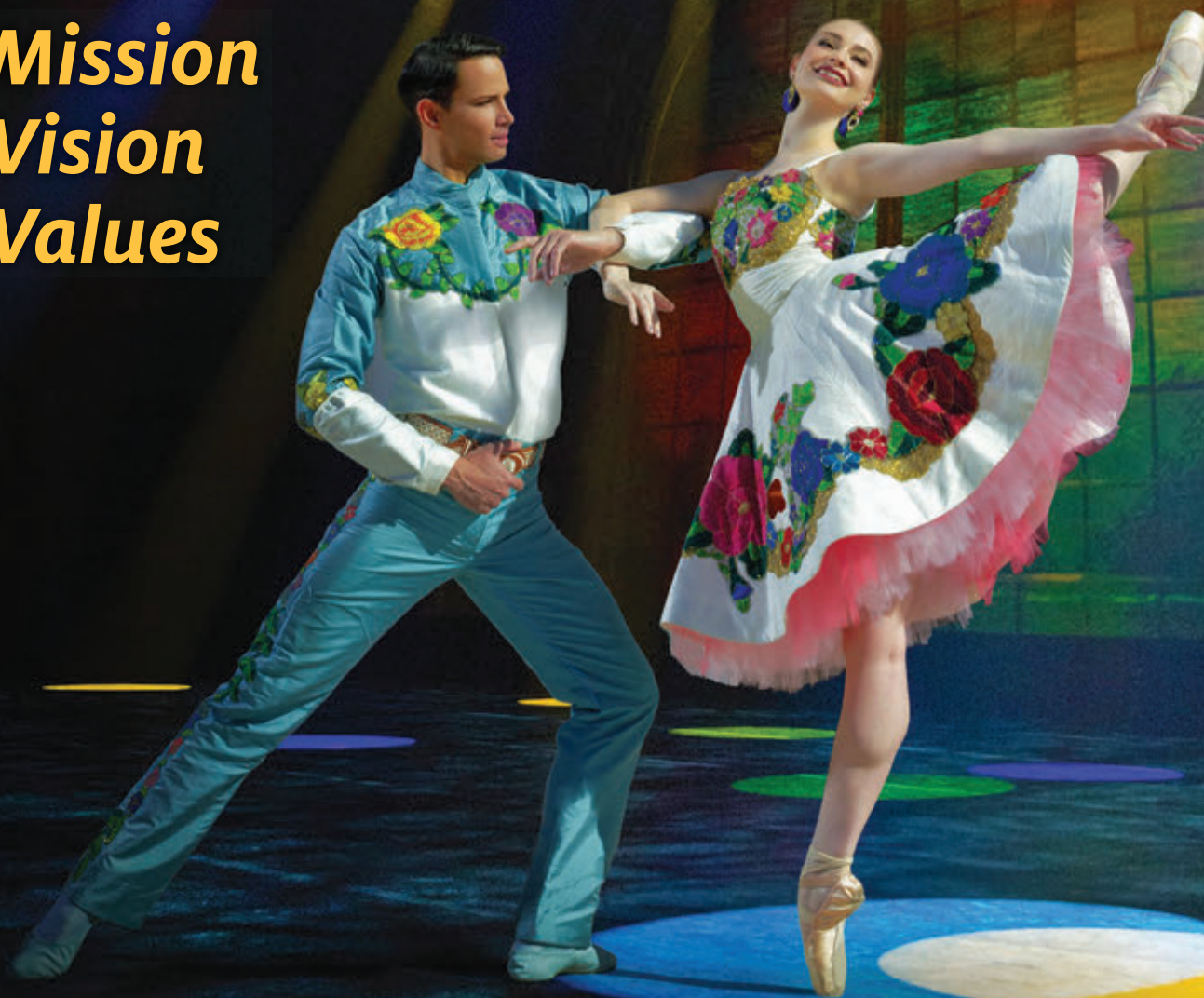
**Letter From the
Executive Director:**
Jami Kozemczak

SBAZ Spotlight:
Studio Company

Production Feature:
Costume Creation

TURNING POINTE

Mission
Vision
Values



Ballet Arizona dancers Randy Pacheco and Tiffany Chatfield. Photos by Rosalie O'Connor and Michael Higgins.



Thank you for your support which has allowed me to grow as an artist.

Welcome to Ballet Arizona's 2023-2024 season! This year will be one of celebration and gratitude, as I look back on my 24 years of serving as your artistic director.

I recently sat down to document everything I have done, what I staged, what I choreographed... I was astounded! It was incredible seeing how much it grew each year. Part of my need to choreograph was one of financial necessity for the ballet, as we went through many tough times. But truthfully, I had a greater desire to create my own works because I needed to challenge myself and challenge the company. I am proud to have done that throughout my tenure.

We have taken on classical ballet giants, meant for companies twice our size, and built stages in the desert, creating an entire spectacle unique to Arizona. I joke that I am shocked to still be alive because I poured every part of myself into this work and into this company. Knowing that I started from scratch and to see what we have built on stage and quite literally with our building on Washington, fills me with pride.

With each edition of *Turning Pointe*, it is our opportunity to show you the impact of your support on Ballet Arizona. In that same light, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the impact you have made on my life. Thank you for your support which has allowed me to grow as an artist. I hope to see you at the theater this season.

Gratefully,

Ib Andersen, Artistic Director

BEHIND THE SCENES *with Ib Andersen*

Q: Let's talk about *Juan Gabriel*!

A: Juan Gabriel, the man, was incredibly special. He was an artist in every sense of the word, however that alone is not enough to make someone into who he became to people... an icon. Today, that word is used so often, it has almost lost its meaning but there is no doubt Juan Gabriel was and remains an icon in the truest sense.

For me, the journey of creating this ballet started in 2016 after reading his obituary in *The New York Times*. I was fascinated by this person, who had hundreds of thousands of people mourning their loss, and in such a personal way. For an artist to have that kind of access into people's hearts is rare and I have been reminded of that with every step in this process.

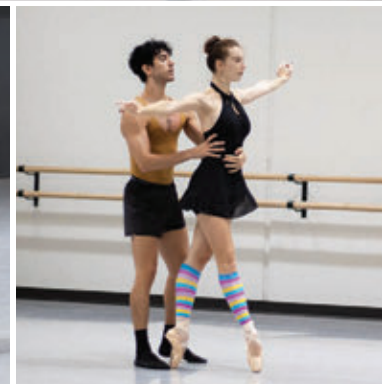
The world-premiere of *Juan Gabriel* in 2022 was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The way the audience engaged, singing and dancing along to music, I have never experienced that with ballet. Ever. It was like a rock concert! The energy coming from the audience was extraordinary and radiated throughout the theatre.

As a dancer, especially, you are so sensitive to how an audience is interacting with you on stage. It can make or break a performance. With *Juan Gabriel*, the audience and dancers were bouncing off each other in a way that I cannot put it into words – you have to come and experience it yourself!



In Rehearsal

JUAN GABRIEL



Ballet Arizona dancers and Artistic Director, Ib Andersen in rehearsal for *Juan Gabriel*.

Q: What is it like revisiting this ballet?

A: It is better than I thought! For ballet, everything is better the second time. There is a clarity that was not, and honestly could not, be there the first time. When you are creating a ballet from nothing, you are just seeing all your ideas thrown together at once. Everything is new – the choreography, the costumes, the lighting – you do not know if your idea will translate well on stage. Yes, you spend months rehearsing, but transitioning from the studio to the stage is an experience all on its own.

This time around, I have the entire picture in my mind. For the dancers, even though some are new, many of them have performed this before, so they are already starting from a different point of view. We can go further and I can push them more in these rehearsals. It has a different feeling but in the best way because we are beyond that surface level.

Some of the choreography has changed here and there, I will probably do more – you never know! Some dancers, who were in prominent roles are currently out, which has naturally changed things. Situations like this are exciting because I get to try something new and give dancers new opportunities.

As artistic director, it is my job to promote and cultivate new talent and it is the part of my job that I have always loved most. Using talent that is really green and turning it into something extraordinary is one of the things I do best. It is such a fascinating process – sometimes it works, sometimes it does not, but... wow, when it works, it is something special.



In 2014, The School of Ballet Arizona (SBAZ) established its very own Studio Company. For those outside of the ballet world, think of it like an internship program. Built for students at the pinnacle of their training, Studio Company provides those who have the potential and desire to become professional dancers, the space to polish their technique and artistry while gaining professional exposure.

Under the direction of Maria Simonetti, and led by Studio Company Manager, Alecia Good-Boresow, dancers are selected by invitation and audition only. This unique and rigorous track features a curated curriculum, experience with community engagement programs, and performance opportunities with SBAZ and Ballet Arizona throughout the season.



This year's Studio Company is our largest yet, consisting of 21 young, aspiring dancers from all over the world, including SBAZ graduates – a key highlight to the program's overall purpose.

For SBAZ, the connection to a nationally acclaimed, professional company



inherently sets us apart from schools across the Valley. It also creates a direct channel for students to develop into the professional company, as can be seen with 13 of our current professional dancers.

"My goal, whether they stay here and join the company, or go elsewhere, is that they will be ready," says Alecia. Her vision for Studio Company is that

each individual feels like they belong and that their presence at Ballet Arizona is visible; giving them guidance, structure, and direction.

New this year, Studio Company dancers will have their own dedicated performance, highlighting both classical and contemporary repertoire, including new works by SBAZ artistic staff and outside choreographers. Experiences like this are invaluable to these dancers' development and provide a nurturing environment for them to grow as artists, all of which continue to strengthen this organization.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jami Kozemczak

Unveiling...

For the first time in more than a decade, Ballet Arizona underwent a rigorous process to examine and evaluate our current mission, vision, and values. This work began last season, touching every employee and board member in the organization, and involved countless conversations with stakeholders and supporters like you. Together we reflected on who we are, where we have been, and our shared goals for the future.

OUR MISSION:

To ignite the human spirit through the magic of dance.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE:

Ballet for everyone.

Just three little words that encompass infinitely more...

Ballet Arizona is a leading force in the performing arts world. We aspire to become a household name in our community, break down barriers, ignite imaginations, and inspire a lifelong love of dance.

Our goal is to make ballet accessible to everyone through education and programming that resonates with Arizona audiences. We hold a deep commitment to our roots, honoring classical ballet while expanding the art form with contemporary works. We will grow the professional company to more than 40 dancers, expand our school to satellite campuses, steward the collaborative partnerships that have led to our success, and foster new relationships that will add to our growth.

Our vision includes social enterprise programs such as artist housing initiatives and nurturing artistic incubators through a choreographic institute. When we say ballet for everyone, we mean to anticipate the needs of our patrons and people and be there to meet them when they arrive.

OUR CORE VALUES:

Tenacity: We make ART HAPPEN. No matter what obstacle we face, no matter how daunting the task, we bring the beauty of ballet to our community and we do that very well.

Integrity: We lead by example and hold ourselves to the highest standards of excellence.

Creativity: We are innovative, visionary, and forward thinking.

Belonging: We cultivate a space in which individuals are met with kindness and respect.

Gratitude: We are grateful for each other, and those individuals touched by our mission.

Nurture People: We develop and grow the talent in our organization from dancers to administrators, and everyone in between.

We are confident this work will enable us to create a lasting and positive impact for our community and beyond. We invite you to join us on this path forward and thank you for your unwavering commitment to Ballet Arizona that has brought us to this point.

I am proud of our final product and even prouder of this journey. I would like to quote a person very dear to me, the champion of our strategic planning work, and the one who guided me through the initial phases. She said, "trust the process, Jami," and I have called upon her words often. I dedicate this issue of *Turning Pointe* in loving memory of Joan Schwing...

Gratefully,

Jami Kozemczak, Executive Director





BEHIND THE SEAMS

As a performing arts company, we are in the business of telling stories. Every element, from choreography and music, to sets and lighting, thoughtfully woven together to create a masterpiece. For dance especially, one of the key elements of that storytelling is costumes.

Costumes, however, are one of the most expensive and time-consuming aspects of a production. When it comes to full-length ballets, like *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, it is very rare for companies, including Ballet Arizona, to own their own sets and costumes, and instead, opt to rent from other companies around the world.

Throughout the past decade, as Ballet Arizona has grown, in both location and repertoire, costumes have provided a path for investment and furthering our artistic goals. With an in-house costume shop of our size and caliber, we can create costumes from scratch for short new works and reimagined storybook ballets.

The long-term investment strategy will reduce rental costs while adding to our costume inventory. This will provide Ballet Arizona with opportunities to generate revenue in future years through rentals to other companies.

Since 2019, Ballet Arizona has remastered three full-length ballets with anywhere from 48 to 85 new, handmade costumes. Here is a look at the costs of each of those builds:

***Juan Gabriel* | 2022**
70-80 costumes

Total Costume Cost: **\$192,037**

***A Midsummer Night's Dream* | 2020**
85 costumes

Total Costume Cost: **\$201,240**

***The Firebird* | 2019**
48 costumes

Total Costume Cost: **\$172,127**

**Total costume construction cost includes costume designer, designer travel, materials, labor, outside vendors, etc.*

We would love to hear from you! Please send any comments or suggestions to Associate Director of Philanthropy, Elyse Salisz at esalisz@balletaz.org or call **602.343.6510**.

COMPANY CONNECTION



Gabriel Wright

Dallas, Oregon

Joined Ballet Arizona: 2021

What inspired you to become a dancer?

Initially dancing was not a choice – my mom decided to put me in a ballet class.

Eventually, though, I fell in love with moving and the chase of perfection in ballet.

What has been your favorite role to dance?

Of my career so far, performing Albrecht in *Giselle* has been my favorite role. It was a great challenge and joy to find and portray so many different emotions in one ballet.

Do you have a dream role you want to perform one day?

I think a dream role for me right now would be Oberon in George Balanchine's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

How has it been for you to work with Ib?

Since joining Ballet Arizona, I have had the honor to work very closely with Ib on many occasions. The way he stops to break down every step, and the way he pushes me to find an intention or feeling behind every step, has been such an incredible challenge. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in rehearsals with him and look forward to the rest of the season.



Rachel Gehr, Gabriel Wright, and Natalie Ramirez in George Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*. © The Balanchine Trust. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.



BALLET ARIZONA 2023-2024 SEASON UPCOMING DONOR EVENTS

October 25 (\$3,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Juan Gabriel Dress Rehearsal Viewing

October 26-29 | Symphony Hall
Juan Gabriel

October 26-29 (All Prima Circle Members) | Symphony Hall
Pre-Performance Receptions at *Juan Gabriel*
(except Thursday & Sunday Evening)

October 27-29 (\$3,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Backstage Tour at *Juan Gabriel*

November 4 | Dorrance Theatre
10th Annual Artist Relief Fund: Dancer's Choice

December 8-24 | Symphony Hall
The Nutcracker

January 11 (\$2,500 & Up)
Legacy for Dance Rehearsal & Luncheon

January 19 (\$2,500 & Up)
Company Class Viewing

February 2 (All Prima Circle Members)
Prima Circle Evening & *Moving Movies* Studio Spotlight

BALLET
ARIZONA

IB ANDERSEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Transport yourself to old Hollywood in this cinematic **world premiere** by Resident Choreographer, Naylor Lovino. Featuring powerful music and stunning visuals, join Ballet Arizona for an unforgettable experience that will delight and entertain your senses!

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