

**Q&A:**  
*Artistic Director*  
Ib Andersen

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

**Production Feature:**  
*Behind-the-Scenes of  
Moving Movies*

**Community Spotlight:**  
*Arts & Culture Economic  
Impact*

# TURNING POINTE

*A Milestone in Creative  
Excellence*



Ballet Arizona dancers Luis Olivera and Alli Chester. Photo by Michael Higgins.



## Thank you for making Ballet Arizona a treasured part of our community.

A new year, means new ballets and the start of 2024 is going to be a defining moment for Ballet Arizona.

We are excited to take audiences on a cinematic journey and give you a sneak peek at the world premiere of Resident Choreographer, Nayon Iovino's *Moving Movies*. Featuring some of Hollywood's most celebrated music scores, this new story ballet will be unlike anything ever performed on the main stage.

This production represents so many of the things we have worked towards as a company throughout the years. It exemplifies our commitment to creating new works, developing our artists, cultivating new audiences, and pushing the boundaries of what ballet is as an art form.

Every day, Ballet Arizona touches someone's life in some way. I recognize this is a big statement, but it has always proven itself to be true. Our mission, **to ignite the human spirit through the magic of dance**, extends beyond the stage because it takes root in our school and community engagement programs.

The performing arts, as a whole, are just one part of the fabric that builds our community, but they are, by far, the most vibrant. Individually and en masse, they are a unique lens into our humanity, the beautiful, the ugly, and everything in-between. This is why your support means everything to us and I thank you for making Ballet Arizona a treasured and integral part of our community.

Gratefully,

Ib Andersen, Artistic Director

## BEHIND THE SCENES with Ib Andersen

**Q: We start the year with the world-premiere of Nayon Iovino's *Moving Movies*! What does this ballet mean for the company?**

**A:** This a very rare and special opportunity, not just for Nayon and Ballet Arizona, but within the ballet world. There are classic story ballets that might get a take, or a new ballet on a well-known story, but you hardly, if ever, see a new ballet with an original story. It is one thing to choreograph a 20 minute piece... it is another thing to create a full-length ballet. What it requires of you as a choreographer is drastically different.

As of now, I have purposely not watched any rehearsals because I want to give Nayon the space to create. Just like you, I am very curious to see what he has created, especially as I have supported his choreographic endeavors throughout the years.

**Q: Let's talk about *Contemporary Moves*!**

**A:** For this season, my idea was to feature works that had Latin influence. The new Paul Taylor acquisition, *Piazzola Caldera*, was inspired by Argentinian Tango, and my piece, *Rio*, is set to Philip Glass's *Days and Nights in Rocinha*. Both pieces hold an American temperament rooted by the shared Latin theme.

I always say that putting together our mixed repertory programs are like creating the perfect menu. These three ballets, which includes Nayon's *Inner Layer*, are individually dynamic, so together they make a very well-rounded program for both the audience and our dancers.

**Q: Why did you choose Paul Taylor's *Piazzola Caldera*?**

**A:** Well first, I have been a life-long fan of Paul Taylor and followed his entire career. He had such an original voice and made his stamp on the dance world. What makes his choreography so distinctive is his brain – he was daring



and bold – in the best way! If you look at his catalogue of work, he touches on so many different subjects, he had no boundaries and was an artist through and through.

*Piazaolla Caldera* is a very sensual and technical piece, based on the Argentinian tango. For anyone who has seen true tango, you immediately know if it is good or bad. The technique and chemistry are completely dependent on one another.

This piece is going to be very challenging for our dancers. The choreography requires a specific quality of movement that is far different to how they typically dance. Performing this type of repertoire is what pushes them to grow in their artistry and that is my favorite part of the job.

**Q: What makes your fan-favorite ballet, *Rio*, so special?**

**A:** I think a lot of it comes down to the music. Philip Glass' *Days and Nights in Rocinha* is very hypnotic, it starts quietly, there is a lot of repetition and then it just builds in intensity

When I choreographed *Rio* in 2017, I had originally intended to do a ballet set to music by Sergei Prokofiev but it was very dark and I did not want to feel that heaviness for weeks. One day, I was on YouTube listening to music, the Philip Glass piece came on and it was an instantaneous yes!

This will be the 3rd time we have performed *Rio*. The choreography is very challenging, because it also requires a specific quality of movement. The ballet is about Samba and the favelas of Brazil – or at least how I imagine them to be anyway.

I think audiences really connect to this ballet because it immediately grabs you from all sides... the music, the lighting, the costumes. Each element on its own is powerful and together is becomes a spectacle.



Ballet Arizona dancers in *Rio*. Photos by Alexander Iziliaev.

# BEHIND THE SCENES OF **MOVING MOVIES**

*with Choreographer Nayon Iovino.*



**Q: What was your inspiration for *Moving Movies*?**

**A:** The cinematic theme was originally chosen by Ib as part of the season. When I was approached to choreograph, I immediately dove in with a desire to create a ballet that is both nostalgic and original.

Looking to renowned movie directors, like Steven Spielberg, Wes Anderson, and Federico Fellini, I took inspiration from classic films that will hopefully resonate with a wide range of audiences.

The biggest influences, however, were the film scores from composers such as Hans Zimmer, John Williams, John Barry, and Marc Shaiman. The emotions and rhythms of a piece of music are almost always where I draw the inspiration for my choreography. There was such diversity in my music selection that it inspired me to create an original story that stitched each of the movies together, helping them flow into one new full-length ballet.

Movies catch the spirit of our imagination. They can take us to ideas beyond our reality, tell our stories, and offer an escape. Ballet can do the same thing and I am excited to blend these worlds together. I want audiences to come out of the theatre saying *"I've never seen anything like that!"*

**Q: How did you go about selecting and integrating these iconic film scores into the ballet?**

At first, I chose works from various movies and made a playlist that had an emotional flow. The piece that gave me the first spark of an idea was *"You Only Live Twice"* by John Barry. However, many of the pieces I chose either did not have licensable scores, or they required instruments that could not fit in the orchestra pit at Symphony Hall.

I spent a long time looking for other pieces and worked with our Maestro, Matthew Kasper. The playlist finally began to develop into something that worked for both the choreography and the orchestra, while still keeping the integrity of my vision. Then the story began to unfold once I had enough music selected.

**Q: When creating a new story ballet, what is it like developing characters?**

**A:** I will probably keep developing the characters until the week before the show to get the story as clear as I possibly can...

There is a villain, who exemplifies envy and the natural desire of power that resides within humans. She is eyeing the position of director and has a plan to get it, but along the way develops mixed feelings.



The director is tremendously successful, but humble. Even though he suffers throughout the story at the hands of the villain, in the end, he is forgiving. Deep inside, the director understands that envy is the true evil, a trait we all possess.

I want this plot to be set apart from typical story ballets. Traditionally there is only good and evil, where villains are defeated by heroes or magic, but that does not reflect reality.

As far as developing these characters through dance, the movement needs to reflect the emotion of the music. The embodiment of that feeling has to be amplified through the dancer to reach everyone in the theater.

**Q: Can you talk about the experience of creating a new ballet?**

**A:** This is my first time creating a full-length ballet from scratch. I came up with the concept, chose the music, put together my design team, and wrote the story. There are so many elements that go into creating a ballet that are equally complex, and rising to this challenge has been the best feeling.

For sets, our production team is building pieces, designed by Clifton Chadick, which will move around the stage. I also wanted to push the boundaries of how we use backdrop projection. We are working with Jacob Pinholster and Chris Ignacio, to create projections that our dancers will interact with and have as part of the choreography itself!

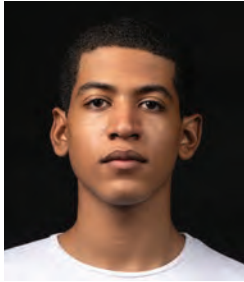
For costumes, we are working with Designer, Liz Vandal. Her portfolio of work is incredible and her creativity is perfect for this project. Seeing it all come together, from the initial conversations and sketches to the pieces being created in our costume shop, has been exciting.



From the very beginning, I have found it very rewarding to collaborate with an artistic team that contributes their own perspective. They help pull different ideas out of me and made the project more fun. My hope is that the end result will be beyond anything I could have imagined on my own.

I also need to give a special thank you to Joan and Charlie Berry, as the producing sponsors, and Adam and Stephanie Goodman for their sponsorship of *Moving Movies*. I am deeply honored for their support of my artistic vision.

# STUDIO COMPANY SPOTLIGHT



## Jordan Islas

Phoenix, Arizona  
Joined Ballet Arizona's  
Studio Company: 2022

### How did you start dancing?

I started dancing when I was 11 years old and the reason I started ballet is funny to me. When I was younger, I loved to play soccer but did not have the best coordination and would trip over my own feet. One day, I was watching a news clip online and it showed football players doing ballet to improve their balance and coordination, so I thought I should do ballet to improve at soccer.

My school, Clarendon Elementary had an after school ballet program, but I was afraid to join and be made fun of by my peers. Despite that, one of my friends convinced me to join with him and we were taught by Camden Lloyd – she was actually the one who introduced me to Ballet Arizona. I joined SBAZ in 2014 and it really helped me understand ballet and grew my love for this art form. Without the teachers at Ballet Arizona I don't think I would be where I am today. They pushed me to my limits, helping me achieve goals I never thought I would achieve. I am truly grateful for all they have done for me.

### How was the journey from SBAZ to Studio Company?

Being a student at SBAZ was challenging for me, trying to balance my time between school, dance, and having a personal life. Once I had time to really focus on dance that is when I saw the most growth in my skills and confidence. I think my teachers saw how much effort I was putting in, how much I was improving, and it all came together. One day, I was called into a meeting with Maria Simonetti, the School Director, and she told me they were putting me into Studio Company the

next school year. I was so excited knowing all my efforts had not gone unnoticed.

### Who is your greatest dance inspiration?

One of my inspirations is Jonathan Batista, a Principal with Pacific Northwest Ballet! I admire his work ethic and talent and am fascinated by his journey, coming from Brazil and getting a full scholarship to English National Ballet School. To see a person that looks like me, achieving such a high title in the ballet world, gave me a north star. It showed me the culture for black dancers was becoming less rigid and more accepting. I hope I can shine just as bright as him and let others, who might not feel seen, know that they belong despite the norms of the ballet world.

### Do you prefer modern or classical ballet?

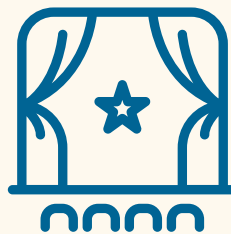
I prefer classical ballet over modern. For me it is all about the movement and intent. I love the way the classical ballet has to be strong yet soft and no matter how small the detail is, it can make or break a performance. You have to fully immerse yourself in your dancing and that is what makes ballet so fun.



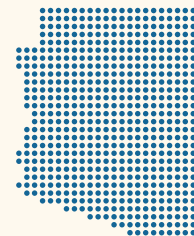
## Arizona Arts & Culture: Economic Impact



The Arts & Culture sector contributed \$1.1 billion to Arizona's economy in 2022



Audiences alone generated \$598.2 million in economic activity



Nonprofit Arts & Culture organizations employ over 11,000 Arizonans



# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Jami Kozemczak**

## **Taking Risks...**

2023 celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Ballet Arizona Center for Dance. Our new home increased the footprint of the company exponentially – both physically and artistically. A decade later, this state-of-the-art facility remains the most impressive in the Southwest, with the artistic reputation of the company holding equivalent international acclaim. This move was a turning point for the organization in 2013, the result of a \$13.5 million capital campaign that not only funded the construction of the building but created the financial support for our strategic initiative fund. This \$1 million reserve supports strategic investments that advance our mission. We have used it for projects such as costume creation for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, live music accompaniment for the *All Balanchine* program, and a solar parking installation that reduces our overhead costs. Our home has allowed us to take creative risks, nurture emerging artists, and deepen our community impact. We reflect on the hundreds of performances that have graced the Dorrance Theatre stage and the profound impact of creative freedom this space has fostered. This milestone marks a decade of creative excellence, artistic exploration, and the cultivation of emerging talents.

**Creative Freedom:** The performing arts have long been a medium through which human expression is elevated to its highest form. However, the ability to bring avant-garde visions to life often collide with the financial constraints inherent in the world of production. The Ballet Arizona Center for Dance, alleviated these constraints, providing our artists and young-artists-in-the-making, with a space where creativity could flourish. Since its creation, Ballet Arizona has fostered a community of world-class training for students of all ages, full-length school performances with live music from Phoenix Youth Symphony Orchestras, a multitude of community

engagement program offerings, and performances by the professional company. Although there will always be financial hurdles associated with our art form, we are willing to take risks and are poised to do so.

**Nurturing Emerging Talents:** One of the core values of Ballet Arizona is 'Nurturing People' and at the heart of that belief is nurturing emerging artists. In 2013, Artistic Director Ib Andersen, made the brilliant discovery – one of our dancers, Nayon Iovino, as a tremendous choreographic talent. He premiered his first work for Ballet Arizona, *Inner Layer*, in the spring of 2014 at Dorrance Theatre as part of a program called *Innovations*. Since then, you have supported Nayon's work as it evolved on stage at the Orpheum Theatre and Symphony Hall. In 2019, he was one of only three choreographers from around the world accepted into the New York Choreographic Institute, a division of New York City Ballet. There he partnered alongside a Julliard composer, and together, they created an original ballet set to an original score. In 2022, he was promoted to Resident Choreographer, and to now say, that Nayon wrote and choreographed his first full-length ballet, the original story *Moving Movies*, is a moment when we will all reflect back with pride and nostalgia saying, "we knew him when..." Ballet Arizona will continue to create an environment where emerging artists can spread their wings and contribute to the evolution of the art form. Don't miss this historical moment and join us this February for Ballet Arizona's world premiere, *Moving Movies*. After all, you certainly helped bring it to life.

Gratefully,

Jami Kozemczak, *Executive Director*



BALLET ARIZONA 2023–2024 SEASON  
UPCOMING DONOR EVENTS

**February 14** (\$3,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall  
*Moving Movies* Dress Rehearsal Viewing

**February 15–18** | Symphony Hall  
*Moving Movies*

**February 15–18** (All Prima Circle Members) | Symphony Hall  
Intermission Receptions at *Moving Movies* (except Sunday Evening)

**February 15–18** (\$5,000 & Up) | Symphony Hall  
Backstage Tour at *Moving Movies*

**March 27** (\$3,500 & Up) | Orpheum Theatre  
*Contemporary Moves* Dress Rehearsal Viewing

**March 28–31** | Orpheum Theatre  
*Contemporary Moves*

**March 28–31** (All Prima Circle Members) | Orpheum Theatre  
Intermission Receptions at *Contemporary Moves*

**April 5** | Phoenix Art Museum  
*Dance With Me – A Ballet Arizona Gala*

**April 9** (All Prima Circle Members) | Ballet Arizona  
Spring Rehearsal Viewing & Luncheon

**April 11** (\$500 & Up) | Ballet Arizona  
Spring Rehearsal Viewing & Breakfast

**BALLET**  
ARIZONA

IB ANDERSEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Phoenix, AZ 85034

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Ballet Arizona presents

# CONTEMPORARY MOVES

**March 28 – 31, 2024**

at Orpheum Theatre

Satisfy your craving for the new and unexpected at *Contemporary Moves*. Ballet Arizona presents an evening of daring works by Ib Andersen, Paul Taylor, and Naylor Lovino.

## Tickets:

[balletaz.org](http://balletaz.org) | 602.381.1096

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Ballet Arizona dancers  
Helio Lima and Ricardo Santos.  
Photo by Michael Higgins.