

Q&A:
Artistic Director
Ib Andersen

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

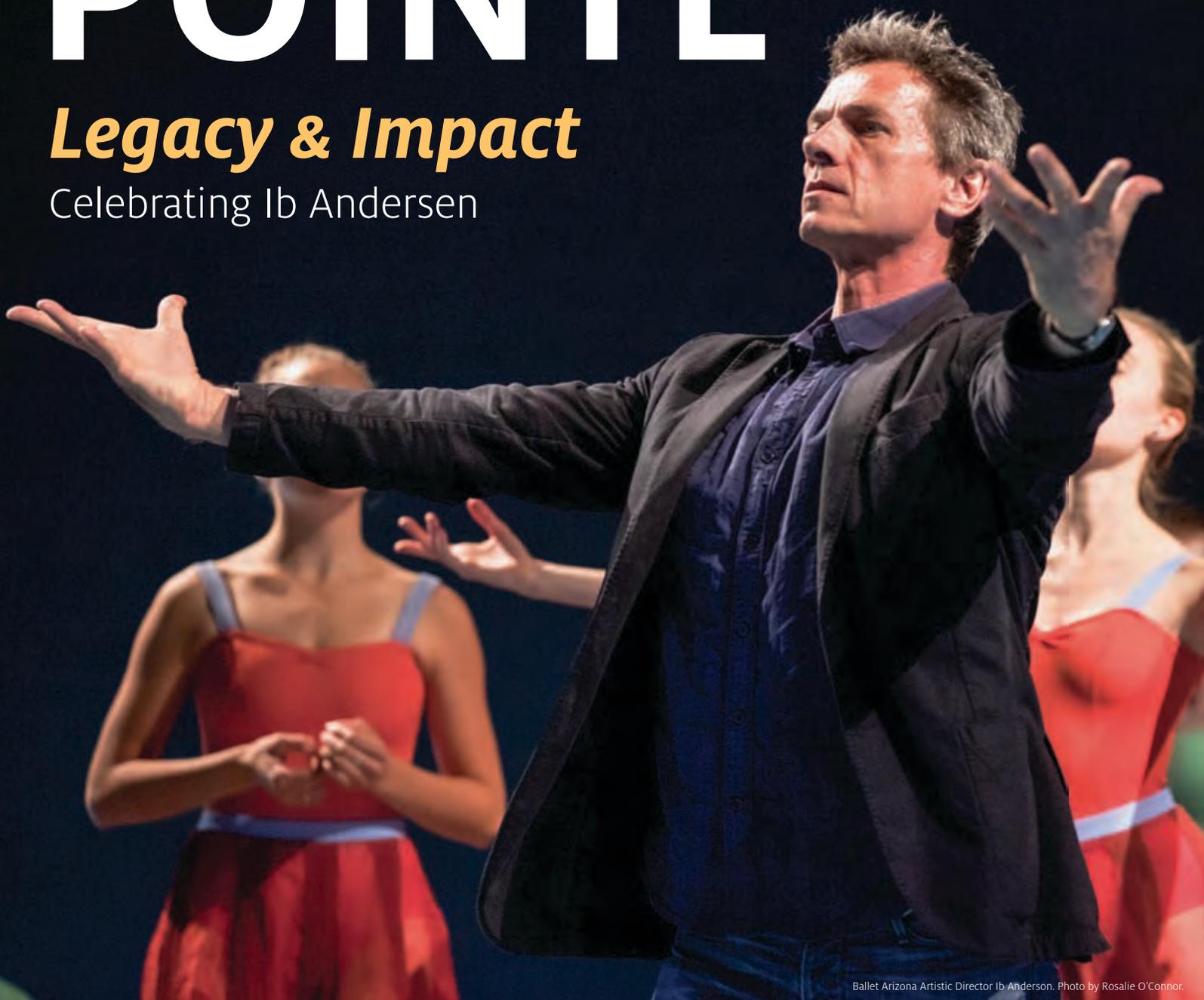
Donor Tribute:
John & Oonagh Boppart

School Spotlight:
Peter and the Wolf

TURNING POINTE

Legacy & Impact

Celebrating Ib Andersen



Ballet Arizona Artistic Director Ib Andersen. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.

SPRING 2024



**Ballet Arizona will
forever be a part of my life,
and I, a part of its.**

Happy Spring! I hope you will join us at Symphony Hall and Desert Botanical Garden, as we celebrate the final productions of the season.

In my final edition of *Turning Pointe* as artistic director, we will take a trip down memory lane. These past 24 years, have been a defining time in my life. What started as a tumultuous time, not knowing if Ballet Arizona would close its doors forever, to where we stand today, as a leading arts institution in the Valley, is incredible and beyond what I could have imagined.

As a dancer, choreographer, and artist, I have always pushed myself and strived for excellence... a sentiment that has carried through to Ballet Arizona. I am proud of the artistic achievements this company has brought to the community and the ballet world under my leadership. We are tenacious, we are innovative, and we have so much potential yet to be explored.

Ballet Arizona will forever be a part of my life, and I, a part of its. My work will continue. There are still stories I look forward to telling and I will be exploring new opportunities to showcase my performances. I want to thank the amazing dancers and loyal patrons that I've gotten to know at Ballet Arizona over the past two decades. Your support and friendships have been inspiring.

Sincerely,

Ib Andersen, Artistic Director

BEHIND THE SCENES *with Ib Andersen*

Q: Tell us about *All Balanchine!*

A: The repertoire this year is spectacular... but it is Balanchine, so it is always extraordinary. Each piece is so different from the other, from the costumes to the music, so the audience will have a beautiful showcase of his depth and range as a choreographer.

Prodigal Son is based on the biblical story. It premiered in 1929 and was the last ballet that Balanchine choreographed for Ballet Russes under Sergei Diaghilev. They commissioned famous French painter, George Rouault to design the sets and Sergei Prokofiev to compose the music, who ended up disliking what Balanchine did with the ballet.

Between the characters and the choreography, Balanchine did a brilliant job of encapsulating the range of human emotion. The *Prodigal Son* role has a lot of meat – from the time the curtain goes up to it coming down, you are looking at a completely different person. Then you have the *Siren*, which I think is the more difficult role. She is an other-worldly being that has to be cold as ice and cynical and an alluring goddess at the same time.

La Valse premiered in 1951. The music by Maurice Ravel is sensational – he wrote in the notes, “*We are dancing on the edge of a volcano.*” It is so powerful and you can feel it in Balanchine’s choreography. The world he creates is surrealist and the story is dark, it feels like an Edgar Allen Poe poem, but it is a ballet that leaves you wanting more.

Square Dance is one of Balanchine’s odes to Americana. The ballet has been changed here and there since it premiered in 1957. Originally, the musicians were on stage with a square dance caller, calling out the steps to the dancers. From a technical side, this is one of Balanchine’s most challenging works. Dancers need to be about to jump and turn, be fast but musical, while making it look effortless. This ballet requires an almost surgical precision.



Ballet Arizona dancers in George Balanchine's *Prodigal Son* (top), *Square Dance* (middle), and *La Valse* (bottom). Choreography by George Balanchine. © The George Balanchine Trust. Photos by Rosalie O'Connor.

Q: What is it like coaching dancers for Balanchine repertoire?

A: Coaching can be a complicated process but thankfully I have been doing this for so long, it is like second nature to me. In rehearsals, I can immediately see what needs to happen, but it is very personal, both how each dancer approaches the role and how I approach coaching them.

Balanchine believed, as do I, that you cannot change people. They are who they are. You can tweak things but they have to remain themselves, otherwise it won't resonate with the audience.

Q: We end the season with *The Four Seasons*. How has it been revisiting this ballet?

A: I always enjoy revisiting ballets. As I have said before, the picture becomes clearer each time you perform. My thought when creating this piece was that the vastness of the space at Desert Botanical Garden and the desert sky requires something special. Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* was the perfect choice, but it is an intense ballet. There are 12 movements and it is very physically demanding for the dancers.

When creating a ballet, the biggest goal is to challenge yourself. You need to constantly push yourself to go further and this ballet definitely did that for me. It wasn't just choreographing, it was also creating the costumes, which I had hand-painted during Covid. They are all fairly abstract, with bursts of color. Each reminiscent of spring, summer, fall and winter. We are currently touching them up and it has been a reminder of what a creative endeavor this ballet was from start to finish.



Remembering John & Oonagh Boppart

Ballet Arizona is immensely grateful to honor the legacy of John and Oonagh Boppart and their philanthropic impact on the arts and culture landscape of Arizona.

John and Oonagh were life-long learners; their curiosity and diverse interests led them to travel extensively and interact with different cultures, music and art. Their combined passion for arts, culture, education and the sciences inspired them to support numerous organizations throughout

the state. In both leadership and philanthropic support, their impact can be felt throughout the Valley.

As Prima Circle members since 2002, they have been instrumental in bringing Ballet Arizona to where we stand today. Oonagh especially made a lasting impact, not only serving on our Board of Directors, but being the central figure to bring leaders from nonprofit organizations across Arizona to connect and collaborate for over 20 years.

“We believe that the community needs diverse arts and culture to be truly successful. Ballet Arizona has grown to become one of the top ballet institutions in America. It has been a great experience witnessing the development.”

~ Oonagh Boppart

In recognition of their more than two decades of support and investment in Ballet Arizona’s future, we are honored to dedicate the entire run of Ib Andersen’s *The Four Seasons* at the Desert Botanical Garden to their legacy.



Ballet Arizona dancers in *The Four Seasons*. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.

To learn more about our Legacy for Dance Society and how you can ensure Ballet Arizona thrives for future generations, please contact Steven Henderson at **602.343.6520** or **shenderson@balletaz.org**.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jami Kozemczak

The Legacy and Impact of Artistic Director Ib Andersen

In the world of ballet, legacy is measured not only in graceful movements on stage but in the enduring impact left on the organization and its community. Now, it is time to reflect on the legacy and impact of Artistic Director, Ib Andersen, and his remarkable 24-year tenure, that has resulted in a transformative journey for Ballet Arizona.

We recently reinvigorated our mission, vision, and values this year. The value put forward by Ib was tenacity. Of our six values, this one best represents our organization and that is the byproduct of his leadership. Ib is the very embodiment of that value and carries a tenacious spirit in his work and life.

Ib assumed the helm of Ballet Arizona in April 2000, inheriting a company teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. Yet, armed with a vision fueled by passion, perseverance, and unwavering dedication to the art form, he embarked on a journey that would redefine this organization's trajectory.

It is extraordinary to reflect on all Ib has achieved during his tenure. He built a company of talented dancers from around the world and a robust artistic repertoire, including his own choreographic works as well as rooting the company in the legacy of George Balanchine. Ten years ago, he built our new home on Washington which was just as much a metaphorical transformation as it was a physical transformation. Throughout the past decade, we have been able to grow our artistic footprint, our school, and our community engagement work.

Through Ib's artistic brilliance, he orchestrated a turnaround that transcended financial challenges, propelling the company from the brink of collapse to becoming one of the most successful arts organizations in the state of Arizona.

At the heart of Ib's legacy, lies an unwavering commitment to excellence and innovation. His choreographic prowess and creative vision have breathed new life into classical repertoire while championing contemporary works. With each production, he has elevated Ballet Arizona's artistic caliber, captivating audiences and garnering critical acclaim both locally and internationally.

Beyond artistic achievements, Ib's impact resonates deeply within the community. Through initiatives at the School of Ballet Arizona and outreach programs, he has nurtured the next generation of dancers and cultivated a love for ballet among diverse audiences. His commitment to accessibility and inclusivity has ensured that ballet remains a vibrant and integral part of Arizona's cultural tapestry.

With gratitude, we extend our sincerest thanks to Ib and to all those who shared in his vision and offered unwavering support. Together, we honor his legacy and look forward to the continued growth of Ballet Arizona as it enters its next chapter. Ib's indomitable spirit of innovation and commitment to excellence have been permanently imprinted on this company and our hearts.

Gratefully,

Jami Kozemczak, *Executive Director*



Celebrating IB ANDERSEN

During Ib's tenure as artistic director, he created over 36 ballets, brought a multitude of renowned classics and cutting-edge new works to the stage, and gave us all so many memorable moments. Here are some of the highlights from his 24 years with Ballet Arizona.

2000

Ib Andersen joins Ballet Arizona as Artistic Director.

2003

Romeo & Juliet premieres as Ib Andersen's first full-length story ballet for Ballet Arizona.

2010

Ballet Arizona performs Ib Andersen's *Diversions* at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

2012

Ib Andersen's *Topia* premieres at Desert Botanical Garden.

2001

Ib Andersen's *Indigo Rhapsody* premieres.

2004

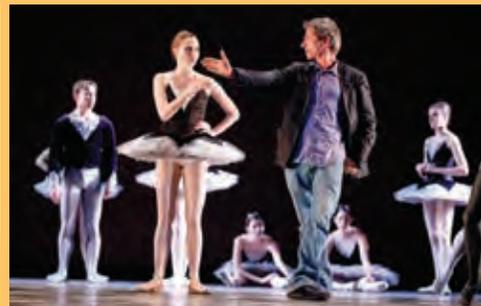
Ib Andersen's *Mosaik* premieres.

2013

Owed to the success of a \$13.5 million capital campaign, Ballet Arizona and The School of Ballet Arizona move into their new home on Washington Street.

2006

Thanks to a \$1.3 million grant from the Sybil B. Harrington Trust, Ballet Arizona premieres Ib Andersen's new production of *The Nutcracker*.



2024

The School of Ballet Arizona premieres Ib Andersen's *Peter and the Wolf*.

2022

Ib Andersen's *Juan Gabriel* premieres.

2023

Ib Andersen's *The Rite of Spring* premieres at Desert Botanical Garden.

2021

Ib Andersen's *The Four Seasons* premieres at Desert Botanical Garden.

2020

Ib Andersen's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* premieres.

2019

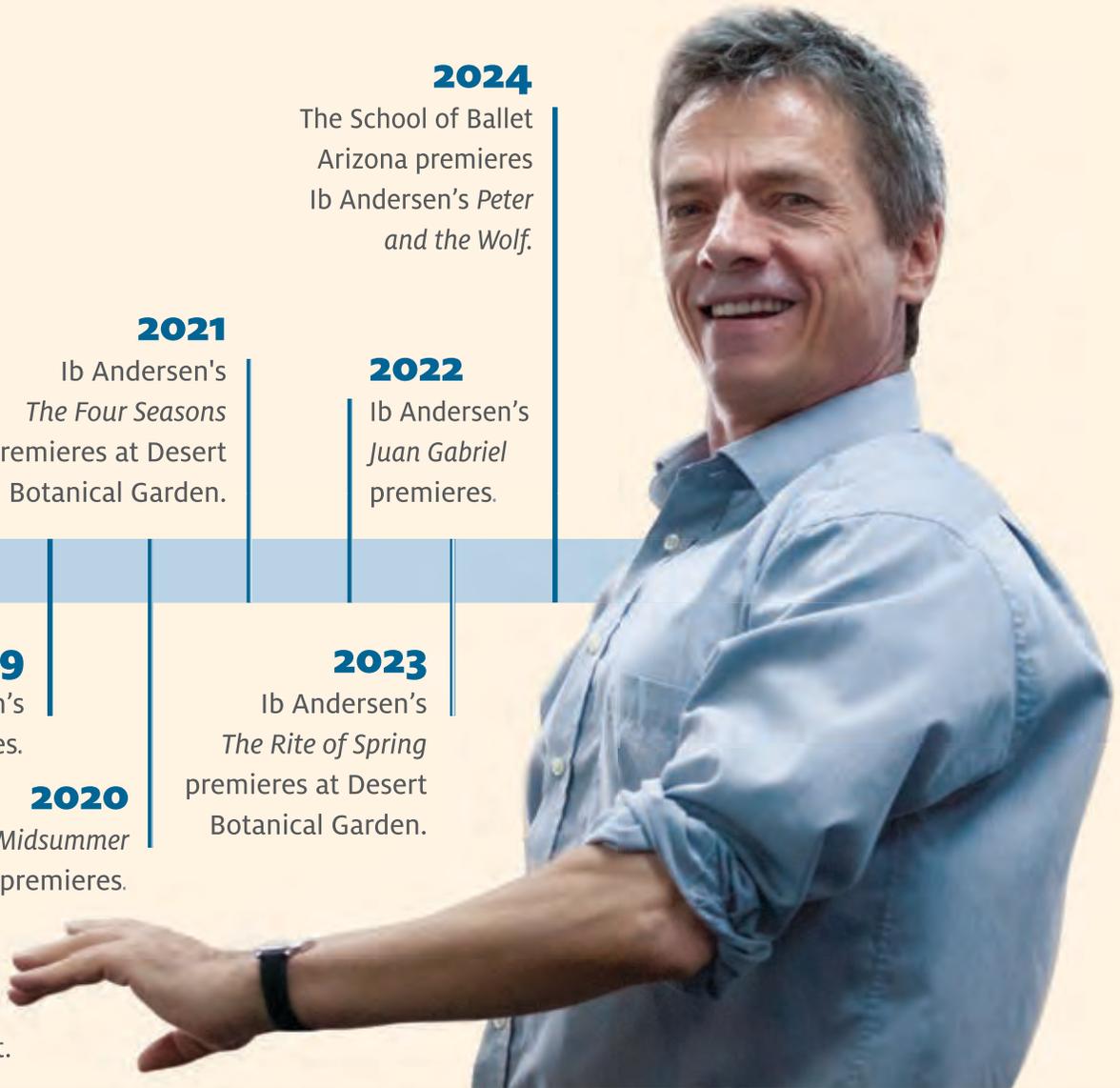
Ib Andersen's *The Firebird* premieres.

2018

Ib Andersen's *Eroica* premieres at Desert Botanical Garden.

2015

Ballet Arizona is the first U.S. company to premiere *Napoli* as a full-length ballet.



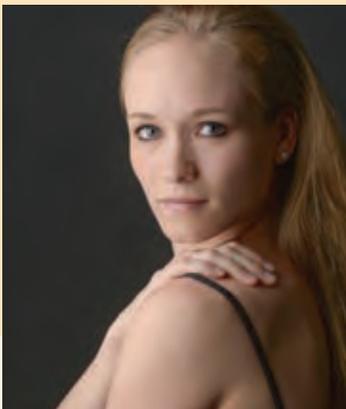
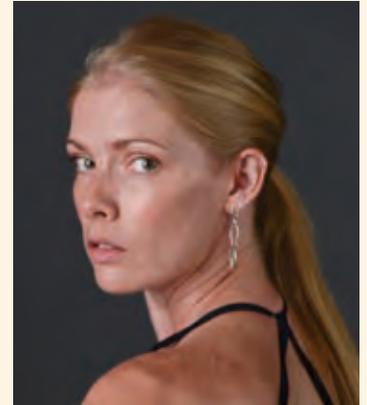


“I knew that I had to learn from Ib the first moment I met him. He gave me a vocabulary I didn’t know existed and I am forever grateful. He could see the parts of me I didn’t know were there and challenged me to refine them. Thank you Ib Andersen for your experience, your mastery and your heart. I had a blast!”

– Skip Cavanagh, Former Company Dancer & Ballet Master

“For most of my life as a dancer, I felt like I didn’t fit in. I was made to believe that ballerinas had to act a certain way and present themselves as that quintessential, quiet, ethereal woman. Then I met Ib Andersen. He embraced everything about my rough, raw, unfiltered expression for dance, and he celebrated it. He always made me feel like I could just be myself, and with that, he changed the trajectory of my life. Ib is one of the reasons I am the person I am today. I will always be grateful for the time we spent together.”

– Chelsea Teel, Former Company Dancer

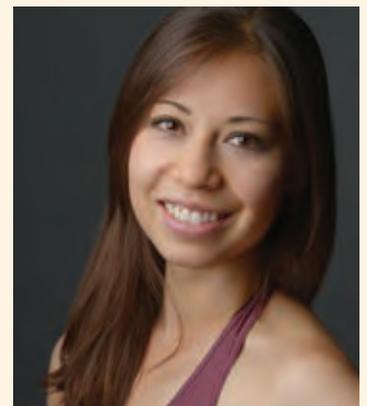


“One of my favorite memories (and there are many) of Ib, in the studios at Ballet Arizona, is when he would have to demonstrate some sort of partnering with you either because he was choreographing or rehearsing something. You immediately felt in control and weightless with his support. It is so innate for him and made the movement so magical.”

– Kenna Draxton, Former Company Dancer

“I have so many fond memories of working with Ib, far too many to fit on a page. Ib challenged me, inspired me and pushed all of us to be better than even we believed we could be. However, my fondest memories of Ib are laughing with him – we had so much fun. Ib’s humor, playfulness and love for his job and his dancers are what made the Ballet Arizona studio feel like home.”

– Michelle Vagi, Former Company Dancer



"I have spent the better part of the past 17 years in the studio with Ib. I have learned so much from him! My artistry, technique, and musicality have been shaped by his coaching and his eye for dance. He has guided and pushed me to become the dancer that I am today, and he often believed in me more than I believed in myself! It has been a joy and an absolute honor to work so closely with him all these years. I will really miss dancing for him."

– Jillian Barrell, Company Dancer



"I have learned so much with Ib over the past nine years. The freedom and trust that I was given to find myself as an artist, always digging deeper to bring out new layers and pushing me to my hardest. What I realize today as an artist is the limit doesn't exist. I will never forget when Ib would say, "You should always give 100% because, why not? You never know what tomorrow will be... if you will even be alive, so do it today!" I will forever appreciate, love, respect, trust, admire, and be grateful for Ib and all that I have learned from him."

– Helio Lima, Company Dancer

"Having grown up in Phoenix, Ib set the standard of what ballet meant to me. Ever since I was young, he has been the pillar of classical ballet for Arizona and was integral in cultivating the art in this community. I've been afforded so many opportunities through his work and am honored to have been part of it."

– Ethan Price, Company Dancer



"Ib has taught me so much, from what singing with your body means to quality of movement and freedom in the dance. I'll treasure all the moments in the studio and all the knowledge that I've acquired through the years. I get to pass something special onto the next generations of dancers because of him. I'm also very grateful that he saw something special in my choreography and allowed me to choreograph on Ballet Arizona for the past 10 years, creating new works and honing my craft. That opportunity has allowed me to grow into the artist I am today!"

– Naylor Iovino, Company Dancer & Resident Choreographer

The School of Ballet Arizona presents

IB ANDERSEN'S PETER AND THE WOLF

In ballet, innovation often breathes new life into timeless classics. For the students of the School of Ballet Arizona (SBAZ), innovation will take shape in Artistic Director, Ib Andersen's new rendition of the beloved children's story, *Peter and the Wolf* at this year's annual Spring Performance.

Originally created in 1936, by Sergei Prokofiev, *Peter and the Wolf* was never intended to be a ballet, rather a symphonic tale to educate children about music. However, Andersen's vision for this piece will transcend the traditional boundaries of storytelling and bring dance to the forefront.

While paying homage to the classical roots of ballet, the choreography will showcase Ib's dynamic approach to movement and staging, while bringing a fresh perspective that speaks to modern audiences. From the whimsical antics of Peter to the menacing prowls of the Wolf, the ballet will unfold a rich tapestry of emotion and imagination.

Working with Ballet Arizona's Costume Director, Leonor Texidor, and Technical Director, Zachary Cooper, Ib has

designed new costumes and set pieces that have been cleverly woven together. Some of the elements featured will include a tree for characters to perch on and children in hand-painted costumes, giving the illusion of a pond.

"I saw Peter and the Wolf when I was a kid, so it has been fun thinking back to my first experience with this story and now putting my twist on it. The process of creating a ballet goes beyond the choreography, there are costumes to design and sets to build. Combining that and working with kids, it has been a different but wonderful challenge and I am excited for everyone to see it," says Ib.

For the young dancers of the SBAZ, learning under guidance of the artistic director is a transformative experience and another reminder of what sets our training apart from other ballet schools. In addition to their weekly classes, the process of attending rehearsals and preparing for performances provides an element of mentorship, instills an appreciation for the art of storytelling, and provides a space for self-expression.

Join us for the School of Ballet Arizona's Spring Performance and see Ib Andersen's *Peter and the Wolf* come to life May 25 – 26 at the Orpheum Theatre.





2024 Hazel Hare Awards

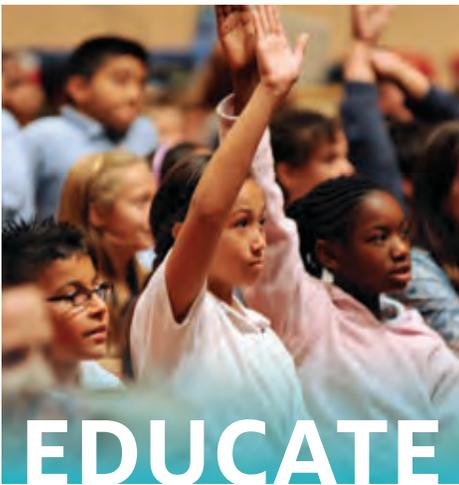
Ballet Arizona celebrated the 6th Anniversary of the Hazel Hare Award of Artistic Excellence.

Established in 2018, it is awarded to a male and female dancer whose spirit echoes the strength, dedication, and passion that Hazel exemplified throughout her entire life.

Hazel was a strong, dedicated woman with a deep passion for ballet. A generous supporter since 1996, she arranged to make a transformational gift to Ballet Arizona through her estate, the Hazel A.S. Hare Charitable Trust, establishing an endowment of more than \$4 million. The largest, single gift in Ballet Arizona’s history, the endowment helps fund the artistry she so deeply loved.

This year’s recipients were Isabella Seo and Gabriel Wright, who were presented the award at our 2024 *Dance With Me* Gala on April 5. Both Isabella and Gabriel have demonstrated an incredible level of dedication to their art that not only shows in the quality of their own work but also in the way it inspires others to do the same.

GIVING BACK — COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



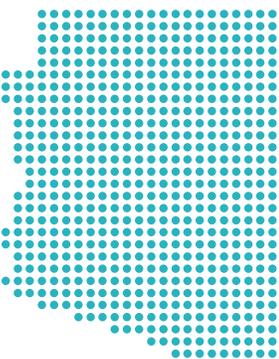
EDUCATE



INSPIRE



IMPACT



**21,576
ARIZONA
RESIDENTS
SERVED**



\$14,020
in scholarship
money awarded

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UPCOMING DONOR EVENTS

May 1 (\$3,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
All Balanchine Dress Rehearsal Viewing

May 2 (\$2,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Company Class Viewing on Stage at *All Balanchine*

May 2 – 5 | Symphony Hall
All Balanchine

May 2 – 5 (\$1,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Prima Circle Intermission Receptions at *All Balanchine*

May 13 (\$1,000 & Up) | Desert Botanical Garden
The Four Seasons Dress Rehearsal Viewing

May 15 (\$1,500 & Up) | Desert Botanical Garden
The Four Seasons Opening Night Reception

May 15 – June 1 | Desert Botanical Garden
The Four Seasons

May 25 – 26 | Orpheum Theatre
Spring Performance by The School of Ballet Arizona

BALLET
ARIZONA

IB ANDERSEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Ballet Arizona presents

THE FOUR SEASONS

May 15 – June 1, 2024
at Desert Botanical Garden

The Four Seasons makes its triumphant return to Desert Botanical Garden. Set to Vivaldi's iconic score, take a journey in movement through spring, summer, autumn, and winter, featuring costumes designed and hand-painted by Artistic Director Ib Andersen, with the backdrop of the matchless desert landscape and the setting sun.

Tickets:
balletaz.org | 602.381.1096

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Ballet Arizona dancers Luis Corrales and Katelyn May. Photo by Michael Higgins.