

Q&A:
*Artistic Director
Daniela Cardim*

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

Production Feature:
*The U.S. Premiere
of Frida*

Donor Spotlight:
Thomas Carlton Rogers II

TURNING POINTE

*Celebrating
the milestones*

that your generosity
makes possible.





I'm honored to share some of the remarkable milestones and future plans that lie ahead.

Welcome to the Winter 2025 edition of *Turning Pointe!* As we celebrate the successes of the season thus far and look ahead to what is next, I continue to be amazed and filled with gratitude for your unwavering support.

This edition highlights the vibrant energy surrounding Ballet Arizona's artistic endeavors. We start the New Year with the highly-anticipated U.S. premiere of world-renowned choreographer, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Frida*. This breathtaking retelling of Frida Kahlo's life and artistry, exemplifies our commitment to bringing bold, visionary works the stage that will resonate with our audiences.

You'll also enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at the creative process, from building the sets and costumes for *Frida*, to developing the programming for our upcoming *Spring Mix* production, this is just a glimpse at vibrant future ahead.

Additionally, we are delighted to shine a spotlight on the remarkable generosity of Thomas Carlton Rogers II, whose transformative gift to Ballet Arizona's endowment will ensure the beauty and artistry of ballet will enrich the cultural fabric of our community for years to come.

Each story is a testament to your impact. Thank you for standing with us, I am excited to be on this journey with all of you. Together, we create magic, one step at a time.

Sincerely,

Daniela Cardim, *Artistic Director*

BEHIND THE SCENES with Daniela Cardim

Q: It has been just over six months since you joined as Artistic Director, how has it been?

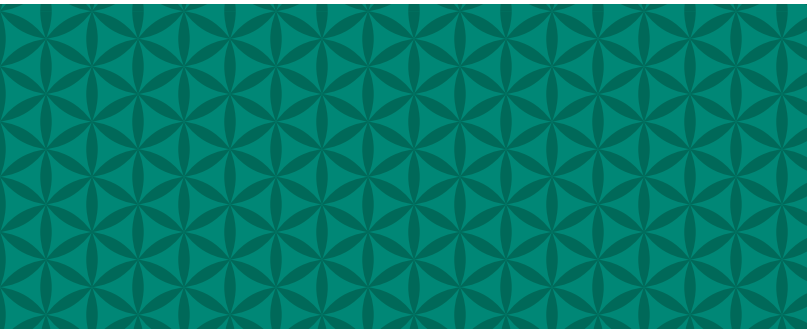
A: It has been wonderful! Everyone has been so welcoming and open to my artistic vision for the company. My focus has been on building relationships with the dancers and staff and taking the time to listen to everyone.

As part of the strategic planning work that I am doing, I am focused on restructuring the dancers' health and wellness program. It is still in the beginning stages, but I am thrilled to say we have more regular access to physical therapy, which is so vital for the dancers. I have also developed a repertoire plan for the next three seasons that has been approved by the board, giving us a clear direction moving forward.

We have also had an amazing start to the season, with record sales for both *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker!* Seeing the audience's enthusiasm and growth has been so rewarding. It's taken years post-COVID, but audiences are returning to dance, and the artistic and marketing teams have done an outstanding job delivering high-quality performances.

Q: Let's talk about *Frida!*

A: Well first, I am so happy the choreographer, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, chose Ballet Arizona to be the first company in the U.S. to perform this ballet. Given our proximity to Mexico and the large Latino population in our community, *Frida* feels particularly relevant. It celebrates a female Latina artist whose story resonates deeply today. It's a contemporary story that reflects our commitment to presenting diverse narratives and broadening the audience's experience.



I believe it will become a pillar of our repertoire—a piece we revisit every few years. It’s an opportunity for the community to develop a deeper connection with a contemporary story ballet and reinforces our mission to innovate while honoring tradition.

Q: Looking to more contemporary works, what can audiences expect with Spring Mix in March?

A: I am particularly excited for Spring Mix because it is the first program where I had significant input. It includes Christopher Wheeldon’s *Within the Golden Hour*, a new ballet by Resident Choreographer, Nayon Iovino, and Robert Bondara’s *Take Me With You*.

The variety in this program offers new challenges for our dancers and audiences alike, showcasing contemporary works with fresh perspectives – it perfectly balances tradition and innovation.

Nayon’s piece is exciting on two levels – one it’s new choreography, but secondly he is collaborating with a local composer! These types of collaboration’s are something I am very passionate about so I am happy Nayon was open to this opportunity.

I first saw *Take Me With You* by Robert Bondara when I was in Australia and fell in love with it. When I had the opportunity to select the third ballet for this program, I knew immediately this is the piece I wanted on the stage. The ballet is brilliant and just so cool. The piece is set to music by Radiohead and it’s a burst of energy, so clever and elegant.

This program will be very challenging for the dancers but so rewarding. Contemporary works demand openness and a willingness to step outside one’s comfort zone. Unlike classical ballet, dancers must learn entirely new movement languages, but it brings out a completely different type of artistry, where they have the ability to imprint on the role they are performing. It’s a beautiful experience for both the dancers and the audience.



Donor Spotlight:

Thomas Carlton Rogers II



"I believe that Phoenix can never be a great city without fine art"

~ Thomas Carlton Rogers II

Establishing a Legacy

Ballet Arizona is honored to announce a landmark \$1 million gift from Thomas Carlton Rogers II, received last spring. This generous contribution establishes the Thomas Carlton Rogers II Balletomane Fund, a permanent endowment that will sustain Ballet Arizona's mission to ignite the human spirit through the magic of dance and help make our vision of ballet for everyone a reality.

Thomas Carlton Rogers II, a Phoenix native who grew up in San Marino, California, attributes his passion for ballet to early exposure to the performing arts. "Television shows of Ballet Blanc in Copenhagen were my first view of the fine arts from Europe," he recalled. "As time went on, I developed into a balletomane – a ballet devotee. Now, I have the means to do something on behalf of fine art in Arizona."

Rogers emphasized his gift is deeply rooted in his appreciation for his Arizona heritage and his steadfast conviction that the arts are essential to a thriving city. "The money that I am donating is not something that

I conjured up down at the stock exchange. This money was earned in the mining business in Arizona by hard and dangerous work. I'm not sure what those men would think about this donation, but I believe that Phoenix can never be a great city without fine art," he explained.

The inspiration for this remarkable donation also stems from Rogers' admiration for Ballet Arizona's leadership. "Their relentless devotion to the Ballet gives me absolute confidence that this money will support artisanship and excellence in perpetuity," Rogers said. "I know they are bringing the highest level of artisanship to our community."

In honor of Thomas Carlton Rogers II's remarkable generosity and dedication to the arts, Ballet Arizona has named the artistic wing of its state-of-the-art facility the "Thomas Carlton Rogers II Artistic Wing." This recognition celebrates Mr. Rogers' impactful contribution, ensuring his legacy will inspire and support the growth of ballet for generations to come.



Why Endowments Matter

Endowments are a cornerstone of financial health and stability for non-profit organizations. A permanent fund that generates annual investment income, an endowment acts as a financial anchor, providing a sustainable source of funding and can make the difference between a company thriving or struggling.

As ticket sales only cover 50% of our operating costs, we rely on contributions and grants from individuals and institutions. However, these revenue streams often fluctuate due to economic conditions, changes in donor priorities, or unexpected emergencies. This stability offered by an endowment, enables non-profits to weather economic fluctuations, innovate in programming, and focus on fulfilling their mission without being solely dependent on annual fundraising efforts.

For Ballet Arizona, this new endowment represents an enduring investment in the cultural enrichment of Arizona and will play a vital role in the company's future as we set our strategic plans in motion. This fund will enable us to maintain our high artistic standards, expand our repertoire and nurture the next generation of artists and balletomanes!

"An endowment is a gift that keeps giving," says Executive Director, Jami Kozemczak. "The Thomas Carlton Rogers II Balletomane Fund is not just a celebration of generosity but also a testament to the enduring value of the arts. We are deeply grateful to Tom, his visionary support, and his belief in the transformative power of cultural investment."

To learn more about Ballet Arizona's endowment and our Legacy for Dance Society, please contact Steven Henderson at **602.343.6520** or shenderson@balletaz.org.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jami Kozemczak

Viva Frida!

On the eve of the U.S. premiere of *Frida*, I could not carry more pride for our community than I do in this moment. We were honored to be the first US company to premiere the work of world-renowned choreographer, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa. When we embarked on this journey, two years ago, we knew it would be a pivotal moment in Ballet Arizona's history, and our community rose to embrace this premiere exactly as we had hoped. Thank you for making *Frida* the blockbuster it has become.

Frida is the grand finale of the Latino Arts Initiative, a 5-year grant funded by Jacquie and Bennett Dorrance that has successfully broadened our reach to Latino audiences in the valley. We extend our deep gratitude to them for their visionary support.

Not only is *Frida* an artistic achievement, it is also a financial win for the ballet. Producing this new work allows us to rent it to other ballet companies around the globe – next stop, Hong Kong Ballet, then onto Santiago, Chile. Not only is this an investment in our artistic vision, but it also diversifies our revenue streams and extends the reach of Ballet Arizona's influence and brand on an international scale.

The School of Ballet Arizona Blooms

The New Year launched the opening of a satellite campus for The School of Ballet Arizona in Mesa, created in partnership with Child Crisis Arizona. Located at the Center for Child & Family Wellness on Rio Salado, this campus will expand access to dance education for students and families in the East Valley. With classes for children ages 2-8, along with adult programs and community engagement opportunities, this initiative complements our full school-year curriculum while fostering greater inclusivity in the arts.

Project: Ignite Takes Flight

None of these exciting projects would be possible without the generous support of our donors. This year, Ballet Arizona was the recipient of a transformational grant award from the Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation. This 3-year initiative, called *Project: Ignite*, is inspired by Ballet Arizona's recently completed strategic plan. This initiative outlines five major

goals: artistic vision and innovation, growing our patron base, achieving financial resilience, operational excellence, and enhancing our school.

This historic gift comes at a pivotal moment as Ballet Arizona continues to build momentum following the challenges of the pandemic. *Project: Ignite* will strategically invest in programmatic growth, mission enhancements, and organizational stability through expanded revenue opportunities and infrastructure development. By deepening our commitment to cultural outreach, dance education, and equitable access, this visionary initiative will create meaningful, lasting impact for our community. We thank the Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation for such an extraordinary investment in our mission.

Many of you have approached me over the past few months and asked the question: what is the secret ingredient to the ballet's recent success? My answer is the same every time... it is YOU. You have helped us by spreading the word to your friends, colleagues and neighbors. You helped us sellout our entire run of *The Nutcracker* performances by making it part of your family's holiday tradition, you have made generous donations to support our community programs, and you have helped the ballet go viral on social media by sharing our content with your network. We are here, because of you. On behalf of every heart touched by this organization, I thank you from the bottom of mine.

In awe,

Jami Kozemczak, Executive Director



Painting with Movement:
THE U.S. PREMIERE OF FRIDA



Photo © Hans Gerritsen. Courtesy of Dutch National Ballet.

Ballet Arizona is proud to present the U.S. premiere of *Frida*, a breathtaking ballet by the renowned choreographer, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa that brings the extraordinary life and artistry of Frida Kahlo to the stage.

This production marks a strategic and artistic milestone for Ballet Arizona and exemplifies our mission ***to ignite the human spirit through dance*** by presenting works that challenge perceptions and expand the reach of ballet.

Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, a Belgian-Colombian choreographer celebrated for her innovative and emotive works, masterfully brings Kahlo's world to life through ballet. Inspired by Kahlo's resilience and her ability to transform personal pain

into profound art, Lopez Ochoa translates this spirit into movement. "Frida Kahlo used her life as a canvas," Lopez Ochoa explains, "infusing every piece with raw, personal truth. Through her art, she challenged conventions and made us confront the beauty in pain and the strength in vulnerability."

Choosing to produce *Frida* in-house represents a strategic investment for Ballet Arizona. The estimated \$4,000,000 cost

to build the production locally is comparable to the expense of renting it from the Dutch National Ballet. However, by creating these assets internally, Ballet Arizona not only strengthens its financial position but also opens avenues for future revenue generation, cost savings, and potential co-productions with other ballet companies. This decision reflects the company's dedication to advancing the art form and diversifying its repertoire while fostering a sustainable operational model.

This stunning production features a rich tapestry of visual and musical elements. British composer Peter Salem's score incorporates traditional Mexican instruments to immerse audiences in Kahlo's cultural heritage, while Dutch designer Dieuweke van Reij's striking set and costume designs reflect the vibrant aesthetic of Mexicanismo, the art movement embraced by Kahlo. By building the production locally, Ballet Arizona strengthens its ties to the Arizona community and ensures a sustainable artistic investment that will serve the company for years to come.



The story of Frida is deeply personal and symbolic, capturing the essence of Kahlo's life through her vivid imagination and surrealist artistry.

Lopez Ochoa draws inspiration from several of Kahlo's self-portraits, using them as mosaics to narrate the artist's journey. In a powerful creative choice, male dancers portray Kahlo's iconic self-portraits, symbolizing the larger-than-life legacy of her art. "I wanted the paintings to be bigger than her," Lopez Ochoa notes, emphasizing how Kahlo's work transcended her personal struggles to achieve global acclaim.

As audiences prepare to witness *Frida*, they will experience not just a ballet but a transformative celebration of one of the 20th century's most compelling artists. Through Kahlo's story, Ballet Arizona continues to honor the past while pushing the boundaries of ballet into the modern era, igniting the human spirit with each step, note, and stroke of artistry.



BALLET ARIZONA 2024–2025 SEASON UPCOMING DONOR EVENTS

February 12 (\$3,500 & Up)
Frida Dress Rehearsal Viewing

February 13 (All Prima Circle Members) | Symphony Hall
Frida Opening Night Reception

February 13 – 16 (All Prima Circle Members) | Symphony Hall
Intermission Receptions at *Frida* (except Sunday Evening)

February 13 – 16 (\$5,000 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Backstage Tour at *Frida*

March 11 (All Members) | Ballet Arizona
Legacy for Dance Rehearsal & Luncheon

March 18 (\$125 & Up) | Ballet Arizona
Coffee & Tea with Artistic & Executive Directors

March 18 (\$500 & Up) | Ballet Arizona
Corps de Ballet Rehearsal Viewing & Breakfast

March 26 (\$3,500 & Up)
Spring Mix Dress Rehearsal Viewing

March 27 – 30 (All Prima Circle Members) | Orpheum Theater
Intermission Receptions at *Spring Mix*

April 3 (All Prima Circle Members) | Ballet Arizona
Spring Studio Rehearsal & Luncheon

BALLET
ARIZONA

2835 E. Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ 85034

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

SPRING MIX

March 27 – 30, 2025
at Orpheum Theatre

Spring Mix celebrates masterful and diverse choreography with works from both emerging and celebrated choreographers:

Within The Golden Hour
by Christopher Wheeldon

Akelarre
World Premiere by Nayon Iovino

Take Me With You
by Robert Bondara

Tickets: balletaz.org | 602.381.1096

Opening Night Series Sponsor

F. Francis &
Dionne Najafi



Produced by:

Joan & Charles Berry

Sponsored in part by

**Paul & Beth Hommert
James & Joyce Smith
Van & Ann Wolf**



Ballet Arizona dancers Ricardo Santos and Trey Puckett. Photo by Michael Higgins.