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Ballet Arizona Annual Dance With Me Gala Raised \$320,000
Performances, Cocktails and More Highlight the Charitable Evening on Feb. 7

PHOENIX – [Ballet Arizona](#) hosted its annual Dance With Me Gala on Friday, Feb. 7 at the Scottsdale Center for The Phoenix Arts. This memorable event was chaired by Stephen Hardy and honored Mary and Jeff Ehret for their decades of philanthropy with Ballet Arizona and their dedication toward keeping the art of ballet alive. This year’s gala raised \$320,000 in support of Ballet Arizona’s professional dance company and its upcoming season of performances as well as its education and community engagement programs.

This year’s theme was inspired by Ballet Arizona’s spring production, “Frida.” Guests received an exclusive sneak peek look at the U.S. premiere of “Frida” before it was performed at Ballet Arizona the following weekend, Feb. 13 through 16th at Symphony Hall. “Frida” is a biographical ballet depicting legendary painter, Frida Kahlo’s life, featuring choreography by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and a score by Peter Salem.

“It was an honor to chair this year’s Dance With Me Gala,” said Hardy. “Mary and Jeff Ehret’s dedication to the arts are a true inspiration and we were proud to recognize their years of continued support to Ballet Arizona. On behalf of Ballet Arizona, we were also thrilled to celebrate our first gala with our new Artistic Director Daniela Cardim.”

Hardy and Ballet Arizona’s artistic and executive director, Daniela Cardim and Jami Kozemczak, welcomed guests and spoke of the impact Mary and Jeff Ehret have had on Ballet Arizona and their passion for the growth of the arts in Arizona. Luis Corrales and Leticia Endler were awarded the “Hazel Hare Award for Artistic Excellence.” In its seventh year, the Hazel Hare Award honors dancers whose spirit echoes the strength, dedication, and passion that Hare exemplified throughout her entire life.

Following the performance of “Frida” and dinner, guests took the dance floor with the professional dancers for the remainder of the evening. This is a tradition from with *Dance With Me* receives its name.

Ballet Arizona would like to thank its generous sponsors Jeff and Mary Ehret, The PENTA Building Group, SRP, Rebecca Ailes-Fine and Peter Fine, Joan and Charlie Berry, John Demenkoff and Diane Bradshaw, Dionne and F. Francis Najafi/Pivotal Foundation, Barbara and Donald Ottosen, and Rose and Harry Papp.

Ballet Arizona is the official ballet company in the Valley, whose mission is to ignite the human spirit through the magic of dance. The company is dedicated to preserving and celebrating classical dance while creating and commissioning new innovative works. For more information about Ballet Arizona, visit www.balletaz.org/.

Ballet Arizona

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Since 1986, Ballet Arizona has been dedicated to preserving and celebrating classical dance while creating new and innovative works. Under the new artistic direction of internationally acclaimed choreographer Daniela Cardim - a former soloist with the Ballet of Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro and Dutch National Ballet - Ballet Arizona is excited to follow her lead to the future of dance in Arizona. During its 38th season, the Valley's professional ballet company will present *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, the U.S. premiere of *Frida*, *Spring Mix*, *All Balanchine* and *Eroica*. The School of Ballet Arizona, under the direction of Maria Simonetti, promotes access to the art form of ballet through dance education, with a focus on excellence in the form, directing each student to a life-long love of dance. Following this vision, Ballet Arizona connects to more than 25,000 children and families every year through its free and low-cost outreach programs. For more information, visit balletaz.org.

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