

Q&A:
Artistic Director
Daniela Cardim

Letter from the
Executive Director:
Jami Kozemczak

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Akelarre

Dancer Spotlight:
*Hazel Hare Award of
Artistic Excellence*

TURNING POINTE

**Artistic
Achievements**

that you help make possible.



Ballet Arizona dancers Leticia Endler and Nayon Iovino in *Take Me With You*. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.

SPRING 2025



Your support allows us to dream boldly, create fearlessly, and share the transformative power of dance.

Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of *Turning Pointe*. As we approach the final months of our season, I'm filled with gratitude for your continued support and excited to share the artistic achievements you help make possible.

In this issue, we look ahead to our last productions of the season: *All Balanchine*, a program that honors the genius of one of ballet's most influential choreographers, and *Eroica*, where dance and nature come together at our Desert Botanical Garden.

You'll also be introduced to this year's Hazel Hare Award of Artistic Excellence recipients – two dancers whose performances this season have captivated audiences and reflect the strength and vision this award was created to celebrate.

We're especially proud to spotlight *Akelarre*, the latest creation from Resident Choreographer, Nayon Iovino. This daring new work, made in collaboration with a local composer, Thomas Breadon Jr., reflects our ongoing commitment to innovation and to nurturing Arizona's arts community across mediums.

Your support allows us to dream boldly, create fearlessly, and share the transformative power of dance. Thank you for being an essential part of our story.

With appreciation,

Daniela Cardim, Artistic Director

BEHIND THE SCENES

with Daniela Cardim

Q: What can audiences expect from the final two productions of the 2024–2025 season: *All Balanchine* and *Eroica*?

A: The *All Balanchine* program is going to be very dynamic and, most of all, fun for the audience. George Balanchine's choreography is known for its breadth. His work can be poetic, bold, and witty. This program really highlights that range with three distinct ballets.

In *Walpurgisnacht*, we see 24 women dancing with wild abandon. It is a celebration of movement and perfectly embodies Balanchine's quote "*ballet is woman*." *Western Symphony* brings a playful twist. Set in the American Old West, it pairs traditional ballet technique with the spirit of folk dancing and cowboy charm. *Scotch Symphony* is new for Ballet Arizona! It is a romantic escape to the Scottish Highlands, full of musicality and brisk footwork. It's a lovely nod to the classical ballets of the 19th century.

As a dancer, I've always felt an incredible sense of freedom in Balanchine's choreography. His movement is expansive, it breathes with the body rather than containing it.

The first Balanchine ballet I performed was *Serenade*. It was unlike anything I had experienced before, and it deepened my love for his work. I don't think audiences can ever fully grasp the pure joy a dancer feels in these works, but I always hope that joy is felt from the stage.

As for *Eroica*, choreographed by Ib Andersen, it is truly a special experience. Set outdoors at the Desert Botanical Garden, the combination of Beethoven's powerful symphony, the open air, and the natural desert landscape creates something unforgettable. I was able to see *The Four Seasons* last year as an audience member and I was in awe. It's a beautiful way to close the season.



Q: The 2025–2026 season was recently announced. What are some of the highlights?

A: Next season is all about balance – honoring the tradition of classical ballet while also looking forward with fresh, thought-provoking works. We open with *The Sleeping Beauty*, one of the great story ballets. It's a timeless production, and I've added a few choreographic elements of my own while keeping the heart of Petipa's masterpiece intact.

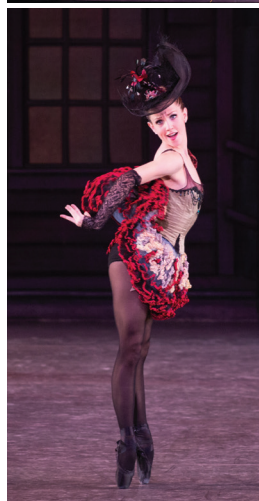
Then, in February, we take a whimsical turn with *ALICE (in Wonderland)* by Septime Webre. It's imaginative, theatrical, and bursting with color and creativity. I think it will surprise people because it's not your typical ballet.

In March, we're offering a mixed program called *Cacti & Other Works*. It includes Balanchine's *Apollo*, which is one of his most iconic pieces, and *Concertante* by Hans van Manen, a sleek, musical work with powerful energy. Then there's *Cacti* by Alexander Ekman, which brings humor and a contemporary edge that's both entertaining and refreshingly clever. It's a diverse, engaging evening that will resonate with a wide audience.

One of the most exciting parts of the season will be our performances at Desert Botanical Garden, now presented as a double bill! First is *Concerto Six Twenty-Two*, a Mozart-scored masterpiece by renowned American choreographer, Lar Lubovitch. Second is the U.S. premiere of my contemporary ballet, *Reset*, set to a blend of classical and electronic music by Gabriel Prokofiev that really fuels the movement.

Q: Any thoughts you want to share as you complete your first year?

A: I'm incredibly grateful for the warm welcome I've received from the community. Ballet Arizona has so much talent and heart, and I'm proud of what we've accomplished together... each production has been its own milestone this season. It's been overwhelming in the best way and I can't wait for what's ahead!



Ballet Arizona dancers in George Balanchine's *Walpurgisnacht* and *Western Symphony*. Photos by Alexander Iziliaev.
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Dancer Spotlight:

Hazel Hare Award of Artistic Excellence



Established in 2018, the award honors one male and one female dancer whose spirit echoes the strength, dedication, and passion that Hazel exemplified throughout her entire life.

A devoted supporter of Ballet Arizona since 1996, Hazel was a woman of remarkable character and unwavering love for ballet. Through her estate, the Hazel A.S. Hare Charitable Trust, she arranged a transformational gift, an endowment of more than \$4 million. As the largest single gift in Ballet Arizona's history, it will help sustain the artistry that inspired her for decades.

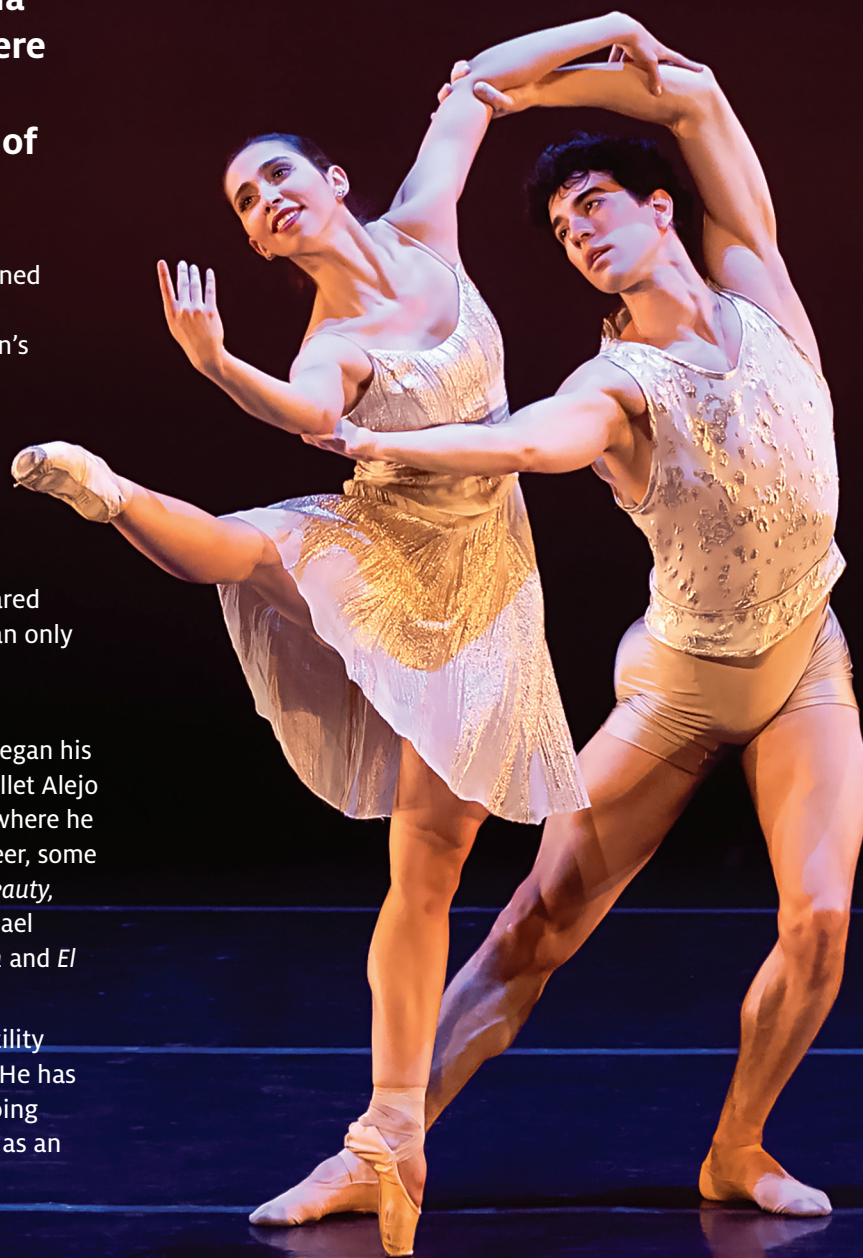
This year's recipients were Leticia Endler and Luis Corrales, who were presented the award by Artistic Director, Daniela Cardim as part of our 2025 Dance With Me Gala.

Originally from Anápolis, Goiás, Brazil, Leticia joined the company in 2022 after a year in our Studio Company. Her repertoire includes Fredrick Ashton's *Les Patineurs*, Ib Andersen's *Romeo & Juliet*, Juan Gabriel, and *Swan Lake*, Christopher Wheeldon's *Within the Golden Hour*, and most recently Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Frida*.

"Leticia is such an intelligent dancer, who is starting to tap deeper into her artistry and it is incredible to watch," says Cardim. "She is not scared to take risks on stage and has delivered what I can only call star quality performances during our runs of *Swan Lake* and *Frida* this season."

Finishing his fifth season with the company, Luis began his ballet training in Havana, Cuba at the School of Ballet Alejo Carpentier and the Cuban National Ballet School, where he graduated with honors. Over the course of his career, some of his repertoire highlights include, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Le Corsair*, *Giselle*, *Don Quixote*, *Romeo & Juliet*, Michael Descombey's *The Dying Swan*, Pepe Hevia's *Carmen* and *El Eco de tu Adios*, and Jiří Kylián's *Symphony in D*.

"When I think of Luis, the words elegance, versatility and professionalism immediately come to mind. He has great potential and as we bring new repertoire going forward, I am excited to see how he will develop as an artist," says Cardim.





LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jami Kozemczak

The Creativity of our People.

Why do we continue to believe in the power of the arts during the most uncertain times? Because they unite and inspire us, spark joy, and foster deep pride in ourselves. For me, the arts embody a lasting optimism as the foundation of a healthy, vibrant, and thriving community.

At Ballet Arizona, it has been a privilege to work alongside such creative people, including our generous supporters. We are constantly reminded of how lucky we are to benefit from that creativity as you invent new ways to broaden our reach and awareness. **Thank you** for increasing our impact.

Here are some of my favorite mission moments...

David C., one of our most loyal volunteers, single-handedly arranges groups of 20+ people from his retirement community to attend Ballet Arizona performances. He started this initiative in 2022 and has since brought 250 attendees to experience numerous performances.

Our board championed a live music initiative at the invitation of Artistic Director, Daniela Cardim, as the first step in bringing her artistic vision to life. Led by former board member, Jim Smith, they raised the funds needed to create an original score by local composer Dr. Thomas Breadon Jr. for the world premiere of Resident Choreographer, Nayon Iovino's *Akelarre*.

Our Contemporary Council, the most dynamic group of young professionals you will encounter, created the wildly successful *En Pointe: High Tea & Couture Reimagined* fundraiser

in partnership with fashion incubator, FABRIC. A sold out celebration of creativity that blended the worlds of ballet and sustainable fashion.

Our Community Engagement team launched two new initiatives: *Driven to Dance* and *The School Bus Initiative* increasing access to dance education and programs. The School of Ballet Arizona celebrated our Studio Company members with their 2nd annual dedicated showcase and launched a satellite campus at the new Child Crisis Center for Child & Family Wellness in Mesa.

Dare I even try to close with what we experienced together during the U.S. premiere of *Frida*? What we witnessed was pure magic and the power of great art. Our community is still reverberating from *Frida*'s success to this day. I have never seen our staff work so hard, with such tenacity to create an exquisite masterpiece. It was a pivotal moment in time for Ballet Arizona.

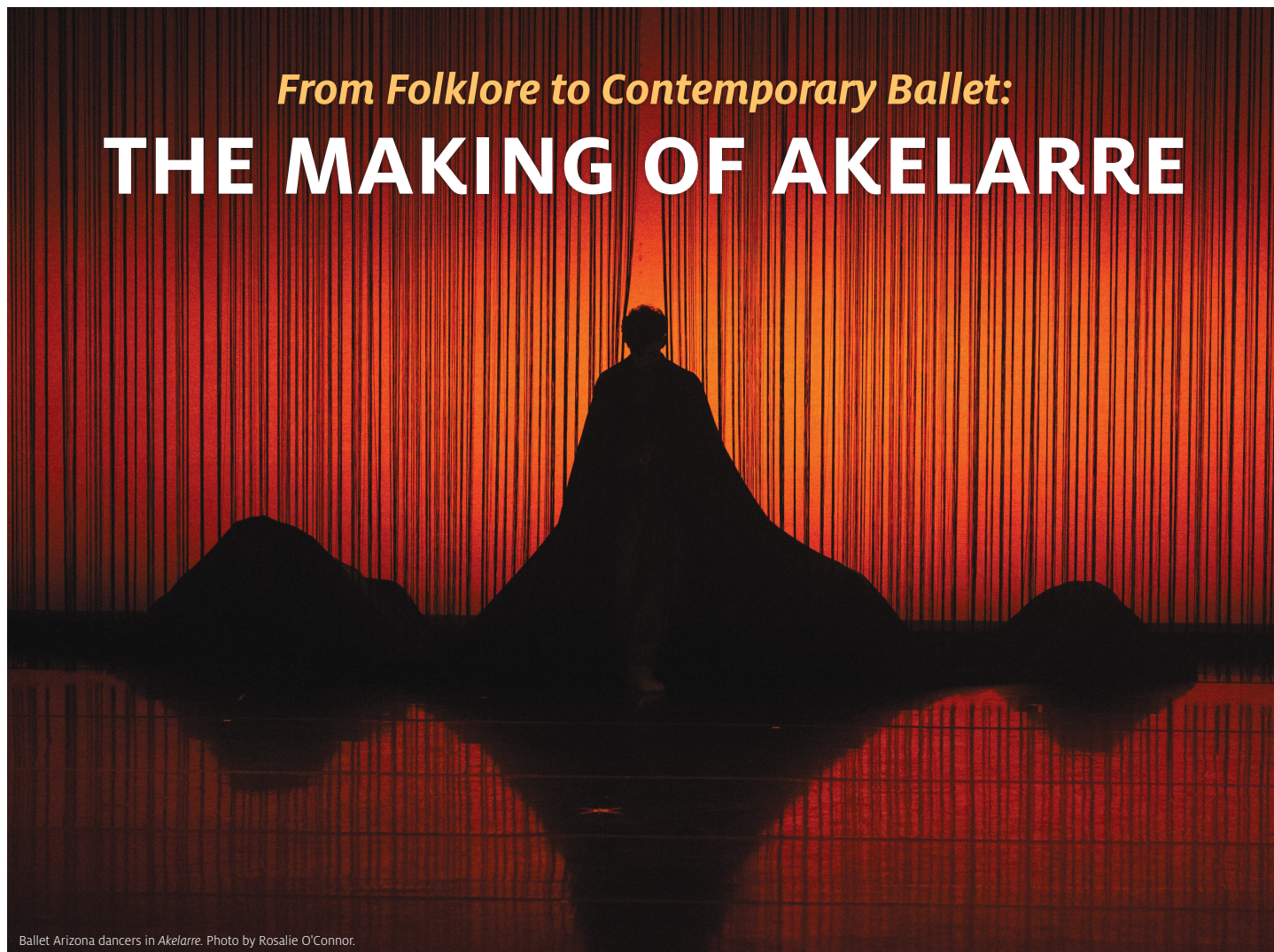
This community brings joy and enthusiasm into our halls and we are humbled by that shared experience. Art is a celebration of humanity; together, we are the champions of inspiration and magic.

With gratitude,

Jami Kozemczak, Executive Director



From Folklore to Contemporary Ballet: **THE MAKING OF AKELARRE**



Ballet Arizona dancers in *Akelarre*. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.

This past March, the curtain rose on Ballet Arizona's newest world premiere, *Akelarre*. Created by Resident Choreographer, Nayon Iovino, and featuring an original score by Phoenix-based composer Dr. Thomas Breadon Jr., audiences were transported to a realm where folklore, music, and movement collide in a powerful and haunting experience. It was also a shining example of how donor support makes it possible for new artistic visions to take the stage.

The title *Akelarre*, meaning "witches' sabbath" in Basque, evokes eerie tales of moonlit gatherings. Nayon drew inspiration not only from this European myth, but from the stories of his Brazilian roots. *Growing up, we were told the legend of the Cuca, a witch-like creature that stole children in the night,*" Iovino shares. *"With Akelarre, I wanted to channel that same sense of mystery, fear, and transformation through dance."*

Breadon's haunting score, brought to life by the Mill Ave Chamber Players, was the initial spark for the project. "I had written the music as a kind of abstract exploration" Breadon explains. "When Nayon heard it, he saw a story begin to unfold. That's the magic of collaboration."

The result was a hypnotic piece for six dancers, three women and three men, which blurred the boundary between human and supernatural. The live music added a tangible intensity to the performance, allowing for a richer, more nuanced connection with the dancers.

Collaboration was central to Iovino's creative process. In the studio, Nayon welcomes the dancer's feedback saying, *"I want the movement to belong to them. It has to resonate in their bodies or it won't land with the audience."*



Ballet Arizona dancers and Mill Ave Chamber Players in *Akelarre*. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.



Ballet Arizona dancers in rehearsal. Photo by Randy Pacheco.

This open and intuitive approach extends to the costume design as well. Working closely with Costume Shop Director, Leonor Texidor, this is often the last piece of the puzzle, allowing the visual elements to emerge organically from the world Nayon has built.

Ultimately, *Akelarre* is more than a performance; it is a celebration of creative risk. Ballet Arizona continues to be a place where artists dare to dream and where audiences are invited into worlds they have never seen before. This is just one example of how your generosity breathes life into bold, beautiful art.

“New works like this keep us on our toes, literally and figuratively. They challenge us to reimagine what ballet can be.”

– Nayon Iovino

A special thank you to the sponsors whose generosity made *Akelarre* possible:

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Joyce & Jim Smith	Ann & Van Wolf
Jami Kozemczak & Brad Reifschneider	Flavia Campbell

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

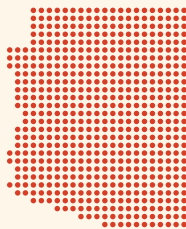
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May 1 – 4 (*All Members*) | Symphony Hall
All Balanchine

May 1 – 4 (\$1,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Prima Circle Intermission Receptions at *All Balanchine*

May 12 (\$1,000 & Up) | Desert Botanical Garden
Eroica Dress Rehearsal Viewing

May 14 (\$1,500 & Up) | Desert Botanical Garden
Eroica Opening Night Reception

May 14 – 31 (*All Members*) | Desert Botanical Garden
Eroica

May 31 – June 1 (*All Members*) | Orpheum Theater
Spring Performance by The School of Ballet Arizona

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Ballet Arizona dancer Luis Corrales. Photo by Ed Flores, photo composite by Angie Slade.