

## Welcome!

This is the 6th collaborative performance between The School of Ballet Arizona and Phoenix Youth Symphony Orchestras. We hope you enjoy today's production of *Raymonda* choreographed by Marius Petipa. The ballet explores love, loyalty, courage, and the triumph of good over evil, with *Raymonda's* character often portrayed as both virtuous and strong willed. While the original plot emphasizes courtly romance and chivalric adventure, modern adaptations highlight female agency and heroism in wartime contexts.

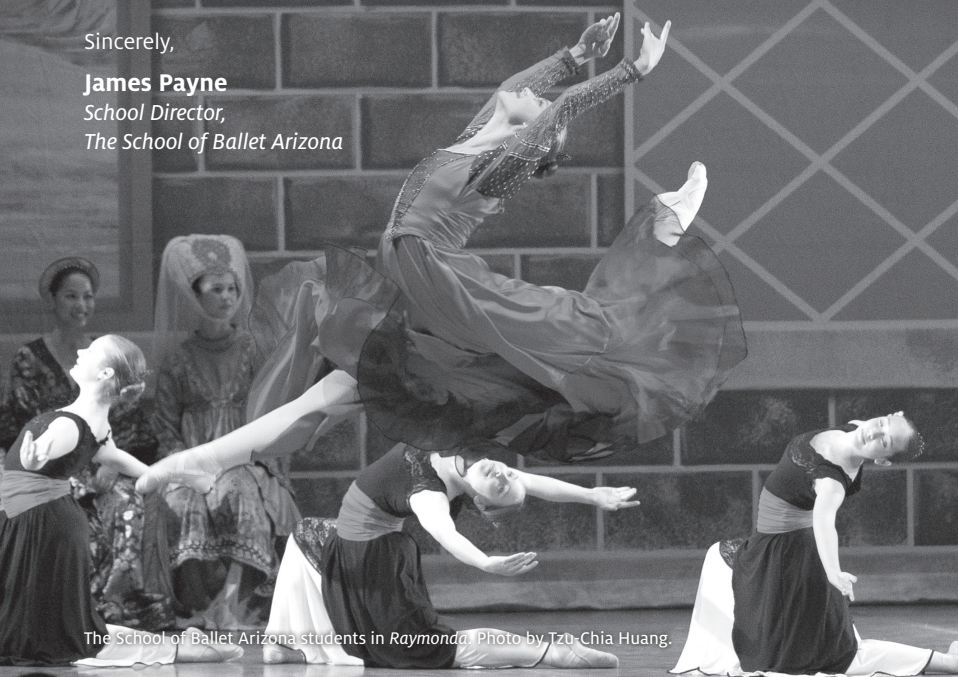
Although the original choreography is by Marius Petipa, this performance would not be possible without the staging of Maria Simonetti. As the School's Principal Répétiteur, Maria continues to dedicate her time, expertise, and care to our students, spending countless long days preparing them for this performance. Lisbet Companioni has also contributed choreography to this production and has assisted Maria throughout the rehearsal process. I am deeply grateful to have both of them maintain such a strong and meaningful presence within our school.

Since our first joint performance of *Swan Lake* at Desert Botanical Garden in May 2021, we have forged an incredible partnership that has brought together student artists in a spirit of hope, joy, and artistry. We are proud of our students' dedication to their craft, and even more proud of our community's unwavering support of youth arts education. Thank you to all of The School of Ballet Arizona and Phoenix Youth Symphony Orchestras families, faculty, staff, and friends for your constant support of our students and our organizations. You have all made countless sacrifices in support of the students' education and well-being, and we are deeply grateful. We look forward to continuing this partnership and offering our students this unparalleled collaborative experience.

Sincerely,

**James Payne**

*School Director,  
The School of Ballet Arizona*



The School of Ballet Arizona students in *Raymonda*. Photo by Tzu-Chia Huang.

THE SCHOOL OF BALLET ARIZONA AND  
PHOENIX YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS PRESENT

# RAYMONDA

May 30 – 31, 2026 at Orpheum Theatre



*Music by Alexander Glazunov*

*Choreography after Marius Petipa*

*Additional Choreography by*

*Lisbet Companioni, assisted by Maria Simonetti*

*Staged by Maria Simonetti*

*Conducted by Matthew Kasper*

*Lighting Design by Michael Panvini*

Presented by

**Richard P. Stahl  
Charitable Fund**

Sponsored by

**FREED  
OF LONDON**

# Raymonda Synopsis

## ACT 1

Friends and family gather at Doris castle for the name day celebrations of the young countess Raymonda. In attendance are her aunt, Countess Sybille, her friends Henrietta and Clémence, and the two troubadours Béranger and Bernard. A messenger, sent by Jean de Brienne, Raymonda's fiancé and noble knight, arrives. Raymonda rejoices when she reads Jean de Brienne will arrive the next day for their wedding. The festivities continue late into the night, finally exhausting the young countess. Raymonda lies down on a couch and falls asleep, dreaming of the legendary La Dame Blanche, protector of the Doris household. La Dame Blanche orders Raymonda to follow her to the garden and, a moment later, Jean de Brienne appears. Raymonda runs happily into his arms and they are surrounded by celestial maidens. The happy lovers are together but suddenly Jean de Brienne disappears. Raymonda finds a rival knight in his place who declares his passionate love for her, but she quickly rejects him. Imps and elves appear from everywhere surrounding Raymonda, who awakens from her dreams.

## ACT II

The next day, Raymonda cannot hide her uneasiness caused by Jean de Brienne's delay. Raymonda sees a knight named Abderahman at the festivities, who she recognizes as the mysterious stranger from her dreams. He approaches her and offers wealth and power in exchange for her hand in marriage, but Raymonda remembers the warnings of the La Dame Blanche and rejects him. Enraged, he calls his servants to dance for her and attempts to abduct Raymonda. Jean de Brienne arrives, accompanied by his knights and challenges Abderahman to a duel. Jean de Brienne is victorious. Raymonda embraces her fiancé and the two join hands.

## ACT III

Raymonda and Jean de Brienne are finally married and a celebration begins. Everyone at court dresses in Hungarian fashion and performs a range of dances.



The School of Ballet Arizona students in *Raymonda*. Photo by Tzu-Chia Huang.



# THE SCHOOL OF BALLET ARIZONA

The School of Ballet Arizona offers comprehensive dance training grounded in the evolving traditions of classical ballet. With a wide variety of classes for all ages and skill levels, the school provides top-tier instruction, whether students aim for professional dance careers or simply wish to enhance their lives through dance. The curriculum includes classical ballet in a graded program for children through young adults, as well as pre-ballet, pointe, men's classes, Horton technique, and contemporary.

Our syllabus preserves the core principles of classical ballet while delivering the highest quality training at every level through:

- Internationally-renowned faculty
- Live piano accompaniment for most ballet classes
- Performance opportunities with Ballet Arizona, such as *The Nutcracker* and other productions
- A unique connection to Arizona's official ballet company
- Access to the Southwest's premier dance facility

For more information or to schedule an audition,  
visit [balletaz.org/school](http://balletaz.org/school)



## Director Biographies



### *Daniela Cardim*

*Artistic Director*

Daniela began her career at Ballet of Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro in 1994, becoming a soloist in 1995. She joined the Dutch National Ballet in 1999, performing key roles in ballets such as *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Romeo and Juliet*. She started choreographing as a young dancer and quickly gained recognition with works for the Dutch National Ballet like *Three Movements for Cello & Piano* and *Zahir*. She was selected for the New York Choreographic Institute in 2008 and was named a “New Name to Watch” by *Dance Europe Magazine* in 2015. She has created works for companies including Birmingham Royal Ballet, West Australian Ballet, New English Ballet Theatre, Dutch National Ballet - main and Junior companies, São Paulo Dance Company and Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro. Cardim has also taught, mentored and choreographed at institutions like The Royal Ballet School, Elmhurst Ballet School and English National Ballet. After retiring as a dancer in 2010, she earned a first-class honors degree in arts management from London South Bank University. She has held various leadership roles at the New English Ballet Theatre and was named artistic director of Ballet Arizona in 2024.



### *Jami Kozemczak*

*Executive Director*

Jami Kozemczak was appointed Executive Director for Ballet Arizona in May 2022, after having served as the Director of Development since 2015. Kozemczak works to advance the organization through a people-centered leadership model that focuses on building culture, expanding programs, and increasing revenue generation. During her tenure, the organization has successfully implemented a culture of philanthropy that permeates throughout the organization. She has secured more than \$50 million in contributed revenue during her time at Ballet Arizona, and increased earned revenue by 53% since her first year as Executive Director.

Kozemczak has 16 years of experience in arts non-profit management which includes fundraising, strategic planning, public relations, communications, donor relations, and marketing. Beginning her career as a marketing professional, she quickly transitioned to fundraising after discovering her true vocation was connecting donors to their passion. Jami holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science from Arizona State University. Jami’s volunteer work centers on mentorship; she served on the AFP Professional Mentoring Program Committee for 7 years and has a passion for helping individuals invest in themselves and their future.



*James Payne*  
School Director

James Payne began his ballet training in Phoenix, Arizona with Nina Marlow, Michel Fokine's great niece. He performed with Ballet West (1989-1994) and Houston Ballet (1994-2001). With over 35 years experience in ballet, he has excelled in both classical and contemporary roles, including soloist and principal roles in major classics by Balanchine, Forsythe, and Kylian.

After retiring from performing, Payne served as Houston Ballet's company manager, co-founded a student company and school in Texas, and choreographed five full-length and numerous one-act ballets. He has held roles including Philadelphia Ballet's School Director, Houston Ballet Academy faculty, and board member of the American Guild of Musical Artists. Currently, he is a Master Teacher, judge for YAGP, and repetiteur for Trey McIntyre, staging his ballets worldwide.

## *Ballet Arizona Administrative Staff*

### **ADMINISTRATIVE**

#### ***Director of Operations***

Alexandra Sarver

#### ***Executive Assistant***

Korina Mitchell

#### ***HR Generalist***

Christian Espinoza

#### ***Accounting Service***

Four Leaf Financial  
& Accounting

### **BOX OFFICE**

#### ***Box Office Manager***

Abigail Brow

#### ***Customer Experience Representatives***

Alexis Costello  
Abraham Newsum

### **MARKETING**

#### ***Director of Marketing***

Averi Gutierrez

#### ***Marketing Specialist***

Renée Rodriguez

#### ***Tessitura System***

#### ***Administrator***

Stephen McDonough

#### ***Additional Marketing Support***

Monet Almaraz

### **PHILANTHROPY**

#### ***Associate Director of Philanthropy***

Elyse Salisz

#### ***Corporate & Foundation Manager***

Sasha Vincett

#### ***Annual Fund Manager***

Paige Manne

#### ***Philanthropy Events & Volunteer Manager***

Haley Cantarella

#### ***Philanthropy Assistant***

Samantha Mooth

#### ***Grant Consultant***

Good Works Grant Writing

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

#### ***Director of Community Engagement***

Claire Martinez

#### ***Community Engagement Coordinator***

Elijah Evans

*Make summer magical with The School of Ballet Arizona's*

# Build-A-Ballet

## DANCE CAMP

*Young dancers will step into storytelling, movement, music, and creativity as they build their own ballet inspired by beloved classics!*

### MESA CAMPUS

June 22 – 25 | 9 – 11:30 am

Theme: The Sleeping Beauty

### PHOENIX CAMPUS

July 13 – 16 | 9 – 11:30 am

Theme: The Nutcracker

**Recommended for ages 4 – 7\***

**All experience levels are welcome!**

*\*Camp attendees must be fully potty trained to attend.*

**Price: \$200 per week**

*10% off for siblings after the first sibling*

*10% off second week if attending both sessions*

Learn more and register at

**[balletaz.org/school/dance-camp](http://balletaz.org/school/dance-camp)**



## Studio Company



Photo by Ron Brewer.

Photo: **Front Row** (from left to right): Emerson Butler, BriAnna Binzak, Nahomi Alafita, Abigail Carpenter, Scarlett Fulton, Laurel Ho **Back Row** (from left to right): Dakota Blake, Dasha Derkach, Emma Taylor, Juliana Utzinger, Noah Finnigan, Elizabeth Millard, Gabriella Agnew- Huertas, Madeleine Smith

The Studio Company performs alongside the professional company and presents its own works independently. The Studio Company is a bridge between school and professional life, providing an opportunity for students of the highest rank that possess the potential and desire to pursue a career in dance. An indispensable and important part of their training is understudying and appearing regularly on stage with Ballet Arizona and in Studio Company productions. Studio Company members are selected by audition only and hail from all over the world.



The School of Ballet Arizona students in *Raymonda*. Photo by Tzu-Chia Huang.

# The School of Ballet Arizona Students by Level

## PRIMARY A

Sophie Bond Choquette  
Luna Castillo  
Clio Dailey  
Keturah Edris  
Penelope Golfen  
Heidi Healey  
Madeline Hodel  
Rosalyn King  
Jayla Larson  
Sylvie Linksvayer  
Zoe Lopez  
Leora Miller  
Isla Poole  
Penelope Roosevelt  
Charlotte Skaggs  
Rhian Stamback  
Sienna Torruellas  
Julie Zhou  
Marlies Ziegenhein

## PRIMARY B

Amelia Adkins  
Mina Bingham  
Eloise Birch  
Rebel Bussey  
Ylva Davis  
Victoria Diaz  
Bodhi Everett  
Gemma Hansen  
Isabella Hegener  
Nadean Hernandez  
Magnolia Kasper  
Ruby Leopold  
Shiloh Lu  
Violet McKenzie  
Robyn Pierson  
Aria Pine  
Lucia Pirehpour

Kira Smith  
Caroline Stonebraker  
Isabel Swartz  
Charlotte Wyse

## PRE BALLET

Quinn Baldwin  
Gemma Farley  
Selah Folsom-Smith  
Scarlette Hieb  
Luna Huff  
Camille Roberts  
Elisa Russell  
Alice Seyller  
Aurora Telles

## LEVEL 1

Miah Alejandre-Castaneda  
Amina Ally  
Alexandra Castillo  
Luna Cutino  
Avery Davidson  
Quinn Feeney  
Allison Finet  
Adriana Hernandez  
Cienna Kennada  
Isabella Le Blanc  
Diane Niklaus  
Jocelyn Otero  
Vivian Parks  
Deznique Perez  
Emma Swartz  
Giselle Williams  
Camilla Cisneros  
June Nixon  
Kimberly Reyes Trevizo  
Faith Saldivar  
Essien Southwell  
Eliza Tepeyac Cortez  
Sadie Winters

## LEVEL 2

Catherine Aguirre  
Victoria Alyousef  
Emilia Aubrey  
Karli Bieber  
Penley Cobran  
Hayley Hochreiter  
Fiona Kasper  
Addison Kelly  
Lily Mitchell  
Sarah Ren  
Freya Riley  
Abigail Vogel

## LEVEL 3

Claudia Alejandre-Castaneda  
Audrey Baker  
Elliot Baugh  
Spirit Cunningham  
Serena Ehteshami  
Emily Flores  
Ella Gupta  
Leah Hernandez  
Evelyn King  
Nicole Lopez  
Chloe Scott  
Brody Smith  
Clara Thornton-Fawcett  
Charlotte Vittori-Lauderdale  
Scarlett Wood  
Violet Wood

## LEVEL 4

Yulianna Acuna  
Maia Alvarado  
Ornina Alyousef  
Valeria Blanco Reyes  
Lillian Gerstman  
Savannah Gibb

*continued next page*

Nina Gupta  
Anabel Gutierrez  
Zara Hu  
Theodore Kasper  
Beckett Keenan  
Addison McCorkle  
Charlotte McCorkle  
Victoria Mordoukhovskaia  
Diesel Skaggs  
Avery Southern  
Ziva Stark  
Adaline Wagenaar

#### LEVEL 5

Salara Bennett  
Nina Campbell  
Claudia Di Russo  
Ahnalee Higginbotham  
Soleil Jaffe  
Ana Monreal Hernandez  
Celine Park  
Lucienne Pelanne  
Cleo Pettit  
Nora Riley  
Clara Wood  
De'Anthony Wood  
Alexa Zammit

#### LEVEL 6

Amber Allen  
Wayuwita Ben  
Brianna Gray  
Elliana Guzman  
Noah Guzman  
Seraphina Hieb  
Abigail Kho  
Roya May  
Cassidy McFarland  
Charley O'Connor  
Scarlette Watras

#### PRE-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM

Petra Aleksic  
Virginia Anderson  
Lydia Campbell  
Reaghan Rossell  
Charlotte Specter  
Keyarra Thompson  
Charlotte Woodside

#### PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM 2

Emma Bakhru  
Annelise Dixon  
Sonia Hu

Savannah Johnson  
Magdalynn Kenney  
Tess Meyer  
Katelyn Schlecht  
Talia Simonian  
Jaeger Skaggs  
Seneca Vincett

#### PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM 1

Hannah Dодt  
Isabella Guzman  
Alexandria Watt

#### PROFESSIONAL DAY PROGRAM

Chloe Arriaga  
Sophia Bakonyi  
Henry Deane  
Filomena Falsitta  
Shaelee Morris  
Karly Willis  
Lauren Wood



The School of Ballet Arizona students in *Raymonda*. Photo by Tzu-Chia Huang.

## The School of Ballet Arizona Faculty



**Gillmer Duran**

Upper Division  
Student Liaison



**Lisbet Companioni**

Company  
Ballet Mistress



**Luis Martinez**

Principal Faculty



**David Krensing**

Company  
Ballet Master &  
Summer Intensive  
Coordinator



**Fabiana Poulis**

Children's and  
Lower Division  
Coordinator



**Gia Firicano**

Arizona School for  
the Arts Program  
Manager

## Additional Artistic Staff

**Production Management  
Consultant**

Michael J. Panvini

**Technical Director**

Jessica Muñoz

**Assistant Technical**

**Director/Head Electrician**

Sam Cooper

**Stage Manager**

Laura Cadieux

**Deck Crew**

Lilly Escobar

**Costume Director**

Leonor Texidor

**Wardrobe Supervisor**

Kaler Pilar Navazo

**School Photographer**

Tzu-Chia Huang

**Costume Shop**

Cecilia Acosta

Flor Loya

Camila Corrales

Edna Orlanes

Vera Solodovnikova

Iris Weng

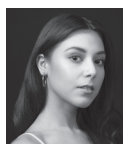
## The School of Ballet Arizona Teaching Faculty



**Sibylle  
Acatos-Dadey**  
Ballet



**Rachel  
Gehr**  
Ballet



**Natalie  
Ramirez**  
Ballet



**Daniel  
Baudendistel**  
Ballet



**Tyler  
Hooten**  
Contemporary



**Lainie  
Seretis**  
Open Ballet



**Camila  
Corrales**  
Ballet



**Mishelle  
Mackle**  
Ballet



**Kleiton  
Sistélos**  
Horton  
Technique



**Sarah  
Diniz**  
Ballet



**Gail  
Passey-Reed**  
Ballet



**Robyn  
Tennyson**  
Ballet

## School Staff

### **School Manager**

Jasmine Nunn

### **School Administrator**

Tyler Hooten

### **School Assistants**

Maya Sarraf

### **Volunteer T Shirt Design and Coordination**

Joanne Sevrain

## School Accompanists

Shauna Bierly  
Larisa Denman  
Kylar Gardner  
Amanda Hidalgo

Robert Kaplan  
Klara Kukumi  
Jisun Myung  
Larry Phibbs

Natasha Schwimmer  
Terry Seretis  
Bill Swayze  
Grace Templeton

## PYSO and SBAZ Director Biographies



### **Matthew Kasper, PYSO General and Artistic Director**

American conductor Matthew Kasper is a dynamic presence in the artistic communities he serves, known for bridging 20th- and 21st-century American repertoire with its European roots.

From 2015 to 2023, Kasper served as Assistant and later Resident Conductor of The Phoenix Symphony, leading more than 250 performances across subscription, pops, education, and chamber series. Highlights included Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Ives' Second Symphony, Handel's Messiah, and a two-year tenure with the Bösendorfer Piano Competition. He was promoted to Resident Conductor in 2018 in recognition of his artistic impact.

Kasper's work has earned national and international recognition, including a 2020 Career Assistance Award from the Solti Foundation U.S. and participation in Jukka-Pekka Saraste's LEAD! program. He has guest conducted widely with ensembles such as the San Francisco Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, and others across the U.S., Asia, and Europe.

Equally active in ballet and opera, Kasper was named the first-ever Principal Conductor of Ballet Arizona following successful productions of *The Nutcracker* and *Romeo and Juliet*. He has also appeared with New York City Ballet and conducted a broad operatic repertoire, including contemporary world premieres.

Since 2020, he has served as Artistic and General Director of the Phoenix Youth Symphony Orchestras, expanding partnerships and educational access. A 2023 Piper Fellow, Kasper holds degrees in violin and conducting from Queens College and the Chicago College of Performing Arts, and lives in Phoenix with his family.



### **Maria Simonetti, Rehearsal Director & Principal Répétiteur**

Ms. Simonetti, a Buenos Aires native, trained at Teatro Colón and danced with La Joven Guardia of Ballet Nacional de Cuba before assisting Laura Alonso as stage director for Cuballet. She taught at several institutions, including the Magda Aunon School of Ballet and Pittsburgh's Point Park College, before becoming ballet mistress at Hubbard Street Dance Chicago in 1995. While assisting choreographer Daniel Ezralow, she contributed to various productions, including *Mandala* and choreography for Pope John Paul II's International Youth Day. She has staged works for the Bratislava Dance Theatre and the National Ballet of Greece. In 1997, she became rehearsal director for Ballet Arizona while still working as a visiting artist, returning to Hubbard Street Dance Chicago each summer. Recently, she collaborated with Ib Andersen on *Romeo & Juliet* for Kansas City Ballet's 50th-anniversary season and served as a guest teacher for Nederlands Dans Theater.

# Phoenix Youth Symphony Orchestras Musicians

## Serena Fornay, Assistant Conductor

### VIOLIN I

Joshua Lee  
 Jayden Yoneyama  
 Michael Erickson  
 Daniel Yang  
 Graham Schaub  
 Evangeline Miller  
 Aaren Ho  
 Michael Zhang  
 Benny Taylor  
 Ried Fleischman  
 Chenye Li  
 Cindy Chen

### VIOLIN II

Aimi Siejak  
 Angela Yoneyama  
 Steve Wongso  
 Claire Su  
 Liam Whelan  
 Jinyao Audrey Zhou  
 Jason Kai  
 Ben Park  
 Kyle Hwang  
 Hayden Fowler  
 Mingtian Skye Peng

### VIOLA

Alex Gong  
 Xavier Semien  
 Aaron Zhang  
 Arianna Ruei-Shin Yeh  
 Aisha Saperbak  
 Kate Colligado  
 Gowri Vinay  
 Jiin Bak  
 Rheema Li  
 Ethan Hetherington

### CELLO

Justin Kang  
 Israel Kim  
 Zachariah Ham  
 Ethan Chang  
 Meredith Liu  
 Fayfay He  
 Yola Svoma  
 Nathan Chang  
 Gavin Hart  
 Jioh Bak  
 Isabel Nasr

### BASS

Ahnaf Muntaqim

### FLUTE I

Sophia Chen  
 Elizabeth Chong

### FLUTE II

Lauren Carney  
 John Yoo

### PICCOLO

Cassidy Popkin

### OBOE I

Johsua Hayes

### OBOE II

Hadley Moore

### ENGLISH HORN

Hadley Moore

### CLARINET I

Kavi Gullapalli  
 Izzie Meidlinger

### CLARINET II

Max Xue

### CLARINET III

Lucas Hwang

### HORN I

Irene Liu

### TRUMPET I

Pola Hobbs

### TRUMPET II

Aiden Lytle

### TRUMPET III

Abraham Lezcas

### TUBA

Pete Garcia

### HARP

Grace McNeal

### PIANO/CELESTE

Mia Lucchesi

### PERCUSSION

Todd Betz,  
*Percussion Director*  
 Charles Radway  
 Marcus Siangio  
 Aiden Brewer  
 Javier Becerra

ROMEO & JULIET | THE NUTCRACKER | DON QUIXOTE | PULSE  
DESERT LINES | BALLET IN THE MAKING

2026-2027

# BALLET ARIZONA

40th Anniversary SEASON

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND UNLOCK EXCLUSIVE  
BENEFITS, WITH SAVINGS UP TO 35%.**

**Flex Packages now available. Learn more at [balletaz.org](http://balletaz.org).**