



FALL 2017

EN POINTE



DEAR ALUMNI, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS,

Our forty-second season is off and rolling with dancers actively participating in community events such as Fashion in the Falls, our annual Gala "Pirouettes in Paris", and the Tree Festival at the Knight Center and many more yet to come. We are working hard in the studio with rehearsals in preparation for several in-school and library performances in continuing our mission of educating area children in the art of dance.

Our annual Akron Civic Theatre performances on March 10 and 11, 2018 will feature a reprisal of James Sewell's "The Carnival of the Animals" and an original ballet, "The Magic Flute" based on Mozart's opera of the same name. The inventive choreography and colorful costumes by Erich Yetter brings to life this magical opera that will be sure to captivate audience members of all ages.

We hope you will put our shows on your calendar, bring family and friends and help us engage your schools, social networks and groups with a truly unique dance experience. For those of

you who haven't received an e-blast, joined our Facebook page or viewed our website, we would welcome your email contact information to



update our database and eventually go green. You can contact us by mail, phone or email to respond.

Our biggest challenge this year is our need to increase funding through people like you, alumni, families and friends. If you are not aware, area foundations are dropping their funding for small arts organizations such as ours to collaborate on causes for school education and the poor. Although we applaud their bold moves, our small arts organization is looking at a \$30k shortfall in the next year. This is a huge hit for us! Now more than ever, no donation is too small. Ninety percent of each dollar donated goes directly to programming which is something very few non-profits could claim. We list our supporters on our programs, Facebook, Instagram and website at www.balletexcelohio.org. Being able to continue the vision of our Founding Artistic Director Nan Klinger is important for our dancers and our community. I feel blessed to be a part of this great organization and hope you will find it in your heart to help the arts stay alive in our area.



Sincerely,

Mia Klinger

PIROUETTES IN PARIS, SASHAYS TO SUCCESS!

This year's BXO annual gala, whose theme was "Pirouettes in Paris," was tres Magnifique! The event was held at Portage Country Club on October 7th, 2017 on a lovely autumn evening. Attended by 110 glamorous guests, the Parisian themed fundraiser was complete with beautiful centerpieces, plumes and chic décor, a creative array of auction items from a hot air balloon ride to the much-coveted French dinner at the famous restaurant, Chez Francois in Vermilion. All enjoyed the dinner, the exciting dessert dash and the generous paddle raising for Ballet Excel Ohio's outreach program, Reach Out and Dance (ROAD). Garnering over \$7,000 in corporate and individual sponsorships, combined with proceeds of the silent and live auction which utilized the electronic bidding program, BIDPAL for the first time this year, we successfully raised a total of over \$30,000.

Highlighting the evening was an elegant trio performance of classical variations (Raymonda, Aurora and Cortège Hongrois). Captivating the audience were beautiful BXO company dancers, Emily Kavenagh, senior at Revere High School, Christianna Poblete, 8th grader at Our Lady of the Elms and Joni Allen, Senior at Firestone High School.

Chaired by Susie Dix and her gala committee extraordinaire: Theresa Arnold, Maria Banig, Sara Blankenship, Anne Coughlin, Jennifer Doucet, Shannon Gray, Jennifer Harris, Carrie Schnirring, Gina Poblete, Jennifer Woods and Jackie Zorich, the power team combined hard work, creativity, endless meetings at Mustard Seed Café, late nights and many glasses of wine that contributed to a successful and fun occasion.



A heartfelt thank you to the family members of BXO, the alumni families and special friends of BXO who generously donated and who continue to support the mission of this unique organization.

The funds raised this year will meet BXO's mission of bringing original ballets to local schools and community venues in Northeast Ohio. It will also help support BXO programs such as Reach Out and Dance (ROAD), Community Ticketing, Scouting for the Arts and Ballet Excel on Tour, making the Arts accessible to children and their families.

Merci Beaucoup to all for your generosity, friendship, kindness and support in making "Pirouettes in Paris" a night to remember.



LETTER FROM BOARD PRESIDENT, SARA BLANKENSHIP

As leaves fall, and the season is changing, Ballet Excel Ohio commemorates its 42nd season of exceptional dance and community outreach.

For over four decades, Ballet Excel Ohio, formerly Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet has been delighting audiences with performances and providing exceptional ballet training to local children.

Dancers and choreographers are hard at work getting ready to perform **The Magic Flute** choreographed by Akron's own, Erich Yetter. Also, this year, they will do a reprise of a beloved all time favorite - **Carnival of the Animals**.

Thankfully, many members have stepped up and contributed to the success of our company and I want to take this opportunity to personally thank everyone who contributed their time to make our annual Gala the best ever! Ballet Excel Ohio could not survive without each and every one of you contributing and participating in our organization in some way, shape or form.

Lastly, I hope to see all of you at the Premier of The Magic Flute at the Civic Theatre in Akron on March 10 & 11th. Bring your children and families to the theater. It is live action; it is real dancers; it is imagination; it is up close and personal. It touches and inspires for a lifetime.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Board President. If there is anything you would like to talk about, I am more than happy to hear from you. (president@balletexcelohio.org 216-509-3500).

Best regards,

Sara Blankenship
President of the Board

REACH OUT AND DANCE



Reach Out and Dance®, is the educational outreach program of Ballet Excel Ohio. This year's ROAD® season includes second graders from Immaculate Heart of Mary, Our Lady of The Elms Elementary, Helen Arnold CLC, and middle schoolers from Jennings. We have changed up the program to consist of two 10-week sessions during the school year with an in-school performance for each school to showcase the students. We are excited to spread the joy of dance throughout schools in the Akron area and are enjoying the change of pace. ROAD® scholarships will be given to all participating students to attend a workshop (information TBA) which can then lead to further participation with BXO.

Facebook and Instagram are being updated with all of the changes being made to the ROAD® program, so please bear with us as we transform and grow!



WELCOME APPRENTICES

Adalyn Zorich	4th grade	Miller South School for Performing Arts
Clara Woods	5th grade	Immaculate Heart of Mary
Wendy Moreno-Garcia	4th grade	Harris Elementary School
Emma Simms	9th grade	Stow Munroe Falls HS
Sameer Mainali	3rd grade	Harris Elementary School
Rebecca Banig	6th grade	Tallmadge Middle School
Lisa Akin	3rd grade	Parkside Elementary School (Solon)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 7	<i>Pirouettes in Paris Gala</i> , Portage Country Club
November 25	Holiday Tree Festival, John S. Knight Center
January 6	Library Performance, Fairlawn Library
January 13	Library Performance, Kent Free Library
January 20	Library Performance, Akron Main Library
January 31	In-School Performance, Dover
February 3	Library Performance, Cuyahoga Falls Library
February 8	In-School Performance, Our Lady of the Elms
February 27	In-School Performance, Wooster
February 17	Library Performance, Hudson Library
March 10 & 11	Civic Performances: The Magic Flute and Carnival of the Animals

OUR FUNDING

Thank you to these incredible organizations that make Ballet Excel Ohio, and its outreach programs, accessible to the youth of our community.



2017 SUMMER STUDY

Our dancers were busy this summer! The end of the school year means opportunities for our dancers to travel near and far to gain valuable dance experiences. Listed below is how Ballet Excel dancers spent their summer studies:

Joni Allen	EID	Emily Kline	Boston Ballet Summer Dance Program, MA
Lisa Aiken	EID		EID
Lilyann Arnold	EID	Carolyn Lott	School of Cleveland Ballet, OH
Rebecca Banig	EID		EID
Jade Blankenship	Chautauqua Institution, NY	Sameer Mianali	EID
	Ribbon Mill Ballet, PA	Abigail Mathews	Gelsey Kirkland Academy, NY
	EID		EID
Sophia Boyages	EID	Wendy Moreno-Garcia	EID
Danielle Castle	Ribbon Mill Ballet, PA	Julia Pentasuglio	Ribbon Mill Ballet, PA
	EID		EID
Elizabeth Coughlin	Saratoga Springs Summer Dance, NY	Cara Poblete	Alonzo King LINES Ballet, CA
	Ribbon Mill Ballet, PA		Steps Dance Studio, Philippines
	EID		EID
Emma Doucet	The Rock School for Dance, PA	Christianna Poblete	Houston Ballet Academy, TX
	Ribbon Mill Ballet, PA		Steps Dance Studio, Philippines
	EID		EID
Ellie Ferry	Gelsey Kirkland Academy, NY	Emma Simms	EID
	EID	Maggie Stone	Ribbon Mill Ballet, PA
Vivian Gray	Chautauqua Institution, NY		EID
	EID	Clara Woods	EID
Jenna Harris	Ribbon Mill Ballet, PA	Adalyn Zorich	EID
	EID	Lex Zorich	EID
Makenna Johnson	The Rock School for Dance, PA		
	EID		
Emily Kavenagh	Carolina Ballet, NC		
	EID		

EID = Excellence In Dance

BALLET EXCEL OHIO AWARDS SUMMER DANCE SCHOLARSHIPS

Through our generous donors, grants and fundraisers, Ballet Excel Ohio was able to award dance scholarships to our company dancers at the End of the Year Celebration. Congratulations to all scholarship award recipients.

GAYLE NOBLE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Jade Blankenship	Emily Kavenagh
Elizabeth Coughlin	Emily Kline
Emma Doucet	Abigail Mathews
Ellie Ferry	Cara Poblete
Vivian Gray	Christianna Poblete
Makenna Johnson	Maggie Stone



Seniors

Carolyn Lott, Stow/Munroe Falls High School
 Joni Allen, Firestone High School
 Emily Kline, Firestone High School
 Sophia Boyages, Hudson High School
 Emily Kavenagh, Revere High School

Alumni News

MISS HANNAH COLEY

An exclusive interview with CVYB alumna dancer Hannah Coley (23 y.o.) CVYB'12, conducted by current BXO dancer, Cara Poblete (15 y.o.) via a Skype video conference. Hannah does mission work as a Jesuit Volunteer in Punta Gorda, Belize. From Akron to the breezy shores of Belize last October 6th, 2017, here is a recount of their inspiring dialogue...

Hannah: Hi Cara! How are you? My goodness, you are all so grown up Cara!

Cara: *So are you Hannah! I feel like I am the older dancer now just like you were when I was an apprentice and you were the older dancer then.*

Cara: *Where are you now? What do you do and how did this whole journey start? What inspired you to do this?*

Hannah: I am doing well. I've been in Belize for a year and a half now. I am in the most southern part in a town called Punta Gorda. I can't believe it, it's so surreal! I've had friends visit me and my family will be visiting in December!

I am working at a Jesuit Church, with its primary school. I had (4) years of Jesuit education at Walsh Jesuit High School, then I took college at Loyola University in Chicago majoring in Philosophy with a concentration in social justice & ethics, while also double minoring in Peace studies and Dance, so I was a part of the Dance department. I think Loyola pushed me into this place by teaching me how to be creative, to work with my education, my spiritual life, and dance. The dance department was tremendously supportive. My college experience helped me connect my faith, philosophy, recognize how the arts can be huge part of this social justice movement, especially in these scary times, how to bring people together.

Cara: *That sounds like a lot that you went through! Were there any lessons that you learned from the company or from Mia? Going through college, your challenges and your life now?*

Hannah: One thing that sticks out to me – as an alumnus of CVYB, working with Miss Mia and other dancers during all those years, is the reality of community, the freedom to be creative. I was encouraged to work hard and recognize the beauty in the spirit within myself. Miss Mia really encouraged diversity in the company. She can pick out in dancers what is unique in each of us based on our strengths. This is exactly what community is all about – neighborhoods! To identify strengths, bring people together with all its challenges and joyous moments! It was a privilege to work with fellow dancers and also our choreographers – working with people who are so passionate about their craft. This was definitely something that inspired me to be passionate about my own faith, social Justice, the people around me, being sensitive to be able to pick up the needs of other people... Francis Patrelle, James Sewell, they were amazing!

Cara: *What do you like most about your job?*

Hannah: I work at a parish and I am the youth minister so I get to work for all the youth in town and the outside villages within my district. Something I love so much is that I am able to accompany other people in their lives and spiritual journey. Especially young people because it helps me to look back at what I experienced when I was their age, and dance comes to mind since it was such a huge part of growing up, it was part of my formation, understanding myself. My favorite part is being able to create meaningful spaces for other people. I also love living in community with two other volunteers, we travel together, experience nature... I love that I live by the Caribbean Sea that greets me each morning! There are a million little things I love here... when I leave, my take away would be my individual experience, my work with the youth.

Cara: *As a youth myself, I want to know how do you respond to teenagers who are not close with their faith?*

Hannah: It's so hard. It is difficult to admit but the church is not attractive to young people. I see that my role is to meet people where they are at. Just having



“How Dance Transformed My Life!”

conversations with them and listening. It's what I do most: What are teenagers thinking, what do they want to do? What are their talents? Let's figure that out – and let's create something. A lot of people like to sing, they love music, some are incredible drummers, their music is a cultural style that has been passed on to them from generations ahead – music is a huge connecting piece and I understand that in young people, since I consider myself still young, I'm only 23.

Cara: *What are your plans for the future?*

Hannah: I really want to teach. I want to continue to work on myself. I would love to do something with retreats having been exposed to campus ministry. I hope I get to travel too and experience different cultures. Belize is so diverse, it has opened my eyes to what diversity really is and how people can co-exist with one another... I like to learn more. Grad school will come too!

Cara: *What is your most memorable time as a CVYB company dancer?*

Hannah: A place I've been missing a lot that reminds me of home is the Civic Theatre. I realize it was such a privilege to be able to perform in a historic place, the performing arts community of Akron... I took this for granted! I worked hard, showed up and danced on stage but it truly was a spiritual experience for me looking back, to be able to perform for other people and to show a part of myself that I don't normally show in everyday life – that was really special! I also remember going to the balcony, finding secret passages, going to where we were not supposed to go and being able to watch performances from a different angle. Ah, Civic week, I will never ever forget it!

Cara: *What advice can you give us younger dancers?*

Hannah: As a 23 year old working with young people, and having two younger sisters, I would say to all of you in the company: Be kind and gentle with yourself. Let dance be a space of peace, self-love and community for you. It can be a lot, especially in these times of division and heartbreak in our world. Let yourself love yourself even in challenging moments. Lift one another up too. Ballet is really an incredibly powerful creative force. I've seen the way that arts can really change the world.

Just be kind to one another, it will be so much more life giving, relatable to other people too. You've always been talented and passionate Cara... just let that transform you and learn from one another. I wish I heard that more often growing up, that dance can be something more than just performing and being in the studio.

Cara: *How did you manage to stick with the company until your senior year?*

Hannah: A big part was admitting that I felt many times that I could not balance all this! I think sitting with my mom, having endless conversations, the supportive campus ministry. Faith was a big part but also recognizing dance can translate to other areas of my life was really important. Not until my junior year did I realize, that missing dance classes did not mean being disconnected from it. It was important to gain experiences outside the studio. To go on a retreat for instance meant self-care, and it helped me be fully present to myself and to other people by attending it. There's so much in demand from a young dancer, a lot to balance. Recognizing your support systems is also very helpful. Miss Mia and others in the company want you want to be well rounded. Being an artist, you can artistically interact with the world because of what you are in the studio – when you experience life outside the studio, in what way was that experience life giving? This can only help you to be a better dancer.



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2017-2018 Ballet Excel Ohio Dancers

