



FALL 2022

EN POINTE



DEAR ALUMNI, FAMILIES, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY,

As with many organizations, Ballet Excel Ohio has learned to survive through even the toughest of times. Our dance programs are in full swing again and flourishing. We work incredibly hard to raise the funds it takes to support our unique and innovative dance company. This is the first year since 2020 that our Reach Out And Dance® program has been teaching dance in our local schools and searching for those kids that are ignited in dance, offering full scholarships into our Pre-professional Program. Little do they know their lives will be forever changed through dance.

After many of our dancers returned from summer studies all over the country, they went back to the classroom to learn new choreography for our 2022-2023 season. "Hansel and Gretel" choreographed by Erich Yetter will premiere at the Akron Civic Theater on March 11 & 12, 2023, with a whimsical witch that is outsmarted by a brave Hansel and Gretel. Our audiences will fall in love with Erich Yetter's beautiful and touching choreography. Another ballet we commissioned, "Gaga Games", choreographed by Danielle Diniz is a fun and joyful contemporary piece with instrumental music by Lady Gaga. It will be sure to capture the attention of the school children when we premiere this piece in February 2023.

This past fall I was fortunate to be chosen as one of the five dance teachers to participate in School of American Ballet's National Visiting

Fellowship program. I spent a week working with many of the current staff at SAB in learning their syllabus. It took me back to my mother's class (Miss Nan) and combinations of my childhood. They were stunningly the same! This also allowed me to visit with alumni Jonathan McCray. This is Jonathan's second year at the school and he recently submitted one of his choreographic pieces at the school to rave reviews by his teachers. Go Jonathan! I look forward to continuing my fellowship at SAB this spring and bringing the knowledge of Balanchine's training back to our dancers in Ohio.



As you plan your year-end giving, we hope you will consider making a gift to Ballet Excel Ohio. Your generous tax-deductible contribution helps ensure the survival of BXO and ROAD® as we continue to deliver world-class artistic experiences to our dancers and community.

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy holiday season!

Warmly,

Mia Klinger
Artistic Director

PRIMA AWARD BESTOWED TO LAURA DiCOLA

Written by Lois Margaret Nora

When we speak about volunteers and their important contributions, we often speak in terms of talent, time, and treasure. I used those three words in reflecting on Laura as I framed my comments.

Talent... Laura DiCola... what talent! Her intelligence, creativity, communication skills, strategic thinking, and leadership abilities are just a few of her talents. These talents led to her national stature and reputation in law – her first career, and now to a national reputation and leadership position in early childhood education.

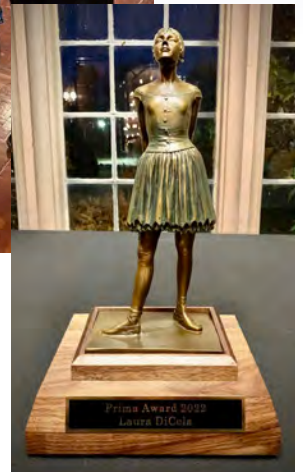
Laura brought all those talents to her work with Ballet Excel Ohio (“BXO”). She insisted on, and then led us through, strategic planning; she told our story – and whether to a studio audience of donors, a funding agency, or a sold-out crowd at Civic – she communicated the passion and importance of ballet and this company. She championed outreach to the community, helping to bring dance to others who would otherwise not experienced it. She led our board in an inclusive way that leveraged everyone’s skills and kept us focused on mission.

Time... I am struck that I met Laura 20 years ago when our family first came to Akron. She was already engaged with then Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet, and so her efforts not only span remarkable amounts of contributed time both during individual years, and collectively over two decades. What tremendous devotion – both in the short-term activities and also in long term commitment!

And treasure... now oftentimes treasure is just thought about in terms of monetary donations. And surely Laura has been a stalwart donor to BXO over the years. But the word treasure makes me think about other aspects of Laura.

Laura treasures family. Her engagement with BXO, as well as her involvement with schools, horseback riding and other activities, are rooted in her deep love for her daughters and their importance in her life. I have watched and admired as, over the years, she managed work obligations, her limited free time, and traveling long distances to attend events in order to be deeply engaged with her daughters and their extended family. Travel, time together over the holidays, carpools, attending ballet performances and other activities – being together and being there for her children has been a top priority.

Laura treasures people – and children, in particular. I watched as she extended her care to include all of us who were engaged with the ballet. She included shy people in conversations, managed backstage drama in the kindest of ways, went out of her way to support families going through wonderful times and traumas. She was genuinely enthusiastic about hearing about ballet dreams and outside interests from all company members and often their siblings as well.



I saw her quietly encourage the company’s dancers when they struggled with a hard critique, not getting a role, having an illness or just thinking through what summer program to attend or high school courses to take. She is remarkable not only in her ability to communicate with young children but also middle and high school young adults as well. Through these actions, she became a wonderful role model for all the children and particularly our daughters. I know I am not the only parent who considered Laura a role model for myself, but also encouraged my daughters to “Be Like Laura”.

Laura treasures the arts – for themselves and for how they vitalize a community. Over the years, over now-too-infrequent dinners, we have discussed movies, art, books, dance, and music. Her interests are eclectic and I always learned from her. Her passions have helped advance the arts in northeast Ohio through her own efforts; for example, Reach Out And Dance® would not be what it is today without her leadership in those early years of the program. And now, she also helps advance the arts through her support of Howard, another extraordinary community leader who is so important to our community.

Laura’s commitment to community is also evident in the fact that – as remarkable as her work on behalf of BXO has been – she has also dedicated substantial effort on behalf of other community organizations, including, but not limited to, the Women’s Endowment Fund of the Akron Community Foundation and Leadership Akron.

Laura, what a blessing that the things you treasure brought you to BXO. How fortunate we are that you have made so many of us involved with the ballet feel treasured throughout our relationship with you. Thank you for your dedicated efforts that have contributed to the successes of BXO, and congratulations on this well-deserved and very important honor.

Alumni Spotlight

KATHRYN (WELSH) THOMPSON

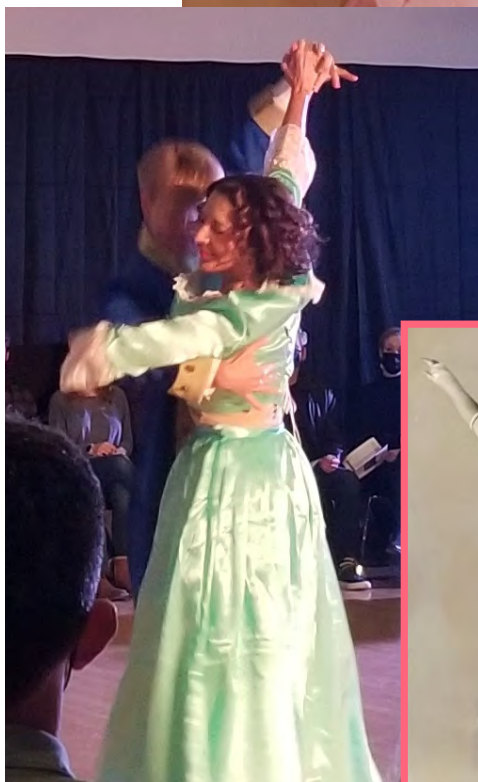
Kathryn (Welsh) Thompson is an example of how being a part of a successful pre-professional youth ballet can shape you into a productive and dynamic adult. Ballet Excel Ohio has had the opportunity to find out about what alumni Kathryn has been up to and her reason for circling back.

At just a young age, Kathryn joined the Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet (CVYB) currently known as Ballet Excel Ohio. She remembers dancing Friendship, Toy Shop and Ida's Flowers alongside her lifelong friend Char Harvey and her "ballet friends" Tina Flory, Doreen Esposito, Julie Burkett, and Kelly Thorburn to name just a few (she keeps in touch with many!). Her most memorable moment of the company is one that would disappoint many dancers to the point of giving up. When Kathryn was 11 years old, she and others from the company were selected in a local audition in Ohio to come to New York and audition for a children's role with the New York City Ballet in their summer series. About 13 dancers and a few parents drove to Saratoga Springs, New York and auditioned again. But at the end of the audition Kathryn ended up being the only dancer from CVYB who did not make the cut. Not only were her parents back in Ohio, she had to sit in an almost 8-hour car ride with dancers who were chosen for a part. Instead of quitting dance, this moment became a pivotal experience that helped build resilience and perseverance. Learning the lessons from failure are crucial to developing life skills such as learning to dust off and try again. The next year, Kathryn auditioned for the children's corps with New York City Ballet and succeeded.

Kathryn is currently the Chief Operating Officer for Girls on the Run which is a non-profit that helps thousands of girls gain confidence through running. Kathryn equates the lessons of Girls on the Run to lessons learned during her youth as a dancer with CVYB. "Confidence is one thing that I never struggled with and it was because of my many years of dance and time in the company." Building confidence is critical to helping children recognize and achieve their potential in whatever that may be. Kathryn wants other kids to have the same benefit which is why Kathryn has been a huge supporter of Ballet Excel Ohio and the reason for her giving back to the company. "Non-profits rely on donations from people, not just big foundations or companies. Without them they will not survive".

It is not too late to see Kathryn on stage (and sometimes on social media). She is currently ballroom dancing in Charlotte, North Carolina and still loves to perform. "Dance is just something that engages your brain. It is fun to learn something new and I am okay with not being perfect at it. Dance just makes me feel young."

We enjoyed listening to some of the fun stories about her days back in the old studio. Kathryn is an example of how BXO gives more than just the love of dance to young students, it also builds character and confidence. We are grateful for her support and believing in what we do as an organization.



NOT JUST ANOTHER BALLET STUDIO

Written by: Gina Poblete

My daughters have graduated from their dance company for a few years now and they may not necessarily pursue dance as a career but they know they have been changed for the better because of the experience and passion cultivated through their dance training.

As a family, we shall always look back and remember fondly and most appreciatively, how the arduous journey somehow became a significant formation in our family life.

It wasn't just about dancing, at "Miss Mia's" studio. The school's strict dance culture and adherence to the rigor and discipline of a pedagogy Mia Klinger inherited from her renowned mother Nan, has gained this tiny, nondescript studio, a strong and remarkable reputation, one of the finest training grounds for youth dancers in the Cleveland/Akron areas.

Miss Mia relentlessly upheld the legacy of an esteemed dance company, despite the ever rapid changing times in a fiercely competitive dance world, with classical ballet training overshadowed by the more popular genres on stage: modern, hip hop, street dance, lyrical and contemporary, not to mention newer, trendier studios emerging in the area.

To our family, it was all about that familiar neighborhood studio that turned into a ritual, after so many years driving our daughters back and forth in rain, shine, snow, sleet, hail and, not even a pandemic can put a halt to the steady beat and cadence of this ballet studio, a powerhouse that churned out good dancers and even finer human beings.

I have seen enough alumni launched into the world out there, equipped with sheer discipline, excellent work ethics, confidence, an unmistakable élan only dancers carry, and a generosity of heart. These values honed early at the barre, and at the wings of the stage, at visits to the underserved schools in the area to perform, at the libraries, hospitals, senior homes, the yearly Akron Civic Theatre performances and E.J. Thomas Hall. These beautiful swans crystallized as they stared at their reflection much too often at the studio mirrors; their sinewy legs, tweaking their image to perfection, not out of vanity but to optimally project their craft with justice and perform with grace, making athletic feats appear effortless and graceful once on stage.

We are endlessly grateful to every teacher, every parent, relative, friend, every dance peer who comprised the powerful village, long after the curtain has dropped on stage.

Give back whenever you can and celebrate life through the Arts, through education, through the support of youth initiatives, NOT as a solo act but as a "corps" just like the ballet, a "collective care and collaboration" so others can "leap" through life with gratitude towards the lovely community who helped raise them.

Ours was certainly not just another ballet studio. Thank you to everyone who made it so.



Wow! It's been a busy year at Ballet Excel Ohio (BXO). We are back in full swing and thriving in this post-Covid era. I'm thrilled that we had choreographer, Erich Yetter, back to choreograph this year's performance of Hansel and Gretel. It's truly an incredible ballet that I know the dancers can't wait to share with the community.

Not only do we have Hansel and Gretel to look forward to, but the very talented, Danielle Diniz, joined us in September to choreograph a really fun short ballet set to instrumental music by Lady Gaga. This one is guaranteed to be a crowd pleaser and a lot of fun for the dancers to perform.

We have just concluded our very successful annual fundraiser, A Night of Magic, where we 'Raised the Barre' by over \$36,000! We couldn't be more grateful for all of our BXO sponsors, donors, volunteers and attendees for helping to make this event a major success. This fundraiser ensures the health of BXO and Reach Out and Dance's (ROAD®) coffers and enables us to continue to educate and delight the community with the wonderful world of dance.

The dancers are looking forward to their Secret Snowflake party where they can spread their holiday cheer in the form of secret gifting and the spirit of giving this holiday season.

Additionally, we are thrilled to be back out in the community where the dancers can show their amazing abilities in local schools, libraries and community centers in the area. One key mission of BXO and ROAD® is to educate young audiences about dance and hopefully ignite their love of the performing arts.

The sheer talent and determination of these dancers is truly inspiring. The dedication of the parents, family members and volunteers that keep BXO operating in top form leaves me humbled. We couldn't make it happen without all of you. Thank you for your unwavering support and love for the arts.

We look forward to seeing all of you at the Akron Civic Theater, March 11 and 12, 2023, for the debut of Hansel and Gretel!

With gratitude,

Ashleigh Miller, President to the Board of BXO



DONATE AND JOIN OUR MOVEMENT!

Even with talented dancers, involved alumni, an innovative artistic staff and outstanding volunteers, Ballet Excel Ohio relies on the support of community members like you. Your donations provides everything from shoes to full scholarships to children in need. Gifts can be made

ONLINE at <https://balletexcelohio.org/index.php/support/donate>

by CALLING **330-376-8522**

or EMAILING development@balletexcelohio.org

During this holiday season follow us on social media to take advantage of several opportunities to double the impact of your donation with funds matching up to \$2,500 from a generous alumni, Giving Tuesday, and Amazon Smiles.

Thank you so much for supporting this important cause!

OUR FUNDING

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

The Clara Faber Foundation



Anonymous



The Noble Foundation

Welty Family Foundation

Sisler McFawn Foundation

Anonymous

Maynard Family Foundation

Anonymous

The Muna and Basem Hismeh Foundation Inc.



The Synthomer Foundation

The Lloyd L. & Louise K. Smith Foundation

The Charles E. & Mabel Ritchie Memorial Foundation

The Mary & Dr. George L. Demetros Charitable Trust

How Will Your Gift Make An Impact?



- \$25** Buys 1 pair of dance shoes for underserved dancer from Reach Out And Dance®
- \$50** Buys full dance attire for 1 underserved dancer from Reach Out And Dance®
- \$100** Buys one month of dance classes to pre-professional underserved dancer from Reach Out And Dance®
- \$250** Buys one customized costume for a ballet
- \$500** Buys 62 tickets for children in need to attend the ballet
- \$1,000** Buys 4 FREE in-school performances for inner city children
- \$2,500** Buys a year of dance classes for a dancer from Reach Out And Dance®
- \$5,000** Buys 5 inner city school FREE dance classes at their school
- \$10,000** Buys an ensemble of musicians for live music at our dance performances in March



Making an impact: Give from your IRA

An IRA is an appealing way to save for retirement: Making contributions and enjoying tax savings. Eventually the tax bill comes due when you take your annual distributions and again when you leave your assets to heirs. If you want to avoid the tax sting and make an impact on our mission, consider a gift to Ballet Excel Ohio.

Make a Gift Today

If you are 70 and a half years or older, you can make a tax-free gift (up to \$100,000 per year) to Ballet Excel Ohio. Benefits include paying no income taxes on the gift. The transfer does not generate taxable income or a tax deduction. If you are required to take minimum distributions, your gift can satisfy all or part of your RMD obligation.

Magnify Our impact After Your Lifetime

You can name Ballet Excel Ohio as a beneficiary of your retirement account. This is a great option for extending support from your IRA beyond your lifetime. It costs you nothing today. Here's how:

1. Contact your IRA administrator for a change of beneficiary form, or simply download a form from your provider's website.
2. Name Ballet Excel Ohio and the gift percentage on the form.
3. Let us know about your plans so we can thank you.

Whether you make an impact at Ballet Excel Ohio today or after your lifetime, your gift matters. Please feel free contact us to discuss your plan.

A world premiere by Erich Yetter

Hansel Gretel

Artistic Director
Mia Klinger



March 11 & 12, 2023
Akron Civic Theatre



2022-2023 Ballet Excel Ohio Dancers

