



FALL 2023

# EN POINTE



## DEAR ALUMNI, FAMILIES, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY,

I hope this message finds you in good health and high spirits.

Reflecting on this year's journey at the dance studio, I am filled with immense gratitude and excitement for the incredible milestones we have achieved together. The past months have been a whirlwind of artistic endeavors, and I couldn't be prouder of our dance family.

Our talented dancers, returning from summer studies nationwide, swiftly transitioned back to the studio, immersing themselves in the beauty of new choreography for our upcoming 2023-2024 season. "Snow White" by Laszlo Berdo and "Miss Spider's Tea Party" by James Sewell are masterpieces and graced with original commissioned scores – a true rarity in the dance world. Witnessing our young artists with these esteemed choreographers has been a joyous experience. Their poise, grace, and confidence speak volumes of their dedication and passion for the art of dance.

Celebrating a remarkable 25 years, our ROAD® program stands as a beacon of dedication and commitment, the longest-serving dance outreach initiative in Ohio. At Ballet Excel Ohio, we take immense pride in setting the standard for community engagement, making dance accessible to all. Through ROAD®, we've had the privilege of impacting young lives, nurturing their enthusiasm for dance and providing scholarships for further training – a legacy we continue to build upon.

The success of our October gala, "Bluegrass and Bourbon" is a testament to the unwavering support from our sponsors and the extraordinary efforts of my remarkable daughter, Jessica, sponsors, and parent volunteers.

The event surpassed all expectations, setting a record for funds raised, a vital boost in the face of rising costs. To each and every one of you who contributed to this achievement, my heartfelt thanks.

As we approach the year's end, I extend an invitation to join us in making a meaningful contribution to Ballet Excel Ohio. Your generous, tax-deductible donation will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of BXO and ROAD®, enabling us to continue delivering unparalleled artistic experiences to our dancers and community.

In closing, I wish you all a holiday season filled with joy, warmth, and love. Together, let's embrace the upcoming year with open hearts and soaring spirits.

Warmest regards,

Mia Klingler  
Artistic Director



# Alumni Spotlight

## 10 QUESTIONS WITH CHESARÉ HARDY

If you're a true 90s kid who grew up on State Road in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, you surely remember Chesaré Hardy. Chesaré was renowned for her amazing dancing skills and warm personality that left a lasting impression on everyone she met. We recently reconnected with her and asked her some questions about her time at the studio.

### 1. How old were you when you started dancing?

I was around 7 or 7½ years old when I first dipped my toes into the dance world. Lori Klinger was my very first teacher, and still remains my favorite!

### 2. What years were you in the company?

I was lucky enough to dance with them from 1988 to 1999.

### 3. What made you want to join the company?

It was pure magic! When I first started, the studio was in this quirky location under a meat butcher. There was only one studio, so everyone got to watch the classes that took place before and after. I'd linger to catch glimpses of the older dancers in action. Tiffany K., Piper M., and Anthony T. – I was in complete awe watching and learning from them, they were unbelievably talented. It was only natural that I totally wanted to be like them and be a part of the same company!

### 4. What is your favorite ballet?

I have a deep affection for "I Love Shapes". It was my very first ballet with the company.

### 5. What is your best memory of being in the company?

It's nearly impossible to choose just one, but Civic weeks stand out vividly. The smell of the theater, the secret nooks and crannies to explore, giggling with friends in the dressing rooms – those were always the best times!

### 6. What are you currently up to?

Currently, I work in advertising as a Senior Project Manager and Producer.

### 7. How has CVYB/BXO impacted your career?

CVYB gave me the mental strength I needed. I have dyslexia, so traditional academics were a bit of a challenge for me, but CVYB showed me that I was "smart" in my own unique ways and gave me and my fellow dancers a solid platform to learn and grow from. Now, in the regular workforce, I've discovered I have a work ethic and resilience that surpasses many of my peers. I can endure, adapt, and pivot faster, achieving more than others who didn't train like I did at CVYB. I truly believe the discipline and resilience I learned from a young age played a big role in that.

### 8. What is your favorite memory of Miss Mia?

Mia played a crucial role in my journey. She wasn't just an amazing teacher; she really got us when we were high schoolers and empathized with our whole teenage experience. Her technique and variations classes were hands down my favorite every week. And if I remember right, she'd sometimes let us wear our 'junk' clothes, giving us the freedom to show our unique styles. I'm truly grateful to Mia for the freedom and confidence she gave me during those teenage years. It was exactly what I needed for my dance journey, and her support was invaluable.



### 9. What is your fondest memory of Miss Nan?

I remember visiting Nan after I'd graduated from the company when she was very ill, and during that visit, she held my hand. Not just in a formal handshake way, but like two people who genuinely cared for each other. She held it and seemed genuinely happy to see me. I think it's safe to say that anyone in the company had a complicated relationship with Nan. But in that moment, I understood that underneath it all, there was love and respect.

### 10. What advice can you give younger dancers?

I think it's important to grasp the concept that attaining perfection is an illusion. Within the pursuit of it, it might trick you into thinking that unless everything you do is flawless, you're falling short and that reality can hold you back. Real strength and growth emerge from embracing imperfection and the valuable lessons we gain from our missteps. So, be kind to yourself and remember that there's incredible strength in embracing your "flaws" and the lessons they bring.

# REACH OUT AND DANCE® CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

We are thrilled to celebrate a remarkable milestone – the 25th anniversary of Ballet Excel Ohio's inspiring outreach program, [Reach Out and Dance®](#) (ROAD®). ROAD® is not just an organization; it's a beacon of hope, a testament to the transformative power of dance in the lives of young students.



Since its inception in 1998 by visionaries Lori Klinger and Thecla Harris, ROAD® has been a force of positive change, touching the hearts and souls of over 15,000 public school children. It's an initiative born out of a deep commitment to making dance accessible to those who might not otherwise have the chance to experience its magic, and in doing so, it has altered the course of countless lives.

What sets ROAD® apart is its dedication to nurturing young talents and guiding them toward excellence. Through scholarships offered to select students, ROAD® paves the way for aspiring dancers to embark on a pre-professional journey at Nan Klinger Excellence in Dance, a path that extends all the way to their high school graduation. This investment in pre-professional dance training is the most substantial of its kind in Northeast Ohio, making dreams of becoming a professional dancer attainable for many.

The impact doesn't stop there. Many of our ROAD® dancers go on to become valued company members of Ballet Excel Ohio, where



opportunities are abundant. They learn not only the art of dance but also the values of unwavering commitment, dedication, and self-assurance. These skills shape them into responsible, confident, and driven young adults.

Every day, we witness the profound impact of our mission on the next generation. We challenge our dancers to reach for the stars, and they rise to meet the occasion with unwavering determination. A recent testimonial from a grateful ROAD® scholarship parent echoes the sentiments of many: "This is exactly what my child needs. God has answered my prayers, and we are thankful for this opportunity."

As we celebrate 25 years of dance, dedication, and transformation, let ROAD® serve as a powerful reminder of the incredible potential within each young heart. Together, we are forging a brighter future through the art of dance, empowering our youth, and enriching our community. Here's to the next 25 years of inspiring excellence, dedication, and limitless possibilities.



## BOARD PRESIDENT LETTER

On behalf of the [Board of Directors](#), I would like to thank you for your support of Ballet Excel Ohio and the many young talented dancers that work so hard all year long to achieve excellence. In addition, your support helps to make sure our ROAD® program continues to be a success by providing scholarships that make dance accessible to all. Together we can be assured that these programs help create well rounded individuals and future performing artists and enthusiasts.

Ballet Excel Ohio (BXO) is committed every day to improving quality dance education and training throughout Northeast Ohio. Our staff, board members, and community partners are passionate about achieving this mission, and we could not do this without the generosity of our donors and volunteers. Together, we create great opportunities for our youth.

Our dancers have the privilege of working with some of the most talented teachers and choreographers from around the country, such as James Sewell and Laszlo Berdo. This high level of training is extraordinary and has an extensive impact on our dancers and quality of performance.

In October the Bluegrass & Bourbon Gala was our biggest fundraiser of the year. Many incredible volunteers worked around the clock sacrificing their time and donating resources. Special thanks to Jessica Thomas

who chaired the event and made sure everything ran smoothly. We had incredible sponsors and supporters who attended to make this event the most successful gala to date.

Achieving our mission takes continuous support, and we hope that you will reach out to us with any questions, feedback, or to explore new ways for us to work together to build a better dance community for our youth and patrons.

Thank you for making this a great year for Ballet Excel Ohio and the ROAD® program. Together we can improve the lives of many families and youth while looking forward to opportunities and progress for next year.

Sincerely,

Scott Hamed  
BXO Board President



# GIVING BACK JUST LIKE JACK



Jack Cronin was passionate about ballroom dance and other forms of dance from the age of 60 until he passed away at 92. In his memory, he wanted to donate to children who couldn't afford dance lessons. His six children Shelley, Lisa, John, Jim, Matt and Brian all agreed that Reach Out And Dance® would be the perfect organization to receive his donation and help underprivileged children experience the joy of dancing. Thanks to his kind contribution, students have been able to enjoy dance. You too can make a difference by making a few simple changes in your own retirement plan.



## **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 visit our [website](#) to learn more or [contact us](#) to discuss your plan.

# YEEHAW! BLUEGRASS & BOURBON Was A Success!

Ballet Excel Ohio's annual Raise the Barre fundraiser was celebrated in denim jeans and cowboy boots this year at Hale Farm and Village in a fun Bluegrass and Bourbon theme. All 150 available tickets were sold to community supporters who gathered on the evening of Friday, October 6 to celebrate BXO and raise a total of **\$51,753** to support its mission.

The event started earlier that week with an online silent auction open to the public. Several items ranging from household decor and bourbon themed baskets to entertainment for a night in or out and adventure outings were up for bidding. Items were donated by businesses, company members, and community supporters and arranged by volunteers in a stunning display the night of the event.

Gala sponsors, including Harwick Standard, The Read Family Fund, Akron Civic Theatre, Continental Heritage Insurance Company, House of LaRose, ST2 Furniture, Collide: Cuyahoga Falls, and Fifth Third Bank, were invited to a VIP pre-event. Cleveland Whiskey, Towpath Distillery, and Western Reserve Distillers offered bourbon tastings with southern-themed catered food by Moe's Restaurant and live music by Jen Mauer and the Hog String Band. The biggest hit of the night was the dessert dash. Fifteen decadent desserts were donated by local bakeries and auctioned off to the highest bidding tables. Other fun activities included a raffle drawing for a handmade bourbon barrel table filled with rare bourbons and saddle chairs, a game of Heads or Tails and a punch board filled with gift cards, mini bourbon bottles and lottery tickets.



The event's Honorary Chairs, Mary Kay and Ernie Pouttu, were awarded the Prima Award for their support and dedication to BXO with a touching speech by their daughter and BXO alum, Carly Pouttu. Bob Hale of Benefit Auction Services led the evening's live auction that consisted of donations from Falls Wheel & Wrench, ST2 Furniture, Vinifera Wine-to-Whiskey Bar and Restaurant, Stimson Inn Kennel, Michael Batu and Kaufman Container. The presentation portion of the evening concluded with a heartfelt speech by Angel Hampton, the mother of Jonathan McCray who found his love for dance in BXO's Reach Out and Dance® program and is now studying dance at the School of American Ballet in New York City. Her speech kicked off a paddle raise to raise funds for ROAD® in its 25th anniversary season. To end the evening, current BXO dancers led guests in a country line dance.

**Stay tuned for the announcement of next year's gala!**

## ERNIE AND MARY KAY POUTTU RECEIVE THE PRIMA AWARD



Ernie and Mary Kay Pouttu, steadfast supporters of Ballet Excel Ohio since 2002, epitomize unwavering dedication. Their involvement with the former Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet, now Ballet Excel Ohio, showcased the transformative power of ballet education. Ernie, as the board's President, and Mary Kay set the gold standard, ensuring excellence for our dancers and opening doors of opportunity. Their legacy will forever dance within the soul of our ballet family, a testament to their love for the arts and dedication to shaping aspiring dancers' dreams.



## CELEBRATE GIVING TUESDAY WITH A MATCHING GIFT!

As Giving Tuesday approaches, we extend an extraordinary invitation to join us in a movement that is nothing short of inspiring. Our devoted friend and passionate advocate, Kathryn (Welsh) Thompson, herself a former student of Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet (now Ballet Excel Ohio), has stepped forward with a remarkable offer: **to match donations, pledging an incredible \$5,000!**

Visualize the change this can ignite: Your contribution, no matter the amount, becomes a catalyst for transformation. Each dollar you give will be instantly doubled, empowering us to share the magic of Reach Out and Dance® (ROAD®) classes with not just one, but three schools. It will underwrite an entire year of dance classes for four deserving ROAD® scholarship students. Furthermore, it will allow us to introduce a cutting-edge portable dance floor to local schools, touching the hearts and souls of countless children.

This gesture is a beacon of hope, and it becomes even more profound when you consider that over half of our gifted dance company members rely on scholarships. Your donation has the power to change their lives, enabling them to pursue their dreams and receive world-class training right here in Northeast Ohio.

Now is the time to be part of something truly remarkable. Giving Tuesday is not just a day; it is an opportunity to be part of a movement that transcends the ordinary. By contributing, you are not only supporting the art of dance but also participating in a story of resilience, passion, and the unyielding pursuit of dreams.

Join us on [Giving Tuesday](#), and let's create a future where dreams take flight, where the world becomes a stage for hope and inspiration, and where your generosity fuels the aspirations of countless talented individuals.

Together, we can inspire a brighter tomorrow through the transformative power of dance.

# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Gala Sponsors:



The Read Family Fund



Ballet Excel Ohio is funded in part by:



NOBLE FOUNDATION



The WELTY Family Foundation

Mary Kay & Ernie Pouttu

BXO returns to the Akron Civic Theatre on March 9 & 10 performing **Snow White** choreographed by Laszlo Berdo and **Miss Spider's Tea Party** choreographed by James Sewell. Performance weekend experiences include a special appearance by Miss Spider's Tea Party author, David Kirk, a sensory-friendly performance, backstage tours for aspiring dancers, and Scouting for the Arts for Girl Scouts. Sign up for our newsletters to be the first to receive announcements and information about these special experiences and more!



## Season 23-24 Community Performances

Catch Company dancers performing in the community!  
Performances are open to all and free of charge.

Akron Children's Hospital Tree Festival at the John S. Knight Center  
**Saturday, November 18 • 11:00 am**

Cuyahoga Falls Tree Lighting Festival  
**Saturday, November 25 • 6:30 pm**

Holiday Performance at the Jenks Building  
**Saturday, December 9 • 12pm & 2pm**

Akron-Fairlawn Library  
**Saturday, January 20 • 10:30 am**

Cuyahoga Falls Library  
**Saturday, January 27 • 10:30 am**

Akron Art Museum Family Day  
**Sunday, February 4**

Hudson Library  
**February 10 • 11:00 am**

Akron Main Library  
**February 17 • 11:00 am**



## 2023-2024 Ballet Excel Ohio Dancers

