



The ViewPointe

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Friends of Alexandra Ballet

The Friends is a group of individuals committed to the support of Alexandra Ballet. In addition to the functions listed below, we help with almost any job needed to keep Alexandra Ballet thriving, such as transporting guest dancers and choreographers, altering costumes, and bulk mailing.

Everyone is welcome to be a Friend of Alexandra Ballet. We have no dues and we meet monthly. If you know a friend, relative, neighbor, or acquaintance, who is interested in being a part of a support organization to help promote quality ballet in St. Louis, please let us know.

Summer Intensive Program

IN EARLY JUNE, Alexandra Ballet welcomed choreographers Petrus Bosman, Kennet Oberly, Marek Cholewa, and Rosanna Ruffo to St. Louis. For two weeks, Alexandra School of Ballet students, returning alumni, and a few new faces had the opportunity to improve their skills and to gain new perspectives of dance from these talented instructors. After classes, these artists began staging Alexandra Ballet Company's offerings for the 2007-2008 season.

The students enjoyed the lively wit of the former principal of the Royal Ballet, Petrus Bosman. Bosman is an experienced teacher. He has been the ballet master for Ballet West and has taught at the School of the Arts at the University of Illinois and most recently, at the Virginia School of the Arts where he had an eighteen-year tenure.

Bosman commented that Alexandra Ballet students are very well prepared for dance and indicated that his time here was so enjoyable that he would like to return to work with them again.

While he was here, Bosman staged excerpts of *Les Patineurs* after choreography by Sir Frederick Ashton for the Winter Repertoire performance. Bosman's Royal Ballet colleague Margot Fontaine premiered the lead of Ashton's *Les Patineurs* when she was just fourteen.

Summer Intensive dancers had the unique opportunity to learn the Bournonville technique from Kennet Oberly. Oberly is a Bournonville expert who taught at the RDA Midstates Festival in 2006. His most recent association with Alexandra Ballet was that of consultant for the 2007 production of *Napoli*.

Mr. Oberly has been a member of the Boston Ballet, the Stuttgart Ballet, the Tivoli Pantomime Theater in Copenhagen, and the Ballet of the XX Century. After his first exposure to Bournonville technique, Oberly sought instruction from two well-known Bournonville experts in Copenhagen, Edel Peterson and Valerie Sutton. Peterson learned the Bournonville syllabus from August Bournonville himself.

Oberly has staged Bournonville works throughout America and has reconstructed some for the Estonia National Ballet. He has reconstructed Bournonville's entire *Konservatoriet*. However, the scene from *Konservatoriet* that he is staging for Alexandra Ballet for the Winter Repertoire performance is in the current ballet repertoire.

The Summer Intensive students who were a part of Oberly's classes are among the select few in the United States to have had the exposure to Bournonville technique. Alexandra Ballet reaps the benefits of this experience because of the authenticity Bournonville technique lends to *Konservatoriet*.

The second week of Summer Intensive saw the return of long time collaborators with Alexandra Ballet Marek Cholewa and Rosanna Ruffo from Butler University. Cholewa and Ruffo guided students through a week of demanding ballet technique. After classes, Cholewa worked with Company members to set the choreography for the Alexandra Ballet's Mainstage production *Coppelia*.

Once again, this summer, Alexandra Ballet students worked hard, had fun, made some new friends, and had opportunities for instruction that few other dancers have.

ALEXANDRA BALLET is a non-profit organization committed to educating, elevating, and enriching St. Louis communities through the art of dance.



Alexandra Zaharias, Petrus Bosman, CiCi Houston, & Kennet Oberly

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2007–2008 Season Fresh Ideas ... Great Traditions

by Artistic Director Alexandra Zaharias

WELCOME TO a new season of dance with Alexandra Ballet! We're off to a great start, networking with the many wonderful arts organizations in our community and joining together to advance the art of dance in St. Louis. More than ever before, this season promises to be one of great traditions blended with new opportunities and fresh ideas, and I'm most proud to tell you more about it.

The month of May was barely over when we began to receive invitations to perform around the city—and at some very unusual venues. We begin the season at Busch Stadium...yes, I said at the ballpark! We will be there to assist in promoting Joffrey Ballet's December production of *The Nutcracker*, brought to our city by Dance St. Louis. Executive and Artistic Director of Dance St. Louis, Michael Uthoff, asked Alexandra Ballet to coordinate and rehearse part of the local children's cast, and subsequently invited our dancers to the stadium before the 1:15 game on Sunday, September 2, to share the exciting news with Cardinals fans.

Decked out in tutus and tiaras, AB dancers will be stationed at all the gates. In addition, Alexandra Ballet's Sugar Plum Fairy, the Snow Queen and her Cavalier will be introduced on the field in the pre-game festivities, and our Nutcracker Prince Dillon Malinski will get the chance to throw out the ceremonial first pitch! One thing is certain—this is probably the most unusual season opener we've ever experienced, and one we all look forward to.

Our season of performances begins with a bang with not one, but two separate performances in two different venues on the same

day. KFUCO Classic99's *Rhapsody in Bloom* on September 29 at the Missouri Botanical Garden, is the perfect setting for an outdoor performance of several works from our extensive repertoire. This will be our fifth consecutive year to celebrate the arts with KFUCO, and we look forward to performing for the enthusiastic audiences we have come to expect each year.

No sooner do we finish at the Garden than the dancers pack up their bags and grand jeté over to the Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District, where they will participate in *Dancing In the Streets!* a day of activities celebrating St. Louis' most talented dance groups. Alexandra Ballet will perform Alan Hineline's *de l'innocense* at 4:30 pm on a stage directly in front of the Fabulous Fox Theater, so plan to dance the day away with Alexandra Ballet on September 29!

We are very excited to once again present our own production of *The Nutcracker* to audiences in the Chesterfield area in partnership with Chesterfield Arts and Rockwood Community Education. We're especially pleased to offer an added performance this year in response to the demand from last year's performance. Mark your calendars for December 15 at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm at the Marquette High School Theater for our delightful, family-friendly production of this timeless holiday classic.

We have been blessed to have two exciting new choreographers to work with this season, and the results of their collaboration with Alexandra Ballet will form this season's Winter Repertory Program on Sunday, January 27 at 2:00 pm at a beautiful new venue

in our area—the Purser Center on the campus of Logan College of Chiropractic. Petrus Bosman, former Royal Ballet dancer and retired faculty member of the Virginia School of the Arts, set selections from Sir Frederick Ashton's *Les Patineurs* on the Company. Kennet Oberly set August Bournonville's *Konservatoriet*, and reconstructed *Pollacca Guerriera*, a world premiere. In addition, AB Ballet Mistress Norma



Marek Cholewa in action

Gabriel choreographed *Tarantella* for the Junior Company for this performance that benefits the Alexandra Ballet Student Scholarship Fund.

Finally, I am very excited to announce the return of one of my favorite ballets, *Coppélia*, as our MainStage Performance on March 7-9, 2008, at the Touhill PAC. This delightful ballet has been choreographed by our longtime friend and Vaganova master, Marek Cholewa. *Coppélia* marks the 7th full-length ballet staged for us by Marek, along with dozens of smaller works created by this gifted artist for our dancers since 1989.

In closing, I would like to thank our past President of the Board of Directors, Greg Chastain, for all his dedicated work over the past two years. Greg has paved the way for our new Co-Presidents, Peter Karutz and Geoff Rigabar, with a tradition of hard work and innovative ideas, opening the door for these two high-spirited gentlemen to carry us on to even greater heights in the future.

As you can tell, nothing but the very best is in store for our dancers and our audiences this year. This summer was an extraordinarily busy one, but one which holds the promise of one of our best seasons ever. I hope you will plan to attend some of the many performances offered by this wonderful group of talented dancers—if you do, plan on enjoying every moment of delightful dance!

IMPORTANT DATES

CLASSIC 99'S RHAPSODY IN BLOOM—Missouri Botanical Gardens, Saturday, September 29th

DANCING IN THE STREETS—Grand Center, Saturday, September 29th, 4:30PM

SUGAR PLUM PARTIES—Co-presented with Saint Louis Galleria Friday, November 23rd

THE NUTCRACKER—Co-presented with Chesterfield Arts Saturday, Dec. 15th, 2pm and 7pm



THE 20TH CENTURY arrived ten years late for the world of ballet. The first decade of the modern era bore witness to an explosion of creativity in the arts. In particular, the visual arts of painting, sculpture, and photography expanded in radically new directions.

In dance, however, the 19th Century lingered on past its time, stagnating after such brilliant creations as *La Bayadère*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*. While dance slumbered, however, Serge Diaghilev dreamt of founding what was to become the most influential ballet company of the modern era: the sensational Ballets Russes.

Diaghilev forever changed the direction of ballet and its possibilities with his fourth production for the Ballets Russes. He hired the then unknown 28-year-old composer Igor Stravinsky to take over from the Russian composer Anatol Liadov in writing the music for a ballet based on the Russian fairy tale of the Firebird. With the addition of choreographer Michel Fokine, Diaghilev and Stravinsky brought ballet back alive and to the forefront of the arts with the 1910 premier of *The Firebird*. This landmark production established Stravinsky as one of the most important composers of the 20th Century, as well as cementing Diaghilev and Fokine as the hot inner core of contemporary ballet.

So staggering an accomplishment is *The Firebird* that it seems a daunting, almost impossible task to bring this ballet alive with a new production in the 21st Century. The Alexandra Ballet has proved up to the challenge. In cooperation with the innovative work of choreographer Marek Cholewa, the Alexandra Ballet re-imagined this one-act ballet for our time in a stunning production at the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center, UM–St. Louis Campus.



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A Promise to keep... A love to win!

The Firebird

Cholewa incorporates modern dance movement into his ballet to create a style that melds the artistry of traditional ballet with the excitement and freedom often associated with modern dance. The result is a smoothly integrated and dynamic sense of movement that challenges the dancers and delights the audience.

Agatha Schmank danced the title role with finesse and grace. Guest artists Sergey Sergiev of the Indiana Ballet Company and Sean Strycker of Butler University provided the passion and power to contrast with Schmank's grace. The powerful performances of the guest artists and Schmank's Firebird complemented the sensitive portrayal of Aimee Chastain's Tsarevna.

The audience were not only treated to this most important of modern ballets, but were also allowed the pleasure of comparing this modern reworking of *The Firebird* with the 19th Century *Napoli* and the more recent *de l'innocence*. Sergey Kozadaye's—of Chicago's Salt Creek Ballet—*Moldavian Suite* managed to stand out for its sheer kinetic energy and brilliance.

Completing this fusion of the old with the new is the appearance of alumna Andrea Lucas and guest artist

Keven Wiltz of Butler University in the contemporary *de l'innocence* with its choreography by Alan Hinline. Ms Lucas continues to grow and stretch as a dancer as she continues her studies at Butler University.

With this production, the Alexandra Ballet shows that it can move forward while embracing the past. Continuing the tradition of giving free Young People Performances for area schools completes the daring role that the Alexandra Ballet has taken on for itself in promoting education and awareness of the arts. This is the essence of art. St. Louis can be proud of having such an important and innovative ballet company working in its environs.

PACKING THEIR BAGS!

A number of Alexandra Ballet students furthered their dance training this summer by attending dance programs outside of St. Louis.

- Rachel Butchko—American Ballet Theater, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
- Makensie Howe—American Ballet Theater, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
- Neta Johnson—Dance Theater of Harlem, New York.
- John Robert Jones—Kansas City Ballet, Missouri.
- Claire Smith—Kansas City Ballet, Missouri
- Elizabeth Unal— Kansas City Ballet, Missouri

Alumni

- Megan Buckley—Nashville Ballet, Tennessee
- Andrea Lucas— Kansas City Ballet, Missouri and the Rockettes, New York
- Sarah Stockman—Miami City Ballet, Florida

THANK YOU ANGELS!

Alexandra Ballet Board members, Frank Buckley, Greg Chastain, Sally Duncan, Erica Freeman, and Dennis Hollenkamp, who contributed to help send AB's First Company to the Regional Dance America's National Festival in Pittsburgh.

Jo Lucas organized and graciously hosted Mr. Petrus Bosman's birthday celebration at Yia-Yia's restaurant.

Cynthia and Kiri Maasen kindly welcomed Kennet Oberly, guest choreographer, into their home

All of the volunteers who made the Summer Intensive a rousing success.

And to all of the rest of the many individuals who assist AB on a regular basis. Thank you for your generous donations of time, talent and treasures!

FAREWELL BUT NOT GOODBYE!

Aimee Chastain received her Associate of Arts degree from Jefferson College in Hillsboro, MO. She will attend Belhaven College in Jackson, MS and will major in dance.

Shannon Hutsler plans to major in Dance at the University of Missouri in Kansas City.

Andrea Mason will attend the University of Missouri in Kansas City where she will major in Dance

Agatha Schmank will major in Dance Performance at Butler University in Indianapolis, IN.

Connie Tsai will attend Washington University in St. Louis and will major in Biology.

Aimee, Shannon, Andrea, Agatha & Connie We wish you happiness and success in your academic & dance endeavors and look forward to your return as guest artists sometime soon.



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Regional Dance America The Community of Dance

NINE ALEXANDRA BALLET First Company members and one Apprentice flew to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to attend the Regional Dance America National Festival 2007. From April 24 through April 28, companies from all regions convened for a national festival to celebrate fifty years of Regional Dance. In the history of the organization, this was only the second national event. The ten Alexandra Ballet members were among some nearly 2,000 to take classes with renowned instructors of the dance world and to watch a performance of each company present.

Over the course of five evenings, each company performed in the historical Benedum

Theatre. The Wednesday program began with Alexandra Ballet's performance of *Napoli Pas de Six Excerpts* by the First Company.

Congratulations are in order for several Alexandra Ballet members. RDA granted John Robert Jones a \$250.00 cash award to be used for his dance training. Elizabeth Unal received an RDA scholarship to Kansas City Ballet. Neta Johnson received a scholarship to Dance Theater of Harlem and was selected as the first alternate to the Joffrey Ballet in New York City. A scout for the School of American Ballet spotted Dillon Malinski and offered Malinski an open invitation to attend the school.

The success of the trip was made possible through the generous donations of a number of people. Thank you to Vivianne Albers Topping for taking over the teaching responsibilities at the studio during the week of RDA. Special thanks are in order for Janet Houston (Miss Cici's mother) and Tynetta Chastain. Both stepped up to the plate to chaperone and to organize meals for the Company. No small feat in those hotel rooms!



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A special thank you to Richard Calmes for the use of his RDA photograph in this newsletter.