

# The *Nutcracker*



McANINCH ARTS CENTER  
Dec 19-21, 2025

## Welcome to the McAninch Arts Center!



Dear Friends,

It is always a joy to welcome you to the McAninch Arts Center. Each season, our stage becomes a home for extraordinary artistry from around the world, and we are thrilled to share these experiences with you. From unforgettable music and breathtaking dance to thought-provoking theatre and laugh-out-loud comedy, our touring performances bring the very best of the arts right here to DuPage County.

Your presence here is more than just attending a show—it is a celebration of the arts and a vital part of keeping them alive in our community. Every ticket purchased, every standing ovation, and every shared moment in this theater helps us fulfill our mission to make the arts accessible, engaging, and transformative.

As you enjoy today's performance, I encourage you to explore everything the MAC has to offer—from our gallery exhibitions and educational programs to our local and international collaborations. Whether this is your first visit or your fiftieth, we are honored to share this experience with you and look forward to making you feel right at home.

If you enjoy coming to the MAC, the greatest help you can offer us is to share your experiences with friends and neighbors. Word-of-mouth is one of the most powerful ways to keep the arts thriving in our community. If there is anything we can do to make your experience more enjoyable, please do not hesitate to let us know.

We look forward to entertaining you this evening, and we thank you sincerely for your support of the MAC.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Diana'.

Diana Martinez  
Executive Director  
McAninch Arts Center

McAninch Arts Center  
at College of DuPage  
presents

**SALT CREEK BALLET:**

# *The Nutcracker*

Music by **Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

Based on a story by **E.T.A. Hoffman**

Staged & Choreographed after **Dace Dindonis & George Verdak**

Re-worked by **Erica De La O & Kristopher Wojtera**

**Erica De La O**, Artistic Director

**Kristopher Wojtera**, Artistic Director

*featuring*

**Yuria Isaka & Wilhelm Josue Gomez Sarria**

*and*

**New Philharmonic**

**Kirk Muspratt**, Music Director and Conductor

*New Philharmonic is grateful for support from:*



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*As a courtesy to our dancers and fellow audience members,  
photography or videotaping is strictly prohibited.*

Dec 19-21, 2025  
Fri 7p, Sat & Sun 1p & 5p  
Belushi Performance Hall

## A LETTER FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

As we celebrate Salt Creek Ballet's 40th Anniversary, we are filled with gratitude for our dancers, families, and audiences who bring our mission to life. As a not-for-profit organization, Salt Creek Ballet is more than a school or performing company — it is a creative home where people of all ages can experience the beauty of dance and music. Through our community-enriching programming and performances, we are committed to making the arts accessible, inspiring, and transformative.

This season is especially meaningful as we launch our capital campaign to build a new home for SCB and continue our cherished partnership with the McAninch Arts Center. We are thrilled to bring *Cinderella* to the MAC stage, set to Prokofiev's enchanting score — a joyful celebration of hope, humor, and transformation.

Your ticket also includes our Cinderella Royal Ball, a magical, child-friendly event immediately following the 1:00 p.m. show. Children can learn a dance, choose a treat, and enjoy photos and autographs with the cast in full costume — an unforgettable extension of the performance.

If today's experience inspires you, we invite you to join us in supporting the future of Salt Creek Ballet. Your generosity helps nurture young artists, enrich our community, and keep the magic of ballet shining for years to come.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Erica De La O  
Artistic Director



Kristopher Wojtera  
Artistic Director

**ARTISTIC DIRECTORS**

Erica De La O

Kristopher Wojtera

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Jayne Friscia, Marketing Coordinator

Joelle Farano, Costume Coordinator

Kendall Bolt, Administration

Sarah Mills, Administration

**DESIGN AND PRODUCTION STAFF**

Scenic Design..... Simon Pastukh  
Costume Design .....Galina Solovyeva  
Production Designer and Painter ..... Oleg Smirnov  
Wardrobe Coordinator.....Joelle Farano  
Technical Director ..... Brandon Lewis, *Midwest Event Solutions*  
Lighting Designer.....Charles Cooper, USA\*  
Rehearsal Assistants..... Joelle Farano, Kim Kramer, Jean Marquez,  
Anna Spelman, Vera Zhukova  
Costumers .....Kay Johnson, Stephanie Johnson,  
Emily Lorenz, Sabena Sellnow & Carl  
Gramza, Halsey Onstage, Travis Halsey,  
Rachel Young, Aida Yanahan, Rick  
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Kristen Blickhan Photography, Illona Didzbalis  
Poster ..... Lauren Kavanaugh  
Program Design.....Jen Graham  
Public Relations..... Julie Rusin

A special thank you to the committee chair volunteers:  
Kristin Challacombe, Jennifer Bogs, Danielle DeChristopher,  
Terri Deckys, Farrah Fahmy, Stephanie Johnson, Jacque Kent,  
Dana Meinkow, Heather O’Hara, Alison Poteracki, Renee Offenbacher,  
Jamie Rediehs, Shannon Reilly, Georgia Tsantilis, Aida Yanahan,  
Rebecca VanDeCastele

Salt Creek Ballet would like to thank our esprit de corps volunteers  
who help make this exceptional production a reality!

*\*Those designers and scenic artists identified by USA are members of United Scenic  
Artists, IATSE Local 829, AFL-CIO*



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## PROGRAM

- The Nutcracker..... Scott Reed\*, Connor Barak\*, Martin Ortiz Tapia\*  
Soldiers..... Natalie Anderson, Cecilia Aranauskas, Nadia Bizior,  
Nina Guth, Alyssa Martinez, Annie Spencer,  
Joanna Tsantilis, Zoey Lewis, Milly O’Hara,  
Katelyn Warner, Molly VanDeCastele  
Toys ..... Maeve Borsom, Wesley Happ, Charlotte Petzer,  
Josephine Bennett, Ania Borsuk,  
Violet Johnson, Jenavieve Kisiel  
Princess Clara ..... Alina Djordjevic, Mia Menkow, Nicoletta Deckys,  
Briana Jaskevicius  
The Nutcracker Prince..... Norbert Nirewicz\*, Brandon Penn\*  
Snowflakes ..... Alice Barbashov, Lyla Barkley, Virginia Birmingham,  
Emma Botha, Helena Bratcher, Amelia Challacombe,  
Nicoletta Deckys, Alexandra Didzbalis,  
Alina Djordjevic, Tacy Hendricks, Giavanna Fahmy,  
Tatum Flanagan, Briana Jaskevicius, Mia Meinkow,  
Sabrina Yanahan, Vera Brenneman\*\*, Natalie  
DiBartolo \*\*, Sylvie Barreo\*\*

## Act II

- Sugar Plum Fairy & Cavalier ..... Lindy Mesmer & Aaron Renteria,  
Yuria Isaka & Wilhelm Josue Gomez Sarria  
Angels..... Eleanor Aldis, Vivienne Bogs, Finola Cordero,  
Chiara DeChristopher, Chloe Kim,  
Holiday Lin Kerkhof, Eliana Tsantilis,  
Genevieve Carney, Emily Herrmann,  
Olivija Jankauskas, Violet Johnson,  
Claire Kavanaugh, Ava Logun, Iris McGee,  
Molly McKeague, Islay Reilly Engquist,  
Seraphina Roseri, Emma Ross, Hailey Stout  
Spanish Dance..... Briana Jaskevicius, Amelia Challacombe,  
Sabrina Yanahan, Alina Djordjevic, Mia Meinkow  
Chinese Dance..... Alice Barbashov, Emma Botha, Helena Bratcher,  
Amelia Challacombe, Alexandra Didzbalis,  
Tacy Hendricks, Nicoletta Deckys, Giavanna Fahmy,  
Tatum Flanagan, Briana Jaskevicius,  
Mia Meinkow, Sabrina Yanahan

**PROGRAM**

- Mirlitons.....Helena Bratcher, Amelia Challacombe,  
Nicoletta Deckeys, Alexandra Didzbalis,  
Alina Djordjevic, Tatum Flanagan, Briana Jaskevicius,  
Mia Meinkow, Sabrina Yanahan
- Russian Dance ..... Wilhelm Josue Gomez Sarria\*, Connor Barak\*,  
Scott Reed\*, Alice Barbashov, Lyla Barkley,  
Virginia Birmingham, Emma Botha, Alexandra  
Didzbalis, Giavanna Fahmy, Tacy Hendricks,  
Raleigh Kent
- Arabian Solo ..... Brandon Penn\*, Mia Meinkow,  
Alina Djordjevic, Norbert Nirewicz\*,  
Briana Jaskevicius, Amelia Challacombe
- Arabian Corps.....Eloise Bourgeois, Cecilia Aranauskas,  
Nina Guth, Addison Johnson, Raleigh Kent,  
Alyssa Martinez, Annie Spencer, Elise Trocki,  
Maeve Offenbacher, Katelyn Warner
- Mother Ginger .....Luis Caro, Ann Lockhart\* (11/29, 11/30)
- Her Children, the Bon Bons..... Adeline Anderson, Emily Angileri,  
Emilia Aranauskas, Sienna Barkley, Mia Botha,  
Liv Cordero, Divya Culen, Lucia DeChristopher,  
Polina Hedroyts, Virginia Hofheimer, Marissa Martinez,  
Brooklyn Morelli, Evelyn Poteracki, Embry Rediehs,  
Anna Rosenberg, Alexa Zitkevicius
- Bon Bon Soloists..... Natalie Anderson, Nadia Bizio, Zoey Lewis,  
Joanna Tsantilis
- Dew Drop Solo ..... Mia Meinkow, Amelia Challacombe,  
Sabrina Yanahan, Alina Djordjevic
- Waltz Demi Soloists..... Nicoletta Deckys, Amelia Challacombe,  
Briana Jaskevicius, Alina Djordjevic,  
Mia Meinkow, Sabrina Yanahan
- Waltz Corps ..... Alice Barbashov, Lyla Barkley, Helena Bratcher,  
Virginia Birmingham, Emma Botha, Alexandra Didzbalis,  
Tacy Hendricks, Giavanna Fahmy, Tatum Flanagan,  
Briana Jaskevicius, Sabrina Yanahan, Vera Brenneman\*\*,  
Natalie DiBartolo \*\*, Sylvie Barreo\*\*
- Finale & Apotheosis .....Salt Creek Ballet Company and Guest Artists

\* Denotes Guest Artist

\*\* Denotes Returning Alumni

## PROGRAM NOTES

### *The Nutcracker*

Music by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Based on a story by E.T.A. Hoffman

It is Christmas Eve and the Von Stahlbaums are preparing to welcome their party guests, who arrive family by family, bearing gifts for the host's children, Clara and Fritz. The presents are all carefully placed under the Christmas tree. Clara's Godfather, the mysterious Herr Drosselmeyer, arrives with a marvelous group of mechanical dolls. In addition, the magical and eccentric Herr Drosselmeyer has planned a special surprise for his beloved Godchild, Clara. He presents her with a wonderfully mysterious nutcracker. Clara is immediately taken with her strange gift. Fritz is jealous and steals the nutcracker from Clara. In the chaos of his teasing, Fritz accidentally breaks the nutcracker. Herr Drosselmeyer comes to the rescue and assures Clara that all will be well. The guests perform a contredanse, after which they depart and the Von Stahlbaums prepare for bed.

Just before the stroke of midnight, Clara returns to the darkened living room to check on her nutcracker. She is frightened by large mice, but suddenly Herr Drosselmeyer appears and the mice flee. Much to Clara's amazement, Herr Drosselmeyer commands the Christmas tree to grow to such an enormous size that it pushes away the entire room. Next, he changes her little toy into a life-size nutcracker. The mice suddenly reappear and a vicious battle ensues. Just when the soldiers seem to be winning, the great Mouse King appears and the tide turns. The Nutcracker and the Mouse King fight. The Mouse King is about to overpower The Nutcracker when Clara distracts him with her shoe, giving The Nutcracker the chance to run the Mouse King through with his sword. The Nutcracker, released from an enchanted spell, turns into a handsome prince. Clara becomes a Princess. The Nutcracker Prince takes Princess Clara's hand and escorts her on a magical voyage to the Kingdom of Snow and beyond.

Princess Clara journeys to the Kingdom of Sweets where the Sugar Plum Fairy greets her. A series of entertaining divertissements are ordered. Princess Clara and The Nutcracker Prince dance together surrounded by radiant flowers. The Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier then dance for Clara and the Prince. When the festivities are over, everyone bids goodbye to The Nutcracker and Clara who leave together for her home, where she awakens, uncertain if her magical journey was a dream or reality.

## GUEST ARTIST PROFILES



**Yuria Isaka**, originally from Japan, trained at the renowned Académie Princesse Grace in Monaco. She danced with Staatsballett Berlin from 2018 to 2023, performing principal and soloist roles, and continues to expand her international career. A recipient of multiple awards at major international ballet competitions, Yuria now works as a freelance dancer and guest artist, including collaborations with London City Ballet.



**Wilhelm Josue Gómez Sarria** started his dance training at age six at the “Teatro Municipal” in Cali, Colombia with Cesar Mosquera. Then he enrolled at the Instituto Colombiano de Ballet (IncolBallet) where he received his formal training since he was eight years old and graduated from High School. He went to train under full scholarship with Fort Lauderdale Youth Ballet under the Artistic Direction of German Dager where he graduated in 2021. Josue was Fort Lauderdale Youth Ballet’s first Nutcracker Prince.

He won the Youth American Grand Prix in New York Semi-Finals and was a YAGP Finalist at the NY Finals performing his Talisman Variation at Lincoln Center’s David Koch Theatre. He won 1st Place all around in Classical and Contemporary at The Miami International Ballet Competition at age 15 and was invited to dance at the closing Gala with La Boheme, his contemporary piece. At the American Dance Competition, for two years in a row, he won 1st Place in Classical and Contemporary. His Pas de Deux from Le Corsaire also won 1st Place and was invited to perform the Pas de Deux and Talisman Variation at the closing gala. Josue also won 1st Place for Diana & Acteon Pas de Deux and Coda at the Universal Ballet Competition & Shake the Ground Competition.

Josue has won full scholarships to San Francisco Ballet School, the American Ballet Theatre (two scholarships and invitation by Sasha Radetsky to take class at the American Ballet Theatre Studio Company). He also won a scholarship to The Paris Opera Ballet School in Paris, France, The Dutch National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam, Netherlands, all year round program, The Elmhurst School of Ballet, The School of American Ballet (SAB), Pacific Northwest Ballet, Houston Ballet

## GUEST ARTIST PROFILES

Academy, The Bolshoi Ballet Academy, Pennsylvania Ballet, Orlando Ballet School, The Joffrey Ballet School, Next Generation Ballet / Patel Conservatory, and Sarasota Ballet. Josue spent two summers with full scholarship at the San Francisco Ballet School and The Fort Lauderdale Youth Ballet.

At the Youth American Grand Prix Semi-finals in Tampa, Florida, Josue won the Youth American Grand Prix in the Senior Category and won 1st Place in Pas de Deux with Grand Pas Classique. He also had the honor to have been invited to dance in the Gala. He has also been invited to dance at the two Gala's at the Youth American Grad Prix Mexico ~ Festival Internacional de Danza in October 2019.

At the Universal Ballet Competition, Josue won 1st Place in the Senior men Classical with his Albrecht Variation, 1st Place in Contemporary with his Revive, and 1st place in the Senior Pas de Deux Competition with Grand Pas Classique.

Josue has danced the Cavalier in the Sugar Plum Pas de Deux and Snow Pas de Deux at the Fort Lauderdale Youth Ballet Nutcracker Ballet, for three years in a row. He danced at Birmingham Royal Ballet in the United Kingdom, where he was a company artist and danced professionally for the 2021-2022 Season. In 2023 Josue danced with English National Ballet for the Spring Production of Cinderella where he danced 30 shows at the Royal Albert Hall in London, UK.

In the Summer of 2023, Josue was invited to guest dance with the Kenneth McMillan Project at the Kaatsbaan Cultural Park Festival in Tivoli, NY where he danced "Ballade" by Kenneth McMillan.

Recently, Josue was invited to be part of the Sugar Hill Production where he will be the lead in The Nutcracker Movie. He will be performing eight performances at the Benedum Center in Pittsburgh, PA, 16 performances at the New York City Center and 16 performances at the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago, IL.

## GUEST ARTIST PROFILES



**Edson Cabrera** was born in Cuba and graduated from the highly regarded Escuela Nacional de Arte in Dance in 2005. During this training period at the National School of Art in Havana, he participated in the ITs Festival in the Netherlands under the direction of Feri de Geus and Noortje Bijvoets. Subsequently, he joined the Cuban dance company Ballet Rakatan, dancing as a soloist.

In 2007, he became a member of Danza Contemporánea de Cuba, participating in several international tours to England, Mexico, Hungary, Poland, Spain, the Netherlands, Australia, and the USA. He has also performed in the Sziget Festival in Budapest, Mercat de Les Flors in Barcelona, Brisbane Festival, Manchester International Festival, The Bydgoszcz Opera Festival, and Virginia Arts Festival. Mr. Cabrera was made Principal Dancer in 2010.

During his tenure with Danza Contemporánea de Cuba, he worked with choreographers Rafael Bonachela, Carlos Junior Acosta, George Céspedes, Julio César Iglesias, Juan Kruz Díaz de Garaio Esnaola, Mats Ek, Itzik Galili, and Pedro Ruiz, and performed works by Jan Linkens, and Kenneth Kvarström.

He joined artistic forces with Hedwig Dances in 2012.



**Luis Caro**, originally from Puerto Rico, began his dance training in Lansing, Michigan where he was a theatre student. In 1993, he earned his B.F.A. from Butler University in Indianapolis. Since that time, he has danced professionally with Louisville Ballet, Montgomery Ballet, Eugene Ballet, and performed as guest with several other dance troupes around the U.S. In Chicago, he has been a dance faculty member at Columbia College and The Chicago Academy for the Arts. Also, he performed with the Ruth Page Foundation under the former direction of Larry Long, Ballet Chicago, Ginger Farley's former 58 Group, and various contemporary companies. Luis is a certified Pilates, Active Red Cord, and core trainer as well as a Thai and clinical Thai bodyworker practitioner. With the exception of last year, he has been a guest performer with Salt Creek Ballet since 1998.

## GUEST ARTIST PROFILES



**Ricardo J. Garcia** (Mayaguez, Puerto Rico) began his dance training at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, where he earned a BA in Dance. Upon graduating, he joined the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company (DCDC), under the direction of founder Jeraldine Blunden and subsequently Kevin Ward. At DCDC, he had the honor to work with acclaimed choreographers Bill T. Jones, Doug Verone, Donald McKayle, Ronald K. Brown, and Dwight Rhoden, among others. Additionally, he was the recipient of the Josie Award for Outstanding Male Dancer of the Year in 2002. He relocated to Chicago and spent five seasons with Luna Negra Dance Theater and performed as a guest with The Joffrey Ballet, Illinois Ballet, Peoria Ballet, and Salt Creek Ballet. He has conducted classes throughout the US, Europe and Russia, and his choreography have been performed by Luna Negra Dance Theater, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company II, South Dayton Dance Theater, Stivers School for the Arts, After School Matters, and Piel Morena Contemporary Dance. Ricardo holds a Master of Science in Nonprofit Management and Philanthropy from Bay Path University and has been the Administrator of Career Transition For Dancers/Midwest, the Managing Director for Lucky Plush Productions, the Co-Artistic Director of the Blue Lake International Ensemble, on the faculty of The Chicago High School for the Arts, the Manager at the American Rhythm Center, the Sr. Pantry Programs Manager at Beyond Hunger and is currently the Manager of Place-Based Initiatives at Feeding America National Organization.



**Brandon Penn** was born and raised in Richmond, VA, and began his dance training at the age of 10 at the Pine Camp Cultural Arts Center where he studied with Annette Holt, Rodney Williams, and Willie Hinton learning a variety of styles. He later enrolled in the School of Richmond Ballet where he studied under Igor Antanov, Malcolm Burn, and more.

After spending three years at the Richmond Ballet Mr. Penn was accepted as a trainee of the company whilst completing his senior year. After graduating, he spent one year at the State University of New York

## GUEST ARTIST PROFILES

(SUNY) at Purchase College Conservatory for Dance, studying under Larry Clark, Taryn Russell, Ted Kivitt and others. After spending a year at SUNY, Penn was offered a position with Atlanta Ballet 2.

After two years there, he was offered a company position with the Columbia City Ballet. Later, after much experience and repertory under his belt, he accepted a principal contract with the Fort Wayne Ballet where he just finished his second season. He would like to immensely thank his family for all of their love, support and words of wisdom.



A native of Poland, **Norbert Nirewicz** began his ballet studies at the National Ballet School in Gdansk. He was a finalist in Poland's seventh national Ballet Competition and obtained a silver medal in the same competition two years later. As a Dancer for the Polish National Theater, he portrayed roles in a variety of classical ballets such as "Swan Lake", "Giselle", "Sleeping Beauty", and "La Fille Mal Gardee" in Warsaw and throughout Europe. After leaving Poland Mr. Nirewicz joined Ballet Classico de Camara in Venezuela as a Principal Dancer adding "La Bayadere", "Le Corsaire" and many more to his repertoire. After Mr. Nirewicz competed at US International Ballet Competition in Jackson, Mississippi, he was offered a Principal contract to join Cleveland/San Jose Ballet. He performed with the company for two seasons in Nahat's "Blue Suede Shoes" and Roland Petit's "Carmen" garnering public and critical acclaim. In the Summer he competed in the 16th New York International Ballet Competition where he was a finalist. After two seasons with Cleveland/San Jose Ballet Mr. Nirewicz joined Columbia City Ballet with a Principal contract where he performed in "Don Quichote" and "Dracula" among the others.

Since 2010 he has been working as a Free Lance Dancer, Teacher, and Choreographer performing across the United States, Japan, Latin America, and Europe adding many more ballets to his repertoire such as "Apollo", "Who Cares", "Allegro Brilliante", "Combat", "Serenade", "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux", and "Romeo&Juliet" to name the few as well as taught numerous Master Classes, Company Classes and Summer Intensive Workshops throughout the Country as well as created Award Winning choreographies for Ballet Companies and Dance Competitions.

## GUEST ARTIST PROFILES



**Connor Barak** is from Kent, Ohio, where he trained at Ballet Theatre of Ohio and Meneer School of Dance under the direction of Christine Meneer. At Ballet Theatre of Ohio, he had the opportunity to perform roles such as Franz in *Coppélia* and The Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*. He graduated from Butler University in May 2024 with a

B.S. in Dance Arts Administration and Spanish. While at Butler, he performed in several classical works set by Marek Cholewa, Rosanna Ruffo, Derek Reid, and David Ingram, performing roles such as Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake*, The Nutcracker Prince in *The Nutcracker*, and Hanz in *La Vivandiere*. He also has had the opportunity to perform in several contemporary works including *Ourfire* by Jennifer Archibald, *Bronze* by Maria Konrad, and *Gnostos* by David Ingram. When not in the studio, he is passionate about increasing accessibility to the arts and has worked with Butler Community Arts School, helping run over 20 arts summer camps. Appears courtesy of the Dayton Ballet.



**Martin Ortiz Tapia** graduated from University of Wisconsin Stevens Point earning his BFA with additional summer training dance programs from Luna Negra Dance Theater, Thodos Dance Chicago, and Giordano Dance Chicago. He spent over nine years as a company member at Giordano, performing and touring nationally. In

addition to concert dancing, Martin has a passion for musical theater. He has appeared in various productions, including the Lyric's Opera of Chicago *West Side Story* and Drury Lane's *Mary Poppins*. He has also appeared in other musical theater productions such as *Saturday Night Fever*, *Newsies*, and *Cabaret*. Martin's work does not just stop on the stage. He has worked in the fitness industry and holds multiple certifications from major athletic clubs around the Chicago area as well as world-wide fitness companies, including LesMills. Martin's charisma, hard-work ethic, enthusiasm, and clever personality have fostered a sense of community and joy in all the spaces he has been involved with. Martin is thrilled to join Intrigue Dance Company and continue building community! Vamos con todo!



Ms. **Erica De La O** was born in East Los Angeles, CA, and is a Principal Artist with The Louisville Ballet. Her repertoire has included leading roles in much of the classical canon, including *La Sylphide*, *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella*, *Coppelia*, *Don Quixote*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Les Sylphides*, *Lady of the Camellias*, and *The Nutcracker*. She also has performed leading roles in works by Balanchine, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, Adam Houghland, Lucas Jervies, Val Caniparoli, Ben Stevenson, Dave Ingram, Harrison McEldowney, Helen Pickett, Ma Cong, and many others. Beyond ballet, she has also forged a career as a choreographer and collaborative artist in music, film, and graphic design. Her honors include the Sono Osato award, the John Orr Award from the Pasadena Arts Council, an award from the Kentucky Women Foundation to shed light on social topics, a fellowship from Hadley Creatives, and a silver medal at the Los Angeles' Music Center Spotlight Awards. She created *Bunhead Talks*, an educational vehicle for dance history, female empowerment in ballet culture, and parent/student dance education. Ms. De La O holds an MFA from Hollins University. She earned an EMBA from the University of Louisville and University of Kentucky Schools of Business.



Joining Erica is her husband, **Kristopher Wojtera**, born in Poland. Mr. Wojtera began ballet studies at the National Ballet School in Gdańsk at age ten. He joined the Polish National Theatre in Warsaw and worked with prominent choreographers such as Lorca Miasin, Emil Wesolowski, Yuri Grigorovich, Krzysztof Pastor, and Mats Ek. During Mr. Wojtera's 28 year career, his repertoire as a Principal artist included leading roles in *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Don Quixote*, *Lady of the Camellias*, *Le Patineurs*, *Theme and Variations*, *Billy The Kid*, as well as contemporary works by Ma Cong, Val Caniparoli, Twyla Tharp, Antony Tudor, Harrison McEldowney, and many others. He danced professionally with Baltic Opera (Gdańsk, Poland), Columbia City Ballet (South Carolina), Louisville Ballet (Kentucky), and English National Ballet (London, England). While still performing, he completed a Master of Fine Arts degree in Dance from Hollins University in association with the Forsythe Lab and the Mousonturm in Frankfurt, Germany. He earned an Artist's Diploma from The National Ballet School of Gdańsk in Poland and certificates in

## SALT CREEK BALLET PROFILES

Vaganova Teaching methodology (levels 1 – 5) from Bryn Mawr College. Mr. Wojtera's awards include the Carolina New House Scholarship, the Sono Osato Award, and the Hollins University Fellowship. As Artistic Director, he will be teaching a mix of classes, coaching, and implementing the artistic vision of SCB. He looks forward to working together to advance the mission of Salt Creek Ballet.



**Charles Cooper** (Lighting Designer) is an award-winning Chicago-based lighting designer for theatre and dance currently returning to Salt Creek Ballet for his 14th season of lighting *The Nutcracker*. His regional and Chicago credits include work for Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Writers' Theatre, Drury Lane Oakbrook, Victory Gardens Theatre, Northlight Theatre, First Stage Milwaukee, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, American Theatre Company, Peninsula Players Theatre, The House Theatre of Chicago and many more. Charles is proud to be an Associate Artist of Chicago's TimeLine Theatre where he has designed more than 15 productions. Frequent collaborators include directors William Brown, Kimberly Senior, Erica Weiss, Hallie Gordon, and Sandy Shinner, designers Keith Pitts, Kevin Depinet, Andrew Hansen, Chris Kriz, and Rachel Healy. He studied at Purchase College and DePaul University. Awards include the 2016 Joseph Jefferson award for Outstanding Lighting Design, six Joseph Jefferson nominations for Outstanding Lighting Design, and two After Dark Awards for best overall design. Since 2002, Charles has been on the faculty of Hinsdale Central High School teaching the basics of theatrical design and production. Through his teaching and design work, Charles is proud to be inspiring a new generation of theatre artists. He lives in Oak Park, Illinois with his wife Angela and sons, Ethan and Gavin. Charles has been a proud member of United Scenic Artists Local 829 since 2005.



**Brandon Lewis** (Technical Director) is thrilled to be back at Salt Creek Ballet for *The Nutcracker*. He has worked with Salt Creek Ballet since 1997 only missing a few years here and there. He is an account executive at Midwest Event Solutions who specializes in lighting, audio, and video. In addition, he is the Theatre Program head at St. Francis

High School in Wheaton, Illinois. Much love to his family, and his favorite Bon-Bon ever.



**Joelle Farano** (Rehearsal Assistant), a native of Darien, IL, obtained her Doctor of Pharmacy and a minor in dance at Ohio Northern University, and completed her MBA and two-year administration residency at the University of Chicago Medicine. She has been dancing since the age of 10 in tap, jazz, hip hop, ballet/pointe, lyrical,

contemporary, pom, and kick. Joelle was a member of the Steppin' Out Dance Company, where she and her teammates won numerous awards at local and national dance competitions under the direction of Donna Johnson and Ashley Goletz (DeForest). During her high school career, Joelle was captain of the Varsity Danceline, dancing at football and basketball games and competing in Kick and Pom and solo categories. In college, Joelle was a part of the Ohio Northern University Dance Company under the direction of Dr. Laurie Bell, where she performed with various dance companies, including Paul Taylor II, Amy Marshall Dance Company, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, and Ballets with a Twist. She has taken tap master classes with Sean Kaminski, Jay Fagan, Nico Rubio, and Savion Glover. She enjoys combining and adapting her expertise in rhythm and Broadway tap techniques to provide her students with strong technical skills while encouraging them to explore their artistry.



**Vera Zhukova** (Rehearsal Assistant) trained and received her diploma in the pedagogy of ballet and character dance from the prestigious State Academy of Art and Culture in Chelyabinsk, Russia. Vera was a principal dancer with the State Ural Folk Choir and Dance Ensemble from 1975 to 1981, performing in several

countries around the world. She was the artistic director of the Municipal Children's Dance Theater in Ekaterinburg, Russia, for thirteen years. Under her direction, students of the dance theater successfully participated in competitions in the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Turkey, and Finland. She received the Russian Federation's honorable dance teacher award in the year 2000. Several of Vera's former students have pursued dance careers, either as professional performers or dance instructors. She is also the author of a book on dance teaching methods, which has

been well-received by dance instructors in her native Russia. Prior to founding Ballet Academy in Lincoln Park, she was the artistic director of the Dmitri Roudnev Ballet School of Chicago, where she taught ballet and character dance. Her ballet teaching is based on the Vaganova syllabus, which has proven to be highly successful with young children. Vera enjoys working with children and strives to help her students achieve their full dance potential.



**Kim Kramer** (Rehearsal Assistant) began dancing at the age of two, eventually training in ballet, modern, jazz, lyrical, tap, and hip hop. She trained with Russian ballet master Avnun Yakubov and ballet master Watmora Casey. As a young dancer Kim performed in Snow White The Ballet and ballet variations such as Paquita, and

Cinderella, which included members of the Kirov Ballet Theatre of Chicago. She also has received extensive training from Lou Conte Dance Studio, Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago and, in Los Angeles, Edge Performing Arts Center, The Performing Arts Center, and Millenium Dance Complex. During her childhood she performed with Fabourgh Ballet Theatre and competed and performed with Moves Dance Theatre and later Perseverance Dance Company, under the direction of Melissa Ridgway. While performing and competing she won numerous awards and scholarships. She is honored to have also performed with the Chicago Human Rhythm Project, which included working with tap masters, Lane Alexander and Brill Barrett, and the Mandelone Project in Los Angeles. Kim trained and worked with top choreographers in California, toured as a dancer/ model with Wella Global Vision, and appeared on the MTV Movie Awards. Today, she focuses on training children in many styles. Her choreography has won top awards through the years and she is continuously dedicated to sharing her passion for dance and teaching young dancers to be the best that they can be.



**Jean Marquez's** (Rehearsal Assistant) early dance training started in the suburbs of Chicago. Her exploding passion for dance as a teen soon brought her to the city to study under the legendary Birute Barodicaite at Hubbard Street Ballet, taking classes alongside the esteemed HBDC Company Members. Jean then ventured off to Millikin

University, where she received a BFA in Musical Theatre. At Millikin,

Jean had the privilege of training with many talented professionals, including Darlene Harshbarger, and many master classes with ABT touring company members, including the incomparable Cynthia Harvey. While at Millikin she had the opportunity to study abroad and continue her training in theater and dance at Pineapple Studios in London. Jean's professional career highlights include a midwest Regional Tour of A Chorus Line (Christine), several productions with the esteemed Civic Light Opera in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, including Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (Ruth/Millie understudy) and 42nd Street (Lorraine). She also enjoyed several contracts with Royal Caribbean Cruise Line as a dancer and appeared in a music video for LeAnn Rimes. Jean has 25+ years experience teaching many different styles of dance (ballet, tap, lyrical, jazz, & musical theater), and choreographing for Stage Door Dance Academy, where she has been nationally recognized for outstanding choreography. For the past 10 years, Ms. Jean has honed her focus primarily to the art of teaching ballet, studying with ballet masters on conventions, and through independent study of anatomy, terminology, and theory. Jean is well loved and respected by all her students because of her positive attitude and firm teaching style. Her passion for the art of dance shines through in every class.



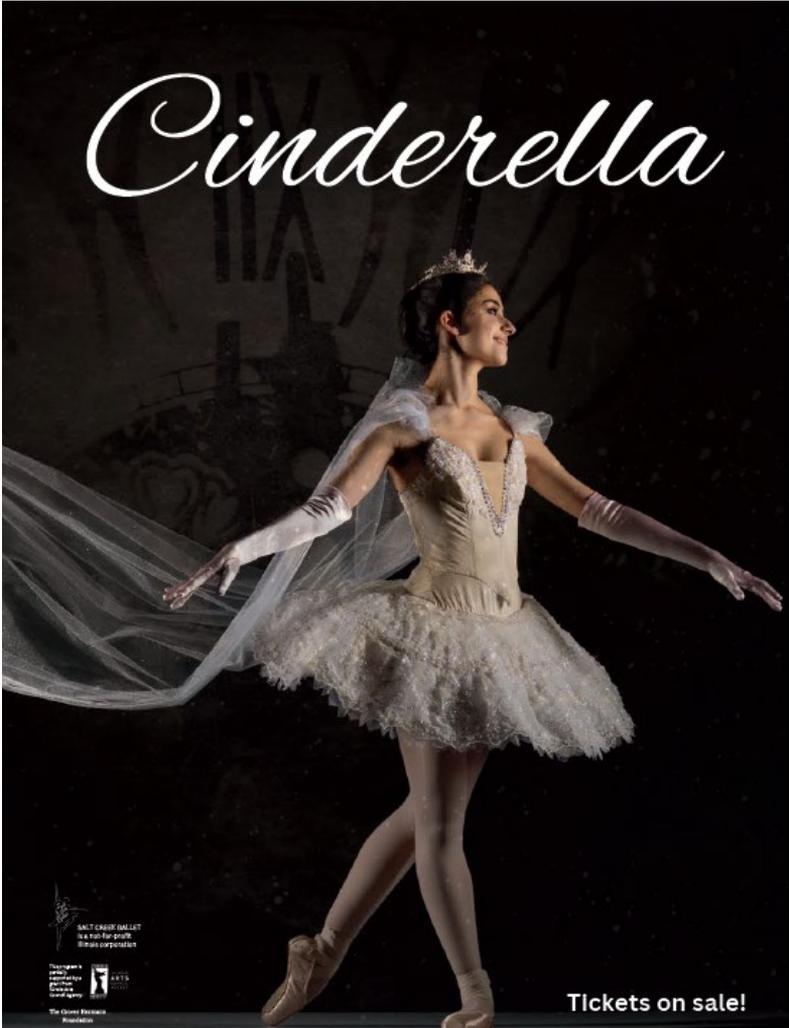
**Anna Spelman** (Rehearsal Assistant) began her rigorous ballet training and performing career at the San Diego Ballet at the age of nine. By eleven, with the influence of NYCB principal dancer Jillana, Anna attended and received scholarships to the School of American Ballet summer intensives in New York City. Under the artistic co-

directorship of renowned Bulgarian ballerina Sonia Arova and her husband Thor Sutowski, Anna thrived in classical ballet training and Thor's contemporary choreography. She enjoyed performing "Clara" in The Nutcracker, "Four Little Swans" and later, "Big Swans" in Swan Lake, the 2nd Shade variation in La Bayadere, Prokofiev's Romeo & Juliet and the Bournonvilleballets Napoli, La Sylphide and Etudes. At twelve, Anna along with twenty San Diego Ballet dancers experienced a summer abroad at L' Ecole Supérieure de Danse de Cannes Rosella Hightower and performed Raymonda and La Sylphide on the French Riviera. At fifteen years of age, Anna was given an opportunity to join a Columbia Artist Tour, performing ballet every night in a different city in the northwest. During the summer, Anna competed as a junior at the

International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria. In the fall, after her ballet teachers were appointed Directors of the Alabama School of Fine Arts Dance Department in Birmingham, Anna was invited to continue her demanding artistic training. Anna performed in outreach projects at high schools in Alabama to educate students in the arts, as well as, onstage in August Bournonville's *The Flower Festival* in Genzano Pas de Deux and leading roles in Michel Fokine's *Les Sylphides* which prompted her to win an Obelisk award for best female dancer. Later, while on scholarship at American Ballet Theatre School, Anna had the opportunity to perform Richard England's *Vivaldi Pas de Deux* with ABT's 2nd company on the Metropolitan Opera House stage. The very next day, she was asked to join American Ballet Theatre to perform in Mikhail Baryshnikov's *Nutcracker*, which marked the beginning of her career with ABT. During her ten-year professional career with ABT under the directorship of Mikhail Baryshnikov, Anna toured the major cities of the US as well as France, Italy, Japan, and Israel. In Israel, Anna performed Michel Fokine's *Le Spectre de la Rose*, Emilia in Moor's Pavane by Jose Limon and Paquita under the direction of Elena Tchernichova. Anna danced and acted in the films *Hair*, directed by Milos Forman and choreographed by Twyla Tharp, and *Dancers*, directed by Herbert Ross and filmed in Livorno, Italy. Her television credits include: *Live from Lincoln Center*, PBS special *Twyla Tharp with ABT*, and *American Ballet Theatre in San Francisco*, and *Don Quixote* ABT with Mikhail Baryshnikov at the Met, and the David Gordon television special *Dance in America* where Anna was featured as *The Woman in White* in Gordon's ballet *Murder*, dancing with Baryshnikov. Anna has worked closely with choreographers in both ballet and modern dance including George Balanchine, Kenneth MacMillan, Jerome Robbins, Antony Tudor, Frederick Ashton, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Merce Cunningham, David Gordon, Paul Taylor, and Twyla Tharp. Anna continues to fuel her passion for dance by teaching her craft. She completed intensive training in the American Ballet Theatre National Training Curriculum and is ABT certified to teach Primary thru Level 7 & Partnering. After acquiring her ABT certification, Anna has been teaching ballet in the Chicagoland area at dance schools, such as Faubourg School of Ballet, Plainfield Dance Academy, Steps Dance Center, Ruth Page Center for the Arts, Salt Creek Ballet and Chicago

**SALT CREEK BALLET PROFILES**

Ballet Conservatory. In 2020, YAGP awarded “Outstanding Studio” to the Chicago Ballet Conservatory where Anna has been an integral part of the ballet foundation at the University of Tampa.



# *Cinderella*

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**Kirk Muspratt** (Music Director and Conductor) recently received the Conductor of the Year award from the Illinois Council of Orchestras. He was also named “Chicagoan of the Year” in classical music by John von Rhein and the staff of the Chicago Tribune. In honoring Muspratt, von Rhein said, “Ask the delighted adults and kids who this

year flocked to his concerts in west suburban Glen Ellyn with the New Philharmonic Orchestra ... They will tell you he made concert going an interactive experience that was both enlightening and—are you ready?—fun.”

In July 2004, Muspratt was named both Music Director of New Philharmonic and Artistic Director/Music Director of DuPage Opera Theatre (now New Philharmonic Opera). In 2017 and 2009, New Philharmonic was awarded Professional Orchestra of the Year by the Illinois Council of Orchestras.

Muspratt begins his 25th acclaimed season as Music Director of the Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra (NISO). In 2006, with NISO, he initiated the South Shore Summer Music Festival.

Previous to this, Muspratt was resident conductor at the Pittsburgh Symphony, Associate Conductor at the Utah Symphony, and Assistant Conductor at the St. Louis Symphony. He was recently awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Lethbridge.

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## Volunteer at the MAC

We are always looking for enthusiastic, dedicated, reliable and customer service-oriented people to become volunteers serving as ushers, greeters and docents at our events. Volunteers provide invaluable service by assisting guests to their seats, answering questions and most importantly creating a welcoming environment for our guests. Volunteers are unpaid, but that doesn't mean you won't be rewarded. The cultural perks you'll enjoy as a volunteer include vouchers for every shift worked offering discounts to use at the MAC Box Office and invitation to our annual volunteer appreciation dinner including prizes and gifts.

Visit [AtTheMAC.org/Volunteer](http://AtTheMAC.org/Volunteer) to fill out an online application and for more information on requirements and qualifications. Applications accepted year-round.

For more information, contact Volunteer Coordinator  
Rob Nardini: [nardinir@cod.edu](mailto:nardinir@cod.edu) | (630) 942-3705.

## HOUSE NOTES

- Cameras and recording devices are not allowed in the theater and are prohibited by our contracts with the artists.
- Smoking is not permitted in the theater or on campus.
- For your comfort and security, all backpacks and large bags must be checked.
- Please turn off all cell phones and any other alarms while in the theater.
- Emergency phone number at COD Police Department for after-hour calls is (630) 942-2000.
- Latecomers seated at discretion of the House Manager.
- Groups of 10 or more may contact (630) 942-3026 or [grouptix@cod.edu](mailto:grouptix@cod.edu) to arrange for group discounts.
- If you notice a spill in the theater, please notify an usher.
- McAninch Arts Center volunteers are people who assist the house staff in areas of ticket taking, ushering and general management during performances. To get involved, call (630) 942-3705.
- For **Americans With Disabilities Act** accommodations, call (630) 942-2141 (voice) or (630) 858-9692 (TDD).
- **Infrared Assistive Listening Devices:** For audience members who desire audio amplification of performances, headsets with individual volume controls are now available. You may check out the headsets at the Box Office with a driver's license. *Underwritten by a generous gift from The Knowles Foundation.*

## MAC STAFF LISTING

### MAC Administrative Staff

Director of the McAninch Arts Center.....	Diana Martinez
Business Manager .....	Molly Junokas
Assistant Business Manager .....	Linda Sharbaugh
Curator, Cleve Carney Museum of Art .....	Justin Witte
Assistant Curator.....	Julia Walker
Gallery Assistant .....	Madelene Przybysz
Marketing and Patron Services Manager .....	Janey Sarther
Graphic Designer.....	Wendy Melgar
Director of Development for Cultural Arts.....	Jon Nadel
Education and Community Engagement Coordinator.....	Mandy Rakow
Project Manager .....	Kari Schoettle
Office Manager/Events Coordinator .....	Morgan Bainbridge
Student Clerical Assistants .....	Kate Cadag, Claudia Mah Eng Muzquiz

### MAC Box Office and Front of House Staff

Box Office Manager .....	Julie Elges
Assistant Box Office Supervisors .....	Daniel Arzola, Elise Wash
Box Office Assistants .....	Patrick Garon, Joanne Hunt
Patron Services Manager .....	Tom Murray
House Manager/Volunteer Coordinator .....	Rob Nardini

### MAC Resident Professional Ensembles

Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, Managing Artistic Director .....	Gus Menary
Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, Associate Artistic Director.....	Daniel Millhouse
Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, Business Manager.....	Bryan Burke
New Philharmonic, Music Director and Conductor .....	Kirk Muspratt
New Philharmonic, Associate Conductor and Librarian .....	Benjamin Nadel
New Philharmonic General Manager .....	Paula Cebula
New Philharmonic Personnel Manager.....	Karen Dickelman
New Philharmonic Assistant Librarian.....	Ryan Michel

### MAC Design and Technical Staff

Technical Production/Lighting/Sound Coordinator.....	Richard Arnold, Jr.
Technical Theater Supervisor .....	Sabrina Zeidler
Costume and Make-up Design Coordinator .....	Kimberly G. Morris
Assistant Costume Coordinator and Stitcher .....	Gretchen Woodley
Production Manager .....	Joe Hopper
Sound and Lighting Specialist.....	Ben Johnson
Lighting Production Specialist .....	Elias Morales
Audio Production Specialist .....	Fisher Parsons
Events Production Specialist/Tech. Director – BTE .....	Caitlyn Woods
Stage Hands .....	Bobby Bryan, Zak Zubka

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