

BALLET ARKANSAS

ONE OF AMERICA'S TOP 75 BALLET COMPANIES



25|26 SEASON GRATITUDE REPORT

A NOTE FROM LEADERSHIP

As the curtain falls on another remarkable year, Ballet Arkansas is filled with gratitude and pride as we reflect on the accomplishments of the 25|26 season. This season has been defined by continued artistic excellence, expanding community engagement, educational growth, and meaningful impact throughout Arkansas—made possible through the steadfast support of our donors, partners, volunteers, and patrons.

Your belief in our mission remains the foundation of our success. Throughout the season, Ballet Arkansas continued to strengthen its position as one of the nation's fastest-growing ballet organizations, serving tens of thousands of audience members, students, and community participants through performances, educational programs, outreach initiatives, and statewide partnerships. Because of your support, the organization has continued to expand its reach while maintaining the artistic quality and organizational strength that define Ballet Arkansas.

The Ballet Arkansas School for Dance continues to flourish as a cornerstone of our mission, providing year-round training to students of all ages and experience levels in our downtown studios. Led by an exceptional faculty of professional artists and educators, the School remains dedicated to developing confident, creative, and disciplined young dancers in a supportive and inspiring environment. Community participation also remained a hallmark of the season, with hundreds of students, families, and community cast members joining our professional company onstage throughout the year, creating meaningful artistic experiences that unite generations through the power of dance.

The 25|26 season featured an exciting array of performances, educational initiatives, and community engagement programs that further strengthened Ballet Arkansas's role as a statewide cultural resource. From main stage productions and touring performances to outreach activities and collaborative partnerships, the organization continued its commitment to bringing world-class dance experiences to audiences throughout Arkansas. As we celebrate the accomplishments of this season, we do so with tremendous optimism for the future.

The 26|27 season promises new artistic opportunities, expanded educational initiatives, deeper community partnerships, and continued organizational growth. With your ongoing support, Ballet Arkansas will continue advancing its mission while creating transformative experiences that inspire, educate, and enrich our communities.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, staff, faculty, and artists, thank you for your continued belief in Ballet Arkansas. We are honored to share this journey with you and look forward to all that we will accomplish together in the year ahead.



Michael Fothergill
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Catherine Fothergill
Associate Artistic Director
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FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

It is my sincere pleasure to extend heartfelt gratitude to each of you for the unwavering support you have shown Ballet Arkansas throughout the 25|26 season. As President of the Board of Directors, I am honored to recognize the extraordinary impact of your generosity. Through your charitable contributions, attendance at performances and events, volunteer service, advocacy, and enrollment in our School for Dance, you have played an essential role in advancing Ballet Arkansas's mission and ensuring another year of remarkable achievement.

The accomplishments of this season reflect the collective commitment of a community that believes deeply in the power of the arts. Because of your support, Ballet Arkansas has continued to expand its artistic reach, strengthen its educational programs, deepen its community impact, and serve audiences, students, and families throughout Arkansas and beyond. Your investment in our organization enables us to present inspiring performances, provide exceptional dance education, and create meaningful opportunities for engagement across our state.

Ballet Arkansas has grown into one of the region's leading cultural institutions and continues to earn recognition for artistic excellence, innovation, and community service. This progress would not be possible without supporters like you who understand the vital role the arts play in enriching lives and strengthening communities.

Having a thriving professional ballet company and dance school rooted in Arkansas provides opportunities that extend far beyond the stage. Through your support, young people discover confidence and discipline through dance education, artists find opportunities to develop and share their craft, and audiences experience the transformative power of live performance. Together, we are helping ensure that the arts remain accessible, relevant, and impactful for future generations.

Your dedication not only sustains Ballet Arkansas—it strengthens the cultural vitality of our state. The arts foster creativity, empathy, connection, and civic pride, and your partnership allows us to bring those values to life through performances, educational programs, outreach initiatives, and community collaborations.

As we celebrate the successes of the 25|26 season, we also look toward an exciting future filled with new opportunities for growth, artistic achievement, and community impact. On behalf of the entire Board of Directors, thank you for your continued confidence in Ballet Arkansas and for the role you play in our ongoing success.

Together, we are building a stronger future for the arts in Arkansas, and we look forward to all that we will accomplish in the seasons ahead.

Dr. Ann Patel
President of the Board
president@balletarkansas.org



BOARD & STAFF

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Megan Hall, Treasurer
Dr. Elizabeth Irby, Secretary

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STAFF

Michael Fothergill, Executive and Artistic Director
Catherine Fothergill, Associate Artistic Director
Colin J. Neel, Production Manager
Stephanie Ong, Costume Director
Alan Malcolm, Technical Director

COMPANY ARTISTS



Meredith Loy



William Heide



Deanna Stanton



McKenna Ulbrick



Layla Terrell



Aldrin Vendt



Murray McCormack



Sage Feldges



Brittany Dowdy



Leah Norwine



Lauren Yordanich



Keith Newman



Benjamin Piner



Kerridwyn Schanck



Liev Ewart



Claire Churchill



Allen Sizemore



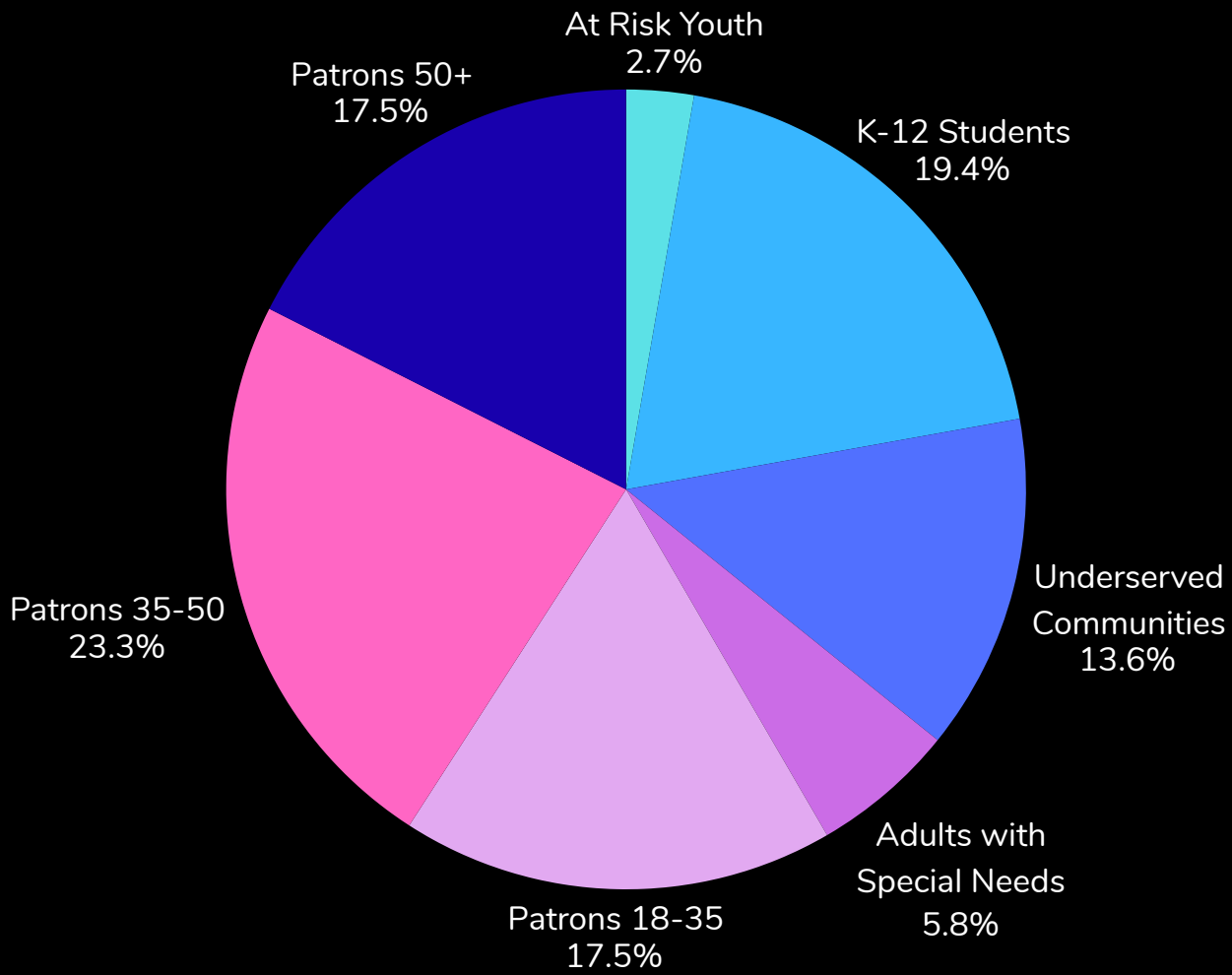
MISSION

Captivate the public through artistic excellence in the presentation of world-class performances and education programs. Grow, develop, and educate a devoted and diverse audience of dance enthusiasts.

OBJECTIVES

- Proactively anticipate and respond to the diverse programming needs of all Arkansans.
- Attract and collaborate with exceptional performers, collaborators, and staff members.
- Educate and nurture the next generation of professional dancers through the presentation of unsurpassed education programs.
- Create a vibrant cultural atmosphere where all Arkansans feel welcome and appreciated.
- Strengthen our financial and organizational foundations to provide for the expansion of programs and services that uplift, enrich, and inspire Arkansans.
- Be a driving force of innovation within the art form.

PROGRAM REACH



7 Wards of Little Rock
4 Wards of North Little Rock
53 Arkansas Counties
50 US States

SEASON MILESTONES



PRODUCTIONS + SPECIAL EVENTS



Throughout the 25|26 Season, Ballet Arkansas presented one of the most ambitious and successful performance seasons in the organization's history, producing six major productions and four special events that celebrated artistic excellence, innovation, and community engagement. Audiences experienced *Sleepy Hollow*, *Lanterns & Legends*, *The Nutcracker Spectacular*, the world premiere of *Cinderella*, *Icons of American Dance*, *Giselle*, and *Origins: A New Works Celebration*, alongside beloved community traditions including *Luminous: The Turning Pointe Gala*, *The Land of the Sweets Nutcracker Tea*, and *The Glass Slipper Cinderella Tea*.

Beyond the stage, Ballet Arkansas expanded the ways audiences connect with the arts through unique partnerships with Little Rock's Capital Hotel and the Clinton Presidential Center. These collaborations brought together dance, culinary arts, and cultural dialogue through special events including the *Land of the Sweets Dinner*, *Giselle Nightscape Dinner*, and *Bold Women, Bold Moves*, a thought-provoking speaker series featuring influential leaders from across the arts sector.

The season also achieved remarkable financial success. *Sleepy Hollow* became the highest-grossing fall production in Ballet Arkansas history, while both *Cinderella* and *Giselle* exceeded budgeted revenue expectations. Special events likewise experienced record-breaking success, with *The Land of the Sweets Nutcracker Tea*, *The Glass Slipper Cinderella Tea*, and *Luminous: The Turning Pointe Gala* all surpassing fundraising and attendance goals. Together, these performances and events welcomed thousands of patrons and demonstrated the growing demand for Ballet Arkansas's artistic and community-centered programming.

50,000+ ARKANSANS SERVED

This season, Ballet Arkansas reached more than 50,000 Arkansans through performances, educational initiatives, outreach programs, special events, and community partnerships. From first-time theatergoers and students to longtime patrons and supporters, Ballet Arkansas continued to expand access to high-quality arts experiences throughout the state.



The 25/26 Season represented a defining moment in Ballet Arkansas's artistic evolution. Throughout the season, the Company presented six world premiere works by Noelle Kayser, Liev Ewart, Deanna Stanton, McKenna Ulbrick, Murray McCormack, and Kerridwyn Schanck, further establishing Ballet Arkansas as a leading incubator for new choreography and creative voices. The season also featured the world premiere of Ballet Arkansas's original full-length production of Cinderella, a major artistic achievement that showcased the organization's growing capacity to develop large-scale productions from concept to stage.

At the same time, Ballet Arkansas continued to expand access to the great works of the classical canon by presenting Arkansas's first full-length production of Giselle, one of ballet's most celebrated masterpieces. The Company's artistic legacy was further strengthened through the addition of four significant works to its repertory, including Andrea Schermoly's *Within Without*, choreography by Noelle Kayser, Gerald Arpino's *Birthday Variations*, and the full-length production of *Giselle*. Together, these achievements reflect Ballet Arkansas's commitment to preserving classical ballet traditions while investing in the future of the art form through innovation, new creation, and artistic excellence.

NEARLY 1,800 PROFESSIONAL COMPANY ARTIST APPLICATIONS RECEIVED



Ballet Arkansas attracted nearly 1,800 audition submissions from dancers around the world through Company Artist auditions, the Los Angeles National Master Audition, and Chicago audition opportunities. This remarkable response reflects the growing national reputation of Ballet Arkansas as a destination for exceptional artists seeking meaningful professional opportunities.



50+ CHOREOGRAPHER SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

As part of its commitment to artistic innovation and new work creation, Ballet Arkansas reviewed more than 50 choreographic submissions from emerging and established dance makers. This process helped identify fresh artistic voices while supporting the organization's ongoing investment in the future of dance.

INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED MUSICAL COLLABORATIONS



Live music continued to elevate Ballet Arkansas productions throughout the season. Audiences experienced performances by internationally celebrated pianist Fei-Fei Dong during Icons of American Dance and enjoyed the return of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra for The Nutcracker Spectacular, creating unforgettable collaborations between music and dance.

A HISTORIC MUSEUM TRANSFORMED INTO A PERIOD PERFORMANCE VENUE



For Lanterns & Legends, Ballet Arkansas transformed the Historic Arkansas Museum into an immersive performance venue, inviting audiences to experience dance in a unique and unexpected setting. This innovative production demonstrated the organization's commitment to creative placemaking and reimagining how communities engage with the arts.

A NEW PERFORMANCE VENUE CHRISTENED IN NORTH LITTLE ROCK



Ballet Arkansas became one of the first arts organizations to present performances at the new North Little Rock Event Center, expanding access to professional dance experiences while helping establish a vibrant new cultural destination for the region.

AN OUT-OF-STATE TOUR PRESENTED



The Company extended its reach beyond Arkansas through a performance of *The Magic of the Nutcracker* at Connect2Culture in Joplin, Missouri. This regional touring engagement introduced new audiences to Ballet Arkansas while strengthening the organization's visibility and reputation throughout the region.

ABUNDANT STUDENT IMPACT



Through the School for Dance, nearly 200 students received high-quality dance instruction each week. These young artists developed technical skills, confidence, discipline, and creativity while participating in a training environment designed to nurture both artistic and personal growth.



Nearly 350 community cast performers, ranging in age from six to over eighty years old, took the stage alongside Company Artists in *The Nutcracker Spectacular*, *Cinderella*, and *Giselle*. These opportunities foster meaningful community engagement and create memorable experiences that connect generations through the performing arts.

A LUMINOUS SUCCESS



The Luminous Turning Pointe Gala, expertly co-chaired by Drs. Monica Lo and Daniel Sherbet and held in the elegant William Grant Still Ballroom at the Robinson Center, was a remarkable evening of celebration, philanthropy, and artistic excellence. Bringing together Ballet Arkansas patrons, supporters, artists, and community leaders, the event highlighted the transformative impact of the arts and recognized individuals whose dedication has helped shape and strengthen the organization's mission. Jana Beard was presented with the Legacy in Motion Award and Darrow Jones received the Above the Barre Award in recognition of their advocacy and unwavering support of the organization.

Guests enjoyed libations generously provided by season sponsor Colonial Wines & Spirits, while the elegant atmosphere was enhanced through the creative lighting and design expertise of Jeremy Carter of The Shade Above Lighting Collection & JC Designs. A highlight of the evening was an exclusive preview of Gerald Arpino's *Birthday Variations* and *Stryga*, a world-premiere work created by Noelle Kayser, both of which were later featured in Ballet Arkansas' *ICONS* of American Dance program.

The gala not only celebrated the achievements of its distinguished honorees but also generated excitement for Ballet Arkansas' artistic future, underscoring the organization's commitment to presenting world-class dance experiences for audiences throughout the region.

6 NEW BOARD MEMBERS WELCOMED



Ballet Arkansas welcomed six new members to its Board of Directors during the season. Their leadership, expertise, and commitment to the mission strengthen the organization's governance and help position Ballet Arkansas for continued growth and long-term success.

2 NEW STAFF MEMBERS ADDED



To support continued organizational growth, Ballet Arkansas expanded its administrative team with the addition of its first-ever Director of Finance and Engagement and a new Education and Outreach Coordinator. These strategic positions strengthen the organization's financial stewardship, community impact, and capacity to serve audiences across Arkansas.



26|27

SEASON

PRODUCTIONS



The Great Gatsby **OCTOBER**

Step into the dazzling world of the Roaring Twenties as Ballet Arkansas presents a world-premiere production of *The Great Gatsby*. Lavish parties, sweeping romance, and timeless themes of ambition and longing come to life in this bold new ballet inspired by the American literary classic.



The Nutcracker Spectacular w/ ASO **DECEMBER**

Celebrate the holiday season with Arkansas's largest and most beloved holiday tradition. Featuring live music, spectacular sets and costumes, and a cast of hundreds, *The Nutcracker Spectacular* transports audiences into a magical world of wonder, adventure, and timeless family memories.



The Sleeping Beauty **FEBRUARY**

Experience one of classical ballet's most treasured masterpieces. Set to Tchaikovsky's iconic score, *The Sleeping Beauty* combines breathtaking choreography, lavish costumes, and timeless storytelling in a magical production filled with enchantment, romance, and spectacular theatrical beauty.



RE:MIX **APRIL**

Experience ballet from a new perspective through an immersive evening of contemporary dance and a collision of orchestral and electronic music. Featuring bold world-premiere works, *RE:MIX* pushes creative boundaries while bringing audiences closer than ever to the energy and excitement of the future of dance.



Don Quixote - Arkansas Premiere **APRIL**

Adventure, comedy, and romance collide in Ballet Arkansas's vibrant premiere of *Don Quixote*. Bursting with virtuosic dancing, colorful characters, and larger-than-life storytelling, this beloved classic celebrates the dreamers, romantics, and adventurers.



SPOTLIGHT **YEAR-ROUND**

Go beyond the stage and into the heart of Ballet Arkansas through an exciting series of conversations, artistic demonstrations, behind-the-scenes experiences, rehearsals, and special events. *SPOTLIGHT* offers unprecedented access to the artists, ideas, and creative process that shape each season.

YOU'RE THE REASON FOR OUR SUCCESS!

As the curtains close on Ballet Arkansas's 25|26 season, heartfelt thanks go to each and every one of you who helped make this year a tremendous success. Your steadfast support and belief in our mission continue to bring our artistic vision to life while extending the reach of Ballet Arkansas performances, educational programs, and community engagement initiatives throughout Arkansas.

To our Sponsors, your generous investment helps make world-class artistic experiences possible. Your partnership supports exceptional productions, educational opportunities, outreach initiatives, and community programs that inspire audiences of all ages. Your commitment to Ballet Arkansas fuels innovation, strengthens our impact, and helps ensure that the arts remain a vibrant part of life in our communities.

To our Donors, your unwavering belief in the transformative power of dance remains the foundation of our continued growth and success. Through your generosity, Ballet Arkansas is able to nurture emerging artists, provide high-quality arts education, expand access to dance experiences, and strengthen our role as a statewide cultural resource. Your support directly advances our mission and creates lasting impact for students, artists, and audiences alike.

To our Volunteers, you are among the most important ambassadors of Ballet Arkansas. Your dedication, enthusiasm, and countless hours of service help ensure the success of performances, events, educational activities, and community programs throughout the year. Your contributions behind the scenes make meaningful experiences possible for thousands of people across our state.

Together, you have helped make the 25|26 season one of artistic achievement, educational growth, and meaningful community engagement. Your support has enriched the lives of students, artists, families, patrons, and community members while helping Ballet Arkansas continue its growth as one of the region's leading cultural institutions.

As we look ahead to the future, we do so with tremendous optimism. With your continued partnership, Ballet Arkansas is poised to build upon this momentum through new artistic endeavors, expanded educational opportunities, deeper community connections, and broader statewide impact.

Thank you for your generosity, your advocacy, and your belief in Ballet Arkansas. We are deeply grateful for all that you make possible and look forward to continuing this journey together in the seasons ahead.

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