

Q&A:
Artistic Director
Ib Andersen

Letter From the
Executive Director:
Jami Kozemczak

Education Spotlight:
DanceAZ

Production Feature:
The Rite of Spring

TURNING POINTE

The Impact of Your Support



Ballet Arizona dancers in George Balanchine's *Emeralds*. © The Balanchine Trust. Photo by Alexander Iziliaev.

SPRING 2023



Your passion and generosity for the performing arts is inspiring.

“See the music, hear the dance” – George Balanchine’s famous quote and a fitting tribute to our 2022-2023 season. More so, these words remind me of the magic of dance. Whether it is highlighting the complexities and beauty of human nature and the world around us, or building connections between people and different art forms, dance is magical. I could go on, but my purpose in sharing this sentiment is to emphasize that you are the reason Ballet Arizona embodies these words.

In this issue, get a sneak peek of building a ballet, with my newest work, *The Rite of Spring*. Our partnership with Desert Botanical Garden is a triumph in innovation and artistry, and I hope you will join us for a uniquely Arizonan experience.

Celebrate the 5-year anniversary of *DanceAZ*. Born out of the need for more youth arts opportunities in schools across the Valley, this program has already made an impact on hundreds of student’s lives.

Executive Director, Jami Kozemczak, reflects on this past year and shares all things blooming at the ballet. Great art happens with great people, and we are privileged to have so many talented individuals working across all departments of the ballet.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Turning Pointe!* Your passion and generosity for the performing arts is inspiring. **Thank you** for being our spark of magic.

Gratefully,

Ib Andersen, Artistic Director

BEHIND THE SCENES with Ib Andersen

Q: Tell us about *All Balanchine*...

A: Well first, this production will have live music, played by The Phoenix Symphony. I mean truly, it makes all the difference for the dancers, for the audience, and for me... live music makes a performance feel whole. Balanchine’s works show the impact music and dance have on each other. Each one brings the other to life.

It is always a delight to work on Balanchine ballets. This year’s selections, *Raymonda Variations*, *Emeralds*, and *The Four Temperaments*, are all a celebration of their music. I want the audience to experience that connection because it is so powerful.

Q: Why these three ballets?

A: *Raymonda Variations* is new for the company. Balanchine always loved the composer, Alexander Glazanov, and this score especially. It is so well balanced between grandeur and playful. The choreography is a reimagination of Marius Petipa’s original ballet. It is Petipa variations, but Balanchine’s way, which means it is much more complicated and technically demanding for the dancers. I love that it is a real challenge.

Emeralds is interesting. When the complete *Jewels* ballet premiered, all of the dancers thought *Emeralds* was beyond incredible, but the audience liked it the least. I think of it as a ballet with a lot of perfume. Gabriel Faure’s music and Balanchine’s choreography together have a unique lushness, layered with different textures. It is very seducing and touches you in such a way that cannot be put into words. Without a doubt, *Emeralds* is the definition of a dancer’s ballet.



In Rehearsal

ALL BALANCHINE



Four Temperaments is one of Balanchine's strongest works. There is so much depth to this ballet, between the medieval historic context, the choreography, and Paul Hindemith's score. All of the elements are very specific and very abstract at the same time. For the dancer, you must be musical and connected with your body to execute everything, but still keep your imagination open. If you can convey what the music is saying through your body, you are already halfway there... but not everyone has that ability.

I always say mixed repertoire programs are like creating a menu. You have to have the right ingredients, the right balance, or else you are left unsatisfied. These three ballets, in my opinion, are every bit as satisfying as your favorite meal.



Q: What makes Balanchine's works so special?

A: The man was a genius. There is no one like him and there probably never will be again. It is funny because I think Balanchine would be surprised by the longevity of his ballets. He was never thinking about what would happen after he was gone. But for every year he lived, he did something extraordinary. It is very rare to be able to say that about most choreographers and there is no one who has created as many masterpieces. In that sense, I feel very lucky to have been around him.

Balanchine was really after seeing the dancer, their person. He believed each dancer had to be honest with themselves and do whatever they could with a role. I think that is why dancers love doing his ballets. There is a freedom to his choreography and of course, it feels like it was meant to be on your body.



Ib Andersen, Ben Huys, and Ballet Arizona dancers in rehearsal for George Balanchine's *Raymonda Variations* and *The Four Temperaments*. © The George Balanchine Trust.



HAPPY 5TH BIRTHDAY DANCEAZ!

Since 2018, Ballet Arizona has served Title 1 elementary schools across the Valley through our residency program, DanceAZ.

Born out of the pressing need for youth arts education and engagement opportunities in Arizona schools, DanceAZ supports children's social and emotional learning in combination with 21st Century skills. Participating students receive basic ballet instruction and learn choreographed movement that culminates in a performance to showcase what they have accomplished over the course of nine weeks.

According to a report from the Arizona Arts Education Census Project, in the 2021-2022 school year, only **1,047 out of 296,687** elementary school children were enrolled in the dance program offered at their school. Arizona children stand to gain so much from participation in dance

activities; countless studies have linked participation in dance and arts engagement to many beneficial outcomes including increased physical ability, collaborative skills, creativity, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills. These skills not only translate to academic success but also continue to serve people throughout their careers and personal lives.

In the five years of DanceAZ, Ballet Arizona has brought the magic of dance and self-expression to 452 3rd and 4th grade students, across 12 Arizona elementary schools, with a goal of reaching two new schools and an additional 40 students in the 2023-2024 season.



"DanceAZ has been able to bring ballet and dance to our students and our community through their school based program. It has given our students experiences that they would not have been able to have otherwise... They gain confidence in not only dance, but in themselves as well. Student attendance improves, social skills and willingness to persevere through something challenging improves and you can see the enjoyment they have while practicing. It is a club the kids look forward to joining when they are old enough, and many students participate for years."

– Jennifer Highum



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jami Kozemczak

All that blossoms...

Like our Arizona spring, all things at the ballet are in full bloom! We cannot wait for you to experience the final two productions, *All Balanchine*, and Ib Andersen’s world premiere, *The Rite of Spring*. Not only is Ib a masterful choreographer, but he has become quite the costume designer, once again hand-painting all of the fabric for the costumes which are vibrant and full of life.

We are coming off the heels of our annual *Dance With Me* gala, chaired by Board Member Emerita, Joan Berry. A gorgeous evening honoring the dancers of Ballet Arizona was coupled with an emotional tribute to the memory of our beloved Colleen Buckley. This event raised more than \$500,000 to support the work you see on stage and in our community. Thank you for making it a night to remember.

This first year has been a sensational one – a year of great learning. During my first six months as your new Executive Director, I spent time getting to know all of our staff on a deeper level. The second phase of my listening tour has been spent getting to know the leaders in our community. I had the lovely fortune of meeting with CEOs of arts & cultural institutions and businesses, and the leaders of our local foundations and public agencies. These individuals graciously shared insights and advice around leadership and the power of community connection. It is motivating to see that Ballet Arizona has the potential to collaborate with many of these institutions, similarly to our partnerships with Desert Botanical Garden, The Phoenix Symphony, Arizona School for the Arts, and Phoenix Youth Symphony Orchestras. There is strength in partnership.

This new perspective has taught me that the impact of your support has shaped our past, our present, and will be the critical component for leading us into our bright future. We are only here due to the grand and generous hearts that have come before us, and we will only continue to grow through your forward-thinking generosity.

As we forge ahead, it has been my privilege to put forward an ambitious budget proposal, one that is rooted with a growth mindset focusing on multi-year initiatives, and employee investment. Coupled with Ib Andersen’s artistry – our 2023-2024 season will invest deeply in our artists and staff. We are adding two additional weeks to the dancer’s contracts, stipends for our studio company students, two full-time positions in our production shop, and right-sizing salaries in all departments, to help retain and attract top talent for our world-class city. The enthusiasm for these future plans were so well-received by our staff, it reassured me that we are taking steps in the right direction.

The only reason we are able to do this for our people is because of you and we are forever grateful to you.

We have a tremendous amount of work to do, and I am going to need your help. If you are interested in learning more about these strategic plans for our future and would like to get more involved, please reach out, I look forward to hearing from you.

Gratefully,

Jami Kozemczak, *Executive Director*





With the world premiere of Artistic Director, Ib Andersen's *The Rite of Spring* just weeks away, we are taking you on the journey of building a ballet from scratch.

In 2012, Ballet Arizona and Desert Botanical Garden launched a singular partnership, bringing together the striking beauty of dance and our desert landscape. In the years since, we have premiered five new works by Ib Andersen, including *Topia*, *Eroica*, and *The Four Seasons*. Located in the Garden's Schilling Events Plaza, these productions provide our audience a glimpse of what it takes to bring a ballet to the stage.

Of course, it all begins with an idea and for Ib, choreographing to Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* was always in the cards.

"For me, making a ballet starts with the music. Once you find the piece, you have to listen to it over and over; it almost becomes part of you. Thankfully, I know this score intimately. I have listened to it since I was a teenager, performed the ballet in the 70s – it has always been in my brain."

During his travels this past summer, Ib had a dream that cemented his vision for the new work. From there, he turned to the studios to start choreographing.

"Choreographing is never straightforward. Even if I have an overall vision for the ballet, the actual choreography begins as a vague idea. I am very open in the studio and that process can take you anywhere. Thinking of steps and seeing it on the dancers does not always translate. They also bring things out

of me that I am not expecting – that is the beauty of creating new things."

Beyond the rehearsal studio, comes the production work. For these performances, it entails more than set and costume design, it means building a venue from the ground up... outside... in the desert. With an incredible 60-foot stage, rows of lighting towers and speakers, *The Rite of Spring* will feature new set pieces, inspired by the Papago Buttes.

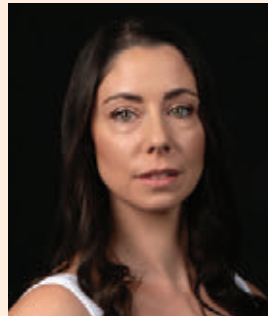
For costumes, Ib has again turned to his other artistic passions, painting! *"The costumes will have painted fabric, mixed with other elements. I am very hands on in the design and creation process and have worked with our Costume Director, Leonor Texidor, for many years. I love seeing these things come to life."*

These productions do so much more than bring new works to life. They show you the immediate impact of your support. From watching our company dancers warm up and our stage crew preparing for the "curtain" to go up, to the hundreds of patrons experiencing their first ballet, it is all possible because of you.

Reflecting on what this partnership has meant for Ballet Arizona, Ib says, *"It is magic. When the sun sets as you are sitting outside and the performance begins, it really does have magic. These productions are so challenging and intensive but they have made us more innovative. It has been one of the greatest privileges to create these ballets and share them with our audience."*

We would love to hear from you! Please send any comments or suggestions to Annual Fund Manager, Elyse Salisz at esalisz@balletaz.org or call 602.343.6510.

COMPANY CONNECTION



Sasha Vincett

Spring Grove, Pennsylvania
 Joined Ballet Arizona: 2007

Sasha began her training at The Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet. In 2003, she received the bronze medal at the USA National Youth Ballet Competition, and was a finalist at the Youth America Grand Prix in 2003 and 2004. Sasha attended the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre graduate

program, performing in ballets such as George Balanchine's *Who Cares?* and Terrance Orr's *The Nutcracker*. Since joining Ballet Arizona, Sasha has appeared in Balanchine's *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, *Allegro Brillante*, *Divertimento No. 15*, *Apollo* and *The Four Temperaments*. She has been featured in Justin Peck's *In Creases*, Ib Andersen's *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and originated roles in Andersen's *Diversions* and *Cinderella*.

After 16 seasons with Ballet Arizona, Sasha is retiring from dancing. Join us for *All Balanchine* on May 7 at Symphony Hall to celebrate her career on stage!

How has dancing with Ballet Arizona impacted your life?

Ballet Arizona has been part of me for the majority of my adult life so far. Being a part of this company has impacted my life in every way possible. It has enabled me to live out my dream of becoming a professional ballet dancer. I have also been lucky enough to have a child and continue with my career. I feel very fortunate that I have danced with this company for 16 seasons and never imagined I would have such a successful career.

What has been your favorite role to dance with the company?

My favorite role has been dancing Justin Peck's *In Creases*. It was a big challenge for me, and I feel lucky to have performed it two separate times.

What will you miss most about Ballet Arizona?

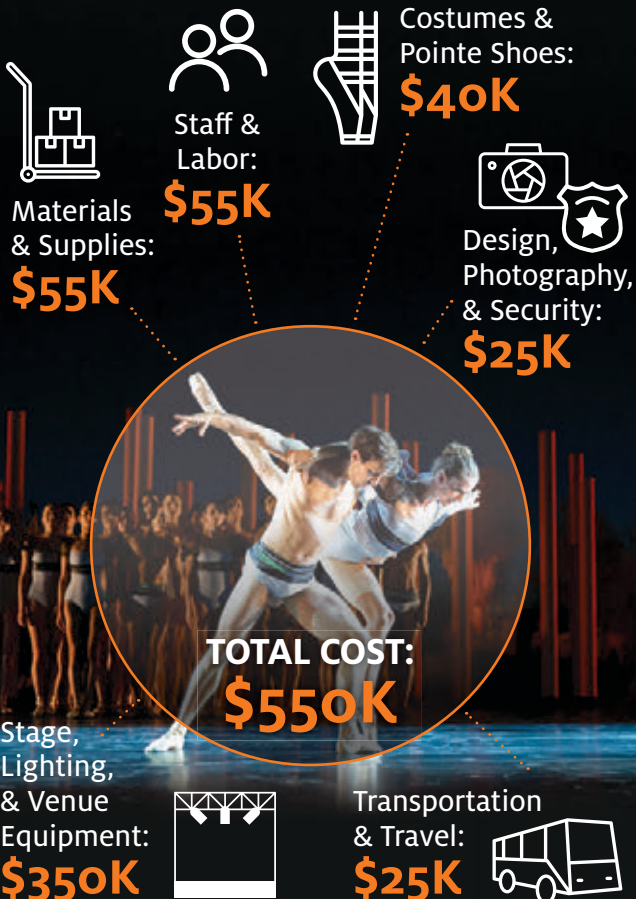
I will miss the daily camaraderie that the dancers have with each other the most. It is really like being with my second family all day.



Sasha Vincett in *Napoli*.
 Photo by Alexander Iziliaev.



BUILDING AN EVENING AT DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN



BALLET ARIZONA 2022–2023 SEASON UPCOMING DONOR EVENTS

May 3 (\$3,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
All Balanchine Dress Rehearsal Viewing

May 4 (\$2,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Company Class Viewing on Stage at *All Balanchine*

May 4 – 7 (All) | Symphony Hall
All Balanchine

May 4 – 7 (\$1,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Prima Circle Intermission Receptions at *All Balanchine*

May 11 (\$1,000 & Up) | Desert Botanical Garden
The Rite of Spring Dress Rehearsal Viewing

May 16 (\$1,500 & Up) | Desert Botanical Garden
The Rite of Spring Opening Night Reception

May 16 – June 3 (All) | Desert Botanical Garden
The Rite of Spring

June 3 – 4 (All) | Madison Center for the Arts
Raymonda by The School of Ballet Arizona

BALLET
ARIZONA

IB ANDERSEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Ballet Arizona presents

THE RITE OF SPRING

May 16 – June 3, 2023

Tuesdays through Saturdays, 8 pm nightly
at Desert Botanical Garden

Join us for the highly anticipated world premiere of *The Rite of Spring* by Artistic Director, Ib Andersen. Stravinsky's iconic score, Andersen's critically-acclaimed choreography and the backdrop of the Papago Buttes at sunset makes this an event not to be missed. Get your tickets today, before they sell out!

Tickets: balletaz.org | 602.381.1096

Ballet Arizona dancers in Ib Andersen's *Eroica*. Photo by Alexander Iziliaev.

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