

Foundation Highlight:
Barbara & Donald Ottosen

Donor Spotlight:
Janet Fabio

Letter From the
Executive Director:
Samantha Turner

Q&A:
Artistic Director
Ib Andersen

TURNING POINTE

How your support

creates exciting
new opportunities
for growth and
development.



Sketching by Fabio Toblini.



*Our work depends on you and
we are forever grateful for you.*

Welcome to 2019! We are excited to kick off the New Year with the world-premiere of my new work *The Firebird* alongside one of the oldest classical ballet's *La Sylphide* this February at Symphony Hall, it will be a spectacular evening of ballet.

I want to extend a special thank you to Barbara & Donald Ottosen, longtime patrons and supporters of Ballet Arizona, whose generosity has made *The Firebird* possible. I am truly grateful for their support of my artistic vision for this ballet and for this company.

In this issue of *Turning Pointe*, Executive Director Samantha Turner discusses the incredible impact you made this past fall on five schools across the Valley through our new *danceAZ* school residency program. It has always been my belief that dance can change people's lives, as it did for me. This program makes that belief a reality for these young students and their families.

Finally, get a behind-the-scenes look at *The Firebird* and everything from new costumes to custom set designs, that goes into creating a ballet from scratch. Plus hear from patron Janet Fabio, as she shares why supporting the arts here in Arizona is so important and why we are a vital part of the arts community.

Thank you for your continued support of Ballet Arizona. Our work depends on you and it is because of you that classical ballet and innovative contemporary works continue to be accessible to Arizona residents. I hope you enjoy this issue of *Turning Pointe* and we look forward to seeing you for the rest of our 2018–2019 season!

Gratefully,

Ib Andersen, Artistic Director

BEHIND THE SCENES

with Ib Andersen

Let's talk about *The Firebird*...

The Firebird is a ballet that is taken from several different Russian fairy tales that were stitched together to create the story as we know it today. It was created for Ballets Russes in 1910 and was Stravinsky's first ballet. It's a traditional story of good versus evil painted with big brush strokes so it is very easy to understand upon first viewing. It is a ballet meant for all ages, both adults and children will enjoy it. I'm following the original piece – more or less – the only difference here is that I have placed my version in the future. That's the beauty of a fairy tale – it can be set in almost any time and place.

The Firebird is a mythical creature that possesses tremendous magical power and energy. My Firebird happens to be an alien – it could be said that any creature like this has always been some kind of alien or spirit, so my version might be more 'real' than most. She is from another planet with different powers and instead of giving the prince a feather she will give him a crystal.

This production has been in the making for almost two years. In my initial vision, I had a fairly good idea that I wanted it to take place in the future and I have not really wavered from my initial course. The music is always my inspiration – I have to connect with the music and wherever it takes me – otherwise I just couldn't do it.

To start the visual process, I met with my costume designer, Fabio Toblini, and went back and forth with sketches and ideas. We had to start work on the costumes before anything else to allow our costume shop enough time for construction. The next step was to begin work on the sets and lighting. Michael Korsch is our designer for both the scenic elements and the lighting. He has been involved very early in the process. This will not be scenic design in a traditional sense – it is more like a movie director creating the content for what you will see on the screen – much of it will be abstract. This ballet will be a very different experience from the norm. We are opening up the stage completely and using a huge panoramic black screen (90'x28') that runs up to the edge of the proscenium and we are lifting the lighting. It will be a very cinematic experience. Michael is essentially making a fifty-minute movie that fits into the choreography happening on stage. We went through



minute by minute – what will be happening and what needs to be done. I still haven't seen the final product yet! This is all unknown territory but I think it's all going to work out.

Choreographing this ballet has been very challenging. I had to be careful to follow the story line so it makes sense; while also including the intensity the music inspires. The score is amazing. I listened to 20 different recordings of *The Firebird*, and I chose the one by Valery Gergiev, because it made the most dramatic sense from beginning to end. The others felt a little choppy. This is going to be a challenge for the symphony too. It's such a complicated score.

Q: Are you having fun creating this from scratch?

A: It has turned out better than I thought. You can say artists procrastinate – but throughout the process you need to leave yourself as open as possible. You often feel unsure, and sometimes your initial idea may suddenly go in a different direction. As long as you continue to follow your vision and don't decide to scrap it along the way, you will be okay. Your vision has to be pretty solid to make something like this work that far in advance. I can't really change it now — with these monsters and machine-like costumes. What if I suddenly stopped and thought, man ... this really should have been set in a Victorian time period?

Q: Why pair *The Firebird* with *La Sylphide*?

A: There are parallels in the two stories; so it was a natural fit. The lead characters are creatures or spirits that possess an otherworldly energy. The sylph is a creature of fiction just as the Firebird. *La Sylphide* is about inner life and what it means to be human; to dream about where you want to go in life or who you want to be. The sylph represents all of that for James, the Scotsman, as he contemplates destroying his life by not wanting to be tied down by marriage. He becomes completely infatuated with her and her world. It's a more psychological story than *The Firebird*. It's a great ballet and has survived almost 200 years. Ballet Arizona hasn't performed this since 2004, so it is basically like a premiere in itself. The last time we performed it was at the Orpheum Theatre without a live orchestra.



Ballet Arizona dancers Nayon Iovino and Jillian Barrell. Photo by Tim Fuller.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fun Facts about *La Sylphide*

- *La Sylphide* was the first major Romantic ballet and is to this day, one of the world's oldest surviving ballets!
- There are two versions of the ballet, the first by Italian choreographer Filippo Taglioni which premiered on March 12, 1832, at the Salle Le Peletier of the Paris Opéra, and the second by Danish ballet master August Bournonville of the Royal Danish Ballet which premiered on November 18, 1836, at the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen.
- What made this ballet so notable was that it was the first time where dancing en pointe had an aesthetic rationale and was not merely an acrobatic stunt!
- Marie, who originated the role of the sylph was known for shortening her skirts to reveal more leg and show off her impressive pointe work which was considered highly scandalous at the time.
- The story was set in Scotland because it was considered an exotic land and the ethereal mists of the Highlands made the perfect backdrop for the mythical characters!

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



Foundation Highlight

Barbara & Donald Ottosen
Executive Producers of *The Firebird*

Barbara and Donald Ottosen started The Ottosen Family Foundation in 1995 after an incredibly difficult year for their family. Coming through the year and thankful for all they had, they felt they were in a position to share their good fortune and success with others in need in Arizona. The foundation's mission statement initially was to improve the quality of life in the Arizona community, with an emphasis on women and children's issues through education, health care, nature and the arts. As the Foundation continued to grow and explore need areas within the state, they progressed into a focus on the sciences, education, conservation and sustainability, the arts, healthcare and medical research. They strive to find organizations that will benefit and grow due to their involvement and are continuously learning more about the incredible people and non-profit opportunities within the state of Arizona.

As Prima Circle level donors for many years, they have thoroughly enjoyed their involvement with Ballet Arizona. The Ottosens didn't become actively involved until mutual friends encouraged them to attend a performance of *Giselle* as their guests. It was instant love and became a large focus for the both of them. Barbara joined Ballet Arizona's Board in 2013 to become more involved with the Ballet and assist in growing the

support network and direction of membership. She immediately assumed a leadership role as the Chair of the Governance Committee and has worked with current and new board members to help create the incredible organization it has morphed into today.

In addition to the other organizations they support, they are especially passionate about Desert Botanical Garden. Donald is a Trustee Emeritus and Barbara previously served on various committees at the Garden. Upon experiencing the mutual success of An Evening at Desert Botanical Garden, stemming from Ballet Arizona's *New Works Initiative*, they felt their involvement in producing *The Firebird* would continue the growth of ballet patronage. For Barbara and Donald, seeing garden patrons who may not have had an affinity for ballet initially become ballet lovers was an opportunity to open so many new doors for Ballet Arizona. This contemporary style of ballet is what ultimately led them to produce *The Firebird*. In the nearly 20 years Ib Andersen has been with Ballet Arizona, they felt it was important for Ib to have the financial support and creative freedom to create new contemporary choreography for Ballet Arizona. "Several of our favorite contemporary ballets, such as *Eroica* and *Topia*, were created from Ib's creative genius," says Barbara. "And we know *The Firebird* is going to be one of our new favorites as well. These new ballets will help us achieve a new generation of ballet supporters and allow Ib a stage for his incredibly creative and expressive works."



THE FIREBIRD HIGHLIGHT

As the countdown to Artistic Director Ib Andersen's world-premiere of *The Firebird* begins, here is a look at everything that goes into making this multi-media ballet possible!

- There are a total of 48 costumes being created from scratch by renowned Italian costume designer Fabio Toblini. Ib knew from the beginning that he wanted Fabio to design the costumes for this cutting-edge ballet and it marks the 4th ballet that they have collaborated on, others being *The Nutcracker*, *Eroica*, and *Diversions*.
- All of the monster costumes were embroidered by Fabio Toblini himself which make the monster's look like pieces of machinery with buttons and tech gadgets.
- With fabrics being sourced from all over the world, the costumes are being created in Ballet Arizona's costume shop headed by Costume Director Leonor Texidor, as well as in New York City by Eric Winterling Inc. with head pieces being created in Ashland, Oregon by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.
- In order to make this multi-media ballet come to life, Ballet Arizona had a custom 90-foot-long screen built by German company, Gerriets, who specializes in creating set pieces for the theatre.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Samantha Turner

I wish you could have been there with me.

In the darkening evenings of this past November, family and friends of 75 public school students — moms, dads, grandparents, baby brothers, big sisters, neighbors and others — gathered to watch a special performance that included their children, Ballet Arizona’s professional company and studio company. They crowded in lunchroom auditoriums at five Valley schools, arriving just in time after squeezing the event into busy family schedules at the end of a work day or a rushed family dinner.

They were there for *danceAZ*, a Ballet Arizona community engagement program started just this year, providing six weeks of dance classes at Title I elementary schools. The School of Ballet Arizona faculty members met with the students twice each week, providing their first experience of ballet. The introduction was about more than pliés and tendus. It was about having the courage to try something new, learning that commitment to practice helps you improve, believing it is okay to ask for help, and many other life skills that dance helps to develop.

After six weeks of classes, the students were part of an evening of performances that included the choreography they learned and practiced. Joining them were the professional company, performing excerpts from Nayon Iovino’s work *Inherent* presented at *New Moves* earlier in the year, and the studio company, presenting a medley of iconic dances from the holiday favorite *The Nutcracker*.

The children’s performance was as precious as you would expect – filled with big smiles and little mistakes, bursting with pride from both the students and their admiring audience. For me, there was also tremendous pride in Ballet Arizona and its donors for bringing this opportunity to these students and their audience.

What happened for the next 40 minutes took my breath away and I wish you could have been there. As the professional and studio company dancers performed, the audience, seated in lunchroom tables that converted to benches, was absolutely mesmerized. Every person was completely still, captivated by the dancers and the music. No fidgeting, checking of phones or trips to the bathroom — just absolute stillness, as though the audience feared that any movement might cause the experience to stop. And then the applause — as thunderous as a crowd of 50 or so could be — accented by a few enthusiastic whoops and whistles. I don’t think I’ve seen anything like it, even with a Symphony Hall crowd.

Ballet Arizona’s artistic philosophy is that a performance can change lives. It’s true, and it was something to be witnessed at these five *danceAZ* performances. A group of people, most of whom had not seen a live dance performance, let alone from a professional ballet company, completely transfixed and transported. You funded that!

Gratefully,

Samantha Turner, Executive Director

- The 90-foot screen will detach into 4 separate pieces that will need to be assembled and disassembled before and after each production at Symphony Hall using a rig system sourced locally here in Phoenix.
- The lighting and media design for the ballet is being created by Michael Korsch, Ballet Arizona’s resident lighting designer. There will be a double of every technical element in the ballet running at all times throughout the production, so in case of a glitch, the ballet will go on without hiccups!
- Ib started choreographing *The Firebird* over the 2018 summer, creating an initial outline for the ballet.
- Company dancers began rehearsals on August 31, 2018, and have had hours upon hours of weekly, if not daily, rehearsals with Ib and other artistic staff in the studios.
- From dancers, to the production crew and seamstresses, it will take about 70 people to make this show happen every day.



Sketching by Fabio Toblino.



Donor Spotlight

Janet Fabio

You are such a longstanding supporter of the arts in Arizona. What inspired such generosity to the arts and specifically Ballet Arizona?

I have loved ballet from the time I was very young and saw the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo perform in Rochester, MN where I grew up. I took ballet lessons for many years, including studying ballet and modern dance with Loyce Houlton and the Minnesota Dance Theater. I never missed an opportunity to see a ballet. My mother and I would make the 90 minute drive to Minneapolis, and we even drove to Chicago once to see the Bolshoi. Later, living and working in the Minneapolis–St. Paul metropolitan area, I enjoyed the easy availability of the dance seasons offered by the University of Minnesota that brought a variety of touring dance companies. By seeing some of the leading professional companies, I developed a strong appreciation for dance and became familiar with many of the ballets. And by studying dance, I gained an understanding of the technical and physical demands on dancers. When my husband Jim and I moved to SaddleBrooke,

north of Tucson, almost 20 years ago, I missed seeing the high caliber of dance that I enjoyed. Then a friend suggested we drive to Phoenix to see Ballet Arizona's *All Balanchine* program. I was so impressed that I now make several trips a year to see Ballet Arizona performances, and they are always worth the drive.

Why do you give?

I give because I want to help ensure that Ballet Arizona continues to be a vital part of the arts community in southern Arizona, and because I appreciate being able to attend ballets performed by an outstanding professional ballet company.

What ballets or contemporary works have inspired you the most?

I particularly enjoy classical ballets that display the technical skills of the dancers. I also love the *All Balanchine* programs. It's a pleasure to take family and friends to the spring programs at Desert Botanical Garden as everyone admires the athleticism of the dancers, even if they are not big fans of ballet.

What are you most looking forward to this season?

I am very excited about *The Firebird*. After seeing a preview of Ib Andersen's unique approach to this ballet, I am anticipating a performance with creative choreography, impressive dancing and imaginative costumes.

Which ballet have you enjoyed most this season and why?

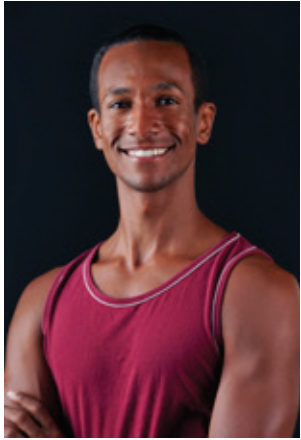
I particularly enjoyed *New Moves* in September for several reasons. I absolutely loved *Rio*, both the music and the dancing. It was so vibrant. To me, it exemplified the sheer joy of dance. I didn't want it to end. Further, my husband and I met composer Philip Glass at the Grand Teton Music Festival a few years ago, so to hear his music being used for this program was very special. Another draw for me was that I saw the premiere of *In Creases* performed by New York City Ballet in Jackson, WY a few years ago. But I enjoyed the performance by Ballet Arizona even more. I thought the dancers gave it an energy and interest I did not recall from the New York City Ballet performance. I can't ignore Naylor Lovino's *Inherent*. I have seen several of Naylor's works and I think he has much to offer the dance world. I look forward to seeing future works by this talented young choreographer.

Any other comments you might like to contribute?

Those of us who live in southern Arizona are so fortunate to have Ballet Arizona in our community. Ib Andersen's leadership has fostered creativity and set high standards of dance excellence. I also value the variety of programs offered each season. There is something for everyone. Support this wonderful artistic resource by attending performances and enjoying the experience.



COMPANY CONNECTION *Meet dancers Ricardo & Kathryn*



Ricardo Santos

Hometown: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Joined Ballet Arizona: 2016

What inspired you to become a dancer?

The challenges of dance and being able to express myself through movement inspired me. And because it seemed like I understood the language so easily – easier than academics.

What has been your favorite role to dance?

I have a couple of favorite roles but if we are talking about a storybook ballet, I would have to say Mercutio from *Romeo & Juliet*. It was the most

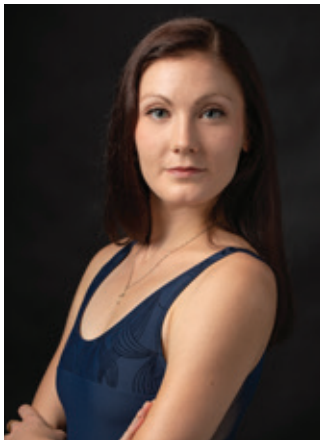
emotionally challenging role I have yet to do and the most gratifying.

Do you have a pre-performance ritual?

I like to relax as much as I can and get ready early so I can listen to the music of what I am going to dance. In my mind, I go through what I'm going to do onstage — all of the nuances I'm going to use and what parts.

What do you do when you're not training or performing on stage?

I usually workout to keep somewhat in shape, watch different T.V. series, go out dancing and drive for Uber.



Kathryn Meeusen

Hometown: Romeo, Michigan
Joined Ballet Arizona: 2018

Who is your greatest dance inspiration?

I don't have one inspiration that has molded me as a dancer, but I do draw inspiration for my work from all areas of my life. My family, friends, peers, teachers, faith and past experiences all feed into my dancing and inspire me in this career.

Do you prefer modern or classical ballet?

I love classical ballet, but recently I prefer dancing neoclassical type work. I find those kinds of ballets

give a little more freedom of movement and room to express myself.

What is in your dance bag?

Pointe shoes, flat shoes, Thera band, toe pads, toe tape, pointe shoe glue, bouncy ball/tennis ball/lacrosse ball/massage stick for rolling out tight muscles, leg warmers, a skirt, booties, my mustard colored puff vest, water bottle, iPhone and headphones!

What do you do outside of dance?

I love to bake! I also really enjoy practicing yoga.



Ballet Arizona dancers in *In Creases*. Choreography by Justin Peck. Photo by Alexander Izilaev.

BALLET ARIZONA 2018–2019 SEASON
UPCOMING DONOR EVENTS

February 14 – 17 (All Prima Circle Members) | Symphony Hall
Intermission Receptions at *The Firebird & La Sylphide*
(except Sunday evening)

February 14 –17 (\$5,000 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Backstage Tour at *The Firebird & La Sylphide*

February 13 (\$3,500 & Up) | Symphony Hall
Dress Rehearsal Viewing *The Firebird & La Sylphide*

March 5 (\$500 & Up) | Ballet Arizona
Corps de Ballet Rehearsal Viewing & Breakfast

March 7 (All Prima Circle Members) | Ballet Arizona
Studio Rehearsal Viewing & Luncheon

March 30 Ballet Arizona
Artist Relief Fund Performance & Reception

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