



alexandra ballet

ALEXANDRA ZAHARIAS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

August 2003

www.alexandraballet.com

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Upcoming Events

September 26, 2003

Golf Tournament Fund Raiser

Crystal Springs Quarry Golf Course
Maryland Heights, Missouri
Contact David Lucas, 636.399.8240 or
Frank Buckley, 314.552.6010

September 27, 2003

KFUO Performance

"Rhapsody in Bloom"
Botanical Gardens, St. Louis, Missouri
free and open to the public

October 18, 2003

Polish American Society Performance

University Club, St. Louis, Missouri

November 21, 2003

The Nutcracker Suite

Chesterfield Mall
Chesterfield, Missouri

November 28, 2003

Sugar Plum Parties

Saint Louis Galleria
St. Louis, Missouri

March 5-7, 2004

The Sleeping Beauty

Blanche Touhill Performing Arts Center,
UM-St. Louis Campus,
St. Louis, Missouri

May 19-23, 2004

RDA Mid-States Festival

Overland Park, Kansas

If you have gifts and time you would like to share with Alexandra Ballet, please contact the Friends of Alexandra Ballet at 314-469-6222.

Alice in Wonderland

Down, down the rabbit hole Alice tumbled, into a curious world of whimsical characters and dance, beautiful dance. Well, perhaps that isn't the way the story usually goes, but it did on March 7, 8 and 9 at Edison Theatre as Alexandra Ballet presented *Alice in Wonderland*, an original production choreographed by Sergey Kozadayev and Susan O'Connell.

Fantastical scenery and costumes, breathtaking choreography, the enchanting music of Jacques Ibert and Sir Edward Elgar, and the delightful interpretation of the dancers – all fused to offer performances audiences found, well, downright wonder-filled.

Kozadayev, Artistic Director of Salt Creek Ballet, and O'Connell, also of Salt Creek in Westmont, Illinois, combined classical ballet, tap, Broadway and even Keystone Cop antics to create a mesmerizing ballet. Music, lights, unusual sound effects, dancers, and even scenery whirled about the stage in a deliciously witty retelling of the beloved story of Alice, the little girl who fell down a rabbit hole and landed in a surreal world of such odd characters as the mad Mad Hatter, the befuddled White Rabbit, the exotic Caterpillar and the mischievous Cheshire Cat.

This ballet, challenging to dancers with its many scenery and costume changes, combined with its rapid pace, was obviously a delight for company dancers to perform. Each dancer seemed to revel in the theatrics and antics, yet technical mastery was not compromised and sensitivity to interpretation was beautifully translated. Sharing the demanding lead role of Alice were Megan Buckley and Consuelo Williams, who did an outstanding job portraying the girl in the midst of the confusion and ambivalence about growing up.

Guest artist Alexander Kozadayev was outrageously funny as the Cheshire Cat and his execution of leaps and turns was breathtaking. Choreographer Sergey Kozadayev made a cameo appearance as Lewis Carroll. Professional children's entertainer Thomas Thale left the audiences gasping as he wandered frantically about the stage dressed as Fantastic Alice during the Pool of Tears scene.

Enthusiastic bursts of laughter during the performances and roaring applause at the end spoke clearly of how much the audiences, young and older, enjoyed their adventure in Wonderland with Alexandra Ballet.

David Lucas, New Board President

To serve as President of the Board of Directors of Alexandra Ballet is truly an honor for me, and I am eager to meet the challenges that come with this position. First and foremost, I would like to thank Hillary Zimmerman for her leadership for the past three-plus years. I have been on the board during her term as president, and have learned a great deal about the hard work, commitment, and cooperation that is required in order for a not-for-profit organization such as ours to survive. The fine group of individuals that has come together on this board exhibits all these qualities, and I will do everything I can to match their energy and dedication to this organization.



It is our desire that Alexandra Ballet not just survive, but thrive, even in these tough economic times. While arts organizations federally and locally are cutting costs and curtailing donor programs, we know that we cannot shortchange our community. We must find other, more creative ways to keep our

funding in place and our budget intact, in order to continue to provide the level of professional production standards always associated with Alexandra Ballet.

The top priority, the very heart of this organization, is the pursuit of excellence consistently demonstrated by the Artistic Staff and the dancers of the Company. As a board, it is our responsibility to enable this pursuit to continue. We will continue to provide quality performances to our community, the best in training to our dancers, and a continuation of the highest traditions of ballet brought to this city a half-century ago by our inspiring Artistic Director, Alexandra Zaharias.

As you know, Alexandra Ballet produces a full-length ballet every year—quite an impressive feat. We will produce yet another one in March of 2004, when we present *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Blanche Touhill Performing Arts Center on the campus of the University of Missouri-St. Louis. The venue is larger than we have had in the past, the production more beautiful, and with your help, I know we can make this production, and the entire season, a resounding success.

Alexandra Ballet Goes All Pointes North

Alexandra Ballet traveled to Interlochen, Michigan, May 1-3 to attend the annual Regional Dance America (RDA)/Mid-States Festival, hosted by the Interlochen Dance Ensemble. More than a dozen regional ballet companies came together for a whirlwind weekend of classes, auditions, parties and performances, culminating in an extraordinary Gala Evening containing not one, but two outstanding performances by the talented dancers of Alexandra Ballet.

The location for the festival was unique this year for the member companies of RDA Mid-States, who are accustomed to attending these functions in larger metropolitan areas. Instead, this festival was set deep in the north woods of Michigan on the campus of the renowned Interlochen Center for the Arts, as well-known for its rustic beauty and glassy lakes as it is for its excellent training in the arts. Instead of taking escalators or concrete sidewalks to class, dancers walked the wooded trails to classes which provided beautiful vistas of pine forests and pristine lakes.

Mornings and afternoons during the festival were filled with classes in ballet, pointe, pas de deux, modern, jazz, yoga and labanotation, and were taught by a distinguished faculty including Magali Messac, Stephen Pier, Michael Uthoff, Stephanie Rand and others. The evenings were filled with programs selected and arranged by adjudicator Thom Chlower, highly-esteemed for his broad range of knowledge and training in many styles of ballet; Vaganova, Balanchine, Cechetti and Bournonville.

Alexandra Ballet dancers made a fine showing in the audition results at the end of the festival at the Gala Banquet. Anna Jennings was awarded a cash prize of \$250, and dancers Katie Fanger and Heidi Popp both won scholarships for summer intensive programs. Several other company dancers were named alternates for other programs.

The high point of the festival for the company dancers came during the Gala Performance, with the opportunity to perform two pieces in the program that night. The first piece, *Pas de Six*, from the *Ballet La Vivandiere*, was danced by Megan Buckley and guest artist Jeffery Hover, as well as Sara Little, Heidi Popp, Sabrina Walker and Consuelo Williams. This historic divertissement, restaged by choreographer Marek Cholewa, reflected all the charm and sweetness of the Bournonville style, while exhibiting quick and complex footwork, and received resounding ovations from the knowledgeable audience for its execution.

The second piece, entitled *Pezzi per Ametisto (Shades of Amethyst)*, was danced by the entire company, with Andrea Lucas and Brian Moore in the lead roles. Originally choreographed by Robert Kelley and restaged by Alexandra Ballet's Norma Gabriel, this powerful contemporary ballet, set to the haunting music by Sergei Prokofiev, awed the audience with its beauty and intensity. Robert Kelley, in attendance at the festival as part of the Regional Dance America's National Board, honored the dancers with some correction and direction during their rehearsal period the afternoon before the event.

These two pieces, performed by the dancers of Alexandra Ballet, demonstrated the superior training they receive on a daily basis. National Board Member Alun Jones (former Artistic Director of Louisville Ballet) put it this way, "To have two pieces performed at the Gala Performance is an honor in itself, and I'm not sure that I've ever seen it done before, but to have two such *diverse* pieces, and to perform them so expertly, is an *extraordinary* accomplishment."

Regional Dance America was founded in 1988 to promote the artistic development of dance companies throughout the United States. It continues the work of the National Association for Regional Ballet, which contributed to the decentralization of dance, as regional companies grew in stature and quality nationwide. Membership has grown to



Magali Messac teaches a group of dancers from Alexandra Ballet.

five geographical areas, including more than two hundred companies, with more than two dozen nationally recognized professional groups. The RDA dedicates itself to fostering quality, promoting education, and nurturing the talents of dancers and choreographers throughout the country, while exploring new horizons.

Next year's festival, *The Center of it All*, will be hosted by Kansas Regional Ballet in Overland Park, Kansas, on the weekend of May 20-22, 2004.

A Grand Pas de Deux: An Evening of Celebration



Robin Porta and daughter, Ashley, at A Grand Pas de Deux: An Evening of Celebration which was a grand fundraising endeavor for Alexandra Ballet.

On a pleasant April evening lovely costumed dancers drifted gracefully through the rooms of a beautiful historic mansion as guests chatted and mingled. Magnificent floral arrangements adorned tables and a beautiful ice sculpture of pointe shoes took center stage in a sumptuous display of hors d'oeuvres.

The historic home of John and Robin Porta was the setting for A Grand Pas de Deux: An Evening of Celebration and the opportunity for the St. Louis community to support the company's artistic endeavors.

The Portas graciously hosted the event at their beautiful Italianesque mansion in St. Louis. The mansion has been painstakingly restored to its original grandeur and beauty by the Portas. It was built in the 1800s for a tobacco baron who decided to settle near the great Mississippi River.

A silent auction and a pot of gold were part of the evening's festivities as well as a charming fashion show in which the dancers modeled costumes from well-known classical ballets. Artistic Director Alexandra Zaharias described each costume as dancers descended the grand marble spiral staircase.

A Grand Pas de Deux was a tremendously successful fundraising event for the company. More than 150 balletomanes attended the event coordinated by former board member Charlotte Koch. Many local businesses graciously donated items for this important fundraiser.

"Because of the generous donations of St. Louis businesses and individuals, this was one of the ballet company's most successful fundraising efforts," said Zaharias, "and we are deeply grateful for their support."

Alumni News

Jennifer Deckert graduated in May from the University of Utah with a bachelor of arts degree in dance. She will return to the university in the fall for graduate studies in dance.

Rodney Hamilton of Ballet Hispanico made his hometown professional dance debut to two sold-out performances at Edison Theatre in April. Deborah Cottin of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reviewed the company's performances and said Rodney displayed "an exceptionally honed movement quality for a young dancer."

Rachel Peppin, principal dancer with the Birmingham Royal Ballet, had the honor of demonstrating a new Pilates machine for His Royal Highness Prince Charles when he toured the ballet company's facilities recently.

Kimberle Hesker was in town for a visit with Miss A in March. Kim has been dancing for Crystal Cruise Lines since 2001 aboard the Crystal Symphony. She has traveled the world, seeing most of the Mediterranean, the Baltic, and Asia. She left on March 6 for a four-month tour of New Zealand, Australia, Chile, and England. In August, she will return to Pasadena, California, for a month of rehearsals before leaving to tour Canada at the end of the year.



Rachel Peppin demonstrates a Pilates machine for Prince Charles of England.

Alexandra Ballet Dancers Are Off for a Summer of Study

Alexandra Ballet dancers are studying at various prestigious summer arts programs this year.

Suzi Bonnot, Jilana, Taos Ski Valley, NM

Megan Buckley, American Ballet Theatre, New York City, NY, and Cholewa-Ruffo Intensive, Indianapolis, IN

Aimee Chastain, Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet

Katie Fanger, American Ballet Theatre, CA

Charity Garner, Joffrey, New York City, NY
Chelsea Hollenkamp, Ballet Internationale, Indianapolis, IN

Anna Jennings, Ballet Internationale, Indianapolis, IN

Sara Little, American Ballet Theatre, Austin, TX

Andrea Lucas, American Ballet Theatre, New York City, NY, and Cholewa-Ruffo Intensive, Indianapolis, IN

Audrey McFarland, Ballet Internationale, Indianapolis, IN

Brian Moore, Perry-Mansfield, Steamboat Springs, CO

Rachael Moore, Mussorgsky, St. Petersburg, Russia

Shelly Nolan, Perry-Mansfield, Steamboat Springs, CO

Heidi Popp, Ballet Moscow Intensive, University of Northern Illinois

Ashley Porta, Joffrey, New York City, NY

Jessica Ruhlin, White Mt. Summer Dance Festival, Springfield, MA

Jamie Russell, American Ballet Theatre, Tuscaloosa, AL

Aggie Schmank, American Ballet Theatre, Austin, TX

Sabrina Walker, Chicago Art Institute

Allison Wildi, Joffrey, San Antonio, TX

Consuelo Williams, American Ballet Theatre, New York City, NY

Susan Zimmerman, American Ballet Theatre, Austin, TX



Rachael Moore will spend six months this summer and fall, in St. Petersburg, Russia, studying ballet at the Mussorgsky. She is pictured with Marek Cholewa, during Alexandra Ballet's Summer Intensive.

Car Raffle Winner



Lisa Kraner (right), partner in the Clayton law firm of Paster, West & Kraner, shows her winning ticket from the Alexandra Ballet 2003 Car Raffle to past president, Hillary Zimmerman. Lisa decided to forego the 2003 Ford Mustang provided by Reuther Ford in favor of the cash option, and made a generous donation to Alexandra Ballet.

Company Welcomes New Officers

The 2002-2003 season was a tremendous success for Alexandra Ballet. Every performance, from the annual Nutcracker Suites at the beginning of the season to the fabulously received spring production of *Alice in Wonderland*, was extremely well received this season. But much of the company's success occurs behind the scenes, not on stage. Fundraising, budgeting, long-range planning—these activities perhaps lack the sparkle of a performance but without them there are no performances. The success of such behind-the-scenes activities this season was due in large measure to the outstanding leadership of the officers and board of directors of Alexandra Ballet.

These individuals generously invested their time and talents to bring professional quality ballet performances to the St. Louis

metropolitan area in 2002 and 2003 through Alexandra Ballet. The company wishes to extend its heartfelt appreciation for their tireless efforts.

The new board president will be David Lucas, owner of Hewitt-Lucas, Inc. Michael Knoke of Kelly Services, Inc. will serve as vice president. New board members are Tarris Caston, Pat Catanzaro, Maria Costello, Pat Hagerty, Robert Hill, and Bonnie Unal.

"We are thrilled to have these outstanding individuals join the board and I look forward to working with them," said Artistic Director Alexandra Zaharias. "We have had such an excellent working relationship with the board and I look forward to a continuation of that relationship in the 2003-2004 season. It will be an exciting year."



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Alice School Performance a Huge Success

Children giggled, squealed, clapped, oohed and aahed, and sometimes even jumped up in their seats in excitement as Alexandra Ballet presented a special performance of *Alice in Wonderland* for area school groups Friday, March 7, at Edison Theatre. Emerson generously sponsored the school performance.

Spellbound by Fantastic Alice, awestruck by the howls of the Cheshire Cat, and mesmerized by the constantly moving dancers, scenery and lights, nearly one thousand children thrilled to the beloved story of Alice and her adventures in Wonderland.

For many it was their first ballet performance, and they were brimming with questions. They got a chance to ask those questions following the performance when the dancers returned to the stage to meet the children and visit with them. "Does it hurt to stand on the tips of your toes?" "How did the Fantastic Alice get so tall?" "How long did you have to practice?" "How long have you been a dancer?" were just some of the eager questions presented to the dancers and each question was answered thoughtfully.

And which character was their favorite? Some said Tiny Alice, perhaps because she



Dancer, Sarah Stockman, signs autographs for children from the audience.

was closer to their size. Some said Fantastic Alice because he got to walk on stilts and that must be fun! Many liked the Cheshire Cat best because it was funny when he yanked off his tail and howled.

Many of the groups attending sent thank-you notes to Alexandra Ballet and Emerson expressing their appreciation of and excitement over the performance. One note read "We really loved the show! It was so terrific that we almost fainted!"

Thank You, Alexandra Ballet!

The following is a note from a teacher who attended the school performance with her class:

"I have to tell you that the children had a wonderful time at the ballet.

One child wanted to know how to audition for shows like yours, others

told animated stories about the

Pool of Tears, the big and little

Alices and the Caterpillar, among

others. Thank you so much for your

generosity. It was a perfect

performance for our children."