



# alexandra ballet

ALEXANDRA ZAHARIAS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

December 2003

www.alexandraballet.com

Volume V, Number 2

## Upcoming Events

January 24, 2004

**Musical, Magical, Moving**

The Dace Dindonis  
Scholarship Performance  
The Principia, 13201 Clayton Road  
St. Louis, Missouri  
\$10 at the door

March 5, 2004

**The Sleeping Beauty--  
Young People's Performance**

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

March 6-7, 2004

**The Sleeping Beauty**

Blanche Touhill Performing Arts Center,  
UM-St. Louis Campus,  
St. Louis, Missouri  
\$20/\$25/\$30

March 21, 2004

**Giverny--Public Performance**

3:00 p.m.  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet  
6400 Minnesota Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri

April 2004

**Alexandra Ballet Gala Auction**

Public is invited

May 7 & 8, 2004

**St. Louis Dance Showcase--  
Public Performance**

Edison Theatre  
Washington University  
St. Louis, Missouri

May 19-23, 2004

**The Center of it All--  
RDA Mid-States Festival**

7:30 p.m. each evening  
The Carlsen Center  
Johnson County Community College  
12345 College Blvd.  
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.

## Dance Blooms at the Missouri Botanical Garden

Alexandra Ballet premiered an exquisite new piece and performed the lovely and joyous *Our Fafur* when KFUE-FM presented "Rhapsody in Bloom" September 27 at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. Musicians performed throughout the day, filling the air with the soothing strains of music as guests ambled among the flowers, pools and fountains.

But in the afternoon, crowds congregated around the lovely fountains as Alexandra Ballet performed *Our Fafur* and *Giverny*. *Our Fafur*, choreographed for the company by Marek Cholewa, expresses the joy of a new day at the moment of sunrise. Set to the lilting and joyful music of Antonin Dvorak, dancers gracefully and flawlessly expressed the universal human emotions of watching a glorious sunrise – hope, joy and rebirth.

Following *Our Fafur*, the company premiered *Giverny*, a contemporary piece



Dancers from left to right:  
Megan Buckley, Jessica Ruhlin, and Anna Jennings

choreographed by Susan O'Connell. The dancers whirled barefoot in sumptuous silk skirts before a beautiful fountain to the lovely strains of Handel's *Water Music*. Giverny was the home of Claude Monet, the Impressionist whose famous paintings were often of gardens and pools. The lush garden setting, sunlight sparkling on falling water behind the dancers

and the brilliant silk skirts whirling were evocative of such paintings. This contemporary work expresses the serenity of a garden stroll but also the exotic energy of a garden in bloom, and requires the dancers to express both of

these seemingly opposing forces. The audience's enthusiastic response was evidence that the dancers had accomplished that with technical finesse.

As the audience drifted away to enjoy the garden grounds, it was obvious that the performance had been a satisfying melding of nature, music and dance, a true blooming.

## Overwhelming Response for Upcoming *Sleeping Beauty*

A beautiful princess, a dashing prince, the triumph of good over evil—these story elements are simply irresistible to audiences of all ages.

Alexandra Ballet will present the enchanting *Sleeping Beauty* March 6 and 7 at the new Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center on the campus of the University of Missouri-St. Louis. And if reservations for the school performances are any indication, it is a magical story St. Louisans can't get enough of. Reservations for both school performances,

offered free of charge to area students and educators, were filled months in advance in anticipation of this exciting production.

The beloved story will be told in the classical ballet tradition of Peter Tchaikovsky's music and Marius Petipa's choreography. Marek Cholewa, guest choreographer, has restaged the production for Alexandra Ballet.

Tickets are available through the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center ticket office at 314-516-4949 or 866-516-4949. Hurry and get yours before the magic is all sold out!

## Emerging Choreographers

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Alexandra Ballet is proud to announce that two of its company dancers have started work on new projects in affiliation with Regional Dance America called "Emerging Choreographers." Andrea Lucas and Jessica Ruhlin will each submit a piece for adjudication, hoping to be admitted into the RDA MidStates Region festival for 2004.

Each year at its annual festival, the entire program for the first evening's performance is devoted to works from choreographers who are new to the craft. This exciting event affords these choreographers a chance to experience what it feels like to work from the inception of an idea, through its stages of development, and finally, performance of the piece before a live audience.

Andrea, a high school junior from Weldon Spring, has choreographed a classical ballet entitled *Mozart con Moto*, set to the fourth movement of Mozart's 29th Symphony in A major. Asked why she wanted to get involved in this project, Andrea replies thoughtfully that it is something she has always wondered about. "I have always had a passion for performing," she says, "but I also was always imagining, creating, and setting dances in my head. I guess I just wanted to see what it was really like on that side of the process. I also thought this would be a great experience in case I might decide to go that direction some day in my career."

The actual work has been more challenging than she thought it would be, but not, she says, because of the dancers. "The dancers I am working with are excellent, and they have been so easy to work with, and so supportive, it's really been the best part of the whole process," she beams.



Andrea Lucas & Jessica Ruhlin

Jessica, a senior from Webster Groves, plans to submit a modern work, *Hela Mamela*, which means "Have Faith" in a South African dialect. The music comes from the beautiful score from *The Mission*, composed by Ennio Morricone. She explains her desire to choreograph this way. "Mostly, I wanted a chance to explore different kinds of dance. Here at Alexandra Ballet, we are strongly trained in ballet, and I thought this would give me a chance to develop a modern piece for the company."

Like Andrea, Jessica has also been creating dances her entire life, mostly in the privacy of

her room at home. Asked how she feels about working with her dancers, her face lights up. "Wonderful!" she exclaims. "I love it. I'm working with lots of different levels of ability. We move very differently in modern, and there is an entirely different vocabulary involved. All the dancers have been so willing to learn, and have such a great attitude, it's been a joy. I really look forward to Thursday rehearsals!"

Artistic Director Alexandra Ballet is pleased that the girls have decided to participate in this project. "I am so proud of both of these young ladies," she says, "and what they are doing is not an easy task. In addition to school work and ballet classes, they both have a lot of repertory to rehearse this year as part of the company. They don't get much free time, so for them to be involved in this requires even more sacrifice than usual." Then she adds, "But I'm sure it will be worth all the hard work in the end--they both are learning a lot this year."

Both emerging choreographers expressed appreciation for the help and encouragement they have received from the Ballet Mistress', Norma Gabriel and Amy Scheers. The structure and support system they put into place for these young ladies, who are, after all, only students themselves, has been the key to the success of this project, one which the company hopes to continue for a long time.

## Alumni News

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**Ian Archer**, Fundraising Officer for New York City Ballet, and **Jack Watters** celebrated their commitment as partners in life in a ceremony at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City on June 14, 2003.

**Antonio Douthit** danced as "Death" in Dance Theatre of Harlem's *St. Louis Woman: A Blues Ballet* at Lincoln Center Festival's opening night. Mr. Douthit's photo appeared on the front page of the New York Times along with an outstanding review describing the ballet as "a visually dazzling fantasy" and Mr. Douthit's performance as elegant. Dance Theatre of Harlem will be at the Fox Theatre in St. Louis January 16 and 17.

**Kirstie Keller** and **Taylor Romar**, students at Pacific Northwest Ballet School, will both perform as Chinese dancers in PNB's upcoming production of *Nutcracker*.

**Louise Nadeau**, principal, Pacific Northwest Ballet, gave a dazzling performance this fall in PNB's production of *Swan Lake*. Miss Nadeau splendidly danced the dual role of Odette and Odile, one of the most demanding roles in the classical repertoire. PNB opened its season with *Swan Lake* in the newly and fabulously renovated McCaw Hall which it shares with Seattle Opera.

**Elizabeth Ferrell Wilson** and her husband, Bill, welcomed a daughter into the family recently. Caroline Louisa was born on September 9, 2003.

## Swinging a Club for Ballet

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The first golf tournament to benefit Alexandra Ballet was a good time for golfers and a great success for the company. The tournament, coordinated by Board Chairman David Lucas and Frank Buckley, was held at the beautiful Crystal Springs Quarry Golf Course September 26. Participants enjoyed a delightful lunch, then

played eighteen holes of golf on the championship course.

"We're very pleased with our first golf tournament," said Lucas. "We had good participation and great weather. Everyone had fun and it was an excellent way to benefit the company." It was so successful, Lucas said, that the board is planning a second tournament next year.

## Alexandra Ballet's Nutcracker

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Alexandra Ballet's *Nutcracker* performances have become a holiday tradition for St. Louisans over the years and this year will be no exception.

**The Nutcracker Suite** was held Friday, November 21 at 7 p.m. at Westfield Shoppingtown Chesterfield, Center Court. The performance, presented by Chesterfield Arts, was a presentation of the beloved story of Clara and her Nutcracker doll through storytelling and ballet.

**The Sugar Plum Parties** for children was Friday, November 28, at Saint Louis Galleria. The *Nutcracker* story was presented through storytelling and ballet while children attending the parties enjoy refreshments. After the performance, the children have an opportunity to meet the dancers.

## Moscow Ballet Brings Nutcracker to St. Louis

The world-renowned Moscow Ballet brought its *Great Russian Nutcracker* to St. Louis this holiday season and Alexandra Ballet was invited to be the host company.

"We are delighted to have been invited for this honor and we hope this will be the beginning of a long association with Moscow Ballet," said Alexandra Zaharias, Artistic Director of Alexandra Ballet.

Alexandra Ballet hosted the auditions for the augmented cast under the direction of Moscow Ballet member Boris Baskakov. More than eighty young dancers from the St. Louis area participated in the auditions which were held at the Alexandra School of Ballet. Alexandra Ballet also conducted rehearsals for the augmented cast for all three performances of the holiday production in St. Louis.

Moscow Ballet's *Great Russian Nutcracker* is unique among *Nutcracker* productions because its setting is in the Land of Peace and Harmony rather than the traditional

land of sweets. The theme of peace is highlighted throughout with the addition of a new character—an ethereal dove who appears in the dreamscape.

The stunning sets for the production include colorful drops created with a collage

technique and larger-than-life puppets, each 12 feet in length or height, which give a breath-taking three-dimensional quality to many of the scenes.

Under the direction of Anotoly Emelianov and Valery Lantratov, the *Great Russian*

*Nutcracker* will tour more than 70 cities in the United States this holiday season. A pure classical company with 50 dancers, all Russian graduates of the Moscow Choreographic Institute and the Vaganova Institute, the company's repertory features such classics as *Swan Lake*, *Don Quixote* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Several members of the company are winners of prestigious international ballet competitions including the International Ballet Competition of Varna, Moscow and Paris.

The *Great Russian Nutcracker* performances were held at the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center on the campus of the University of Missouri—St. Louis Saturday, November 22.



Moscow Ballet dancer Boris Baskakov with master class dancers.

## Regional Dance America

Kansas Regional Ballet will host "The Center of it All," the 2004 Mid States Region Festival at the beautiful new Johnson County Community College Theatre May 20-22 in Overland Park, Kansas. Alexandra Ballet Artistic Director Alexandra Zaharias toured the facility recently at the Mid States Region fall meeting.

"It is an absolutely gorgeous theatre. I'm so excited about the possibilities for a wonderful festival at this facility and I know Kansas Regional Ballet will do a tremendous job," Zaharias said.

The adjudicator for this year's festival is Leslie Crockett, a faculty member of Marin Ballet School in the San Francisco Bay area. At the annual meeting of Regional Dance America in New York City, two individuals from the Mid States Region were elected as officers for the upcoming year; Mary Geiger was chosen as vice president and Dennis Landsman as treasurer. Gretchen Vogelzang replaces Debra Roga as national president. We wish them the best of luck as they represent the five regions of Regional Dance America.

## Thalia Mara A True Gift to the Ballet World

The ballet world suffered a great loss in the recent passing of Thalia Mara. Miss Mara's life was devoted to ballet, first as a dancer of extensive reputation, later as a teacher, choreographer, director and author.

Born in Chicago of Russian émigré parents, Miss Mara began her career as a professional dancer at the age of fourteen, performing with companies in the United States, Europe and South America. She studied under some of ballet's most brilliant artists, including Adolph Bolm, Olga Preobrajenskaya, Nicholas Legat and Michel Fokine.

Following a successful performing career, she turned her gifts to ballet education. Her textbooks, well known among ballet educators around the world, have been translated into several languages. She founded one of the first private fine arts school in the United States to combine both academic studies and professional training in the arts. She established the National Academy of Ballet and Theatre Arts, whose graduates have been principal dancers in major companies including American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet, and San Francisco Ballet, among others.

Her knowledge of ballet education has been a gift to many teachers who have in turn passed along to young dancers the technique and art of ballet. For many years

she conducted summer workshops in New York City for dance teachers. Teachers came from all over the world to learn from Miss Mara how better to teach and instill the love of dance in their students.

Miss Mara semi-retired to Jackson, Mississippi, where she established a professional ballet company and school. She was also instrumental in bringing the prestigious International Ballet Competition to the United States. This world-class event operates under the International Theatre Institute, a branch of UNESCO, and alternates among the cities of Moscow, Russia; Paris, France; Helsinki, Finland; Varna, Bulgaria; and Jackson, Mississippi.

Our own artistic director, Alexandra Zaharias, studied under Miss Mara. "She was truly a gifted teacher. She understood the importance of nurturing the love of dance in ballet students. She knew how to nurture that love and she knew how to teach others to do the same."

Miss Mara's philosophy is exemplified in a comment she once made to Zaharias, "Always know and remember that the work you are doing is blessing your city and all its residents, because art is God's gift to mankind. It raises the atmosphere from the mundane to the celestial, and lifts the thoughts and spirits of all – even those who are unaware of it."

We are on the Web! [www.alexandraballet.com](http://www.alexandraballet.com)



## *alexandra ballet*

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Nonprofit Org.  
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THE  
REGIONAL ARTS  
COMMISSION  
SAINT LOUIS

### *alexandra ballet*

Alexandra Zaharias, Artistic Director

presents



SEMIWEEK, MARCH 6, 2004, 2:00 AND 7:00 PM  
SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2004, 2:00 PM  
BLANCKE M. TROHILL PERFORMANCE ARTS CENTER  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS  
TICKETS: \$34 / \$25 / \$20, call 314.536.4949

*A delight for the entire family!*

Alexandra Ballet is proud to present this beautiful production of the enduring Tchaikovsky classic, **The Sleeping Beauty**. With original choreography by Marius Petipa, this full-length version has been restaged by renowned choreographer Marek Cholewa. With incredible sets and hand-painted scenery by George Verdak, guest artists from around the region join Company dancers in recreating this fairy tale world—a world where the wicked fairy Carabosse is conquered by the kind and gentle Lilac Fairy, and where the beautiful Princess Aurora finds her true love when she is awakened with a kiss from a handsome prince.