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Friends of Alexandra Ballet

The Friends is a group of individuals committed to the support of Alexandra Ballet. In addition to the functions listed below, we help with almost any job needed to keep Alexandra Ballet thriving, such as transporting guest dancers and choreographers, altering costumes, and bulk mailing.

Everyone is welcome to be a Friend of Alexandra Ballet. We have no dues and we meet monthly. If you know a friend, relative, neighbor, or acquaintance, who is interested in being a part of a support organization to help promote quality ballet in St. Louis, please let us know.

Alexandra Ballet is a Proud Member of:

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Notes From the Artistic Director



Photo: Melba McCarver

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you! Thank you, everyone, for a great year. It was a grand season of performances, culminating in the beautiful production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream & Paquita* in March, which truly was a dream! It was a perfect example of the dedicated work done by our dancers, choreographers, and artistic staff. Our contributors and corporate sponsors have increased dramatically this year, due in large part to our hard-working fundraising committee, a determined marketing and communications endeavor, a dedicated board of directors, and our wonderful Friends of the Ballet. Their teamwork and tireless efforts have taken this company to greater heights than ever before.

Many thanks to the twenty-seven talented dancers of Alexandra Ballet who performed at all our venues this season, including the Missouri Botanical Garden, Saint Louis Galleria, Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center, Edison Theatre, the University Club in

Clayton, Anderson University in Indiana, and our very own studios. You have performed with grace and maturity far beyond your years, and each and every one of you deserves to feel proud of your performances this season.

I am especially grateful to the Artistic Staff, whose uncompromising standards raised the level of ability of the entire company. They worked with the dancers with great skill and determination, expecting nothing less than perfection, and molded them into the beautiful company we see today.

And now I look forward to yet another new season with great excitement. Along with our usual appearances, we have been hard at work on a newly expanded version of *The Nutcracker*, to be presented by Chesterfield Arts this December at Marquette High School. We will have more of your favorite characters, more space, more dancing, and far more fun than in the past!

The theme of our production next March will be Ballet Through the Centuries, examining the evolution of styles and technique through history, and containing notable works from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries—a unique idea sure to create interest in the St. Louis dance community. The centerpiece of the program will be *The Firebird*, probably the most famous ballet of the 20th century, but rarely performed in St. Louis. Representing the historically rich 19th century will be *Napoli* and *Pas de Quatre*, two artistic masterpieces of their time. Finally, we'll soar into the 21st century with an exciting contemporary work, *de l'innocense*, by one of the most notable American choreographers of our time, Alan Hiline.

Next season is sure to be even better than this one has been, and I anticipate great things from another great company of dancers. All the hard work, the long hours, the endless worry, and the countless details can sometimes seem insurmountable to me. Through the years, I have asked myself many times, "Is it worth it?" I can only answer, "Yes, Yes, Yes!" 

Alexandra Ballet is Funded in Part By:

And For Our Next Performance...

Here is a sampling of the exciting works being planned for the coming season. Many are new pieces being added to the repertoire of Alexandra Ballet for the first time!

The Firebird

Music: Igor Stravinsky

Choreography: Marek Cholewa

Despite its absence from St. Louis for numerous decades, *The Firebird* is one of the most renowned story ballets of the 20th Century. It was originally presented by Diaghilev's Ballet Russe in 1910, with a story derived from various Russian folktales and Igor Stravinsky's atmospheric and melodic score.

The Nutcracker – newly expanded!

Music: Peter Illytch Tchaikovsky

Choreography: Alexandra Zaharias, CiCi Houston, Norma Gabriel

Alexandra Ballet expands the timeless holiday classic. This shortened, narrated version is perfect for children and adults of all ages. Come see new dances and characters along with old favorites!

Pas de Quatre

Music: Cesare Pugni

Choreography: Anton Dolin, staged by Zhanna Dubrovskaya

Pas de Quatre was originally created in 1845 by Jules Perrot for the four greatest ballerinas of that time: Marie Taglioni, Carlotta Grisi, Fanny Cerrito, and Lucile Grahn. Due to the inevitable rivalry of the four ballerinas, *Pas de Quatre* caused an unprecedented excitement throughout the dance world, and to this day remains to be possibly the most famous divertissement in the history of dance.

de l'innocence

Music: Anton Dvorak

Choreography: Alan Hineline

Alexandra Ballet is proud to bring this world-renowned choreographer to St. Louis for his first collaboration with Alexandra Ballet.

Napoli (Tarantella and Variations)

Music: Edvard Helsted and Holger Simon Paulli

Choreography: August Bournonville

Staged by: CiCi Houston

Since its premiere in 1842, *Napoli* has been danced by the Royal Danish Ballet over four thousand times. It is considered to be the masterpiece of August Bournonville, the famous Danish choreographer, and the lively Tarantella is the most widely performed section of the ballet.

Papillons

Music: Robert Schumann

Choreography: CiCi Houston

This premiere is set to Schumann's fleeting piano pieces under the same name.

Today, more than ever before—

Life's better with ballet!

A Bloomin' Success!

Profuse blossoms in the vibrant colors of spring, and dancers adorned in equally colorful costumes, greeted guests arriving at the Meadowbrook Country Club on the evening of April 23 for Another Bloomin' Auction! The fundraiser benefiting Alexandra Ballet proved to be a huge success, raising more than \$14,000 for the non-profit company and its fine arts initiatives.

Organized by Linda Hollenkamp and a team of volunteers from the Friends of the Ballet, the "celebration of spring" began with cocktails and silent auctions, and continued with a delightful dinner and oral auction, led by David Lewis of ATEC, Inc. and emceed by Alexandra Ballet board member, Frank Buckley.

Items up for sale included artwork, ballet memorabilia, travel packages, sports equipment, passes to cultural institutions and entertainment venues, and many other generous donations. There was plenty for bargain hunters and luxury seekers, alike, and it seemed no one went home empty handed.

The most stunning donation of all, though, an 18K white gold bracelet sporting over 400 brilliant cut diamonds, went unclaimed. Donated by Mr. and Mrs. David Lichtenstein, trustees of the Lichtenstein Foundation, this timelessly beautiful bracelet is valued at \$40,000. Its appearance brought excitement, appreciative sighs, and looks of desire by the ladies in attendance, but brought no buyers. The board of directors of Alexandra Ballet now has the task of determining the future for this wonderful donation.

Mrs. Lichtenstein was an honored guest at the auction, and delighted artistic director Alexandra Zaharias with her reminiscences of St. Louis and its history. Also in attendance was Marianne Sydowski, President of the Polish American Cultural Society, Vivienne Topping, philanthropist & alumna of Alexandra Ballet, and former board president, Andrew Ruhlin, with his wife, Ann Marie. 

Where Are They Now?

Here's what we've heard from some alumni recently:

Ian Archer-Watters is currently on a three month tour of Asia with Les Ballets Grandiva. The tour includes seven performances in four cities in Korea, and 60 performances throughout Japan. Ian, who lives in New York City, will return home in July.

Laura (Singenstreu) Bagnall wrote to tell us she is married now and working as a legal secretary in Texas, but still has many fond memories of her days with Alexandra Ballet, especially the excitement of moving up a level and getting to wear her new leotard color—still a common feeling for our students today!

Megan Buckley has nearly finished her first year with the Joffrey Training Program in New York City. Megan appeared in the New York Dance Festival Choreography Workshop at the Madame Tousseau's Wax Museum in April, and will perform four roles in the June production of *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Skriball Theater at New York University. In addition, Megan will perform in *Etudes*, created by Robert Joffrey.

Amy Buettner is living in Portland, Oregon, and writes that she credits Miss A (or "Madame Alexandra" as she was then called) with instilling in her the importance of discipline, of listening, of trying your best, and striving for perfection. Amy now works as an artist, creating one-of-a-kind handmade pieces of jewelry.

Antonio Douthit was in St. Louis in March to participate in A Bliss Full Affair, the gala celebration honoring Sally Bliss upon her retirement as Executive Director of Dance St. Louis. Antonio, who is currently dancing with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, sought out Miss A at the event to express his gratitude to her for the years of support she has given him.

Carolyn Kuhl is now a trial judge in the Superior Court of Los Angeles who has had the distinction of arguing cases in the United States Supreme Court. Carolyn, who studied with Miss A during the '60's, graduated from Princeton University and Duke Law School. She reports that ballet is still an important part of her life, continues to take class regularly, and has a deep appreciation for the high quality of training she received from Miss A.

Sara Little dropped in to say hello before leaving for Austin, TX, where she'll be a supervisor for ABT's summer program. Sara is a dance major at Ball State University.

Andrea Lucas, who recently finished her first year at Butler University, is on tour in Poland with Butler Ballet. One of twenty dancers from the 84-member company selected to make the trip, Andrea is appearing in a full program of modern dance performed in the cities of Warsaw, Poznan, Gdansk, Krakow, and Bytom.

Lisa Morovitz-Geger is working as the Assistant Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer for Cedar Lake II, in Columbia, Missouri. Its parent company, Cedar Lake, is based in New York City. Lisa graduated from Stephens College, in Columbia, and is enjoying this new phase of her life.

Carrie Mullekin-Portzline paid us a surprise visit from Portland, Oregon, where she lives with her husband and family. Carrie's a much sought after free-lance product designer. 

We love hearing from you! Contact us at alexandraballet@msn.com, or by mail at 68E Four Seasons Center, Chesterfield, MO, 63017, to let us know where you are now.

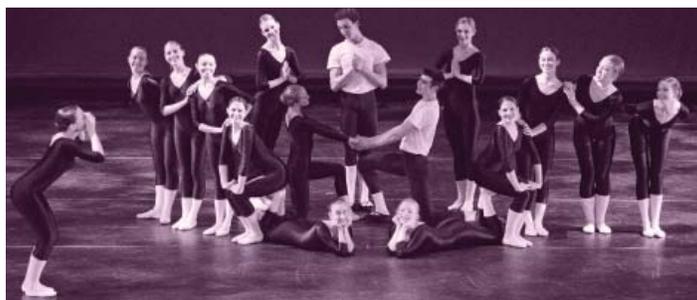


Alexandra Ballet is an honor company in RDA's MidStates Region. Both pieces presented by the company for adjudication were accepted for inclusion into the festival this year. *Minkus Divertissements*, a classical ballet piece, was presented at the Concert Performance on Friday evening, and *Ballare*, a modern dance piece, was selected for the Gala Evening Performance on Saturday night.

This year, Alexandra Ballet dancer Consuelo Williams has the honor of representing Alexandra Ballet as part of MidStates' presentation of *Divertissements* at the USA International Ballet Competition on June 22, 2006 in Jackson, Mississippi. The piece, choreographed by Salt Creek Ballet's Sergey Kozadayeve, is performed by a group of dancers comprised of representatives from each of the fourteen ballet companies in the MidStates region of RDA.



Congratulations to our two scholarship winners! Elizabeth Unal received a scholarship to the Joffrey Ballet School, NYC, and Agatha Schmanek received a cash award towards her studies. 



Divertissements - Choreographed by Sergey Kozadayeve

Photos © 2005 Tynetta Chastain

SpotLight On... Mark Sonnenberg

"Steel wrapped in silk"—these are the words of Mark Sonnenberg and the quality he encourages his male students to aspire to, the same quality he exhibits comfortably as their teacher. It is a recurring theme during his class as he educates, cajoles, and pushes his students to develop absolute strength of technique, while wrapping it in a subtle softness that allows the highest level of artistic expression.

Since arriving in St. Louis two years ago, Sonnenberg has established Alexandra School of Ballet as the place to come for quality ballet instruction for young men in our area, and the men's classes have become a valuable addition to the school. His classes are known for their high energy, all-or-nothing approach, and combine the importance of placement, strength, and technique with an uncanny appreciation for music and beauty.

A third year student at Logan Chiropractic College, Sonnenberg places great importance on knowledge of the human body and its alignment while dancing. He frequently stops class to educate his students on skeletal and muscular structure and how it relates to their quest for improvement in their quality of dance. He reminds everyone how much is really involved in even the simplest movement. Traveling around the class during barre exercises, he watches each dancer carefully and analyzes each movement; increasing turnout, lifting up, straightening arms, stretching the knees, and positioning heads as he goes.

The class begins slowly, but very soon after starting, the young men begin to show the effort they are expending, sweat forming on each brow. Sonnenberg constantly stresses the importance of the music, of listening to the phrasing and moving accordingly. The students' faces are now etched in concentration, focusing on the minutia of each movement. The class only gets more difficult from there.

Soon they have moved into the center of class, where the intensity increases. Battlements in center prove to be especially difficult,

with Sonnenberg repeatedly reminding the dancers to "Lift up through that supporting leg and—turn it out!" He begins to raise his voice now, pushing and cajoling, correcting and encouraging. "That's what I'm talking about!" he yells, as they respond to his urgings. Now the young men are really working, sweat trickling down faces and backs everywhere.

After more work in center, the class begins to dance across the floor in a series of difficult combinations. The music's tempo increases, as does the pace of the class. Over and over again Sonnenberg has the dancers practice a "killer" *dégagé* combination. "Come on, let's go," he says to the exhausted bunch. "No one can know you're tired!" When the music and the dancers (drenched now) finally stop, heavy panting fills the air, but their faces are proud and satisfied. They know they have worked hard and made progress. Part coach, part scientist, part musician--all teacher. Mark Sonnenberg has enjoyed a prestigious career as a performer with many notable ballet companies, including Milwaukee Ballet (under the artistic direction of Ted Kivett), Minnesota dance Theatre (under Loyce Holton), and Dayton Ballet (under the direction of Stuart Sebastian). His ballet experience includes pas de deux in the classical repertoire as well as original works. After observing his class, though, one can only wonder if his performing career was but a preparation for his true calling. Sonnenberg is one of those gifted teachers blessed with technical knowledge, reverence for his art, and the ability to inspire his students to achieve their full potential. This man is the very essence of the male dancer—steel wrapped in silk. 



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Be An Angel!

Though you may not be able to make a sizable monetary donation to our non-profit organization, you may still make a substantial contribution to the Company in the way of durable goods or services.

We are in need of a crew of people willing to help install new multi-purpose dance flooring in the small studio over the summer.

If you are able to help with this task, please contact our office at 314-469-6222, or via email at alexandra@alexandraballet.com. We will direct your donation to the proper individual, and provide you with a receipt for your tax-deductible donation. Every little bit helps, so please . . . be an angel. 

A Big "Thank You!" to the following angels:

Andy Ruhlin, alumni parent and past board president, who generously donated a box of blank camcorder tapes to be used for rehearsals.

CiCi Houston, for coordinating the creation of the promotional DVD to accompany our grant applications. In addition to selecting the performance shorts, CiCi also helped to edit the DVD.

Ann Marie Ruhlin, who provided the expert voice-over for the promotional DVD. Many of you know Ann Marie as mother of alumna Jessica Ruhlin, and as the narrator for our Chesterfield version of The Nutcracker. The DVD turned out beautifully—
THANK YOU!

The Scarpaci Family, who donated and hung blinds in the entrance doors and windows of the studio!

Alexandra Ballet thanks you for your generous gifts. 