



Our New Company Manager

In July, CU Ballet board president Ali Lewis and artistic director Deanna Doty welcomed Kay Greene to CU ballet as company manager and chief information officer responsible for the general operation of the company. Kay is an experienced fundraiser with a background in marketing and communications. She has been successful in directing annual fund campaigns. CU Ballet producer Terri King describes Kay as “energetic, enthusiastic, professional, and a whole lot of fun.” Publicity Committee Chair Terry Bush recently sat down with Kay for a brief interview.

Photo Credit: Darrell Hoemann

Have you always had an interest in ballet?

It's a little embarrassing to admit that CU Ballet's *Cinderella* in May was my very first ballet. I was so impressed! It was magical. The athleticism and grace of the dancers took my breath away. The exquisite costumes and magnificent sets were mesmerizing, and now I'm a huge fan.

Why CU Ballet, then?

In my opinion, CU Ballet is one of the best performing arts organizations in Champaign County, and I'm thrilled to be involved. Whenever you have the opportunity to work with young people, you have the opportunity to make a difference, and that's important to me. I felt my experience in development and fundraising, along with my organizational, administrative and communication skills would be a good fit.

What would you like the community to know about CU Ballet?

Oh, my goodness. There's so much I want to share! I admire the artistic talent of Deanna Doty. Her costume designs are exceptional, each of them hand sewn by dedicated

volunteers, including Deanna herself. Deanna and her staff demand professionalism—on every level. I'm impressed with the discipline of the dancers. They have excellent time management skills to balance tough academic schedules with rigorous rehearsal schedules where perfection is demanded and expected. When it comes to the volunteers who are the pulse of CU Ballet, I'm speechless. Their dedication is a blessing.

What do you know now that you didn't know prior to joining CU Ballet?

Ballet is serious business.

What else should we know about you?

I am incredibly blessed to have a loving husband, Steve, four healthy and talented children, and four “sweet as pie” grandchildren. In addition, Steve and I, along with a long-time close friend and business associate Linda Hamilton, have a consulting business, Clearpath, LLC specializing in non-profit and small business consulting.



Champaign Urbana Ballet

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THE NUTCRACKER

Champaign Urbana Ballet
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Krannert Center for the Performing Arts

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Newsletter of Champaign Urbana Ballet

Fall 2013

GROWING UP NUTCRACKER



GROWING UP NUTCRACKER

Whether you have seen two or ten Champaign Urbana Ballet productions of *The Nutcracker*, you have probably noticed something special about the cast. Quite a few of the dancers—roughly seventy percent of this year's cast— have danced in previous *Nutcracker* productions. Some return to roles they have previously danced. Others, by virtue of age and experience, move from one part to another. Given the amount of time required to learn, rehearse, and perfect the parts, it is at once a testament to the deep commitment CU Ballet dancers have to their craft and this production, and evidence that performing in *The Nutcracker* is a tremendous amount of fun.

Of the many returning dancers this year, three stand out for the length of their tenure and the range of roles they have danced. Audience members have watched Taylor Feddersen, Peyton Herbert, and Corbin Phillips grow up on stage. All three performed in their first *Nutcracker* before they turned six, debuting with a joyous burst from beneath Mother Ginger's enormous skirt. All three have danced their way through the Stahlbaum's holiday party and the epic struggle between the rodent militia and the toy soldiers. All three now regularly dance solo roles and will be on-stage for their eleventh *Nutcracker* this year.

In this year's production, Taylor Feddersen will perform as the Sugar Plum Fairy, an Ice Fairy, and a Flower. Peyton Herbert will dance the roles of Arabian Princess, Chinese Butterfly, Party Mother, Ice Fairy, and Flower. Corbin Phillips will reprise his roles as the Boy Doll and the Russian Dancer. These three dancers, though remarkable in many

ways, are also representative of the degree to which hard work and persistence bring success in ballet. As CU Ballet artistic director Deanna Doty says, "I can teach our dancers many things, but they teach themselves and each other the meaning and benefits of dedication."

In 2013, Taylor, Peyton, Corbin and their fellow company members may well inspire the newest *Nutcracker* cast members (and future dancers as well) to devote themselves to ballet, to work hard, and to love the art of it all. It's entirely possible that the Sugar Plum Fairy for the 2023 production will be in the Polichinelle dressing room this year.



Above: Corbin Phillips, Peyton Herbert and Taylor Feddersen in rehearsal for the 2013 *Nutcracker*. Photo credit: Kristin Feddersen

Below: And in 2004 as Polichinelles. Taylor is third from left in front row, Peyton, second from left in front row and Corbin, second from left, back row. Photo credit: Dan Merlo

"I can teach our dancers many things, but they teach themselves and each other the meaning and benefits of dedication."





It's More Than Just a Cupcake

If you haven't stood in the line, you have at least seen it.

Minutes after the Nutcracker Prince and Clara sail off toward the Land of Sweets, audience members head up the aisles in search of intermission sweets of their own. They queue up outside the Tryon Festival Theater and wait patiently (for the most part) for one of the best cupcakes in town. Tables in the lobby are thick with the treats, frosted in white and pink, topped with delicate ballet figurines. Eager children and equally eager parents move steadily up the line, hand over one dollar each, and then savor ... the moment, the season, the cupcake.

For Nutcracker veterans, the ballerina cupcakes are as much a part of the experience as the Russian Dance. But what even the most seasoned fans may not realize is that these cupcakes are more than just cupcakes. They are, in fact, edible expressions of values deeply important to Champaign Urbana Ballet: collaboration, community, and creativity.

The eagerly anticipated cupcakes are baked and frosted locally by Schnucks markets where, every December, regional manager Dan Wheatman oversees their preparation. Wheatman and Schnucks donate two thousand cupcakes to CU Ballet for sale during the Nutcracker season. For over a decade Schnucks and its employees have been loyal supporters of the ballet. The cupcakes are only the most obvious—and tasty—manifestation of this commitment.

Though the importance of the ballerina cupcakes is most apparent in the eyes and around the mouths of the youngest audience members, in truth their importance extends into communities well beyond the South Lobby of the Krannert Center. The full purchase price of each cupcake goes to support CU Ballet's signature outreach program, Tickets for Kids. Each year Tickets for Kids (TFK) makes it possible for hundreds of children and families

to receive complimentary tickets for an afternoon at the ballet. TFK works with schools in Champaign-Urbana and surrounding communities to identify children who have shown an interest in the performing arts but would not, under normal circumstances come to a performance. For some ticket recipients the Nutcracker is simply a memorable holiday experience. For others it becomes an entrée into the world of ballet, a first step toward dancing on the Krannert stage themselves. In fact, over the past ten years well over a dozen Nutcracker cast members have been introduced to the production through Tickets for Kids.



Photo Credit: Darrell Hoemann

Of course, ballerina cupcakes would not be ballerina cupcakes without the ballerina figurines, lovingly placed atop the cupcakes by CU Ballet volunteers. Long after the cupcake becomes a happy memory, the figurine endures. For some, a single plastic ballerina becomes a pocket-sized memento of a magical afternoon or evening. One can find these tiny plastic soloists on dressers, window sills, and desktops around town. For others, there can never be too many ballerina figurines. The larger the toy dance company, the more elaborate the productions can be. In fact, as a CU Ballet representative recently discovered, members of the Krannert Center administrative staff have created their own office decorations—including a colorful mobile—featuring the tutu-clad cupcake toppers.

The cupcakes look simple enough. But as happens with so many things, CU Ballet and its supporters take the simple and build something remarkable. An audience, much like an army, travels on its stomach. So this year, please, get in line at intermission and enjoy a cupcake or two.

And let us know what your cupcake ballerinas do after their cupcake careers. Post a picture on CU Ballet's Facebook page. We will award prizes for the most original usage and print the photo in the next issue.

HONORING ONE OF OUR OWN



This season, CU Ballet recognized Julianna Steitz with the Barb Fogel Volunteer Award for service and commitment as one of the company's longest standing and most productive volunteers. Julianna began volunteering after the company formed in 1998, supporting her daughter Erin in *The Nutcracker*. When the company ramped up its production at Krannert Center in 2003, Julianna became a board member and costume mistress, and subsequently helped to launch multiple new ballets and countless costumes over several years of exponential growth. Even as a part-time company manager, Julianna continued to dedicate time and skill to costuming.

The award was created last season in memory of Barb Fogel, a longtime volunteer who made costumes and props for company productions. Her son and current board member Tracy McCabe received the inaugural award. It will be given each season to a volunteer who exemplifies the spirit of CU Ballet in heart and action.

As a CU Ballet community, we congratulate Julianna on this award and share in gratitude for the volunteerism which earned it for her.

Julianna Steitz

Photo Credit: Joanna Strauss