

NOUVELLES DU BALLET

Newsletter of Champaign Urbana Ballet

Spring 2018



20 Years in
the Making

Time Marches On

- 1998** • CU Ballet incorporated as a non-profit organization
 - *Nutcracker Variations* performed at Champaign Public Library
- 1999** • Debut performance at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (KCPA):
A *Nutcracker Dream*, with East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra and Central Illinois Children's Chorus
- 2000** • Debut performance at Virginia Theatre: Selections from *The Nutcracker*
- 2001** • Tickets for Kids program launches
- 2002** • First full-length performance of *The Nutcracker*, at Parkland College Theatre
 - Support from Illinois Arts Council Agency begins
- 2003** • *The Nutcracker* with Sinfonia da Camera, at KCPA
 - First performance of *Swan Lake*, at Parkland College Theatre
- 2004** • Performances of *Peter and the Wolf*, and *Le Corsaire*, with variations from *Arensky and Delibes*, at Parkland College Theatre
- 2005** • Debut of full-length *Coppélia*, at Parkland College Theatre
- 2006** • Ballet training scholarships established
 - CU Ballet office, costume and scene shops open at West Clark Road, Champaign
- 2007** • Debut of *The Sleeping Beauty*, at Parkland College Theatre
 - CU Ballet newsletter *Nouvelles du Ballet* launched
- 2008** • First full-length performance of *Paquita*, at Virginia Theatre
- 2009** • Premiere of *Cinderella*, at Virginia Theatre
- 2010** • Girl Scout Day at the Ballet launches at Virginia Theatre
- 2011** • CU Ballet adopts new logo and mission and values statement
- 2012** • First Offstage at the Regent Ballroom: Selections from *Paquita*, *Le Corsaire*,
Dance of the Golden Idol from *La Bayadère*, *Les Sylphides*
- 2013** • First Spring Showcase at Urbana High School
- 2014** • *The Nutcracker* with The Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra, at KCPA
 - First Student-led Production: "Carnival of the Animals"
- 2015** • New *Nutcracker* sets premiere, along with new Snow and Ice Fairy costumes,
sewn with 5 football fields of tulle and 13 football fields of thread!
- 2016** • Annual Student Production moves to Second Stage Theatre at Parkland
College: *Alice in Wonderland*
- 2017** • 20th-anniversary performance of *The Nutcracker* for two weekends at KCPA
- 2018** • See you at the Virginia Theatre for *The Sleeping Beauty*, May 4-5!

Celebration

Once upon a time they were Soldiers, Snowflakes, and Sugar Plums. This spring some of our Champaign Urbana Ballet alumni share their love (and livelihood) for dance as we remember 20 years of ballet in the making.

Tuli Bera: Former CU Ballet Company Dancer

Tuli Bera currently lives in Chicago as a freelance performance artist and curator. Her last CU Ballet performance was *Cinderella* in May 2015. Her journey, as a CU Ballet alumna, has been focused on being involved in the various sectors of the Chicago performance art and dance community. As a first-generation Indian-American, her movement practice explores the duality of her cultural upbringing and dance history. Her work has been presented at Links Hall (a performance venue in Chicago). She is a dancer and collaborator with Project Ishti, led by Preeti Veerlapati and Kinnari Vora. Ishti's collaborations and productions focus on the interconnectedness within a culture and community while highlighting Indian classical dance styles. Bera is also producing and directing a monthly performance series called The J e l l o Performance Series. The series provides a performance space for artists to experiment, create, risk and try. The series has provided a performance platform that has presented over 50 artists' works. In addition to providing a platform for artists, J e l l o provides free photographic and videographic documentation for all artists.

Emily Buss: Former CU Ballet Company Dancer

Buss says, "I was fortunate to return to CU Ballet for three years after college, teaching at the ballet academy and working with the company again before moving to Washington, DC, for graduate school." Since then Buss has continued balancing her interests in international affairs and the arts. She earned a Master's from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, with a focus on cultural diplomacy – broadly, how countries use the arts and culture to communicate and represent themselves on the world stage. After graduating, she worked at a think tank focusing on European politics. While international politics is important to her, she wanted to explore the world of arts advocacy professionally. Now she works at Americans for the Arts, the country's leading arts advocacy organization. She works on cultivation programs – including the National Arts Policy Roundtable and the National Arts Awards – and manages engagement with artists, including through a visibility-driven Artists Committee. She has made it her personal mission here to engage more advocates from the dance world.

Since moving to Washington, Buss has taken classes throughout the city, including at the Washington Ballet. Through these classes, she's learned about Classical Repertory Dance Ensemble, a ballet company made up of adults with serious training, who still train and rehearse intensively, all while working day jobs: "We take class from great teachers, and have original choreography set on us by DC-area choreographers. In

ating CU Ballet Alumni



Kathryn Hosier



Devon Teuscher



Erin Mangian Shannon



Tuli Bera



Emily Buss

addition, we present excerpts from major classical ballets such as *Giselle*, *Paquita*, and *Coppélia*." Buss just finished her fourth season with the company – which was also her first year co-directing the group which was an incredibly rewarding experience. "I never imagined that, so many years after leaving CU Ballet, I would still be dancing and performing as much as I am. I'm so grateful for these opportunities!"

Kathryn Hosier: Second Soloist, The National Ballet of Canada and former CU Ballet Company Dancer

Kate wanted to be a dancer from the age of 4 after repeatedly watching Michael Jackson. That sums up her inspiration for the career she chose. Recalling her training with Deanna Doty, Kate says an aspect that stands out to her was the opportunity to dance on a professional stage. Her experiences in *The Nutcracker* with a live orchestra and large audiences were valuable preparation for her professional career in dance.

After leaving Champaign Ballet Academy at age 15, Kate studied at Canada's National Ballet School, living in a dormitory with other aspiring professionals. Each year Karen Kain, former principal dancer and director of The National Ballet of Canada, traditionally chooses one or two female graduates for the company. Kate's hard work led her to be the only graduate chosen her year, and after an apprenticeship of only four months, she was thrilled to be offered a contract.

Being in a professional company is grueling, competitive work even though the dancers at NBOC have a reputation of being supportive toward one another. Artistic directors have very specific preferences on style and image, which makes it difficult for a dancer to know exactly what lies in her future with a company. Kate is the tallest girl in her company at 5'8", which is not a particular advantage considering many male dancers are shorter.

Corps work often means dancing in every show, often at risk for injury. Since 2010, Kate worked corps, then in 2015 was promoted to second soloist. Before this promotion, Kate danced the principal role in a contemporary version of *Spectre de la Rose*. She danced a principal role in the premiere of *La Petite Prince*, and the lead in *No. 24*. Kate danced as a stepsister in *Cinderella* (her favorite role so far, a comedic performance that allowed her to be on stage almost all of the time). Among other titled roles, Kate particularly enjoys dancing the Lead Fairy in *Sleeping Beauty*, putting her front and center, her favorite place to be! Kate's passion for ballet that began as a little girl watching Michael Jackson, has grown into the profession she loves.

Erin Mangian Shannon: Former CU Ballet Company Dancer

After her time with CU Ballet, Erin Mangian Shannon graduated from the University of Illinois and worked in a variety of roles in Chicago. Now she resides in Bloomington-Normal with her husband Davis and new son Declan. Currently, Erin is the marketing manager

for the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts where she markets the theatre's seasons of live events. Still active in dance, Erin participates in a range of activities including practicing, teaching, performing, choreographing and assisting with the production of performances. She dances as a member of the Bloomington Ballet II, a non-professional performance group associated with the McLean County Dance Association (MCDA), and has taught ballet the past several years at Uptown Dance in Normal, Illinois and MCDA. Her dance involvement ranges from helping little ones onstage with their very first performance to dancing back up for "Weird Al" Yankovic during his 2015 Bloomington shows! While currently taking a break from her dance activities to spend time with her new son, she looks forward to returning soon.

Devon Teuscher: Principal Ballerina, American Ballet Theatre and Former CU Ballet Company Dancer

From her recent promotion to Principal Ballerina with American Ballet Theatre to receiving the coveted *Washington Post's* 2017 Best Dancers Award ("The Year When Powerful Women Seized the Spotlight"), former CU Ballet Company Dancer Devon Teuscher is soaring. In January of last year, she was given the opportunity to dance the lead role of Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake* as a soloist in Washington, DC at The John F. Kennedy Center for The Performing Arts. As the recipient of The Leonore Annenberg Fellowship in 2016, she was able to work with respected acting coach Byam Stevens, as well as spend time developing the role at The Royal Ballet, The Paris Opera Ballet, and The Stuttgart Ballet.

Following her debut, *The Washington Post* quoted "... in January, with Devon Teuscher, not yet a principal at the time, making her beautifully measured debut in the leading role of Odette/Odile [she] took on this rite of passage days earlier than planned, stepping in for an injured Gillian Murphy. Teuscher was promoted shortly thereafter. How exciting it was to see her poised confidently on the threshold." When promoted to Principal, Teuscher stated via Instagram "... words cannot describe how grateful I am... This achievement feels like a dream and is a true testament to the years of hard work, dedication and perseverance that I've put into my career as a dancer."

This past summer Teuscher had the opportunity to perform at The Vail Dance Festival and was invited again to attend the prestigious showcase this coming year. In addition, she has been touring with ABT performing in various cities nationally and internationally, Singapore and China as of late. This ABT Met Season she is hard at work, dedicating all her time to learning the lead in three full length ballets: *Firebird*, *La Bayadère* and her dream role as Juliet in *Romeo & Juliet*. In addition, Teuscher will debut *Swan Lake* with a new partner, Cory Stearns, and also perform in *Giselle*, *Myrta* and ABT original, *Whipped Cream* choreographed by Alexei Ratmansky.

She currently resides in Fort Greene, New York, with her adorable cockapoo puppy Riley.

Girl Scout Day at the Ballet

Meet Delia: Cookie-Seller

Extraordinaire and Ballerina in the Making

If you meet Delia Stout, a nine-year-old third-grader at Lincoln Trail Elementary School in Mahomet, you may end up enthusiastically buying boxes of Girl Scout cookies that you didn't even know you wanted. She is hard to resist. No cash? No problem. She takes checks. She takes credit cards. And she takes Venmo, the free mobile app that makes Thin Mint and Tagalong transactions effortless. She says, "College kids love Venmo!" She knows; she sets up shop in front of Bromley Hall, a housing complex for University of Illinois students, one of many places you may find Delia and her cookies. Last year, Delia sold 2,500 (2,500!) boxes, enough to earn her a free trip to Walt Disney World. She took her lucky mom, Marcie, who is the Scout leader of Troop 2799.

Delia joined Girl Scouts when she was in kindergarten. Kindergarten was also the first year Delia attended Champaign Urbana Ballet's spring production at the Virginia Theater with her Girl Scout troop. A year later, Marcie Stout and her co-leader Nicole Plowick decided to have Troop 2799 participate in Champaign Urbana Ballet's Girl Scout Day, a special day for Scouts, their troop leaders, and their families to attend the spring performance that includes discounted tickets, commemorative t-shirts, patches, and surprises. Marcie says that she wanted to give the girls a cultural experience that was affordable and could involve families. 15 Scouts from Troop 2799 along with 15 parents are planning to attend the Champaign Urbana Ballet production of *Sleeping Beauty* this May.

One day in the near future, we may see Delia on stage. Her interest in ballet has grown from attending Champaign Urbana Ballet performances—*Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, and the quintessential holiday tradition, *The Nutcracker*. To achieve her dream of becoming a mouse in *The Nutcracker* (she says she would be okay with another part if all the mouse parts are taken), she started taking lessons at the Champaign Ballet Academy in January. This was made possible by the generous anonymous donation of a Champaign Urbana Ballet supporter. Marcie, as a single parent, greatly appreciates this financial assistance. Delia says she loves her ballet classes although she doesn't know all those tricky French words yet. Her favorite parts of ballet are leaps and new friends, and she thinks her *balancés* have improved a lot.

Making slime. Digging for worms. Playing with Rusty Buddy Dobby Leonardo Da Vinci Mozart Stout, her dog (he goes by "Buddy"). Ice skating, roller skating, singing, cooking, Kung Fu, Girl Scouts, and, now, ballet. These are some of Delia's favorite activities. She also has goals. She is working toward another free trip to Disney World. If you are hungry for cookies, Delia says you can email her mom at marcielynnstout@gmail.com.

Her ultimate ballet goal? "Get to the highest level I can get to and be one of those girls who can leap across the stage in a pink or purple tutu with lots of sparkles!"



Delia Stout



Volunteer Reunion

This past November, current Champaign Urbana Ballet board members donned the infamous burgundy-colored CU Ballet volunteer aprons to serve two decades' worth of tried and true ballet volunteers at a reunion brunch in celebration of CU Ballet's 20th Anniversary. Held at Crystal Lake Boathouse, one could look out the window and imagine our very own *Lemonade Sea*, as friends were transported to years past through memories and stories. Co-Chair for this event, and former Costume Mistress and Company Manager, Julianna Steitz organized photos that were thoroughly enjoyed by all in attendance. Being surrounded by the beautiful foundation of volunteerism, spanning our Company's formative years, was inspiring and uplifting. Thank you to all CU Ballet volunteers past and present. We are stronger because of you!



Champaign Urbana Ballet

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Photos by Doreen Heemstra