


CU Ballet's Corps Values



from the artistic director

This season, we have another group of passionate young dancers joining our corps de ballet – a great achievement for any ballerina who is mastering her pointe work. Beyond technique, she's learning to move in sync with others, to appreciate being part of something greater than herself, and to be a good team player – lessons that translate well into life.

There's something magnificent about the energy and beauty of all those elaborately costumed dancers – waltzing, jumping, and turning onstage as a group. When the corps comes together, I'm especially proud of our work.

In theatre, movies, and entertainment, we often laud the lead players, each giving their great performance. As you watch CU Ballet's *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* this season, I hope you'll admire our corps de ballet for the great passion and performance they've worked so hard to achieve, together.





Ballet is full of beautiful moments. They come in many forms. An exquisitely costumed dancer executes an impossibly long series of pirouettes. Another defies gravity with a jaw dropping leap. The pas de deux weaves together strength and grace, and punctuates the combination with dazzling lifts. Individual dancers and their talents put ballet audiences on the edge of their seats when they don't bring them to their feet. Yet the beauty of ballet as an art form and its beauty as a discipline are more complex and subtle than any individual performance can capture or express. Aspects of the beauty can certainly be found in an individual dancing body, but it is also found—some would say it is rooted—in the body of the ballet, the corps de ballet, where many bodies dance as one.

The corps de ballet is responsible for many of the signature moments in the world's most cherished productions: the Waltz of the Flowers in *The Nutcracker*, the Garland Waltz in *The Sleeping Beauty*, and the entrance of the swans in *Swan Lake*. They enchant audiences with unified steps and coordinated movements that bring an entire stage to life. These moments are born of strenuous study and rehearsal, attention to detail and commitment to cooperative effort. They are, in other words, a manifestation of the core / corps' values of ballet as a discipline. And for many dancers these moments, and the work that precedes them, are as cherished as any in their ballet careers. As one dancer in Champaign Urbana Ballet's corps de ballet put it, "It's the one time when I can actually feel the

whole group, the movement, the energy. It's amazing."

And it is amazing. The corps de ballet is where experienced dancers, veterans of several dozen Snow Scenes from *The Nutcracker*, come together with dancers dancing in the corps for the first time. It is where all of these dancers work together to balance strength and precision, energy and poise, all to the end of glorifying not an individual role or dancer, but the entire body of the ballet. The challenges, as one dancer described them, are significant. "I have to remember my part, my timing, and dance it perfectly," she said. "And while I'm doing that, I need to watch the other dancers to make sure we're together."

Equally amazing is the enduring appeal of these corps moments to dancers and audiences alike, especially in a cultural moment that so clearly favors the individual over the group, the "I" over the "we." The technologies that we use and the habits they create strengthen our bias toward individual achievement and, some lament, pull us away from each other. The values embodied and danced by the corps de ballet cut against this grain; they argue for attentiveness over self-absorption, connection over isolation, cooperation and communalism over fragmentation. To be sure, individual dancers work hard to perform their part in the corps and care deeply about getting their part just right. But their work and their performances are most fully realized when the many come together as one and make something truly beautiful.

Pictured from top: Snowflakes in 2013's The Nutcracker, often the introductory role for our newest corps members; a bevy of swans in their classic pose before taking flight in 2010's Swan Lake; it's rare to see our dancers sitting, but after a long night of rehearsal, this is a common scene on stage as the corps receives notes for the next day's performance - in this case from 2011's The Sleeping Beauty. On the cover and opposite, Flowers waltz in last season's The Nutcracker. Photos by Darrell Hoemann and Dan Merlo.



update on alums

They've gone from our stage to others throughout the country and around the world. Here's an update on a few of CU Ballet's dancing alumni.



Kate Hosier

Kate has been stretching her muscles beyond the corps de ballet norm at National Ballet of Canada. She danced principal roles in this season's *Spectre de la Rose* and in new works by choreographer Guillaume Côté – *Tonight* and *No. 24*. NBC has featured Kate in classical soloist roles in *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*, and in modern works like Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice in Wonderland* and Jerome Robbins' *Opus 19*. This season includes Nijinsky, MacMillan, and Ratmansky to boot. Catch her in Toronto as NBC's packed season continues through June.



Devon Teuscher

Devon was promoted to soloist at American Ballet Theatre this summer - no small feat in the high stakes arena of America's top ballet company. Her rise seemed eminent after receiving rave reviews as Myrta in last season's *Giselle*. Devon kicked this season off on tour in Chicago, performing in Twyla Tharp's *Bach Partita*, and she's back in New York in late October with featured roles in *Jardin aux Lilas* and the greatly anticipated *Liam Scarlett World Premiere*. ABT's spring season hadn't been announced at press time, but you can be sure to see Devon at the Met this May-July.



in studio

Company dancer Valerie Linsner is partnered by alumni Ben Chapman (left) and Mason Anders (right) in a studio photo shoot. Anders recently transitioned from Tulsa Ballet's Second Company to Texas Ballet Theater where he's dancing corps de ballet roles in *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Merry Widow*, and *The Nutcracker* this season.





Champaign Urbana Ballet

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Newsletter of Champaign Urbana Ballet

Fall 2014



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