

BALLET ARIZONA
2020-2021 SEASON
UPCOMING DONOR EVENTS

BALLET
ARIZONA
IB ANDERSEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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BALLET ARIZONA
DONOR
IMPACT
REPORT

Donor Spotlight:
Joan & Mack Schwing

Corporate Spotlight:
Jim Manley
& Manley Films

Letter From the
Executive Director:
Samantha Turner

Q&A:
Artistic Director
Ib Andersen

On-going (All Prima Circle Members)
In-Studio Rehearsal Viewings (call to schedule)

April 14 (Open to the public)
Ballet Arizona Book Club: *The Creative Habit* by Twyla Tharp

April 16 – 18, 23 – 25 (All Prima Circle members & subscribers)
Balanchine at Dorrance Theatre & pre-show receptions

May 8 (Open to the public)
Set the Stage Digital Gala & Spring Digital Performance

May 17 (\$1,000 & Up)
The Four Seasons Dress Rehearsal

May 18 – June 5 (Open to the public)
The Four Seasons at Desert Botanical Garden

May 30, 31 & June 6 (Open to the public)
The School of Ballet Arizona presents *Swan Lake*
at Desert Botanical Garden

TURNING POINTE

Looking Forward
How your support has made
the difference during this
critical time.



Ballet Arizona dancers in George Balanchine's *Serenade*. © The Balanchine Trust. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.



Ballet Arizona dancers.
Photo by Tim Fuller.

BALLET
ARIZONA
IB ANDERSEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Ballet Arizona presents
THE FOUR SEASONS
May 18 – June 5, 2021
at Desert Botanical Garden

A dramatic score from Antonio Vivaldi, never before seen choreography from Ib Andersen, innovative new costumes and multimedia sets — all come together under the setting sun and embrace the breathtaking desert landscape for an unforgettable evening of visual delight. Experience Andersen's vision for dance in the desert and explore with our dancers a journey in movement through winter, spring, summer and fall.

Visit balletaz.org or call 602.381.1096 for tickets.

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SPRING 2021



*Across time, across borders,
dance continues to connect us all.*

Where to begin... although this past year has been filled with uncertainty for us all, it is a reminder of how powerful we are as a community. Across time, across borders, dance continues to connect us all. It truly is a universal language and what makes us uniquely human. Last issue, I talked about how your support and passion gave our dancers and staff hope for the future. Now, I get to say thank you for giving Ballet Arizona a future.

During one of the most challenging times in our history, you still brought dance to the stage, in person and digitally. Together, we have celebrated the traditions of beloved classical ballets and reveled in inspiring contemporary new works.

In this issue, Executive Director, Samantha Turner, discusses the tremendous creativity from our corporate sponsors and the importance of their support and investment in Ballet Arizona. School Director Maria Simonetti, and Phoenix Youth Symphony Orchestra Artistic Director Matthew Kasper, unveil a new collaboration between our organizations that will take place this spring at Desert Botanical Garden.

Once again, thank you for giving ballet a future in the Valley and for being a part of our story. I hope you enjoy this issue of *Turning Pointe!*

Gratefully,

Ib Andersen, Artistic Director

BEHIND THE SCENES

with Ib Andersen

Q: Give us an update on Ballet Arizona and the dancers – how are things?

A: I am still amazed that we were able to do so much this year. It has only been because of the support from the people in this community, and for that I am very thankful. We were in a good financial situation to begin with, and had we not been, we would not have been able to pull this year off. The generosity from everyone has been overwhelming and inspiring.

Artistically, I re-choreographed *The Nutcracker* and did two new ballets, *Goldberg Variations* and *Boléro*. I am surprised at how much I have done, but also know that these ballets need to be seen in an environment where we have the right lighting and staging. So I must say, my proudest artistic achievement is simply: we have been able to continue on, keep the company together, and keep the dancers dancing.

The dancers feel so relieved. The ballet world is small and they have friends all over. They see what other companies are doing – which is not much. They have a paycheck and they are able to go into work every single day which makes a big difference. I honestly don't know how they are doing it. At least they are maintaining their shape and technique, even if it can't be at their full capacity. I cannot even fathom how hard it would be to get a company together and in shape after such a long time off. For us, all it will take is simply not wearing masks to get in our best shape.

Q: Let's talk about the excitement around your upcoming world premiere, *The Four Seasons*.

A: What is most exciting for all of us is that we will finally have a shared experience together, once again, and that is cause for celebration.

I would like to say I chose Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* because of the beautiful four seasons in Arizona, but that is not the case. We have hot and not so hot! It's hard to find music that connects with what we are trying to do on the Desert Botanical Garden stage. The vastness of that grand space and the big desert sky requires something extra special. It is one of the most famous and recognizable pieces of music and I think it will translate well.

The last day I choreographed for this piece was March 13, 2020, and that feels like it was eight years ago. I had to stop completely and have not touched it since. I will need to get back into the groove again before finishing the remaining choreography and immerse myself in what I have already done. We have videos from last year, but none of it has been rehearsed, been touched, no changes, no shaping, just a bunch of steps right now. It needs a lot of refinement.

The biggest challenge I find choreographing is not the difficulty of the music, or the venue, or even dealing with COVID now. The biggest challenge is to make sure that you are always *challenging yourself*. You need to constantly push yourself to go further, do something new, let the movement take you somewhere you haven't been before. I can't say right now if I have succeeded in that yet. I will know once I get back in the studios.

For the costumes, I actually spent five weeks over the summer quarantine working in the costume shop. I didn't intend to do that initially, but then I had a vision for what I wanted, coupled with my need to have a constant creative outlet, so I just started painting. I painted close to 100 costumes. They are all fairly abstract, with bursts of color – but reminiscent of spring, summer, fall, and winter. It was a time consuming project, but something different for me artistically.





Corporate Spotlight

Jim Manley & Manley Films

Tell us a bit about yourself...

My wife, Flower and I, have 3 boys, ages 6, 19 and 23. I grew up in a small town in Illinois and my wife is from Mexico City. We were both raised by parents, who put the arts front and center. That passion has grown immensely and is a major part of our family dynamic. I worked in the news industry for 14 years in Phoenix. 16 years ago, I decided to go out on my own and start my company,

Manley Films. Since then, we've grown from a local production company with one employee (me), to a global creative agency with clients around the world. Whether we're working with a Fortune 100 company or a local arts organization, our core focus has always remained the same...do great things with great people and make the world a better place.

How has your work been impacted by COVID?

Like so many companies, we were heavily impacted at the beginning. But my incredible team pulled things together quickly and we were humming at full speed again within a couple of months. One of the key things they did was design and build safety protocols for the production world to follow. We also developed innovative remote production processes. Because we work all over the world, we had to adjust to travel restrictions and on-set crew size restrictions. Again, I give all of the credit to the Manley Films team for their

constant thirst to make everything better. It's been impressive for me to watch how they've not only helped our clients continue, but have also improved the production experience from start to finish.

What is special about working with the performing arts?

I love this question! Everything. Every single thing. I always tell my wife, "these are 'my people'." These are the folks I feel most comfortable being around...not just at work, but at performances, galas, and fundraisers.

What is your favorite part of telling Ballet Arizona's story through film?

We have the pleasure of getting a unique look behind the curtain. I'm continuously blown away by Ib's genius, the athleticism of the world-class dancers, the hard work behind-the-scenes by the staff, and the passion of the patrons and donors. It's a reminder that some entities exist for one reason...to spread 'good' throughout the universe.

"We have the pleasure of getting a unique look behind the curtain."



Photos provided by Manley Films.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Samantha Turner

Spirits are higher all around Ballet Arizona, and I hope yours are as well. In just weeks we will be able to greet so many of you on the stage at Desert Botanical Garden for the premiere of Ib Andersen's *The Four Seasons*. This production is also the premiere of the beginnings of our life "after" – when carefully and cautiously, we get to see more of one another, and of the things we've missed for so long.

Day after day, we have been deeply moved by the support you have given us during this time, and your commitments to help us continue to move forward to the future. Thanks to you, we are looking forward to returning to Symphony Hall next season, to studios overflowing with young dancers pursuing their dreams at The School of Ballet Arizona, to the classrooms where we teach DanceAZ and Class Act, and to the many other ways we serve the community through our mission.

In addition to the more than 1,000 individuals like you – who provide two thirds of our annual donations – Ballet Arizona is fortunate for the support and investment of corporations, foundations, and government institutions.

This past year has challenged all of us, including businesses large and small. And yet, while facing some of their own unique difficulties, business leaders did not forget how important the arts are to making our community a wonderful place to live and work. They knew that arts would be a source

of respite and inspiration as we endured this past year and how the arts will continue to be a vital aspect of our society moving forward.

There has been tremendous creativity from our corporate supporters as well. Manley Films, featured in this issue, is a longtime sponsor and partner. Their generosity and talented team have helped us bring dance to you in your homes throughout this past year. For those of you who experienced our digital performance of *Energy* in early March, you saw an important message from local leaders, encouraging the business community to continue supporting the arts. Made possible by *Energy* sponsors Goodmans Interior Structures and Manley Films, this message will be shared beyond that production to cultivate corporate giving and advocacy throughout the Valley, so we may continue to provide our community the best of Ballet Arizona.

I look forward to seeing so many of you in person at the Garden in May and June!

Gratefully,

Samantha Turner

Samantha Turner, Executive Director



Ballet Arizona dancers in *Round*. Photo by Alexander Iziliaev.



Students of The School of Ballet Arizona in rehearsal for *Swan Lake*. Photo by Alberto Peñalver.

SWAN LAKE AT THE GARDEN

This Spring, students of The School of Ballet Arizona (SBAZ) and Phoenix Youth Symphony Orchestras (PYSO) will come together for the first time to perform *Swan Lake*.

Taking place May 30, 31 and June 6 at Desert Botanical Garden, this production is a collaboration that represents a longtime vision come to life.

After a serendipitous meeting between SBAZ School Director, Maria Simonetti and PYSO Artistic Director, Matthew Kasper, two years ago, at a rehearsal for Ballet Arizona's performance of *Napoli*, both were saying yes to an artistic collaboration.

Swan Lake will not only be a unique opportunity for both organizations and our students, but it will play a key role in furthering their education. For a majority of the dancers and musicians, it will be their first time performing alongside another art form.



Matthew Kasper and Maria Simonetti in rehearsal for *Swan Lake* with the students of The School of Ballet Arizona. Photo by Alberto Peñalver.

Kasper describes it as a humbling experience for a conductor and musicians. Compared to a typical symphonic performance, where the audience hears the conductor's interpretation of the score, a ballet will force his orchestra, made up of 75 students, to be very mindful of what is happening on stage and what the dancers are able to do physically.

At SBAZ, live piano accompaniment is a critical part of our students' daily training. Performing with a live orchestra, however, is a different challenge. "They have to be ready for anything," says Simonetti. "You need to be in tune with the choreography and the music. At a moment's notice things may change but it has to feel and look seamless for the audience."

Most importantly, this performance is a testament to the will and ingenuity of our institutions, not to mention a welcome breath of fresh air. After a challenging and isolating year, both Maria and Matthew can feel the excitement radiating from their students as they are back rehearsing and creating art together.

"Maria and I see this as a signal to the people of Phoenix that the arts are still here," says Kasper. "We are strong, we are persistent, we are innovative, and we are going to find ways to make art happen. Be ready for us to come back better than ever."

Visit balletaz.org/school to learn more.

We would love to hear from you! Please send any comments or suggestions to Annual Fund Coordinator Elyse Salisz at esalisz@balletaz.org or call 602.343.6510.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

It is with great excitement that we announce Joan and Mack Schwing, longtime champions for the arts and dance, have generously put forth a \$50,000 matching gift challenge to our community.



Donor Spotlight

Joan & Mack Schwing

What sparked your passion and commitment to ensuring the arts thrive?

We both fell in love with classical music when we were young children through our school systems. We realize that in today's world, few schools are able to offer students the level of musical education that we got in our schools. We want to ensure that there are open

avenues for students and adults to experience and learn about the arts because it has added such enjoyment to our lives through the years.

Why do you give to the arts and specifically Ballet Arizona?

We have been involved with enough arts organizations to know that they cannot survive without contributions from the community. Ticket sales are never enough to begin to cover the costs of the arts organization. We specifically give to Ballet Arizona because we were so pleased to find out when we moved here in 2013 that this level of artistry of dance existed in the Valley. Ballet is really our passion among all the art forms because it takes our love of classical music and adds another dimension to it that is always beautiful to watch.

How do you see the role of the arts in our community?

We believe that the arts are a necessary part of our communities to keep us all

human. They help connect us to others and to our emotions. They give us a way to express ourselves and for others to express themselves. The arts are also a very useful tool to integrate into teaching at all levels in all disciplines. It can help students comprehend an issue and also helps them remember history when they can connect it to music, dance or acting.

In this difficult time, that none of us could have foreseen, the arts must continue to thrive to help us see the beauty in life and transport us to another world if only for a short time. For that to happen Ballet Arizona needs our support more than ever.

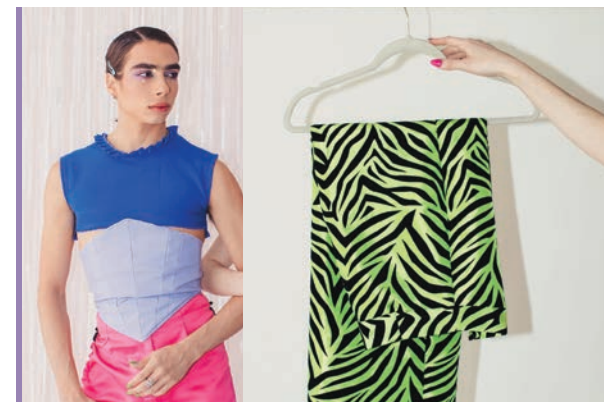
What ballets or contemporary works have inspired you the most?

We are especially fond of contemporary ballets. We love Balanchine's ballets, but also love seeing new works come to the stage. One of our favorites was *Eroica*, which Ballet Arizona performed at Desert Botanical Garden in 2019.

KEEPING UP WITH THE DANCERS



Arianni Martin & Alejandro Mendez welcomed their baby boy, Samuel Mendez in November!



Erick Garnica turned his love of fashion into a business. He is currently creating custom outfits and made-to-order garments. Although the goal is to expand his brand, right now he is focusing on growing as an artist and designer!



Jillian Barrell & Nayon Iovino welcomed their baby girl, Amélia Starr Iovino in February!