

FRONT ROW

FALL 2025



20
YEARS OF
ARTISTIC GRACE



ADAM SKLUTE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PRINCIPAL ARTIST EMILY ADAMS | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

“EXCITING FOR KIDS,
ENTHRALLING FOR ADULTS!”

—Portland Mercury

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WITH THE BALLET WEST ORCHESTRA

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SOLOIST RYLEE ANN ROGERS, DEMI-SOLOIST LEXI MCCLLOUD & CORPS ARTIST WILLIAM LYNCH | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

CONTENTS



SOLOIST VICTORIA VASSOS | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

- 4 20 YEARS OF ARTISTIC GRACE
- 7 A VISION FOR BALLET WEST'S FUTURE
- 8 THE BRIDGE TO BALLET WEST
- 10 DANCER PROMOTIONS
- 11 FINDING HOME ON STAGE
- 12 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP WITH NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE
- 13 THE PATH TO BALLET WEST II

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SPRING 2025



IN THE NEWS



JANE WOOD | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

**From Principal
Dancer to
Principal
Rehearsal
Director**

Jane Wood has been named Principal Rehearsal Director for the upcoming season. From dancing to teaching, Wood has a 35-year history with Ballet West. She has performed the title roles in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *Coppélia*, *Giselle*, and *Lady of the Camellias*.

Reflecting on her new role, she states that the highlight of her job as Principal Rehearsal Director is working with the incredibly talented dancers of Ballet West on a daily basis, watching them grow and perfect their craft.

“From the first day of learning new and exciting choreography, to the thrill of watching them wow the audience on opening night, there is nothing that makes me prouder than seeing their successes,” said Wood.

Read more about Jane Wood on our website at BalletWest.org/JWoodStory

Ballet West Dancer Victor Galeana Makes History

Victor Galeana is making history at Ballet West. The Salt Lake City native has been promoted from Ballet West II to the main company as a Corps Artist for the 2025-26 season, becoming the first dancer to progress from Ballet West's elementary school I CAN DO program to the professional company.



CORPS ARTIST VICTOR GALEANA
PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

Galeana's remarkable journey began 10 years ago as a fifth grader at Midvalley Elementary, where he first experienced ballet through Ballet West's I CAN DO program. What started as weekly dance classes that felt like recess to him would become the foundation for a professional career.

Following his participation in I CAN DO, Galeana began training at the Frederick Quinney Lawson Ballet West Academy in 2013, advanced to the level of Trainee in 2020, joined Ballet West II in 2022, and was recently invited to Ballet West's main company as a Corps Artist.

TWENTY YEARS OF ARTISTIC GRACE

Emily Adams' Journey with Ballet West

Written by Dana Rimington

PRINCIPAL ARTIST EMILY ADAMS | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON



When Emily Adams arrived at Ballet West II in 2005, fresh from training at the School of American Ballet and San Francisco Ballet School, the Pennsylvania native began a journey that would be filled with dreams achieved and accolades inconceivable to her at the time.

Featured in Pointe Magazine multiple times for her work as a dancer, choreographer, and artistic projects outside the studio, and recognized as a Princess Grace Honoree for her choreography, Adams has become one of ballet's most distinguished voices. Yet Adams originally didn't think she would ever get to dance her dream roles.

"I always thought I was only ever going to be Lady Capulet, Lilac Fairy, or Carabosse," Adams recalls. "I was never going to do Aurora or Juliet."

Twenty years later, Adams stands as one of Ballet West's most distinguished Principal Artists, having danced precisely those dream roles she once thought impossible, and so much more.

Rising Through the Ranks

Adams was promoted from BWII to the main company in 2007 by Rehearsal Director Pamela Robinson-Harris, who served as interim Artistic Director during the search for a permanent leader. This uncertain transition left dancers anxious about their futures under new leadership.

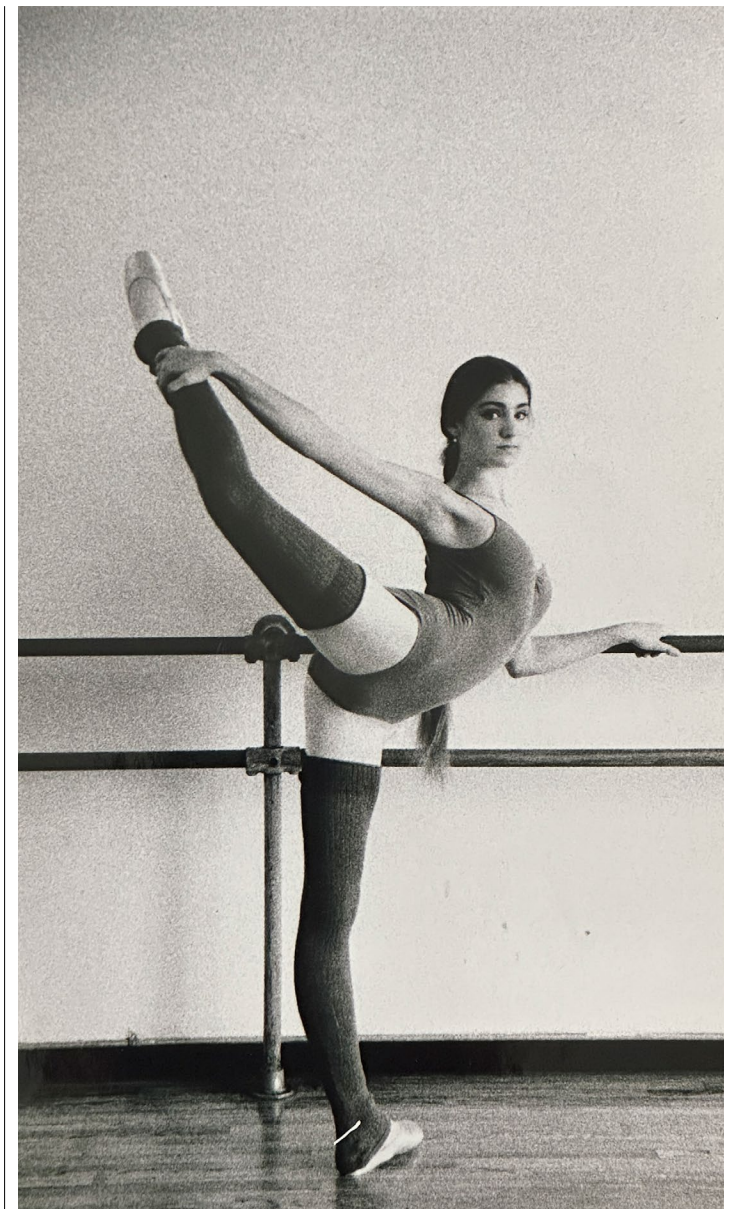
When Ballet West hired Adam Sklute as Artistic Director, he recognized Adams's potential. "Emily's unique qualities were apparent immediately," said Sklute. "Along with an elegant and elongated physique, beautiful line and a natural lyricism, Emily could move at the speed of light, something not common for one so tall. As I got to know Emily more, I also found an artist of deep intelligence, probing curiosity, and a flair for the theater of dance, not just the steps."

Adams followed a steady rise through the ranks until 2015 when Sklute promoted her to Principal Artist. Since then, she has embodied some of the art form's most iconic characters: the tragedy and triumph of Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*, the elegance of Diamonds in Balanchine's *Jewels*, and the hope of *Cinderella*.

The studio is where Adams thrives. "I'm not a bun head watching ballet movies all the time," she laughs. "I just love being in the studio and working on things. It's nice because I get to exercise for a job and listen to piano all day. It's easy to love."

"Emily Adams is the very picture of grace and beauty"

—The Utah Review



EMILY ADAMS, AGE 16

Beyond the Stage

While her performances have captivated audiences, Adams has also emerged as a creative force behind the curtain. She has choreographed six works for Ballet West, with her latest creation, *Mass Hysterical*, developed in collaboration with composer Katy Jarzebowski, premiering in 2025.

"Another thing that truly sets Emily apart is her never-ending growth as an artist", adds Sklute. "Emily has never rested on her laurels; she is always striving to grow and learn. She is a very profound person."

Perhaps the most profound transformation in Adams' 20-year journey isn't visible in her technique or her résumé but in how she understands her purpose.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)



PRINCIPAL ARTISTS EMILY ADAMS & ADRIAN FRY | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

"I feel like I've had to kind of change the way I think about it, where it's not about me as much," Adams reflects. "It's more about this gift I've been given and how am I going to share it with the world."

This shift came gradually, born from experience and a deepening awareness of ballet's impact beyond the footlights. "We don't often realize that it is bringing people joy and bringing people awe," she says, describing the invisible wall that can separate performers from their audiences.

A turning point came when Adams sat in a Broadway theater as an audience member rather than a performer. "I was like, wow, I'm so moved and so grateful that these performers are up there sharing their talent that they've been given."

The experience helped her reflect on what high-level art offers. "I like seeing people that have put a lot of time into their craft and then sharing it, which is really powerful," Adams reflects. "Before the pandemic, I wondered if art really meant anything. Then it became obvious to me how necessary it is to be in a theater and watch."

Sharing the Gift of Dance

After two decades, Emily Adams continues to dance, not just for herself, but as a gift to everyone who has the privilege of watching her move through space with grace, strength, and hard-won wisdom.

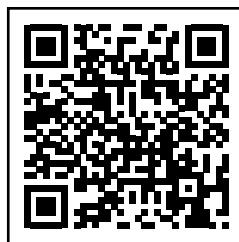
"I would love it if they felt uplifted or moved in a positive way," she said of what she hopes audiences take away from her performances. "I feel like I'm a better version of myself in an actual performance where you get out of your head and get this sense of weird freedom. I think maybe that could impact people in some way with that joy and freedom, but also beauty."



PRINCIPAL ARTIST EMILY ADAMS | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

"Emily is an artist of deep intelligence, probing curiosity, and a flair for the theater of dance, not just the steps."

—Ballet West Artistic Director Adam Sklute



Scan to hear Emily Adams speak about her ballet, *Mass Hysterical*.



Ballet West Board Chair Jennifer Huntsman with Executive Director Michael Scolimiero and Artistic Director Adam Sklute | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

A VISION FOR BALLET WEST'S FUTURE

When Jennifer Huntsman rejoined Ballet West's Board of Directors after a hiatus, she found an organization transformed. Now, as the newly appointed Board Chair succeeding Shari Quinney's distinguished tenure, she is positioning Ballet West for its next chapter of growth.

"This is a really sophisticated ballet company for our size," said Huntsman. "It's important for the city and state because it showcases in a professional way to the world what a talented, arts-loving place Utah is. Ballet West is a jewel that demonstrates that really important part of our culture."

Huntsman's commitment runs deeper than board service. She met her husband, Scott Huntsman, at a Ballet West board meeting. They married while both serving as board members, making Ballet West "now a family commitment," she jokes. Additionally, two of her children have spent time with the Frederick Quinney Lawson Ballet West Academy.

"I got to really see how transformative that can be for kids," she reflects. "It taught them a level of discipline and confidence, a sense of striving for excellence, things I couldn't teach as a parent. Half of my interest in being involved is because of the Academy and the amazing work they do with kids."



THE BRIDGE TO BALLET WEST

TRANSFORMING ASPIRING DANCERS INTO COMPANY ARTISTS



Calvin Kitten stands at the front of the studio watching as a dancer from Ballet West II works through a challenging combination. He's seen this moment countless times before from the struggle, to determination, and then the slow building of confidence. Years from now, he knows this same dancer might take the stage as a principal artist with Ballet West's main company.

During his nine years as Director of Ballet West II, Kitten has watched many dancers progress from Ballet West II into leading roles, including Principal Artists Amy Potter, David Huffmire, and Jordan Veit.

"To see them go all the way up, that's what makes me proud," Kitten says, admitting he often cries watching dancers he trained perform.

The numbers show what Kitten sees in the studio every day: 90% of Ballet West's main company dancers come from Ballet West II, and nearly 50% began their journey at the Frederick Quinney Lawson Ballet West Academy.

This remarkable pipeline didn't happen by accident. It's the result of Artistic Director Adam Sklute's strategic vision and Kitten's hands-on dedication in his dual role as Director of Ballet West II and Rehearsal Director for the main company.

A Strategic Vision

When Sklute arrived at Ballet West in 2007, only two dancers in the company were products of the Ballet West Academy. He had a vision for changing that.

"I made a conscious decision that we needed to start building dancers from the Academy," Sklute has said. "I worked closely with our Academy directors and faculty to discern our unique style and build principles of technique that could help all our students become ready, ideally for Ballet West."

To execute this vision, Sklute needed someone who understood both the technical demands of professional ballet and how to develop young dancers' potential. He found that person in Kitten, his former colleague from The Joffrey Ballet.

Kitten began his dance training at the California Ballet School in San Diego, continuing at the Tbilisi Republican of Georgia

BALLET WEST II DIRECTOR CALVIN KITTEN | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON



State Ballet School and the Joffrey Ballet School in New York. During his 19 years with the Joffrey Ballet, where he and Sklute danced together, Kitten performed principal and soloist roles while touring nationally and internationally. He received two Ruth Page Awards, was featured on the cover of Dance Magazine, and has appeared in numerous films.

Building Professional Dancers

Kitten's dual role creates unique continuity in dancer development. He first works with dancers in Ballet West II, building their technical foundation and professional work ethic. Then, as they transition into the main company, he continues guiding them through rehearsals.

"Dancing can be very mental," he explains. "Day in and day out, you take class every day. You rehearse every day. You can get very down on yourself some days. I try to teach them to be positive about what they're doing, to come in with a good attitude, because it shows later in life."

This philosophy extends beyond the studio. Kitten teaches dancers to be receptive to feedback, to adapt quickly to different choreographers' visions, and to approach challenges with resilience.


Not every Ballet West II dancer will join the main company, and Kitten approaches this reality with both honesty and compassion. "With hard work, it may not be here. It might be a different company," he acknowledges. "But they're going to go out and dance if they really want to. I try to train whoever it is to be the best they can be."

A Pipeline That Works

The partnership between Sklute's strategic vision and Kitten's hands-on expertise has transformed Ballet West's approach

to dancer development. What began as a conscious decision to build from within has become a proven system that consistently produces company-ready dancers.

"I like Adam's vision. I like where he's taking the company," Kitten says. "I've seen such a change even before I got here, how he's brought the level so far up. And it's fun to see."

For Ballet West's supporters, the numbers tell the story: this investment in Ballet West II and the Academy creates a sustainable future, ensuring that nearly half of today's company dancers were developed entirely within the Ballet West system and transforming promising young dancers into professional artists who will define Ballet West's future. 

90%
OF BALLET WEST'S MAIN COMPANY
DANCERS COME FROM BALLET WEST II

**NEARLY
50%**
BEGAN THEIR JOURNEY AT THE
FREDERICK QUINNEY LAWSON
BALLET WEST ACADEMY



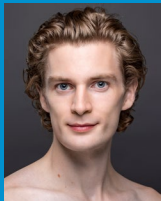
BALLET WEST II DIRECTOR CALVIN KITTEN | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON



DANCER PROMOTIONS

This season Ballet West recognizes eight company dancer promotions and five new company members for the 2025-26 season. This distinguished group includes nine dancers who trained at the Frederick Quinney Lawson Ballet West Academy, four of whom are advancing from Ballet West II. The company also welcomes ten new members to Ballet West II, seven of whom are Academy graduates.

SOLOISTS



Dominic Ballard

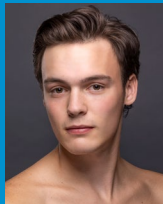


Vinicius Lima

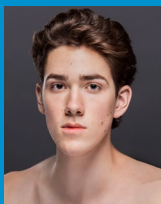


Rylee Ann Rogers

DEMI-SOLOISTS



Jacob Hancock



Joseph Lynch



Lexi McCloud



Anisa Sinteral



Loren Walton

CORPS ARTISTS



Jaya Dhand



Lund Fuller



Victor Galeana



Téa Hinchley



Kyra Stafford

BALLET WEST II



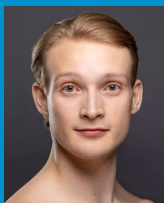
Carly Allyn



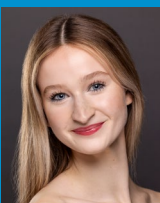
Calder Feinstein



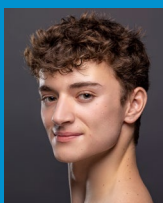
Solomon Fishman



Pieter Gunning



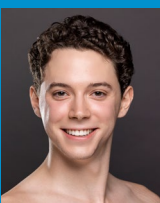
Melanie McIntire



Mario Mery



Aubri Parker



Mateo Salinas



Zoë Wilson



Annalise Wood



SOLOIST VICTORIA VASSOS | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

FINDING HOME ON STAGE

Soloist Victoria Vassos is one of the many dancers who embody the success of Ballet West’s artistic vision. But her journey began long before she arrived in Salt Lake City.

At age 14, the half-Swiss, half-Greek dancer left her hometown and moved to Germany to train full-time at Staatliche Ballettschule Berlin. The transition meant learning a completely new language while studying extra hours to catch up to her counterparts.

“It was a hardship getting adjusted to the number of hours I had to train because I wasn’t used to it and I was much weaker than my classmates, who had been in that academy since they were nine years old,” Vassos recalls. “And because I had to learn German, it was a lot of work.”

Her efforts paid off when she qualified for the Youth American Grand Prix NYC Finals in 2016, placing in the Top 12. That success opened the door to Ballet West. Vassos joined Ballet West Academy as a Trainee in 2016, moved to Ballet West II in 2017, was promoted to the main company in 2019, and achieved Soloist status in 2023.

Each step built on the foundation laid before, with Ballet West II serving as the crucial bridge between student and professional. Under the direction of Calvin Kitten, Vassos developed not just technical prowess but the professional work ethic and adaptability essential for company life.

“The challenges I had to overcome when I moved away from home helped me become a more mature and life-ready person,”

Vassos reflects. “Now, I face obstacles with the confidence that I have overcome something hard before, so I tell myself that I can do it again.”

Ballet has given her more than a career. “I think ballet has taught me so much, not just about the steps, but taught me about discipline, perseverance, and self-respect,” she says. “Ballet has set my values in life and once I’m done with my career, those values are still going to shape my life.”

“When she isn’t training at Ballet West, Vassos pursues interests that complement her dance career. She loves drawing, spending time in nature and continuing her education in different movement techniques.

In 2022 she completed a master’s degree in Exercise Science from Concordia University and since 2023 Vassos is expanding her qualifications as a certified trainer in the Gyrotonic® Method, a movement system that increases range of motion while improving strength and movement efficiency.”

“Ballet has set my values in life and once I’m done with my career, those values are still going to shape my life.”

—Soloist Victoria Vassos



STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN CONNECTING STEPS PROGRAM WITH NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE | PHOTO COURTESY OF NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP WITH NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE


This summer, Ballet West expanded its reach by bringing dance education to new communities through a pilot program with Neighborhood House, a nonprofit serving Salt Lake City's west side.

Over eight weeks, the Connecting Steps program offered 20-25 students in grades four through six to a condensed version of Ballet West's signature I CAN DO curriculum. These students were encouraged to learn new skills, challenge themselves, and experience the joy of dance, all at no cost to participating families.

"Our initial goal was to establish a relationship with Neighborhood House and explore what we could offer together," says Peter Christie, Ballet West's Director of Education and Community Outreach. The partnership was facilitated by Ballet West Board Member Alan Hall and Executive Director Michael Scolamiero.

Ballet West's Associate Director of I CAN DO, Dana Rossi, led the weekly classes with impressive results: "Their teachers and group leaders were pleasantly surprised at how much the kids got into it," Rossi shared.

While one student had previously participated in I CAN DO at their home school, most attendees came from schools where the program isn't currently available, making this summer partnership particularly valuable for expanding access.

The pilot program, funded through Ballet West's community outreach budget, demonstrated the potential for bringing world-class dance education to underserved communities throughout the Salt Lake Valley. 

BALLET WEST ACADEMY DANCE ADVANCE COORDINATOR JOSHUA TRADER
PHOTO COURTESY OF NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

BALLET WEST II ARTIST SOLOMON FISHMAN | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

When Solomon Fishman graduated from the Vaganova Ballet Academy in St. Petersburg, Russia in 2024, he had auditions lined up with companies across the U.S. and Europe when he was invited to join the Mariinsky Theatre.

What followed was an immersion in one of ballet's most demanding environments that would shape him as a dancer and prepare him to join Ballet West II back in Salt Lake City.

The Mariinsky Theatre performs seven or eight shows weekly, creating an intense rehearsal environment where new dancers must adapt quickly or get left behind.

"Three days' notice before my first show was considered a 'luxury,' and there were a lot of times I would get thrown into something at the last minute," Fishman explains. "Nobody was going to slow things down to help out the new guy."

His solution? Self-directed preparation. "As soon as casting went up, I would teach myself the choreography from their video archive before the first rehearsal, that way I would always be ready. It was like boot camp."

The grueling pace paid dividends. Over one season, Fishman performed in 20 different ballets and danced approximately 150 shows, which was a crash course in professional repertoire that few young dancers experience so intensely.

"On the plus side, I got a lot of practice learning tons of choreography fast," he says.

Beyond the demanding schedule, the Mariinsky offered something extraordinary: the chance to train alongside dancers Fishman had admired from afar.

"It was surreal, getting to take class with these legendary dancers I've watched on YouTube and Instagram for years," he reflects. "As challenging as it was, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience."


Fishman's ability to thrive under such pressure didn't happen by accident. The Boston native began training in Washington State under Vera Altunina before continuing at Pacific Northwest Ballet School. He moved to Salt Lake City in 2018 to join Ballet West Academy's Pre-Professional Training Division, later becoming a Trainee in 2022.

During his time at Ballet West Academy, Fishman was selected as a Youth America Grand Prix finalist in both 2021 and 2022 and attended summer intensives on scholarship at the School of American Ballet and Miami City Ballet.

"I'm so grateful to my family, and to Jeff Rogers, my teacher at Ballet West Academy, for preparing me and supporting me on that totally wild ride," Fishman says.

Now back in Salt Lake City as a member of Ballet West II, Fishman brings the intensity and rapid-learning skills honed at the Mariinsky to a company he knows well.

"I'm excited to be back at Ballet West as a member of Ballet West II," he says. "This company has an amazing group of dancers and staff, and a really diverse, incredible repertoire. There are so many great ballets I can't wait to dance here."

For Fishman, the journey has come full circle, from student at Ballet West Academy to international company dancer, and now to Ballet West II. 

Follow Solomon on Instagram: @solomonfishman

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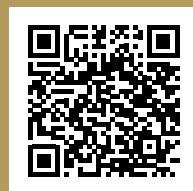
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