

FRONT ROW

SPRING 2026

**Ballet
West**
ADAM SKLUTE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



WHEN DANCING BECOMES A FAMILY AFFAIR

JENNIFER & JORDAN VEIT WITH THEIR DAUGHTER | PHOTO BY LAUREN WATTENBURG



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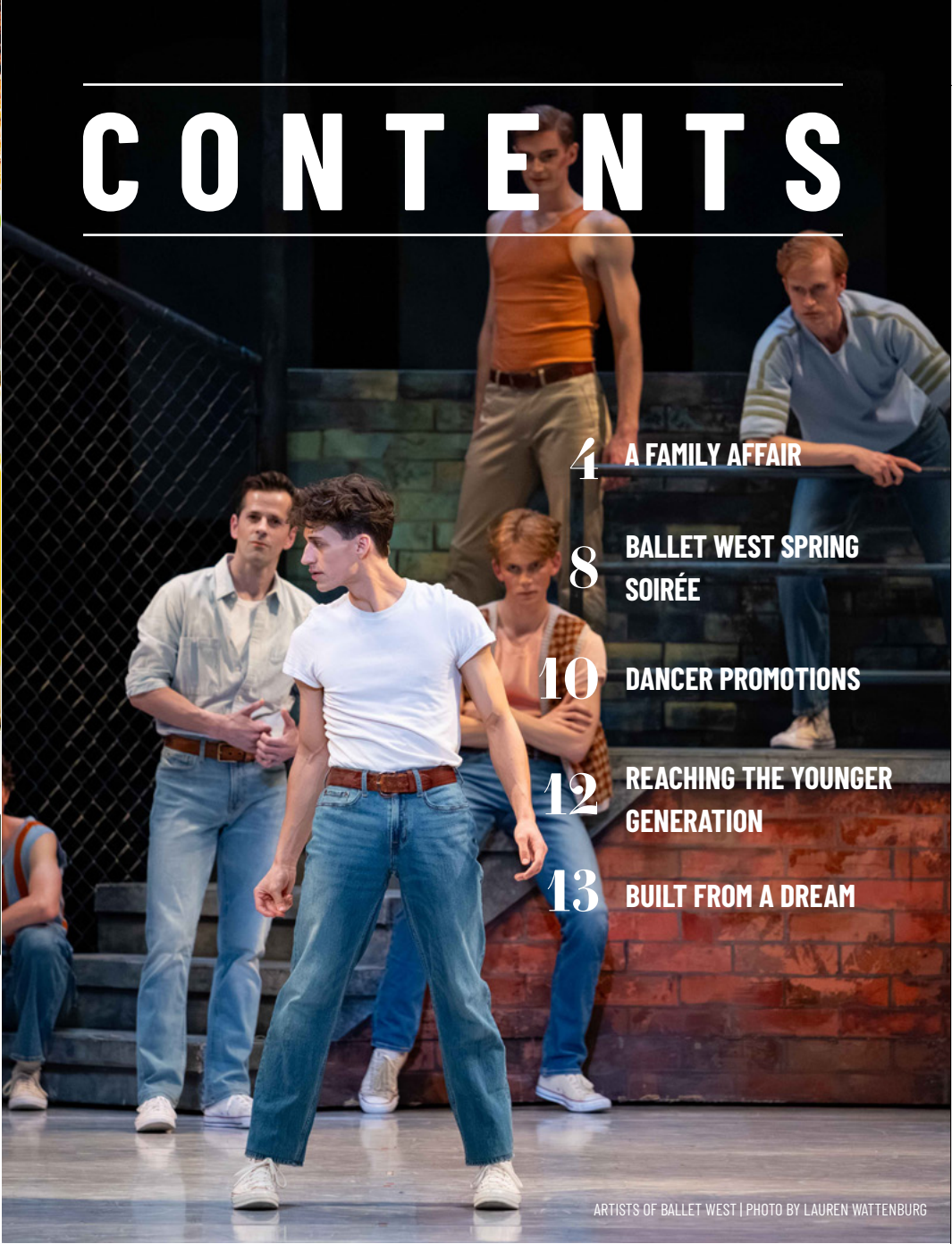
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ARTISTS OF BALLET WEST | PHOTO BY LAUREN WATTENBURG

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IN THE NEWS



Broadway World: Ballet West Surpasses Greatness

Ballet West's *West Side Story: Broadway and Beyond* shatters expectations and surpasses greatness by leaps and bounds. A quadruple bill, this production celebrates

PRINCIPAL ARTISTS EMILY ADAMS & HADRIEL DINIZ IN *AFTER THE RAIN PAS DE DEUX*
PHOTO BY LAUREN WATTENBURG

Jerome Robbins and Christopher Wheeldon, two prominent ballet and Broadway choreographers, and showcases the company's artistry and ability to toe the line of what ballet dancers can do (spoiler alert: they can do anything).

Ultimately, this whole production reaffirms that Ballet West goes above and beyond in everything they do because they are just that cool. They move the bar higher even as they set it and truly embody the artistry needed to continue pushing the boundaries of ballet. **W**

Read the full article here:



ABC4 News: A *Quiet Place* star trains with Ballet West Academy

Millicent Simmonds, a Utah native who previously starred in the *A Quiet Place* franchise, recently spent several months training with Ballet West Academy in preparation for her role in the new film *Pretty Lethal*.

Simmonds grew up in Bountiful, Utah, and described herself as "more of a soccer girl," so learning ballet was a challenge for her at first.

Read the full article here:



"It was very difficult to learn how to hold myself, the names for different movements, the music, but the feeling I felt while dancing was very unique," she said. However, through her teachers at Ballet West Academy, she was able to become more comfortable with ballet. **W**

NEW YORK TIMES: This Dancer is Helping to Expand What a Ballet Body Can Be

Olivia Book of Ballet West is one of the first professional ballet dancers to have a limb difference.

Read the full article here:



A FAMILY AFFAIR:

HOW BALLET WEST'S PARENT-DANCERS ARE REDEFINING LIFE IN THE STUDIO

Written by Dana Rimington



PRINCIPAL ARTISTS EMILY ADAMS & HADRIEL DINIZ REHEARSING EMILY ADAMS'S *MASS HYSTERICAL* DURING HER PREGNANCY | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

FRONT ROW PROFILE



When Principal Artist Jenna Rae Herrera's son refused a bottle during *The Nutcracker* season, her husband started bringing the baby to the studio. She'd nurse him during breaks between rehearsals, then return to the studio preparing for her role as Sugar Plum Fairy.

For Principal Artist Jordan Veit, dancing the grand pas de deux in *The Nutcracker* with a newborn baby at home meant performing on less sleep than he was used to, so he learned to rely on his years of training.

This is what professional dancing and parenting looks like, up close.

Five of Ballet West's principal artists are parents. Principal Artist Adrian Fry and his wife, a former Ballet West dancer, have three children ages five, three, and one. Principal Artist Emily Adams and her husband, former First Soloist Beau Pearson, have two children, ages six and one.

Both Veit, married to a former professional dancer, and Principal Artist Tyler Gum, married to former Demi-Soloist Olivia Gusti, welcomed children in the past year.

Herrera, married to former Ballet West Soloist Alexander MacFarlan, returned to the stage at the start of last season. So did Adams — both navigating the demands of a full performance schedule with newborns at home.

What they've navigated may look different, but what they have in common is a company that has worked to make it possible. Years before the current generation of parent-dancers joined the company, Ballet West was already building a culture where a dancer could have a child and still have a career.

Former dancers like Katherine Lawrence and Allison DeBona did exactly that, at a time when a dancer's parenthood wasn't yet widely accepted in the professional dance world. The contract negotiations that followed were possible in part because Ballet West already believed in the principle.

Leaving Room for Family

In the professional dance world, parental leave is far from standard. Dancers who become parents often have to arrange terms within their contract or hope for goodwill from their company. Ballet West took a different path, but it didn't happen on its own.

Veit spent six years as an American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) delegate and was part of the effort that pushed parental leave into the company's contract. Gum also helped advocate for it before he was even married. Fry stepped in as well, making the case that the original allowance simply wasn't enough. Through multiple rounds of negotiation, the leave increased and was structured in a way for dancers to use it flexibly.



PRINCIPAL ARTIST JENNA RAE HERRERA WITH HER SON DURING THE PRODUCTION OF *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

Gum explained his reasoning behind the efforts. "That's one of the biggest life changes you can make as a person." He thought about the fathers he knew and realized he didn't want that for his family or for anyone else in the company.

What surprised all five of them, in ways they hadn't anticipated, was the impact parenthood had on their dancing.

Trusting Their Training

Fry used to come into the studio on extra days before having kids. He'd take classes and work through choreography. "There's just no chance for that anymore," he said. What he found instead was that he didn't need it. "I realized what I'm doing is enough, and it's good." Some days he leaves the theatre still in his ballet clothes, wanting to spend all of his extra time home with his kids.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)



PRINCIPAL ARTIST TYLER GUM AND FORMER BALLET WEST DEMI-SOLOIST OLIVIA GUSTI WITH THEIR SON

Veit made the same discovery. He no longer stays after rehearsal to run things through his head. He works hard while he's there, and then he leaves work at work. It's changed how he thinks about readiness.

"As dancers, we don't know if we've rehearsed enough," Veit says. "We tell ourselves we don't feel ready for the stage, but it's similar to having a baby. You never actually feel ready until you're out there, and then you're like, oh, I do know how to do this."

A Different Body

When Herrera discovered she was pregnant near the end of the 2023 - 24 season, she continued performing with the company through the first 16 weeks of pregnancy and kept taking technique classes up until her third trimester. At about three months postpartum she began working with a pelvic floor therapist through an exercise regimen called Gyrotonics to help feel connected to her body again.

"Pregnancy and labor just completely disrupted that; I had no control of my body whatsoever. I'm sure most other mothers can recognize that feeling," she said.

She returned to the company full-time last August, where she prepped for the role of Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, something she had dreamed of her entire career. Then, during the month her son turned one, she performed the role of Sugar Plum Fairy. "I think back to last year, when I could barely walk after having him, to now," she said. "A woman's body is amazing."

While she has never been more exhausted, Herrera said she has never had so much joy in her life. She jokes that she doesn't

get to have her pre-show nap as often anymore, but she is just taking it one day at a time while trying to be as present as possible wherever her feet are.

"When I go home, I am immediately a mom, and taking care of my son is top priority. But that makes it all the sweeter when I come to the theatre because I get to dance, and it's something beautiful that I get to experience and also share with my son," Herrera said.

"It was not easy, but Ballet West is such a supportive environment for mothers," she continued. "Our Artistic Director, Adam Sklute, was so patient and gracious. He said, 'Come back at your own time, whatever you need to do ... we're here to support you.' I really felt encouraged and celebrated."

A New Kind of Meaning

For Adams, becoming a mother reframed how she thought about dance.

Before her first pregnancy, she had begun questioning whether ballet was meaningful and wondering what she was actually contributing. Then, when theatres closed during COVID and she was pregnant with her first child, something shifted.

"I want him to grow up in a world where you go to the theatre and see beautiful dancing and hear beautiful music," she said. "If that's the gift I've been given, I knew I wanted to keep sharing it with the world."

PRINCIPAL ARTISTS KATLYN ADDISON & ADRIAN FRY WITH HIS DAUGHTER DURING *THE NUTCRACKER*

THE DAUGHTER OF PRINCIPAL ARTIST ADRIAN FRY HUGGING A CUTOUT OF HIM AS DRACULA

Adams admits that returning to work as a professional dancer after pregnancy is not easy.

"It's physically painful," she said. "It's also really hard psychologically because you're used to feeling and looking a certain way." But she kept going. "I realized how much I love it even more after having kids. It's given me an identity outside of being a dancer that I think is really healthy. And it's made me realize the value of it more."

Gum finished his bachelor's degree this spring while dancing full time and raising his son, now 11 months old. While he was certainly busy, it made him think about the future differently.

"I know my son is going to watch what I do. That's made a difference in my work ethic," Gum said. "I also want to show my son how to fight for the things that really make you come alive, since dance has been that for me."

Somewhere between the late nights, nursing breaks, and less-than-perfect naps, these five dancers have discovered that while the studio may look the same, what they bring to it has changed. **W**

PRINCIPAL ARTIST JORDAN VEIT WITH DAUGHTER
PHOTO BY LAUREN WATTENBURG

PRINCIPAL ARTIST JENNA RAE HERRERA WITH SON DURING REHEARSAL



PRINCIPAL ARTIST ADRIAN FRY WITH HIS DAUGHTER



PRINCIPAL ARTISTS AMY POTTER & HADRIEL DINIZ IN *BEFORE THE GOODBYE* | PHOTO BY LAUREN WATTENBURG



DEMI-SOLOIST LOREN WALTON
PHOTO BY SPARKLE PHOTOGRAPHY



BRANDEN FINI AND SAMANTHA TOPPING GELLERT
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PRINCIPAL ARTISTS JENNA RAE HERRERA & DAVID HUFFMIRE
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JOHN MILLER, MICHAEL SCOLAMIERO, CHASE DREYFOUS
PHOTO BY MIKA SELTENRICH

BALLET WEST SPRING SOIRÉE

Ballet West's sixth annual Spring Soirée exceeded fundraising records, raising \$550,000 to support scholarships for students at the Frederick Quinney Lawson Ballet West Academy.

The sold-out gala featured dinner on the Janet Quinney Lawson Capitol Theatre stage with live performances that included the world premiere of Principal Artist Emily Adams' *Before the Goodbye*. Performed by Principal Artists Amy Potter and Hadriel Diniz, the piece was created in honor of Potter, who concluded her professional dancing career at the close of the 2025-26 season. The program also included the Ballet

West premiere of *L'Air d'Esprit* by Principal Artists Jenna Rae Herrera and David Huffmire. A world premiere of *Analog 13* by former Ballet West Artist Joshua Whitehead was also danced by Ballet West II Artists.

Ballet West Academy has grown to become one of the largest ballet academies in the country, serving nearly 900 students annually across four locations. Currently, 80% of Ballet West's main company comes from Ballet West II, and nearly 50% of company members began their training at the Ballet West Academy.



JESTINE SALAZAR AND EMILIA MOORE
PHOTO BY SPARKLE PHOTOGRAPHY



BALLET WEST II ARTISTS OLIVIA BOOK & PIETER GUNNING IN *ANALOG 13*
PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON



JACOB VINA, TRAVIS HANCOCK, ANDRES ROMERO
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ANDREA MILLER, BRITANI BATEMAN, JENNIFER YEO, AMANDA STEVER | PHOTO BY MIKA SELTENRICH



LUCA DANIEL MATTOS WOLHEIM AND DAVID PARKINSON
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PRINCIPAL ARTISTS JENNA RAE HERRERA & DAVID HUFFMIRE | PHOTO BY MIKA SELTENRICH



KRISTI FLOWERS, KARMEN BERENTSEN, LAURA HARKORT, OLIVIA MILLER
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FREDERICK QUINNEY LAWSON BALLET WEST ACADEMY MEN'S PROGRAM STUDENTS
PHOTO BY SPARKLE PHOTOGRAPHY



DANCER PROMOTIONS

Artistic Director Adam Sklute announces seven Main Company promotions, four new Company artists, and five new Ballet West II dancers – sixteen additions in all, with eight of them Ballet West Academy alumni and three promoted directly from Ballet West II.

FIRST SOLOIST

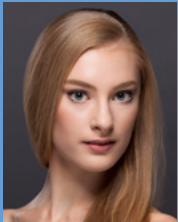


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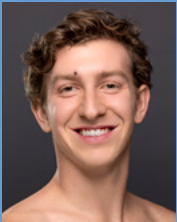
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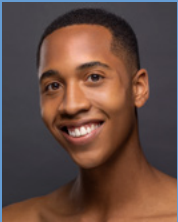
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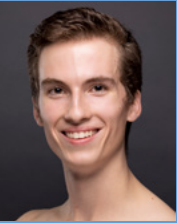


Loren Walton

DEMI-SOLOIST



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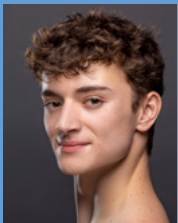


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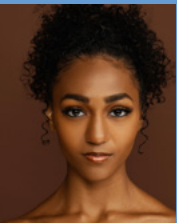
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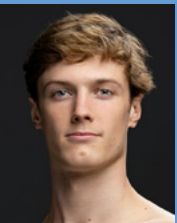
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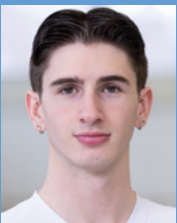
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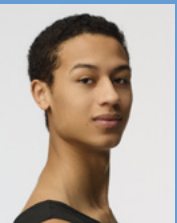
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Adam Sklute to Retire After 20th Season

Artistic Director Adam Sklute will retire at the conclusion of the 2026-27 season, his 20th year at the helm of the company. The announcement marks the end of the longest artistic directorship in Ballet West's history, surpassing even that of founder Willam F. Christensen.

Sklute joined Ballet West in 2007 and has since led the company through a period of sustained growth that has reshaped the company's national profile.

"I come to this decision at a time when Ballet West is both artistically and financially strong and solid," said Sklute. "I love Ballet West with my heart and soul and cherish my time as its Artistic Director but feel that the time is right for me to move on and for Ballet West and me to begin our next chapters."

The 2026-27 season will serve as a celebration of Sklute's two decades with Ballet West. Read Adam's full farewell letter at balletwest.org:



BALLET WEST ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ADAM SKLUTE
PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

Principal Artist Amy Potter Retires

Principal Artist Amy Potter concludes her professional dancing career at the close of the 2025-26 season. The Roanoke, Va., native made her home at Ballet West II in 2011 and stepped into the main company in 2012. Potter then danced with Oklahoma City Ballet in 2014, returned to Ballet West in 2021 as a Soloist, and was promoted to Principal Artist in 2022.

With Ballet West, Potter has danced leading roles including Cranko's *Onegin* as Tatiana, Ashton's *Cinderella* as Cinderella, Odette/Odile in Sklute's *Swan Lake*, Christensen's *The Nutcracker* as The Sugarplum Fairy and The Snow Queen, Smuin's *Romeo + Juliet* as Juliet, Aurora in Sklute's *The Sleeping Beauty*, Kyli n's *Petite Mort*, *Return to a Strange Land*, and *Symphony of Psalms*, Robbins' *Glass Pieces* and *In the Night*, *Within the Golden Hour* and *Carousel*, a *Dance* by Christopher Wheeldon, and *Red Angels* by Ulysses Dove, to name a few.



PRINCIPAL ARTIST AMY POTTER | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON



BALLET WEST DANCE ADVANCE COORDINATOR JOSHUA TRADER | PHOTO BY ALISSA BAIRD

Reaching the Younger Generation

Most kids grow up dreaming about the usual career paths: doctor, teacher, athlete, engineer. Becoming a ballet dancer isn't usually on those lists, simply because it's not always a visible option.

Ballet West Principal Artist David Huffmire knows exactly what that feels like. At 14, he envisioned dancing in movies or commercials, but it seemed very undefined as a career, until he attended a Ballet West Summer Intensive program and former Ballet West Artist Joshua Whitehead explained what a ballet career actually looked like.

"I remember calling my parents that evening and saying, 'This is an actual job that I could do,'" said Huffmire. "All of a sudden, I realized there are hundreds of people that just dance for a living. I was so excited once I knew that."

That conversation changed the course of his life. Huffmire went on to become a Ballet West Academy Trainee in 2014, joined the company in 2018, and was promoted to Principal Artist in 2024.

Dance Advance, Ballet West's newest initiative, aims to give students that same moment of discovery. Director of Education and Community Outreach Peter Christie has worked toward this vision for nearly a decade, and the momentum is growing with three schools involved last year and 10 this year.

The program goes directly into elementary schools with workshops for students in kindergarten through second grade exploring basic movements like jumping, flexibility, and footwork, while instructors look for the physical aptitude, musicality, and students that show genuine interest in the

art form. Selected students are then offered scholarships to progress through ballet training and, hopefully, a career.

"If we want to change the landscape of what we see on stage, we have to teach students from all communities so that ballet is accessible for all," said Christie. "We want to give students from different backgrounds an opportunity to experience dance training and the possibility of a dance career."

While Huffmire's path predates Dance Advance, it was made possible by the same principle at the program's core: a Ballet West Academy scholarship.

"Receiving a scholarship was a branch of support for my family," he said. "If it hadn't been for that, I wouldn't have had training and I wouldn't have ended up where I am today as a Principal Dancer."

As Ballet West Dance Advance Coordinator Joshua Trader says of his time teaching the students, "I have seen hundreds of wonderful children this year that are fueled by talent, energy, and imagination. And they all are here right in our own backyard just waiting for a chance to discover a new side of themselves."

DANCE ADVANCE REACHED 600 STUDENTS ACROSS 13 UTAH SCHOOLS, RESULTING IN 100 SCHOLARSHIP INVITATIONS AND 16 FULL AWARDS. THE LARRY H. AND GAIL MILLER FAMILY FOUNDATION HAS INVESTED \$20,000 IN THAT MISSION AND IS CHALLENGING THE COMMUNITY TO MATCH IT. DONATE HERE



Built From a Dream

Newly-promoted soloist Loren Walton recognizes that the life he is living now was only a dream a few years ago.

"It was something I often imagined from far away, but it felt distant, almost out of reach. Now, when I look around, I pause and realize that this IS that dream; the long hours in the studio, taking class every morning with live music, and being surrounded by people who love this art as much as I do," he said.

When Walton first started dancing at age 12, he didn't plan to become a professional dancer. But he knew one thing for sure: he was in the right place. That same feeling continued when he left Austin, Texas to train at Ballet West Academy at age 17.

"It felt right, even if I couldn't fully explain why. Finishing high school online and moving across the country alone was a leap into the unknown. Utah wasn't always easy as a young Black man, but I came to build something, and Ballet West became my home."

Training at the Ballet West Academy shaped him in ways that went far beyond technique, teaching him discipline, awareness, and what it really means to show up in every aspect. Ultimately, Walton says, "That training taught me how to take everything I was given from the guidance to the environment and find my individuality within it all."

Artistic Director Adam Sklute invited Walton to join Ballet West II in 2020 and promoted him to the Main Company in 2022. In 2025, Walton was promoted to Demi-Soloist and now to Soloist for the upcoming 2026-27 season.

"There have been so many moments along the way where I've stopped and thought, 'Wow,

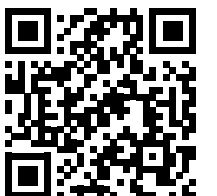
Finishing high school online and moving across the country alone was a leap into the unknown. Utah wasn't always easy as a young Black man, but I came to build something, and Ballet West became my home.

—Soloist Loren Walton

this is really happening.' From walking into my first company rehearsal, to learning and performing dream roles, I am now part of something I had dreamed about for years."

The dream almost slipped from his grasp after he was promoted to the main company in 2022. While preparing for Ballet West's production of *Onegin*, he rushed to the hospital where it was discovered he had a small bowel volvulus, which then led to a blood infection, and fighting for his life. He defied the odds and returned to dancing with Ballet West in 2023.

"At that time, I wasn't worried about if I was going to get a certain role, but if I was going to live," Walton said. "But those moments made everything clearer. They reminded me how much dancing means to me, and how grateful I am to still be here, doing what I love."



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