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WINTER 2026

## BRINGING



## SLEEPY HOLLOW

## TO LIFE





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ARTISTS OF BALLET WEST | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

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CORPS ARTIST MAREN FLORENCE | PHOTO BY LAUREN WATTENBURG

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## IN THE NEWS



CINDY FARRIMOND | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

**Ballet West mourns loss of beloved costume designer days before *Nutcracker* opening**

Just two days before the curtain rose on Ballet West's iconic *Nutcracker*

performance in downtown Salt Lake City, the company faced heartbreaking news at the sudden loss of a cherished staff member who impacted everyone.

Cindy Farrimond, 66, served as the costume shop manager and was the creative force behind thousands of costumes that graced Ballet West's stage. Known for her vision, talent, and problem-solving skills, Farrimond was a leader in the costume department and a beloved colleague.

Read more about Cindy Farrimond here:



Farrimond dedicated more than four decades to the art of costume design, before she died unexpectedly.

**National Public Radio: *The Nutcracker* isn't just a cozy classic. It helps ballet companies pay the bills**

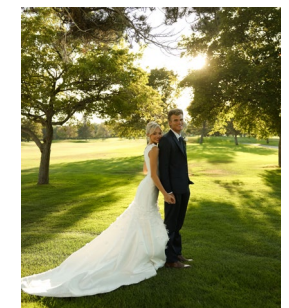
"*The Nutcracker* requires an enormous mobilization of forces," said Adam Sklute, the Artistic Director of Ballet West in Salt Lake City, Utah.

For their three dozen or so *Nutcracker* performances, Ballet West uses 52 professional dancers, a live orchestra of about 50 musicians, at least 30 crew members, and then ... there are all the kids.

Read the NPR story here:

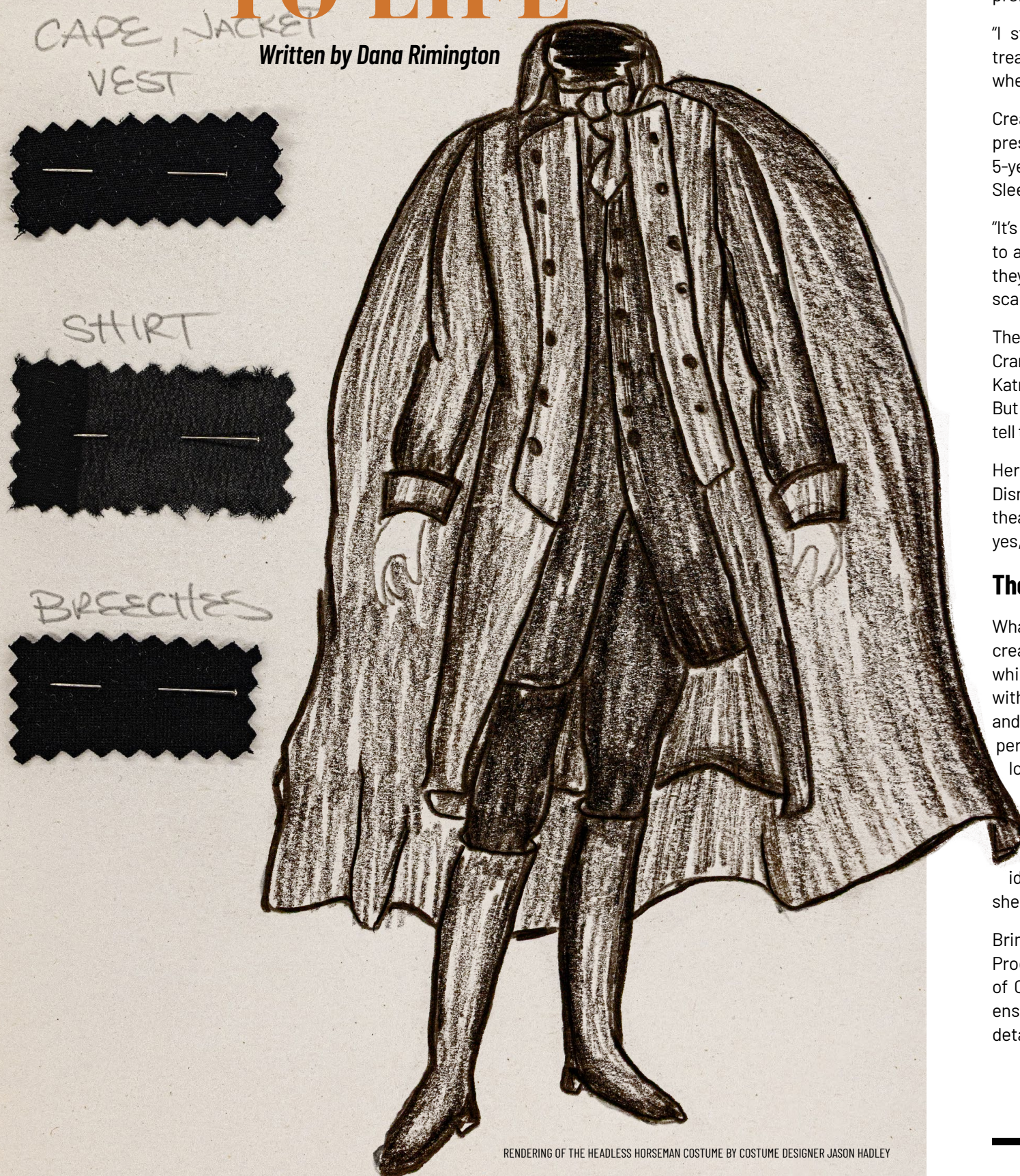


**Soloist Rylee Ann Rogers celebrates her wedding on Sept. 2, 2025**



# BRINGING SLEEPY HOLLOW TO LIFE

Written by Dana Rimington



RENDERING OF THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN COSTUME BY COSTUME DESIGNER JASON HADLEY



While fighting cancer and recovering from bone marrow transplants, Pamela Robinson found an unexpected source of healing: the creative challenge of choreographing Ballet West's newest Family Classic Series production, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, set to premiere at the Capitol Theatre in March 2026.

"I started the process while I was still undergoing chemo treatments," Robinson recalls. "It gave me things to think about when I wasn't wiped out from treatment."

Creating a ballet based on Washington Irving's gothic tale presents unique challenges when your audience includes 5-year-olds. How do you honor the spooky atmosphere of *Sleepy Hollow* without traumatizing the youngest viewers?

"It's a fine line to cross," Robinson explains. "You have to appeal to all ages. What would a 5-year-old think is funny? When are they going to laugh, or are they going to think that it's really scary, maybe too scary?"

The original story is a love triangle when schoolmaster Ichabod Crane arrives in town and disrupts the romance between wealthy Katrina Van Tassel and her longtime companion Brom Bones. But the story was too simple for a compelling ballet. "You can't tell the whole story with just three characters," Robinson notes.

Her research process was extensive. She watched the 1949 Disney adaptation, listened to radio shows, studied various theatrical scripts, and even researched the real *Sleepy Hollow*—yes, it exists, and its famous church is still standing.

## The Choreographer's Process

What many don't realize is how physically demanding the creative process can be, something Robinson had to navigate while still recovering from treatments. First, Robinson started with the music, selecting heavy pieces with strings, clarinet, and oboe, finding that the clarinet and oboe's voice-like quality perfectly captures Ichabod's role as a teacher. "It's almost as if Ichabod Crane is speaking to his class," she explains.

Then comes working on the choreography, something Robinson does directly with the dancers. "I definitely have my music selected and counted out, and I have ideas of when I want certain characters to arrive on stage," she says. "But then it's give and take."

Bringing the vision to life is a full company effort. Director of Production Michael Currey designed the sets, while Director of Costume Production Jason Hadley created the costumes, ensuring the world of *Sleepy Hollow* comes alive with the same detail that makes Irving's tale so enduring.



COSTUME DESIGNER JASON HADLEY, WORKING ON COSTUMES FOR *THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW*  
PHOTO BY LAUREN WATTENBURG

## Sleepless Nights and Musical Obsessions

The creative process follows Robinson even into sleep, or rather, prevents it. "I've not been getting good sleep because I hear a tune in my head and I can't get it out," she laughs.

Her musical preoccupation leads to the technical breakdown that makes creating a ballet possible. Every piece of music must be counted and analyzed: Is it counted in sixes? Are there three sixes in nine? Are we counting in eight? Is it a waltz? Only then can she begin adding in character entrances and movements.

Robinson's work on family ballet began in 2010 with *The Little Mermaid*, co-created with Peggy Dolkas and Artistic Director Adam Sklute, who starts the creative process with a subject, title, and often music.

"Then Pam goes on her genius flights of fancy," says Sklute. "She finds additional music, researches the story and its origins, and comes up with ideas on choreography, costuming, and characters. We go back and forth on her ideas, she writes the librettos, and we decide who will record the voices. It's a fun process, especially because Pam is so wildly creative."

*"You have to appeal to all ages. What would a 5-year-old think is funny? When are they going to laugh, or are they going to think that it's really scary, maybe too scary?"*

—Rehearsal Director  
Pamela Robinson

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)



THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW SET BACKDROP PAINTING IN PROGRESS BY DUSTY TERRELL


### A Legacy of Family Classics

Robinson's work on creating family ballets began in 2010 with *The Little Mermaid*, co-created with Peggy Dolkas. It was then followed by *Aladdin*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Snow White*. Each production incorporates Ballet West Academy students from age 8 through the advanced levels, maintaining the company's tradition of combining narration, music, and dance.

The key innovation came with *Snow White* by separating the narration from the dancing. "With *Little Mermaid*, the narration was within the dancing and people found it difficult," Robinson explains. Now the narrator tells the story while dancers pantomime, then scenes unfold with pure dance, a format that continues with *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

The Family Classics Series represents more than entertainment; it's about inspiring the next generation. "You want the ballet to make 5-year-olds and older artists want to always be dancers," she says.

The production promises to be another captivating addition to Ballet West's Family Classic Series when it premieres at the Capitol Theatre on March 27 and 28, 2026. The performance on March 28 at 7 PM will be presented exclusively with Spanish narration.

Tickets are now available at BalletWest.org. The ballet will be aired on KSL (air date to be announced) thanks to generous support from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Foundation. 

## THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, America's first ghost story, written by Washington Irving, tells the tale of a quiet little town in upstate New York, where mist clings to the trees and whispers linger in the night air. While the town appears peaceful and seemingly perfect, it is said to be haunted by restless spirits, none more feared than the ghostly Headless Horseman, who rides nightly in search of his lost head.

Into this peculiar little town arrives Ichabod Crane, a nervous and superstitious schoolteacher, whose vivid imagination makes him especially vulnerable to the town's chilling legends. Soon, he becomes enamored with Katrina Van Tassel, the beautiful and only daughter of a wealthy landowner. Driven by love and ambition, Ichabod dreams of winning her hand and the vast farmlands that she will one day inherit.

But Ichabod's hopes are threatened by Brom Bones, the bold and brawny town hero, whose pride and jealousy ignite a dangerous rivalry. Determined to rid himself of his awkward competitor, Brom weaves a web of unease and deception, preying on Ichabod's deepest fears. With every shadow and sound, the legends grow more real...until nightmares and reality begin to blur.

Will Ichabod escape the darkness...or will he vanish into legend?



# Ballet West Board Spotlight



**COURTNEY MILLER HAWKS**, elected to the board in September 2024, is a University of Utah graduate, currently serving with the Sherry Black Foundation. She also serves on the Larry H. and Gail Miller Family Growth and Development Committee and previously contributed to Utah Valley University's Fulton Library Board.



**AMANDA SCHMIEDER**, elected to the board in March 2025, is a seasoned public relations professional for Fortune 100 corporations to nonprofits and government agencies. Her extensive volunteer leadership includes service on her alma mater's National Alumni Board, the Draper Chamber of Commerce, the executive committee of a prominent public relations association, and the World Orphan Fund.



**SHELLY RUFF**, elected to the board in September 2025, is a former 5th-grade teacher turned corporate strategist at Adobe, where she now applies her knack for organization, storytelling, and making the impossible seem doable to some of the company's most complex initiatives. Coming from a long line of entrepreneurs, she's constantly looking for ways to support education and help teachers and women upskill into thriving careers.



**MIKAELA COOK WILSON**, elected to the Board in September 2025, is an attorney and former student at the Frederick Quinney Lawson Ballet West Academy. In addition to her legal practice, Mikaela enjoys teaching law and business school students a course on the company life cycle at BYU Law School as an adjunct professor. She also owns Dance Works, a small retail dance shop with locations in American Fork and Provo.



# A 40-YEAR JOURNEY WITH BALLET WEST



Rehearsal Director Pamela Robinson's story is one of resilience, adaptation, and finding purpose through adversity.

When Ballet West Rehearsal Director Pamela Robinson first glimpsed the mountains surrounding Salt Lake City in 1985, she had a passing thought that would prove true: "I think I'm going to retire here." She was 23, auditioning for Ballet West after years of dancing professionally, and something about those peaks spoke to her future.

Forty years later, she's still here, though her journey has taken unexpected turns that would test her in unique ways.

## From Dancer to Director

Robinson's path to Ballet West wasn't conventional. After starting with a professional ballet company in the northeast and feeling disillusioned with the environment, she almost quit dancing entirely.

"I thought, if every ballet company in the world is like this, I'm not sure I want to do this," Robinson recalls.

A detour to Alabama to dance for Hungarian Ballerina Sonia Arova changed everything. Two years later, while dancing for Ballet Mississippi, Ballet West's Artistic Staff noticed her, and she danced here until 1997, retiring at 37 as a Principal Dancer.



BALLET WEST REHEARSAL DIRECTOR PAMELA ROBINSON | PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON

The transition to Ballet West's Artistic Staff was a difficult transition at first as she was suddenly in charge of her former peers.

- 1985** Auditioned for Ballet West, Became Company Dancer
- 1988** Became Principal Artist
- 1997** Retired from Dancing
- 1997** Transitioned to Ballet West Artistic Staff
- 2006** Interim Artistic Director
- 2007** Principal Rehearsal Director
- 2021** Rehearsal Director



*"I never want to be the person who makes an artist feel uncomfortable about who they are or the individual talents and gifts that make them unique."*

— Pamela Robinson  
Ballet West Rehearsal Director



PAMELA ROBINSON AS THE LILAC FAIRY IN SLEEPING BEAUTY

For years, she constantly sought feedback from dancer friends, discovering that not everyone learns the same way she did—through imitation. Some needed verbal explanations, others visualization. It was a lesson that shaped her teaching philosophy: be open, supportive, and remember that everyone's different.

In 2006, Robinson stepped into the position of Interim Artistic Director for nine months as Ballet West went on an extensive search for a new artistic leader. When Adam Sklute was named Artistic Director in 2007, the two of them became close associates and fast friends. "Pam and I are aligned in our approach to ballet," said Sklute,

"I admire how she thinks, the care she puts into her work, and her whole approach to the art-form. She also has a sly and hilarious sense of humor which adds levity to every day," says Sklute. "Pam is a dreamer, an artist, and an impressive fighter."

## The Fight of Her Life

In May 2021, what seemed like a persistent cough and side pain led to devastating news: chronic myelomonocytic leukemia, a rare diagnosis affecting only one in 100,000 people. Without treatment, doctors gave her two and a half years to live.

"I was like, well, dance is my life's blood. What am I going to do if I can't go in and work every day?" she remembers thinking.

After two bone marrow transplants, Robinson found herself in a recovery that stretched far longer than the six months she'd optimistically predicted.

While going through chemo treatment, she found purpose in planning a new creative project that would become a new addition to Ballet West's Family Classics Series, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, set to premiere in March 2026.

## Continuing Her Dance Journey

Three years later and in remission, Robinson continues her work as Rehearsal Director. She's found joy in focusing on what energizes her most: watching dancers grow from their first day learning new steps to delivering powerful performances. "That's what keeps me going," she says. "It's the next best thing to having had that career myself."

Her approach is different from what she experienced growing up. "I never want to be the person who makes an artist feel uncomfortable about who they are or the individual talents and gifts that make them unique," Robinson states.

"Every body type is different and not everyone can approach things the same way. So, I've always wanted to be open and surround dancers with the kind of support they need."

Robinson's story is one of resilience, adaptation, and finding purpose through adversity. After 40 years, she's still in those Utah mountains, still nurturing the next generation of dancers and continuing to push forward, despite challenges.

As she puts it, "What's the point of negativity when you're suffering from a life-threatening disease? You have to face it with a positive attitude."



PAMELA ROBINSON IN GISELLE

SOLOIST DOMINIC BALLARD AS CAVALIER IN *THE NUTCRACKER* | PHOTO BY ROSS RICHEY

## GROWING UP IN DANCE

Soloist Dominic Ballard was born into ballet. “My mom had a school for as long as I can remember,” he said. “She would make ballets for her students, Grandma sewed the costumes, Grandfather would make the sets, and my sisters, dad, and I danced.”

Ballard excelled in tap dance, jazz, and musical theatre, then at age 12, started taking ballet more seriously, with the goal of becoming a professional ballet dancer. He grew up in Albury, New South Wales in Australia, then trained at the Australian Ballet School during his teen years, but the move was a difficult time for him.

“It was challenging to move from my relatively small, suburban beginnings, into a major capital city in Australia,” he said. “Being a country kid is actually wonderful, but it can be really intimidating to enter this elite national institution.”

At age 18, with the support of his family, he left for Europe and spent three months auditioning for professional companies. Ballard received many “nos,” but eventually got a “yes,” which led him to a professional ballet career with the National Ballet of Slovakia.

“I was young and had a lot to learn, but I was just so excited,” Ballard said. “This was the dream. I was in a real ballet company.”

He later joined the Philadelphia Ballet in 2016, then Ballet West in 2017 and was promoted to Demi-Soloist in 2022. Last summer, he received another promotion to Soloist. Since his promotion, Ballard has embraced challenging roles including

Dr. Jekyll in *Jekyll and Hyde* and Christopher Wheeldon’s *Within the Golden Hour*.

“*Jekyll and Hyde* was a leading role in a full-length story ballet,” he said. “That was completely new for me. I could sink my teeth into it in terms of characterization and research, and inner dialogue. I love all that stuff.”

This season’s *Nutcracker* marked a crucial period in Ballard’s growth. For the first time, he performed all three major pas de deux (Snow, Waltz of the Flowers, and the Grand Pas de Deux) with more performances than ever before.

Ballard credits resilience and camaraderie for his success. “I’ve made mistakes. I’ve failed steps or lifts on stage before, and it’s soul crushing,” he said. “But you have to show up again the next day and try again.”

*“Dominic is an elegant performer and a tireless worker. He cares deeply about his art and gives everything he has to every role, either theatrically or technically.”*

—Adam Sklute  
Ballet West Artistic Director

## FROM SOLDIER TO SUGAR PLUM FAIRY

Corps Artist Maren Florence was always dancing around the house when she was younger, which even included her own choreography to the Sugar Plum Fairy solo at just 3 years old. Little did she know she would one day perform that very role on the Ballet West stage.

Florence grew up in Salt Lake City and began taking ballet in kindergarten. At age 9, she attended Ballet West’s Summer Intensive and later began training at Ballet West Academy, along with Summer Intensives at the School of American Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Boston Ballet.

Around age 11, Florence knew she wanted to pursue ballet professionally. “I’ve always enjoyed the feeling of working hard and the routine of a technique class,” she said. “The experience of performing after working so hard on the steps and artistry is incredibly rewarding and satisfying.”

As a student, Florence performed in Ballet West’s *Nutcracker* for many years as a Soldier, Page, and Lady-in-Waiting. She never danced the role of Clara, but those experiences shaped her journey.

“I first got to know Maren as a young child in our Academy, and her gifts as a dancer were immediately apparent,” said Adam Sklute, Ballet West Artistic Director. “Maren is determined and committed to her art. I know that there is nothing she can’t do if she puts her mind to it, and I am excited for her future.”

She advanced through Ballet West’s Pre-Professional Training Division and Trainee program, then spent two years with Ballet West II before joining the main company in 2023. She covered for the Sugar Plum Fairy role for two years, though ultimately wasn’t needed to perform it. This past *Nutcracker* season brought a surprise.

CORPS ARTIST MAREN FLORENCE AS SUGAR PLUM FAIRY IN *THE NUTCRACKER* | PHOTO BY LAUREN WATTENBURG

“I walked into my fitting and saw the Sugar Plum tutu,” Florence said. “I realized, oh, this might actually happen!”

It did. Florence performed the demanding role with Principal Dancer Hadriel Diniz, making her solo debut, where she was overcome with both relief and joy after finishing.

Growing up in an artistic family with her father as an artist and her mother as a violinist, Florence learned to appreciate beauty in art from a young age. Now she enjoys sharing that gift with audiences.

“It was always really inspiring for me to come to the ballet and appreciate the work and the beauty that was in it. Now, I hope it’s the same for audiences, that they can see and feel all the emotions on stage.”

MAREN FLORENCE GETTING MAKEUP ON FOR SOLDIER ROLE IN *THE NUTCRACKER*

*“The experience of performing after working so hard on the steps and artistry is incredibly rewarding and satisfying.”*

—Corps Artist Maren Florence



## Honoring a Founder's Legacy

When the curtain rose on *The Nutcracker Suite* at the Eccles Center in Park City this past December, it was more than just another holiday performance. The students of the Frederick Quinney Lawson Ballet West Academy's Peggy Bergmann Park City Campus were dancing in memory of the woman who made their dreams possible.

Peggy Bergmann passed away on August 23, 2025, the very same day the Ballet West Academy Park City Campus moved to a beautiful new facility at 786 Division Street in the Silver Summit area. Though she did not live to see the campus flourish in its new home, her legacy continues to transform the lives of young dancers throughout the Park City community.

"Her belief in the power of dance education has created opportunities for hundreds of young artists to pursue their dreams," reflected Adam Sklute, Ballet West's Artistic Director. "This *Nutcracker Suite* performance was a beautiful tribute to her lasting impact on the community."

The students who performed embody the dedication that makes the academy thrive. "Ballet makes me feel like I'm free inside my body, and I'm happy when I'm dancing," said Hazely Starr, a student at the Ballet West Academy Park City Campus.

For another dancer in Park City, the academy has become a part of her in more ways than one. "Ballet West is my whole entire personality. My dream when I become an adult is to become a ballet teacher like Miss Allison," said Aiyana Sosa.

Park City Campus Principal Allison DeBona is continuing the passion Bergmann began. "The arts are integral to a strong

and healthy community," said DeBona. "When developing a whole child, creativity and self-expression are essential. And at Ballet West Academy, dance is that medium."

The new location serves a thriving community of dancers, offering everything from classical ballet that mirrors the rigorous Salt Lake Campus curriculum to tap, jazz, contemporary, hip hop, and musical theatre. It's the kind of inclusive, comprehensive program that recognizes Park City students who need to balance their passion for dance with other mountain community activities.

Thanks to Bergmann's generosity and vision, the Park City Campus continues to grow, welcoming hundreds of young artists through its doors each season, each one carrying forward her legacy of believing in the transformative power of dance.



PEGGY BERGMANN WITH FREDERICK QUINNEY LAWSON BALLET WEST ACADEMY STUDENT  
PHOTO BY BEAU PEARSON



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# SHARING THE WORLD OF DANCE



I CAN DO STUDENT | PHOTO BY ROSS RICHEY

The moment the Ballet West for Children assembly ended at Lomond View Elementary in Pleasant View, Utah, students could be seen twirling, leaping, and spinning across the playground during recess.

"It was wonderful to see students rush outside and immediately start mimicking the dance moves they had just seen," wrote Principal Nanette Watson after the program at her school. "The amount of information you and your dancers managed to rehearse and seamlessly pack into a 50-minute presentation was truly remarkable. Every moment was engaging, educational, and beautifully executed."

These moments of discovery and joy happen throughout the year as Ballet West shares dance with students, teachers, and community members across Utah through its Community and Education Outreach programs. For many children, these performances represent their first, and sometimes only, opportunity to experience live ballet.

"In my class, only one student had ever been to the theater or seen the ballet," shared teacher Andrea Hansen-Davidson after bringing her students to see *The Dream*, at one of Ballet West's In-Theatre Presentations at the Janet Quinney Lawson Capitol Theatre.

Another educator, Esther Marsden, noted, "This demographic of students would never have access due to the limited funding for the arts and limited availability for the arts. They all were trying to jump and dance like the dancers and realized how difficult it is even though it looked easy," she explained.

During the same performance of *The Dream*, teacher Peter Haslam was struck by, "...how engaged the students were and how they kept whispering to each other about what was going on in the performance."

Teacher Kimberly Loose recalled having "...students who were upset when they learned our field trip was to the ballet, who then told me how much fun it was. I had a student who told me he loved to read Shakespeare, a child who had never heard of Shakespeare prior to preparing for the ballet."

Perhaps one second-grade class from Salt Lake School District said it best: "We like ballet more now and would love to learn how to do it!"

Through these outreach programs, Ballet West reached over 152,000 students, teachers, and community members throughout Utah last year, opening doors to the transformative power of dance, one performance at a time.

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