

En l'Air

News from
MASSACHUSETTS
ACADEMY of
BALLET
Educational Training
Association

FALL 2010



Photo: Kerry Homstead

Greetings! 2010 has been another successful year for the Massachusetts Academy of Ballet Educational Training Association. MABETA's mission is to educate residents of Holyoke and the surrounding communities about the art of ballet through performances and demonstrations at schools, senior centers and other community venues. In addition, it provides scholarships to students in need who wish to study ballet.

This year MABETA performed for the Loomis Communities, "Discover Holyoke," sponsored by Passport Holyoke, MAB's Spring Performance at the Holyoke War Memorial, Massachusetts Dance Festival and "So, We Think You Can Dance" at Wistariahurst Museum, a benefit for the Museum and for MABETA.

Still to come is our annual production of "Nutcracker and Sweets" December 10, 11 and 12 at the Wistariahurst Museum. Enjoy this Holiday classic with a historic Holyoke twist in the beautiful setting of the music room at the Wistariahurst Museum. Pro-

ceeds from the Nutcracker benefit Wistariahurst and MABETA.

In addition to lecture demonstrations and performances, MABETA offers teacher-training seminars (the most recent was last June for five teachers from Connecticut and Massachusetts). The next seminar is planned for June 27th to July 1, 2011. Teachers and dancers are welcome to partake in this stimulating, inspiring and informative course on teaching ballet. To register contact rflachs@massacademyofballet.com.

MABETA's funding is primarily from donations and Massachusetts Cultural Council grants. We very much appreciate and thank all who have donated to MABETA in the past. As the end of 2010 approaches, please consider a tax-deductible donation to the Massachusetts Academy of Ballet Educational Training Association. Even the smallest amount means a great deal to the Association.

First, your generosity enables us to offer the best ballet training to every student who has

Nutcracker & Sweets

Through narration and dance, MAB students recreate this classic holiday story as it may have taken place in Holyoke in the 1890s. Interspersed with tidbits of Holyoke history, the setting of this unique performance is the large Victorian home of a former silk baron, turned into a museum.

Wistariahurst Museum
238 Cabot Street, Holyoke

December 10, 7:00 p.m.

December 11, 1:30 and 4:00 p.m.

December 12, 2:00 p.m.

Adults \$10.00,
Children 12 and younger FREE.

Space is limited.

Call Wistariahurst at 322-5660
to reserve tickets.

*Dessert reception following
each performance.*

a passion for the art form. Second, it helps us bring ballet to the many audiences who may never witness true classical ballet. Lastly, it provides incentive for MAB students. When students become a part of MABETA they have a creative, challenging and rewarding experience as they share their art form with others who might never realize how exciting and rewarding the art of classical ballet can be!

Please consider supporting MABETA and know that you are helping young dancers attain their goals through the best artistic education that ballet offers. Please make checks payable to the MABETA, a non-profit 501 (c)3 organization.

The Massachusetts Academy of Ballet

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Signing the Wall at MAB

A note from Rose & Charles Flachs

In keeping with the tradition of our teachers and mentors, Margarita de Sáa and John White, we have our students who have gone on to dance professionally sign our wall in the lobby of the studio. The first two dancers to sign the wall are Kara Johnson and Matisse Madden.

A Beautiful Place of Learning

by Matisse Madden



Photo: Andy Bardon

As a professional dancer, I have consistently attended ballet classes at MAB to ally myself with the outstanding teachers and uncompromised teaching philosophies. Co-artistic directors, Rose and Charles Flachs have created a beautiful place of learning where each student is acknowledged and challenged. It is an atmosphere I long for during my professional season at Connecticut Ballet (shhh, don't tell).

In my experience, company class is often given as only a "warm-up." It prepares dancers for the grueling rehearsal day. The ballet masters often shy away from challenging lesson plans so they don't exhaust the dancers. In order for me to stay competitive in a competitive profession, I am left with the added responsibility of seeking out good training during my free time to continually sharpen my skills. It is a luxury to find supplemental training at MAB. As John White said in his latest book, *Advanced Principles in Teaching Classical Ballet*:

A Love of Dance

by Kara Johnson



Photo: Irm Coleman

I started training with Rose and Charles in 2003, when I entered Mount Holyoke College. I immediately fell in love with the Vaganova technique, and really appreciated its logical and anatomically-sound approach. When they opened MAB a few years later, I supplemented my dance classes during the week at MHC with weekend technique classes at MAB. I was, officially, hooked.

Since graduating from MHC I have yet to find a class that engages me on the same level—physically, mentally, and artistically—as Rose and Charles' classes. Thankfully, what they taught me doesn't merely apply to their practiced technique. My experiences at MAB taught me an essential work ethic—and, above all, a pure love for dance—which has enriched not only my training post-MHC, but also my careers in teaching and performing.

What is rare in the dance training world, which one can find at MAB, is the combination of professionalism in the training and a supportive sense of community. I soon

"Students rarely know what is best for them. This includes professional dancers who often mistakenly begin to work slower and slower as they age. Every dancer needs a second pair of eyes to 'see' what is needed" (172).

I wish to express special appreciation to Rose and Charles Flachs, who introduced me to the Vaganova method of training. This system creates outstanding results that have given me an advantage in the professional world.

discovered fellow students became my colleagues and very close friends, such as the lovely Matisse Madden. It doesn't hurt the familial aspect of things that my mother, the fabulous Catherine Johnson, is on faculty at MAB! When I come home to western MA visit my family I make sure to take class at MAB, because I still (and always will) feel at home there.

I often struggled with whether I wanted to pursue a career in ballet or modern dance. Ultimately, I believe that working with Rose and Charles prepared me well for a professional career, in whatever style I chose. What gave me the extra push to "go for it" was Rose and Charles' support for me as a dancer and person. In 2007, after graduation and a summer of shopping for companies, I happily decided to pursue a career in modern dance at Prometheus Dance Company in Cambridge, MA. For someone who loved ballet so much, I couldn't stay away for too long; soon after working with Prometheus I took a teaching job with the Children and Adult divisions of the Boston Ballet School.

I performed with Prometheus for three fantastic years, and look forward to future opportunities with them and other modern companies. Now, I have transitioned into a career in academia, to pursue a PhD in English at Northwestern University. While this is a new and exciting phase in my life, I have made a point to build ballet classes into my weekly schedule, and I look forward to becoming involved with performing in the near future. This experience taught me what Rose and Charles always communicated to me in all my years of knowing them—that the love of dance stays with you, no matter where you go and what you do. Thanks for everything, MAB!

Kara Johnson is in her first year of Ph.D. studies at Northwestern University.

I do regret that I did not have access to a great ballet school like MAB when I was younger. I grew up on the Island of Kauai, where such systematic training was not available. I hope the community takes advantage of this wonderful school in the heart of Holyoke. I trust the students will attend classes regularly and soak in the incredible coaching and training the school has to offer. I certainly plan to.

Matisse Madden, MFA, has danced professionally with the Connecticut Ballet since 2006.

MABETA Alumni News

Rachel Alyward is a sophomore at University of Massachusetts Commonwealth College.

Kelsey Chamberlain is a sophomore at Mercyhurst College Dance Department.

Connie Flachs is a member of the Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet Society and is performing Snow Pas de Deux, Dew Drop and Lead Marzipan in PABS Nutcracker, and plans on competing at the Youth America Grand Prix.

Dan Grzelak is on scholarship at the Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet, performing in their Nutcracker and going to Villanova part time.

Kara Johnson is in a doctoral program at Northwestern University.

Matisse Madden is the proud mother of Rockwell and is performing in Connecticut Ballet's Nutcracker! She is also a guest lecturer at Yale University and is teaching at Mount Holyoke College in the spring.

Thank you to all our generous silent auction donors

The Big E
The Claw Foot Tub
Claypoetics
Costco Wholesale
Jill Ducharme
Grynn & Barrett
Holyoke Children's Museum
Jacob's Pillow
Amalyah Leader
Molly Lieberman
Liu Family
MGL Studio
Matisse Madden
The Majestic Theater
Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts
New Century Theater
Claudette Peterson
Playhouse on the Park
Private Label Designs
River Valley Market
Shea Family
Six Flags Friends, New England
The Spirit Shoppe
The Tavern Restaurant
Vega Yoga Studio
Theresa Whalen
Wistariahurst Museum
Zoar Outdoor

What's New at MAB: Jazz and Tap Classes with Deborah Vega



Photos: Charles Flachs

Thank you MABETA donors!

Elizabeth & Frank Odell Family Fund of the
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Deborah K. Haas and Matthew R. Haas
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Anna Felicitas Thurmayr and
Philip F. Gaziano
Ruth Rootberg
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Thanks also to the Grzelak family for our new refrigerator!

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MAB Celebrates Five Years!

Spring Performance, May 2010, Holyoke War Memorial Auditorium



Photos: Jim Coleman

Top row: Level 5 dancers Abby Lieberman, Connie Flachs, Dan Grzelak, and Anna Lise Wilkins 2nd row: Boys in "When I Was a Lad," Angela Gauthier and Anna Lise Wilkins in "Esmeralda" Third row: Level 4 dancers in "The Typewriter.," Level 5 class variations Bottom row: Levels 1-5 class variations

Youth America Grand Prix

Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) is the world's largest student ballet scholarship competition. This year, one of the semi-finals is held in Torrington, Connecticut, February 18-20. MAB has two students who are participating. Anna Lise Wilkins (Level 5, below right) is going as a competitor and Anna Lally (Level 4, below left) as a non-competitor. Both dancers have been working very hard and are looking forward to a wonderful experience being surrounded by other dancers who are dedicated to ballet and love it as much as they do!



MABETA's Schedule of Events

December 11-13, 2010

Nutcracker and Sweets, Wistariahurst Museum

February 18-20, 2011

Two students participating in the Youth America Grand Prix competition in Torrington, CT

May 21-22, 2011

Massachusetts Dance Festival at the University of Massachusetts (tentative)

June 11, 2011

Spring Performance, Location TBA



Navaeh Lopez in her bluebird costume, poses for the camera following the spring dance performance. Photo: NAME

Faculty Profiles

Rose and Charles Flachs, the directors of the Academy, have danced professionally with the Nashville Ballet, Ballet West, and the Cincinnati Ballet. They are associate professors of dance at Mount Holyoke College and guest teachers with the Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet. They have studied the Vaganova method of training with John White, author of *Teaching Classical Ballet* and Margarita de Saà, and at the National Ballet School in Havana, Cuba.

They have been guest artists and teachers at Jacob's Pillow, Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet, Columbia College, University of Georgia, University of Wisconsin, and the University of Cincinnati, College Conservatory of Music. They have also taught for the Southeast Regional Ballet Festival, the American College Dance Festival, and have choreographed and staged over 50 ballets for university dance departments and regional ballet companies.

Charles has produced and released three musical CDs for the classical ballet lesson, and Rose has written articles for *Dance Teacher* and *Dance Spirit* magazines. The Flachs are founding members of the Council of Organized Researchers of the Pedagogical Studies of Ballet, CORPS de Ballet International, Inc. They are the recipients of two Outstanding Service Awards from the CORPS de Ballet, a Choreographic Fellowship from the Ohio Arts Council, and an Individual Artist Award from the state of Tennessee. They are the proud parents of Connie and Nathaniel Flachs.

Cathy Johnson, a 2006 Mount Holyoke College Frances Perkins Scholar, graduated Phi Beta Kappa/magna cum laude as a biology major and dance minor. She received her early dance training with Ana Roje in Boston and Yugoslavia, later studied with Melissa Hayden at Skidmore College, and most recently studied the Vaganova method with Rose and Charles Flachs at Mount Holyoke College. Cathy has taught ballet in Western Massachusetts since 1994, joining the Academy faculty in 2006. She has a special interest in promoting dance education in the public schools.

Deborah Vega has danced on Broadway in such shows as A Christmas Carol The Musical, Anything Goes, and Funny Girl, and danced for 4 seasons as a "Radio City Rockette" in the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. She has traveled the United States and Europe in national and European Tours such as Fame!, Crazy For You, and Steel Pier. Debra is a proud member of Actor's Equity Association (AEA) and American Guild of Variety Artists (AGVA). She choreographs professional AEA Musical Theatre productions around the United States and locally. Currently, Debra is working with the Theatre Department of Williston Northampton School, choreographing the musical PIPPIN, which debuts mid-April of 2010. She is currently Interim Director of Dance at Williston Northampton School. Debra has practiced yoga for more than ten years and has taught yoga since 2007. She and her husband, Aaron, operate Vega Yoga & Movement Arts www.vegayoga.com, and with a special outreach grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, offer free classes to a variety of Holyoke organizations working with underprivileged teens. She is the assistant to the campaign to help renovate and expand the Holyoke Public Library, is a founding member of the grassroots organization C.R.U.S.H. (Citizens for the Revitalization and Urban Success of Holyoke), and recently helped her husband manage a successful campaign for Holyoke City Councilor at Large.

2010-2011 MABETA Members

Emlyn Fenwick-Homstead
Angela Gauthier
Izzy Haas
Amalyah Leader
Abby Lieberman
Louisa Rader
Jose Miguel Rodriguez
Liam Saito
Anna Lise Wilkins



Photos: Kerry Homstead

The Massachusetts Academy of Ballet

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