

En l'Air

News from
MASSACHUSETTS
ACADEMY of
BALLET
Educational Training
Association

FALL
2011



Photo: Charles Flachs

“Master technique and then forget about it and be natural.” This is a quote by the famous Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova. We like this quote because it encompasses our philosophy of teaching at MAB. Students find joy in the training and freedom in their dancing. This issue of *En l'Air* features the work of Cathy Johnson, with whom most of our students begin their training. Readers will also find news about our future plans and past accomplishments.

We have had a wonderful spring and summer at MAB and look forward to this 7th year of teaching and learning. Spring began with a trip to New York for the Youth America Grand Prix Finals. Our students did well and we enjoyed meeting teachers and coaches from all over the world. Alumna Connie Flachs participated in the job fair, which led to her current position as a professional dancer with the Grand Rapids Ballet Company.

Spring culminated with our Performance and Silent Auction at the Holyoke War Memorial. This is one of our favorite events—a time the entire MAB community joins together, supports each other in performance and raises funds for MABETA, whose mission is to give back to Holyoke and the surround-

ing communities through performances as well as contributing to a scholarship fund for students in need. Students from the pre-ballet division charmed the audience with their poise, regular division students danced a stunning Etudes, and MABETA members and alumni performed exciting classical and contemporary ballet selections.

Summer began with open classes at MAB and finished with our four-week intensive. Guest teachers Paul Dennis and Gayle Stefanelli joined MAB faculty Debra Vega and Cathy Johnson teaching Modern, Pilates, Jazz and Ballet. Students studied contemporary and classical repertory with variations from Giselle, Napoli and Fairy Doll. MABETA members performed for the Loomis Communities in South Hadley, sharing their talents and speaking with audience members following the performance. MABETA is building a strong relationship with Loomis Communities as audience members enjoy witnessing our students' progress from visit to visit.

MAB students also attended summer ballet programs at the Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet, the Julliard School, and the Akhmedova Ballet Academy.

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 16, 7:00 p.m.

December 17, 1:00 and 4:30 p.m.

December 18, 1:00 p.m.

Adults \$10.00,

Children 8 and younger \$1.00

Space is limited.

Call Wistariahurst at 322-5660
to reserve tickets.

*Dessert reception following
each performance.*

Fall brings new and returning students back to ballet classes and rehearsals. Our future includes a performance for Discover Holyoke, the photographic installation “Ballet Dancers: The Urban Portrait Series” at the gallery in Open Square, a Barnes and Noble event and our “Nutcracker and Sweets.” This spring we will bring three students to the Torrington, CT YAGP regionals. All students are already working hard in rehearsal.

We are proud of each and every student, and thankful to each and every parent for your support and understanding that studying the art of classical ballet is a crucial part of your child's artistic education.

Sincerely, Rose and Charles Flachs

The Massachusetts Academy of Ballet

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Tiny TOTS, Creative Movement & Pre-Ballet: Building Blocks of Classical Ballet

by Judy Hubeny

Ballet has long been one of the most beautiful and timeless art forms studied and perfected by dancers all over the world. It is an awe-inspiring form of dance, with such grace and fluidity of movement that the beauty can take one's breath away! But when one is a ballet student, it is also a serious endeavor. Through time, effort, and perseverance, the grace and beauty of movements become what we enjoy as classical ballet.

Massachusetts Academy of Ballet embraces students at all levels of skill, with instruction available to children in their pre-school years. Programs like Toddlers On Toes (TOTS), Creative Movement, and Pre-Ballet provide young dancers with opportunities to learn the basics of ballet in a warm and inviting environment.

Cathy Johnson, Children's Division Instructor at MAB since 2006, has been teaching her young dancers (some of whom have only been walking for a few years!) the basic foundations of ballet in a happy and fun atmosphere. Cathy engages their interest and encourages their participation in learning these basics through the use of creative and exciting educational methods. Classwork includes the imaginative "Hello Dances,"

"Fairy Walks," and "Trampoline Jumps" as well as conditioning exercises such as the "Flying Banana" and "Tickle Bugs," which all focus on basic ballet skills such as pointing the toes; maintaining proper ballet posture; increasing flexibility; holding one's balance; using the imagination; and working on rhythm, musicality, and coordination of movements, all the while keeping these young dancers focused and in motion.

Parents sitting in the waiting room often hear the giggles and lively voices coming from Cathy's class and it is clear that the children are truly enjoying the excitement and fun of experiences presented that day! Little do the children know that the fun classroom activities are designed to focus on developing the basic ballet skills they will need as they progress through the MAB syllabus of yearly goals! Children come bounding out of Cathy's class pink-cheeked from the physical challenges and happy to show just how well they danced while in her class. Cathy says, "Whether these young students ultimately become professional dancers or not, hopefully this pre-ballet foundation is just the beginning chapter in the story of their lifelong study of and appreciation for the wonderful art of classical ballet!"

Photos: Jennifer Cannon and Lorán Saito





Massachusetts Academy of Ballet Faculty

Rose and Charles Flachs,
Artistic Directors

Cathy Johnson, Pre-ballet Division
and Adult Ballet

Debra Vega, Jazz and Tap



Newsletter design: Loran Diehl Saito



Two Weeks at Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet

by Liam Saito

The day after this year's spring performance, my mother and I drove to Narberth, Pennsylvania where I attended two weeks of Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet's summer intensive. I think it was a great chance for me to get a change of scene and take classes with some really great teachers teaching the same kind of curriculum that I get here at MAB.



Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet is run by Mr. and Mrs. White, who both had very prominent careers as dancers in the Ballet Nacional de Cuba. Rose and Charles trained with them and they

teach a Vaganova technique very similar to the one we study at MAB.

When I arrived at my host family's house I was meeting them for the first time, so I was very nervous, but they were very kind and welcoming to me so I soon got comfortable. The family I was staying with had 3 other children involved with the program, including a boy who was in all of my classes. My host mother told me that I should expect to be too exhausted for the first week or so to take any evening classes. So for the first week we left the studio at around 6:30.

Every day we would leave the house at 8:30 and drive 45 minutes to the studio in Narberth. My first class was at 9:30 and I would usually have 2-3 ballet classes depending on whether or not I was taking a night class, and once a week I had classes such as Pilates, jazz, ballroom, and partnering. I also had about an hour and a half for lunch and a few other breaks here and there.

I had a really great time there this summer and I plan to go back next year. I think that I improved there and I hope to get even more out of it next time.

MABETA Board

- Jennifer Cannon
- Charles Flachs
- Rose Marie Flachs
- Deb Gauthier
- Deborah Haas
- Judy Hubeny
- Cathy Johnson
- Anne Lytle
- Brittney Noble
- Navae Rodriguez
- Loran Saito
- MJ Wraga

Thank you MABETA donors!

- Sarah Boy
- Deborah Haas
- Marsha Lieberman
- Ron McKinney
- Elizabeth Odell & Nancy Maynard
- Theodore Paradise
- Bruce & Cristine Rockwell
- Springfield Women's League for the Arts

gratitude

Thank you

to the individuals, organizations, and businesses who donated so generously to MABETA's 2nd Annual Silent Auction!

- 350 Grille
- Children's Museum at Holyoke
- Claudette Lambert Peterson
- Claudia Johnsen
- Deb Gauthier & Rosanna Wilkins
- Divina Acker
- Don Winchester Liquors
- Eastern States Exposition
- Elegant Knits
- Enchanted Circle Theater
- FLN-MAR Rubber and Plastics, Inc.
- Gold's Gym
- Grynn & Barrett Studios

- Holyoke Rows
- It's All About Me
- Jacob's Pillow
- Kiddly Winks
- Leah Spinrad / Riverspring Healing Arts
- LEGO Systems, Inc.
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- Matisse Madden
- Mimi's Creations / Pat Leader
- New Century Theatre
- Orchards Golf Club
- River Valley Market
- Serene Salon & Spa

- Sister's Kids
- Springfield Symphony Orchestra
- Sutter's Jewelry
- The Claw Foot Tub/Mary Moore Cathcart
- The Majestic Theater
- The Spirit Shoppe
- The Tavern Restaurant
- Vega Yoga & Movement Arts
- Whitestone Marketing Group and Go Graphix
- Wistariahurst Museum

A Day in the Life of a Professional Ballet Dancer

by Connie Flachs, MABETA alumna



Connie and her roommate, Yuka, in front of their new workplace, the Martin Wege Theater

7:50 a.m.

My alarm goes off. I reluctantly drag myself out of my nice warm bed (Michigan is getting COLD). Quickly, I pull on a leotard I love and layer on sweaters and warm pants over that. A little extra effort goes into my hair and makeup today; Wes Chapman, a former dancer with ABT with many other impressive credentials, is coming today to begin setting *Dracula*. He may or may not already know the casting, but I'm sure he'll be observing class and I want to make sure I look acceptable!

9:00 a.m.

We arrive at the ballet building, which houses our in-house theater as well as four studios. I drop off my lunch at the fridge, grab my warm-ups from my locker, and take my spot at the barre to do a few ankle rotations and calf stretches before class starts.

9:30 a.m.

We begin pliés, getting our bodies ready for the day ahead of us. Company class is relatively relaxed; as professional dancers we are given the freedom to do what feels right for our bodies—within reason. I have a feeling

cartwheels might be frowned upon. Class is still about improving technique, despite its dual function as a warm-up.

10:45 a.m.

Wes did watch some of class and conversed with our artistic director. The schedule for today is posted on the bulletin board, along with casting for *Dracula*. I am dancing one of "Lucy's Friends" and second cast as "Vampire Bride #2." I don't know exactly what that means, but both sound like fun.

12:00 p.m.

After a break, rehearsal for the Snow scene in *Nutcracker* starts. Even though our next show is *Dracula*, we have to begin preparing for future shows, like *Nutcracker*. In fact, we've already begun learning *Napoli* variations, which we won't be dancing until February.

1:00 p.m.

"Vampire Bride #2" is actually one of *Dracula*'s three brides. *Dracula* feeds, houses, and clothes us, so we, as Wes said, "do basically anything to make him happy." This part is a riot, and while most of what we're learning is mime and staging (along with some teeth fang baring), the amount of acting and character development make working on this scene an enriching experience.

3:00 p.m.

After a break for lunch, we're back working on *Dracula*. As the second cast, we rehearse everything in the back, but often we get our own chance to run through the choreography and receive notes and corrections. My feet are beginning to hurt as I approach my fifth hour in pointe shoes, so on one of our five-minute breaks I whip off my shoes and put my legs up against the wall. A couple of fellow dancers and I discuss the finer points of vampire lore (some people say they can turn into bats, mist, and snakes—who knew?) before we're called back to our rehearsal.

6:00 p.m.

Done for the day! On my way out I check the bulletin board for tomorrow's schedule and see a paper posted with audience responses to our previous show series. There are a bunch of letters and emails from attendees who said they loved the show. One person even mentions one of my performances of *Fairy Doll* pas de trois as their favorite part of the program!

11:00 p.m.

After grocery shopping, showering, eating, checking e-mail, and cleaning up dinner, it's already eleven o'clock. I have pointe shoes to sew, but they'll have to wait for tomorrow. I snuggle back into my warm sheets, review a few phrases of choreography in my mind, and then close my eyes for some much needed rest. Dancing all day ensures a good night's sleep!

Connie Flachs was recently hired to dance with Grand Rapids Ballet Company in Grand Rapids, Michigan. An alumna of Massachusetts Academy of Ballet, Connie was recruited for her new job during the job fair at Youth America Grand Prix 2011, where she performed as a finalist.

Live Dance!

Group ticket opportunity

Join MAB for

Suzanne Farrell Ballet

UMASS Fine Arts Center
Wednesday, February 22, 2012
7:30 pm

Suzanne Farrell ballet has been hailed by the New York Times' Chief Dance Critic as "one of the most courageous projects in ballet today."

We have reserved a block of tickets in Section 4, Center, Rows R- U

Group rate: Adults \$34, Students \$10

Please let Deb Haas know by November 15 if you would like to reserve seats.

Email: debkhaas@gmail.com

More info at <https://fac.umass.edu/>

Moments from the Spring Performance

June 11, 2011 • Holyoke War Memorial Auditorium

Photos: Ron McKinney

Photos on this page (top to bottom, left to right): Abby Lieberman in *Fishnets*, choreographed by Matisse Madden; Calvin Ticknor-Swanston, Anna Lally, and Liam Saito in *Sleeping Beauty* variation; Angela Gauthier in "Cool" from *West Side Story*; MABETA Alumna Kelsey Chamberlain performs *Sigh No More*, her own choreography; Debra Vega's jazz class performs "Cool;" Spring Ballet poster; Emlyn Fenwick-Homstead in "Cool;" Angela Gauthier in *The Moods of the Sea*, choreographed by Lynn Elam with additional choreography by Debra Vega; Abby Lieberman in *Fishnets*; Amalyah Leader performs *Siguriya* (Flamenco), choreographed by Ines Arrubula; Rebecca Howard in "Cool;" Freya Johnsen performing class études.



**SPRING
BALLET**

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

1:00 SILENT AUCTION
2:00 PERFORMANCES
3:30 RECEPTION
WAR MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
310 APPLETON STREET, HOLYOKE

EXCERPTS FROM SLEEPING BEAUTY ♦ GUEST APPEARANCES BY MAB ALUMNI CONNIE FLACHS, DAN GIZELAK, AND KELSEY CHAMBERLAIN ♦ CHOREOGRAPHY BY MATISSE MADDEN, DEBRA VEGA, ROSE AND CHARLES FLACHS ♦ CREATIVE INTERLUDES BY FIRE-BALLET, CREATIVE MOVEMENT AND TOTS CLASSES ♦ ADULTS \$10 & CHILDREN 8 AND UNDER FREE ♦ ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY OF BALLET EDUCATIONAL TRAINING ASSOCIATION ♦ FOR MORE INFORMATION: 413-536-6200 OR WWW.MASSACADEMYOFBALLET.COM

Massachusetts Academy of Ballet





This page (top to bottom, left to right): Angela Gauthier in *The Moods of the Sea*, Izzy Haas and Gabrielle Engel in class études, Abby Lieberman in class études, Izzy Haas in “Cool,” and Alumni Connie Flachs and Dan Grzylak perform *In a Spin*, choreographed by Charles Flachs.

Charles Flachs Interviewed for *Dance Magazine*

Writer Elaine Stuart interviewed Charles for an article in the September issue of *Dance Magazine*, titled “Does Gender Matter in Class?” In the article, Charles shared his experiences of working with young men, and the ways in which he tries to prepare them for life as a male professional ballet dancer. Check out the copy of the article on the studio bulletin board!

SAVE THE DATE
November 13, 2011

Barnes & Noble
Bookfair Fundraiser
for MABETA

In-store performances
by MAB students
11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Can't make the event...

shop online at
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November 13, 2011

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Please present this voucher prior to making your purchase. A percentage of the net sale will be contributed to your school/organization.

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MABETA Calendar 2011-12

October 21

Art Opening: Ron McKinney, "Ballet Dancers: The Urban Portrait Series," Open Square Gallery

October 22, 1:00 pm

Discover Holyoke Performance, Open Square, \$1.00 admission

November 13, 11 am-3 pm

Barnes and Noble Book Fair Fundraiser

December 16-18

Nutcracker and Sweets, Wistariahurst Museum, \$10.00 Adults, \$1.00 Children

February 22, 7:30 pm

Suzanne Farrell Ballet, UMASS Fine Arts Center, group tickets available

March 10, 3:00 pm

Dance to Stop Hunger, Open Square, contributions encouraged

June 9, 1:00 pm

Spring Performance and Silent Auction, Holyoke War Memorial, \$10.00 Adults, \$5.00 Children



2011-2012 MABETA Members

Gabrielle Engel
Emlyn Fenwick-Homstead
Angela Gauthier
Izzy Haas
Louisa Rader
Liam Saito

Angela Gauthier in a photo from Ron McKinney's Urban Portrait Series, opening October 21 in the Open Square Gallery

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