

En l'Air

News from
MASSACHUSETTS
ACADEMY of
BALLET
Educational Training
Association

SPRING 2018



MABETA's "Mighty Feat" ensemble at the Youth America Grand Prix finals in Purchase, NY



Spring Performance 2017. Photo: Charles Flachs

On Competitions

by Rose and Charles Flachs

Here at the Academy, we are now working towards the spring performance. At the same time, several students have prepared to compete in the Youth American Grand Prix and the Connecticut Classic ballet competitions. At the YAGP regional semi-finals in Worcester, Athina Alimonos received recognition for being in the top twelve of the performers in the senior classical division, while our ensemble piece "Mighty Feat" was accepted into the finals in New York. Athina performed again in the Toronto YAGP, and again she excelled, as did our ensemble in New York.

Competitions are a means to an end in the ballet profession. Obviously, winning is a boost to the dancer's confidence and recognition of their talents, but the

real benefits are in the hard work that is put into perfecting the material that is being rehearsed. While a competition is not really comparable to dancing in a company, the process leading up to a performance is very similar.

Competitions also are now being used as a means for artistic directors from ballet schools and companies to see a large number of dancers in one place. The way these competitions work allows directors to see dancers participating in performances and master classes, and to then offer scholarships and/or placement into one of their organizations. Nolan Saito and Aiden Moriarty were offered scholarships to the Boston Ballet summer intensive after participating in a master class at YAGP.

Continued on page 3

Up Next: Spring Performance 2018



Important dates!

MAY 12
Bus Trip to Boston Ballet
Bus leaves at 4:00 pm

MAY 26
Spring Performance
South Hadley High School,
1:00 pm

JUNE 9
Last Day of Classes

JULY 16-20
Summer Workshop
Ages 5-8

JULY 23-AUGUST 17
Summer Intensive

More info at
massacademyofballet.com
and on our Facebook page.

The Massachusetts Academy of Ballet

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Thirteen Years at MAB!

by Rose Flachs

When Sarah Soares was five years old, she registered for our creative movement class. It was September of 2005 and our first year in business. Now, Sarah is graduating and moving on to college, and we will miss her dearly. We have so many memories of Sarah at the studio, and wish to share just a few. She was a serious young dancer parading as a little bluebird in creative movement. She carefully followed Lada Isupova's instruction of coordinating the head with the port de bras in the pre-ballet class. And, she was the instigator in creating the "Hummingbird Swan Lake" in class. (Yes, under her cool demeanor she has a wonderful sense of humor!) Sarah was always enthusiastic and focused, to the extent where I recall hearing Dan Grezlak and Connie Flachs, level five students at the time, watching her in one of the many Etudes performances, say "Oh, she is so good, it is scary, and she is only ten years old!"

As Sarah grew as a dancer she had many successes as a member of MABETA including performing as Ruth in the *Nutcracker* as well as many other roles, in such pieces as *Esmeralda*, *La Bayadere*, *In the Mood* (the Chicken Dance) at YAGP, and of course, many ballets by Charles Flachs, with her cohorts Emma Jane and May. We remember her cool elegance and beautiful dancing in *Morning Light* by Charles Flachs.

We, of course, will miss Joao and Bernita, Sarah's parents. They have been staunch supporters of the school and MABETA, and Bernita has served on our Board. Sarah and her family know by now that no one leaves MAB forever. MAB is a family that students return to year after year, even after they graduate from high school, to share their experiences, accomplishments, and life-lessons. So, this is not good-bye to Sarah, but it is a huge CONGRATULATIONS! We look forward to hearing about her future experiences and accomplishments. We are sure she will do great things.

MABETA Shares the Art of Dance at Loomis Village, December 2017



This Summer at MAB



The summer program at MAB promises to be our best yet. Faculty and master classes by many professional artists including Connie Flachs, Matisse Madden, Sanda Lungu, Debra Vega, Lorelei Chang, and Erica Maillet, with the addition of Heather Reichgott as the musician for the advanced classes. Register now!

Valley Gives Day 2018

Valley Gives Day, May 1, was a Valley-wide day of giving, and for the second year, MABETA was a participant. We received a total of \$1,080 from nineteen donors. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this important annual fundraiser.

Extra thanks to MAB parent Mary Yun, for setting MABETA up as a Valley Gives recipient organization.

If you didn't get to contribute but would like to donate to our scholarship and community education fund, it's never too late—see the enclosed envelope!

MAB Faculty

Rose Flachs, Co-Director
Charles Flachs, Co-Director
Mændy MacFarland
Matisse Madden
Erica Maillet
Charles Markham

Alumni News Flashes

Isabelle Lu'u Lii Haas will graduate from University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music in December, and will hit the audition circuit soon thereafter! Erica Maillet is a Trainee and Administrative Manager with Vivid Ballet and sells her handmade ballet accessories at [etsy.com/shop/MailletBallet](https://www.etsy.com/shop/MailletBallet). Liam Saito was promoted (from Apprentice) to the Corps de Ballet at Royal Winnipeg Ballet for the 2018-19 season. Along with dancing with Grand Rapids Ballet, Connie Flachs is a co-founder of the annual "Better Body Image" conference. <https://www.betterbodyimage-conference.com/>. Alumni, do you have life news to share? Send your updates to rflachs@massacademyofballet.com!

Competitions, continued from page 1

Another positive element of the competition venue is the connection made with dancers from other studios. Our students get to see dancers training in a similar manner to themselves and share in a common experience. It is important for students to see dance on stage, and it can be inspiring to watch others their own age perform. There is also the exposure to other teachers and methods that we encourage our students to learn from while retaining what they already know is correct technique accrued from our syllabus.

We are very proud of the accomplishments of all of our students—competing or not—as each ballet class at MAB is considered a healthy competition for our

dancers as they strive to improve their technique and artistry.



Above: Athina at YAGP Regionals. Below: Gianna and Hannah at CT Classic.



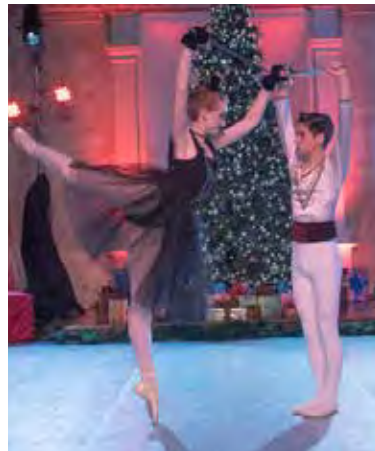
"From the dugout..." The Mighty Feat team backstage at the Pepsico Theatre at Purchase College, warmed up and ready to perform at YAGP Finals.



Nutcracker & Sweets 2017

Photos: Charles Flachs





A Wave to the MABETA Seniors

by Sarah Jackson, MABETA Board



l to r: Amy, Sarah and Athina

Ballet is an exacting art form. It requires dancers to present unnatural positions naturally, to make the arduous effortless, to beguile with deft sincerity. The agile, fluid, rhythmic movements that alternately grace and tear up stage and studio speak volumes to dancers' artistry but little to their inner selves. So it is with graduating seniors Athina Alimonos, Sarah Soares, and Amy Whitmore. As I watched them transform variously into the Mouse Queen, Sugar Plum Fairy, Snow, and Russian and Spanish Dancers in last December's *Nutcracker & Sweets*, I wondered which characters they mostly resembled, or if they were someone wholly different in real life.

Come to find out these young women are as elegant and frothy and deep as the very art form they have worked so hard to assimilate—and which has undoubtedly assimilated them.

Amy, who also dances with Betty Gunderson Studio of Dance, started ballet and jazz at the age of 5. She drives nearly an hour three times a week from West Brookfield for her MAB classes. "I just love MAB, Rose & Charles, and all the friends I've made here." Her first performance with MABETA was in the 2016 *Nutcracker & Sweets*. She loves all kinds of music—her playlist reflects her mood of the moment. She chooses slow over fast food, with a special fondness for potatoes of all kinds.

Sarah, born in Longmeadow, MA, is

Portuguese and American. She is fluent in the languages of both countries, among others. Her tastes range from J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* to David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*. There is an independent streak in her that leads to an embrace of indie rockers such as Khalid and Portugal. The Man. But can she resist a good chicken nugget? Slow food indeed, when there are eggs and pancakes and brownies on the menu! But the strongest indication that Sarah is a woman of intelligence and discerning taste is her choice of Chris Hemsworth over all the other Chrises of current note.

Athina is from Hadley MA. She also claims roots abroad, however: she is Greek and American, and she, too, is bilingual/bicultural and a dual national. Her musical taste is for Greek music. While she claims to prefer the measured pace of slow food, Denny's pancakes hold a special place in her heart. Her secret—or perhaps not so secret—hobbies include make-up, shopping and spending money. She has an exuberance about her as sparkly as her YAGP heels, which I can attest shine as brightly on stage as they do at the I-90 Charlton Service Area McDonald's.

All three young women choose allegro over adagio ("Adagio no more," says Sarah) and artistry over technical (or at least "a good combination of both" affirms Athina), they do diverge in the way they spend their time. Amy is headed to Butler University in Indianapolis for a BFA in Dance, with an eye on a career as a professional dancer. Athina



too is focused on dance—and more dance! Her time currently is taken up with auditions as she considers trainee positions and apprenticeships, all in the aim of furthering her future dance career.

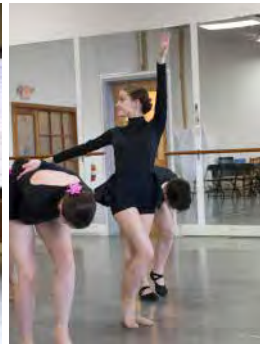
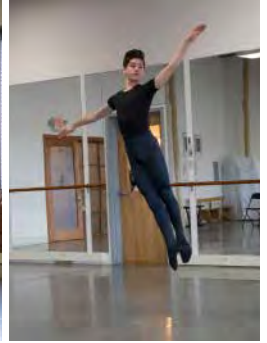
Sarah, meanwhile, in addition to pursuing cutting-edge culture and her secret hobby of water skiing and surfing on Narragansett Bay, is pleased to be heading off to Boston University next year to study international relations or computer science or maybe Russian. She is ready to study. She plans to continue taking ballet classes, but her priority is definitely academic.

Whatever their career trajectories, there is no doubt that the future holds success for these young women. In their ballet lives, off-stage and on, they have each demonstrated a penchant for hard work and a desire to always strive to be better. If diligence, perseverance, sheer brilliance and the beauty reflected in the art of doing your very best are any indication, I think Sarah, Athina and Amy are all off to exciting careers. Congrats!



Dance to Stop Hunger, to Benefit Kate's Soup Kitchen

April 28, 2018, MAB dancers presented an in-studio performance to benefit Kate's Soup Kitchen. We are proud to showcase our dancers and contribute to this important community resource for ten years! We raised \$275 to donate to Providence Ministries!



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Victory Theatre Tour



Massachusetts Cultural Council

On March 21, Rose & Charles and a group of MAB students and their families toured the Victory Theater on Suffolk St. in Holyoke. Plans are underway to return this magnificent, 1,600-seat theater to its original glory.

Excerpted from the Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts (MIFA) website (mifafestival.org/victory-theatre):

"In 2009 MIFA acquired the Victory Theatre. The iconic, Broadway-style theatre opened in 1920 and has been derelict since 1979. The Victory is being restored through a financing package which includes private, individual, corporate, and foundation donations, public grants, and State and Federal Historic Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits."

Donations are accepted at the website.

Dance with the professionals



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