

CORPS de Ballet International Inc.  
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School of Dance  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, Florida USA

*“IDENTIFYING INCLUSIVITY, EQUALITY, EQUITY, AND PRIVILEGE WITHIN BALLET’S  
REINING AND CULTURE”*

MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

“Racialized Visions of ‘the Other’: Histories of Orientalism Behind *La Bayadère*”  
Presenter: Colleen Barnes, MFA Candidate; University of Utah

**ABSTRACT:**

This paper superimposes three modalities: India’s colonial history, the history of *La Bayadère* in its many forms, and an Orientalist lens. Pierre Gardel’s 1810 opera *Les Bayadères*, Filippo Taglioni’s 1830 opera-ballet *Les Dieux et la Bayadères*, and Marius Petipa’s 1877 ballet *La Bayadère* each have significant premiere dates in juxtaposition to India’s colonial relationship with Europe. Reference to postcolonial theory further illuminates each production’s complicity with western patriarchal domination. This research takes a critical look into the misrepresentation and racism present in the productions of *La Bayadère*, and how this antiquated stereotyping is at play in today’s ballet community.

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### BIOGRAPHY:

Colleen Barnes is expected to earn her MFA in Ballet from the University of Utah in April 2019. She seeks to encourage ballet's much-needed shift to inclusivity through her research and teaching. Colleen has worked for the Joffrey Ballet School in various teaching and administrative roles since 2009, with which she has taught across the United States and abroad. She is the Artistic Director of Joffrey South, Joffrey Colorado Springs, and Joffrey Heartland summer intensives. Colleen danced professionally with the Dayton Ballet, Ballet Pensacola, and Dance Now! Miami.

### "Humanizing Ballet Training Through Inclusive Pedagogical Strategies"

Presenter: Dr. Tanya Berg, Sessional Lecturer; University of Toronto

### ABSTRACT:

This presentation discusses pedagogical strategies that allow students to achieve technical proficiency in ballet without feeling that their bodies are not suited to a perpetuated classical ideal. Ballet pedagogy should foster equity and diversity by creating inclusive studio environments and humanizing a dance form that has in the past been elitist and Eurocentric. Recent scholarship is used to address how teachers can allow ballet to be, and *feel*, accessible to dancers of all body types through imagery, safe alignment, and anatomical understanding, while fostering a joy of movement that has arguably been reserved for dance forms perceived as more progressive and accepting.

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### BIOGRAPHY:

Tanya Berg holds a PhD in Dance Studies from York University and is a graduate of Canada's National Ballet School Teacher Training Program. In addition to teaching in private studios, Tanya has taught at the University of Toronto in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education since 2003. She has presented papers on topics such as panopticism in dance education, innovation in ballet pedagogy, and conditioning for ballet dancers. Tanya's publications can be found in journals including *Research in Dance Education* and *Journal of Dance Education*, as well as the forthcoming anthology *Case Studies in Dance Education: Ethical Dimension of Humanizing Dance Pedagogy*.

### 'Othering' in America's Ballet Advertisements: The Troubling Representation of Race and Gender in Ballet Advertising"

Presenter: Dr. Melonie B. Murray, Associate Professor University of Utah

### ABSTRACT:

Given the various ways the ballet community is grappling with the contemporary repercussions of its gendered and racist history, the representation of race and gender within ballet advertisements is troubling. This presentation investigates how race and gender are represented in advertising campaigns created for ballet consumers. Using visual culture methodologies, I analyze how race and gender are represented in ballet advertisements, highlighting the significance of how images represent the culture of ballet. I argue that some advertisements are actually perpetuating Othering and inadvertently contradict the notion that ballet is progressing beyond its gendered and racist roots.

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### **BIOGRAPHY:**

Melonie is currently an Associate Dean within the College of Fine Arts at the University of Utah. Her research interests lie in exploring the continual evolution of ballet training methods and performances and, while honoring the past, investigating ballet through a critical theory lens. Topics of recent research have included analyzing the commoditization of dancers in the advertising campaigns of American ballet companies, exploring notions of ballet as a form of cultural identity, examining how gender is performed in early ballet training, and exploring ballet as a degree focus in American higher education.

Holding a BFA in Ballet from Friends University, MFA in Dance from the University of California, Irvine, and a PhD in Dance from Texas Woman's University, Melonie believes that there is a place for *all* dance forms within the academy, and her commitment to dance as a scholarly endeavor is paramount. She was instrumental in building the dance program at Colorado Mesa University and later served as the Ballet Program Coordinator. Melonie was also the author of a newly-revised MFA in Ballet Program at the University of Utah and served as its inaugural Director of Graduate Studies. Her academic writing has been published in peer-reviewed journals, and she continues to defend the arts, dance, and ballet as legitimate scholarly pursuits.

Melonie is certified in American Ballet Theatre's national training curriculum and has experience teaching multiple genres of studio and academic courses at several universities. Professional affiliations include CORPS de Ballet International, Dance Studies Association, and the World Dance Alliance-Americas. She has also serves regularly as an adjudicator for the American College Dance Association.

**"Interrupting Ballet Class – Developing Students' Voices"**  
**Presenter: Ilana Goldman; Associate Professor, Florida State University**

### **ABSTRACT:**

Over the last eight years I have been designing a student-centered ballet class that employs unconventional strategies and "interruptions" of the traditional ballet class culture and format to promote students' unique voices (both literally and figuratively). This workshop consists of a very abbreviated ballet class (no jumping!) for all abilities where I will share these methods. I will start with an explanation of my influences, many of which come from the contemporary dance realm, and will discuss each strategy after the participants engage with each exercise. Physical participation is not required. Observers are welcome.

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## BIOGRAPHY:

Ilana Goldman is an Assistant Professor of Dance at Florida State University and has taught and choreographed for schools and companies across the country. She currently serves as Washington D.C.-based Bowen McCauley Dance Company’s Choreographer in Residence. Her three short dance films, *Convergence*, *Fledgling*, and *InterState* have screened at numerous international film festivals.

She received her early training at the Maryland Youth Ballet and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from The Juilliard School, where she was awarded the John Erskine Prize for Artistic and Academic Excellence. She earned her Master of Fine Arts from the University of Washington.

Ilana danced professionally with Oakland Ballet, Sacramento Ballet, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and Trey McIntyre Project, and as a guest artist with Alonzo King's LINES Ballet.

“Draft, Workshop, Revise: Processes for an Inclusive Ballet Pedagogy in Higher Education”

Presenter: Kristin Marrs; Lecturer, University of Iowa

## ABSTRACT:

This paper is based on my ongoing research into how ballet class content and modes of assessment promote inclusivity within a diverse student population in higher education. I explain my qualitative research methods, non-authoritarian pedagogical tactics, and integration of Alexander Technique principles. Creative writing process pedagogical strategies such as workshopping, peer-to-peer feedback, drafting, and revising are beneficial models for developmental progress in my ballet classes. I engage in a structured collaboration with a focus group of students who analyze how such techniques meet their individual and collective needs, while grounding their experiences in the time-honored grammar of ballet technique.

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## BIOGRAPHY:

Kristin Marrs, MFA is a Lecturer in Ballet at the University of Iowa, where she teaches ballet and pointe technique, Alexander Technique, choreography, and dance studies courses. After studying at SUNY Purchase and London Studio Centre, she danced professionally with Columbus Dance Theatre, Arova Contemporary Ballet, and Ballet Quad Cities, and continues to perform as an independent artist. Marrs's research interests include the integration of somatic principles with ballet pedagogy. Her recent ballet *When Trees Say Nothing* was created in collaboration with fiber artist Mary Merkl-Hess and selected for performance at the 2019 ACDA Central Conference

### "Incorporating Questions of Equity and Access into University Coursework"

Presenter: Dr. Kate Mattingly; Assistant Professor, University of Utah

## ABSTRACT:

As educators we have integral roles to play in what our students learn, and I have discovered that our ballet undergraduates are invested in conversations about equity and access, and deeply committed to changing systems of exclusion. Rather than separate their coursework from events outside their classrooms, their curricula honors ballet as a site of critical inquiry that opens ways of understanding embodied knowledge and social change. In this paper I disclose how

curricula can foster critical thinking in technique and theory courses and foreground the importance of analytical approaches in both modalities.

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#### BIOGRAPHY:

Kate Mattingly is an Assistant Professor in the School of Dance at the University of Utah. Her research focuses on dance criticism and the transfer of experiences that are felt, embodied, and kinesthetic into formats that are written, spoken, and recorded. Her articles have been published in the New York Times, the Village Voice, Dance Research Journal, Dance magazine, Pointe magazine, The Washington Post, and many other journals and publications. She received her undergraduate degree in Architecture: History and Theory from Princeton University in 1993 and graduated with high honors. Her Master's of Fine Arts degree is from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts where she worked closely with Professor Deborah Jowitz and performed choreographic works by William Forsythe and Amanda Miller. Her doctoral degree from the University of California, Berkeley is in Performance Studies with a Designated Emphasis in New Media.

"Vaganova's Vision for Neoclassicism, Inclusivity, and Dancer Empowerment"

Presenter: Misa Oga; MFA Candidate, University of Utah

## ABSTRACT:

This paper uses historical evidence to demonstrate how Agrippina Vaganova advocated for progressive pedagogical methodologies. Ultimately, I argue that, while ballet has a distinct discipline, rigor, and integrity, its pedagogy is continuously evolving.

Historians primarily focus on Vaganova's refinement of classical ballet technique, and little is written about her broader vision for ballet. Vaganova advocated for dancers to approach their work with confidence and agency, regardless of age, gender, physique, and ability. I reveal how Vaganova encouraged neoclassicism, the modernization of ballet, and advocated for individuality from each dancer.

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## BIOGRAPHY:

Misa Oga is a graduate student in the MFA ballet program at the University of Utah, where she teaches ballet technique courses and is a graduate teaching assistant for ballet history courses. She is the artistic director and owner of MOGA Conservatory of Dance. Misa's research interests lie in exploring the evolution of ballet, particularly of progressive pedagogical methodologies. Misa is the recipient of the "Outstanding Teacher" award at the 2018 Youth America Grand Prix. Misa is an ABT Certified Teacher of the ABT National Training Curriculum, and was the teacher for the Pre-Primary through Level 3 demonstration classes for the ABT NTC Training in Salt Lake City.



“Arthur Mitchell & Dance Theatre of Harlem: Ballet, Inclusivity and Social Change Through the Arts”

Presenter: Keith Saunders; Assistant Professor of Professional Practice, Texas Christian University

ABSTRACT:

The diversity issue in ballet has been around at least since 1933 when Lincoln Kirstein described his vision for ballet in America, a vision including the equal participation of black and white practitioners. In 1969, the establishment and success of Dance Theatre of Harlem positioned Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook as powerful agents of inclusivity and empowerment through the arts. They changed perceptions about who could do ballet, and showed how it could change communities and change lives. I will examine that accomplishment and legacy and offer reasons and context for the rapid, unequivocal success of DTH from its inception.

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Over a 44-year professional career, Keith Saunders has practiced the art and science of ballet as a performing artist, teacher, ballet master, stager, coach, company director, director of education programs, lecturer, adjudicator, and consultant. A long-time dancer and ballet master with Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) under the direction of Arthur Mitchell (1975-2010) and Virginia Johnson (2010-2018), he has taught all levels of ballet while serving on the faculties of the DTH School, the BalletMet Dance Academy, the New Ballet School (Ballet Tech), Steps NYC, the 92<sup>nd</sup> St. Y, the University of Wyoming (Guest Artist-in-Residence), and the Snowy Range Dance Festival. He has choreographed works at the student, university, and professional levels, and taught innumerable workshops and master classes in studios, schools, colleges, and universities across the United States and abroad. In 2017, Saunders earned an MFA in Dance from Hollins University of Roanoke, VA. He joined the faculty of the School for Classical & Contemporary Dance at Texas Christian University in 2018.

### "Brown, White, Black: The Truth About the Unseen Ballerinas"

Presenter: Jennifer Weber; Assistant Professor, The College at Brockport, SUNY

## ABSTRACT:

The discipline of ballet has an acknowledged race problem. Predominantly stemming from white, Euro-centric cultures, the field of ballet continues to be scrutinized for its lack of diversity and lack of relevance to the larger cultures within which it is situated. Steeped in tradition, the field of ballet continues to bring reproductions and new works to the stage. Yet, by adhering to this way of existing, what perspectives are missing? This project responds to this criticism of ballet's lack of diversity by utilizing a theoretical and creative perspective to investigate ways in which the form can incorporate often missing voices in its narrative.

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## **BIOGRAPHY:**

Jennifer Weber, MFA, is on faculty at The College at Brockport State University of New York, as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Dance. Her research engages critical approaches to existing codified dance techniques to reimagine the ways in which the various training methods, practices, and genres of dance can be in conversation. The direct areas of application she investigates are dance pedagogy, creative process, and the individual artist. She has presented her research in Sydney, Australia; Florence, Italy; Provo, Utah; Salt Lake City, Utah; Geneva, New York; and Brockport, New York. Ms. Weber has been on faculty at the University of Utah, the University of Iowa, and many private schools across the United States. She specializes in ballet, contemporary technique, improvisation, creative process, teaching methods, and wellness practices.

Ms. Weber holds an MFA from the University of Iowa where she was an Iowa Arts Fellow and was a recipient of the Caroline H. Newhouse Scholarship. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, graduating summa cum laude with

honors. Ms. Weber has danced with the professional companies of Ballet Quad Cities, Omaha Theater Company, and Ballet Nebraska.