



Devon Carney, Artistic Director

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Kansas City Ballet Announces New Company Members

KANSAS CITY, MO (Sept. 17, 2015) — Kansas City Ballet Artistic Director Devon Carney today announced the appointment of two new members, Elysa Hotchkiss and Thom Panto, and two new apprentices, Lilliana Hagerman and Naomi Hergott to the Kansas City Ballet Company. Additionally there are 10 new members of Kansas City Ballet's Second Company comprised of KCB II dancers Ivan Braatz, Nikolas Gaifullin, Aaron Steinberg and Goldie Walberg and Trainees Miranda Dafoe, Lindsay Dekleva, Elizabeth Dennen, Melanie Jensen, Zoe Stein, and Kara Troester. High resolution photos can be downloaded [here](#).

Carney stated, "With the support of the community, we have been able to develop the Company as well as expand the scope of our second company, which includes KCB II and our Trainee program. We are pleased to welcome these exceptional dancers to Kansas City Ballet and Kansas City. I know our audiences will enjoy the talent and diversity that these artists will add to our existing roster of highly professional world class performers that grace our stage throughout the season. This can only bode well for exceptional artistic growth in both our school and professional company in the years to come."

New Kansas City Ballet Company members

Elysa Hotchkiss was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, and received her early training with the Lake Erie Ballet School. In 2003 she was offered a full scholarship to attend Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's Graduate Program. She then joined Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre as a company member in 2004 and was promoted to soloist in 2011. As a dancer with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, she enjoyed performing such roles as Gamzatti in *LaBayadere*, Mercedes in *Don Quixote*, Myrtha in *Giselle*, Russian Girl in *Serenade*, the lead in Dwight Rhoden's *Carmina Burana*, Lady Capulet in Jean-Christophe Maillot's *Romeo et Juliette*, the Sugar Plum Fairy in Terrence Orr's *The Nutcracker*, Flora in *Dracula* and the principal pas de deux in Balanchine's *Agon*.

Thom Panto, an Atlanta native, started dancing at age 11 and began his training with the New Mexico Ballet Company under the direction of Patricia Dickinson. After attending and graduating from SAB, he moved to Los Angeles and received a degree in Business: Merchandise Marketing from UCLA with a minor in fashion design from the Fashion Institute. While in LA, he trained and studied with Marat Duakayev of the Kirov and Patricia Neary of NYCB. Thom joined the Atlanta Ballet in 2007 and spent the last 8 seasons performing principal and featured roles in John McFall's *Jupiter, Tealia, Firebird*, and *THREE*, Snow King in Atlanta Ballet's *Nutcracker*, Christopher Hampson's *Sinfonietta Giocosa*, Helen Pickett's *Petal & Camino Real*, Ben Stevenson's *Three Preludes*, Dark Angel in Balanchine's *Serenade*, Principal Man in Christopher Wheeldon's *Rush*, Paris in Ballet De Monte Carlo's *Romeo et Juliette*, ABT's Alexei Ratmansky's *Seven Sonatas*, and of The Royal Ballet Wayne McGregor's *Eden/Eden*,

New Company Apprentices

Company Apprentices perform with the company under the tutelage of the artistic leadership as part of their initial professional experience.

Lilliana Hagerman was born in Pordenone, Italy, and started dancing at the age of six at Midwest Dance Academy in Illinois. She took multiple types of dance such as jazz, tap, modern and ballet. Ms. Hagerman spent five summers from 2005-2009 at the Orlando Ballet Summer Intensive, where she had training from Fernando Bujones, Julie Kent and Gelsey Kirkland. In 2009, she joined the Orlando Ballet trainee program, where she started her professional ballet training under the direction of Peter Stark. In 2010 she joined the Orlando Ballet Second Company under the direction of Dierdre Miles Burger where her repertoire included Titania from *A MidSummer Night's Dream*, Robert Hill's *Maestoso*, Dawn variation from *Coppelia*, and as corps de ballet in the

company productions of *Giselle*, *Carmen*, *Battle of the Sexes*, *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*. At the YAGP semi finals in Tampa 2012, Ms. Hagerman won the silver medal in the senior contemporary category and was top twelve in the senior classical category. In August 2012, she joined The Orlando Ballet main company, where she performed many roles such as the Dew Fairy in *Hansel and Gretel*, the Evil Witch in *Snow White*, Big Swans in *Swan Lake*, Harlot in *Romeo and Juliet* and productions such as Robert Hill's *Carmina Burana* and *Piano Concerto*, Peter Chu's *Touching Drops*, Abdur-Rahim Jackson's *Again for the First Time*, soloist in Telmo Moreira's *Barco Negro* and many others. In 2014, Ms. Hagerman performed with Kansas City Ballet's KCB II.

Naomi Hergott started dancing at the age of 3 in Augusta, Georgia, under the direction of Ron Jones and Jessica Bailey. To further her training, Ms. Hergott moved to Atlanta to study with Maniya Barredo. She spent summers training at CPYB, Kaatsbaan, Chautauqua, and Houston Ballet. Upon graduating, Ms. Hergott was invited to perform "Juliet" in Tom Pazik's *Romeo and Juliet* as guest artist with Philippine Ballet Theatre in Manila. She joined Colorado Ballet's studio company in 2011 and enjoyed dancing in ballets such as Glen Tetley's *Rite of Spring* and Balanchine's *Theme and Variations* during her two seasons with the company. Most recently, Ms. Hergott danced with Cincinnati Ballet's second company for two seasons, performing numerous roles with the company including works by Victoria Morgan, Devon Carney, and Septime Webre. Ms. Hergott graduated with her B.A. in Communications from Thomas Edison State College in 2014.

New KCB II dancers

KCB II, part of the second company of Kansas City Ballet, is Kansas City Ballet's emerging professionals program, giving talented young dancers a professional company experience. Dancers in the KCB II program are selected from auditions around the country. These dancers receive professional experience, performing corps de ballet roles in Kansas City Ballet full-length productions.

KCB II is committed to arts education, community outreach and the professional development of college graduates and undergraduates preparing for professional dance careers. KCB II provides a platform for emerging performers, teachers and choreographers to hone their technical skills and showcase their artistic talent. KCB II performs throughout the region through public performances, lecture demonstrations, residencies and workshops, enabling the community to experience live dance in a public setting. Dancers in KCB II act as ambassadors for Kansas City Ballet.

The new members of KCB II are:

Ivan Braatz was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. He began his ballet training at the San Francisco Ballet School, where he trained for 6 years. He then trained at Houston Ballet Academy for one year. Ivan has performed corps de ballet roles with both companies. Highlights of his career thus far include performing in Christopher Wheeldon's *Cinderella*, Stanton Welch's *Romeo and Juliet*, and as Russian in Helgi Tomasson's *The Nutcracker*.

Nikolas Gaifullin was born in Sarasota, Florida. He has also lived in Santiago, Chile, Amarillo, Texas, and presently Tulsa, Oklahoma. He began his ballet training in the family garage with his parents, Stephanie Murrish and Daniil Gaifullin and has trained with them ever since. Nikolas has been a guest performer on his own as well as with his parents with different companies. He has competed in the Youth American Grand Prix from 2005-2012, receiving numerous awards in both the semi-final and final rounds of the competition, as well as full scholarship offers. In 2012, while a student with the Tulsa Ballet Center for Dance Education, he had the privilege to work with choreographer Ma Cong, who created his contemporary solo "Angelo" for competition. In 2007 he performed in the International Spoleto Festival in Italy, received the "Certificate of Achievement" from the Mayor of Amarillo for this performance, the First place winner of the Dance Magazine video contest and rare privilege of a private photo session with the acclaimed ballet photographer/critic Nina Alover. In 2008 he was featured in the Dance Magazine article "Child Prodigies". In 2012 he was Silver Medalist in the World Ballet Competition, recipient of the Grishko Scholarship award from the Carreno Dance Festival, and guest performer in the 17th International Miami Dance Festival, Young Medalists performance. In 2015 he was the Harlequin Floor scholarship recipient for the month of April, attended ABT Collegiate Summer intensive on full scholarship, and Canada's National Ballet School.

Aaron Steinberg is from Tenafly, New Jersey, started training at 17 at Nunnbetter Dance Theatre in Bergenfield, New Jersey. He went on to train at the University of Oklahoma, and the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at American Ballet Theatre. Aaron completed his training and graduated from the Hamburg Ballet School directed by John Neumeier. He has danced for the Peridance Contemporary Dance Company where he performed works by Igal Perry, and Dwight Rhoden. He also spent a season at the Sarasota Ballet where he performed works by Sir Fredrick Ashton, Rudolph Nureyev, and Mikhail Fokine.

Goldie Jane Walberg, grew up in Sherman Oaks, California. She studied ballet under Andrea Paris Gutierrez at the Los Angeles Ballet Academy in Encino, California. In addition, Goldie has studied at the Harid Conservatory, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and on scholarship at the Houston Ballet. In 2012, Goldie was the only North American recipient of The Royal Academy of Dance Solo Seal

Award. In 2013, Goldie qualified for the second time as a soloist at the Youth America Grand Prix Finals in New York. There, she received a full scholarship to The Washington Ballet School in Washington, D.C. In 2014, Goldie started her professional career as a member of Ballet Met II in Columbus, Ohio, under the direction of Edwaard Liang. While at Ballet Met, she was a featured soloist in *The Nutcracker*, and appeared in the world premiere of Edwaard Liang's *Cinderella*.

New Trainee Dancers

The Trainee Program, which is tuition based, aims to nurture and develop young aspiring post-graduate dancers' technical skills and artistry, ultimately preparing them for a professional dance career by bridging the gap between the student and KCB II. In addition to their dance studies, trainees participate in some company classes, have the opportunity to be considered for performances with Kansas City Ballet Company during the season and also perform in tandem with KCB II in their own educational and community outreach performances throughout the year.

The new members include Miranda DaFoe, Lindsay Dekleva, Elizabeth Dennen, Melanie Jensen, Zoe Stein and Kara Troester.

About Kansas City Ballet

To make Kansas City a destination for dance

Founded in 1957, Kansas City Ballet is a 28-member professional ballet company under the leadership of Artistic Director Devon Carney and Executive Director Jeffrey J. Bentley. The company's mission is to establish Kansas City Ballet as an indispensable asset in its community through exceptional performances, excellence in dance training and quality community education programs for all ages.

Kansas City Ballet is home to Kansas City Ballet School with an enrollment of 1800+ children and adults offering professional training for the career-minded student as well as for those simply seeking a healthy lifestyle.

Through its professional company, its second company (KCB II and Trainees) and its many community service programs such as Reach Out and Dance (ROAD), we seek to nurture and develop our artists, audiences and students in the values inherent in the creativity, diversity and joy of dance.

Our home, the Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity, in conjunction with our Resident Company status at the world-class Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, truly has positioned Kansas City as a destination for dance.

Kansas City Ballet 2015-2016 Season at a Glance

The Three Musketeers

Oct. 9-18, 2015 | Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts
Music performed by Kansas City Symphony

A rollicking ballet of swashbuckling, swordplay and daring in the French court of Louis XIII. With every major role danced by men, *The Three Musketeers* will thrill audiences with magnificent jumps and brilliant bravura. All for one and one for all!

The Three Musketeers

Choreography: André Prokovsky
Music: Giuseppe Verdi arranged by Guy Woolfenden

The Nutcracker (All-New Production)

Dec. 5-24, 2015 | Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts
Music performed by Kansas City Symphony

Kansas City Ballet Artistic Director Devon Carney presents an all-new production of this favorite holiday classic. Presented by Bank of America.

The Nutcracker

Choreography: Devon Carney
Music: Peter I. Tchaikovsky

Swan Lake

Feb. 19-28, 2016 | Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts
Music performed by Kansas City Symphony

This stunning Kansas City premiere production of *Swan Lake* from Artistic Director Devon Carney, choreographed to the passionate music of Peter I. Tchaikovsky, is a rare opportunity to enjoy one of ballet's true romantic classics.

Swan Lake

Choreography: Devon Carney after Marius Petipa
Music: Peter I. Tchaikovsky

New Moves

April 1-9, 2016 | Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity

New Moves is a unique performance event designed to search out, develop and showcase new emerging choreographers both from within Kansas City Ballet and from the national dance scene.

Rite of Spring

May 6-15, 2016 | Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts
Music performed by Kansas City Symphony

Presenting one world premiere and Kansas City premieres, and a recently created renowned work from Adam Hougland.

Petal

Choreography: Helen Pickett
Music: Thomas Newman and Philip Glass

World Premiere

Choreography: Viktor Plotnikov
Music: Antonín Dvořák

Diving into the Lilacs

Choreography: Yuri Possokhov
Music: Boris Tchaikovsky

Rite of Spring

Choreography: Adam Hougland
Music: Igor Stravinsky

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