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CONTACT: Ellen McDonald  
816.213.4355  
[publicity@kcballet.org](mailto:publicity@kcballet.org)

For Tickets: 816.931.8993 or [www.kcballet.org](http://www.kcballet.org)

## **Kansas City Ballet Announces Company Dancer Promotions and New Members**

**KANSAS CITY, MO (Sept. 12, 2023)** — Kansas City Ballet Artistic Director Devon Carney today announced the promotion of one member and appointment of five new dancers to the professional Company.

Carney said: “Since my arrival, it has been my intent to develop dancers within our organization and create a seamless bridge for those dancers interested in making a career here in Kansas City, with some of the most established and renowned faculty and guest artists available. This year, we are thrilled to announce not only the addition of several new Company members but a growing number of promotions. This is a testament not only to the accomplishments of these artists but of the level of support, interest, and commitment from the community. Kansas City is truly a destination for dance.”

### **Company Members**

New Members **Aidan Duffy**, **Chase Hanson**, and **Amelia Meissner** will join the Kansas City Ballet Company. **Sophie Hod**, formerly a 2022-2023 KCB Apprentice has been promoted.

### **Company Apprentices**

New Members **Amira Hogan** and **Elliott Rogers** will join the Company as Apprentices.

**Second Company (KCB II and Trainees make up the Second Company)**

## KCB II

**New Member McKibben Needham** will join KCB II. **Troy Monger-Levin**, formerly a 2022-2023 KCB Trainee, will join KCB II.

## Trainees

Graduates of Kansas City Ballet School **Sage Guillot**, **Dylan Wills**, and Kansas City Ballet Summer Intensive student **Elena Victoria** also will join the Trainee Program. New Members **Ava Bernardo**, **Emma Blake**, **Gordon Camplejohn**, **Jake Lapham**, **Laila Madison**, **Mei McArtor**, **Olivia Pearsall**, **Reagan Pender**, **Maya Sprague**, and **Aaron Williamson** will join the Trainee Program.

High resolution photos of all the members can be downloaded [here](#).

## New Company Members

### Aidan Duffy

Originally from Philadelphia, Mr. Duffy began his training with the School of Pennsylvania (now Philadelphia) Ballet and the Rock School for Dance Education. He then joined Boston Ballet School's Professional Division as a recipient of the Pao Scholarship, before being invited to participate in Boston Ballet's Graduate Program. His training was supplemented by coaching with Chérie Noble and summers at the School of American Ballet, San Francisco Ballet School, Miami City Ballet School, and Ellison Ballet.

Mr. Duffy's previous repertoire includes George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, Angel Corella's *Don Quixote*, and Ben Stevenson's *Cinderella* with Pennsylvania Ballet, Mikko Nissinen's *The Nutcracker* and Petipa/Ashton's *The Sleeping Beauty* with Boston Ballet, and Franz in *Coppélia* Act 3, pas de trois from *Le Corsaire*, and roles in new works by Ja' Malik, Chyrstyn Fentroy and Arianna Hughlett with Boston Ballet School. Mr. Duffy has also had the privilege of performing alongside the Philadelphia Orchestra and Cleveland Orchestra.

### Chase Hanson

Chase Hanson began his dance training at the age of 8 in Stamford, Connecticut, at the Connecticut Ballet Center and Greenwich Ballet Academy. In 2019, he received a full scholarship to attend the ABT Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis school, where he trained for 3 years. While at the JKO school, Mr. Hanson was chosen by Twyla Tharp to be part of the original creation of Twyla Now at New York City Center, and in his final year, he was selected to compete at the 2022 Prix de Lausanne in Montreux, Switzerland, where he was a semi-finalist. Upon graduation, Mr. Hanson joined the San Francisco Ballet Trainee program under the direction of Patrick Armand. As a Trainee, he performed works by Val Caniparoli, Miles Thatcher, Davide Occipinti, and Dana Genshaft. He also performed with the corps de ballet in *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and Christopher Wheeldon's *Cinderella*.

### Amelia Meissner

Amelia Meissner was born in San Antonio, Texas, and began her ballet training with the Ballet Conservatory of South Texas. She attended multiple summer intensives at

Houston Ballet Academy and was invited to join the professional training division in 2017 at fifteen. She progressed through the academy levels and joined Houston Ballet II in 2020 under the direction of Claudio Muñoz. During her time in the second company, Amelia performed in featured roles with the academy, including Kitri in excerpts of Ben Stevenson's *Don Quixote* and Raymonda in Claudio Muñoz's *Raymonda* and Corps de Ballet roles with the company. Ms. Meissner was promoted to apprentice with Houston Ballet in 2022 and performed Corps roles in Stanton Welch's *The Nutcracker* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Trey McIntyre's *Peter Pan*, and more. In the fall of 2022, she traveled with the company to Tokyo to tour Stanton Welch's *Swan Lake*. Ms. Meissner joins Kansas City Ballet in 2023 as a new dancer. When she is not dancing, Ms. Meissner is an avid reader, enjoys travel, the outdoors, and following the PGA Tour. She is pursuing her bachelor's degree.

## Promoted Company Member

### Sophie Hod

Sophie Hod was born in Great Neck, New York and began her dance training at Studio Maestro. In 2007, Ms. Hod began training at The School of American Ballet, the official school of the New York City Ballet. In 2013, Ms. Hod began training at Ballet Academy East. In 2017, she then went on to dance with Miami City Ballet School. Ms. Hod joined Cincinnati Ballet as a trainee for the 2018-2019 season, where she performed corps de ballet roles in many of the company's productions.

Ms. Hod joined Kansas City Ballet's Second Company in 2019. She spent two years as a Trainee, and one year as a KCB II dancer. In 2022, she was promoted to Company Apprentice, and in 2023, she was promoted to a full member of the Main Company. Over the years, she has performed in many ballets with Kansas City Ballet – her favorites include George Balanchine's *Serenade*, Lila York's *Celts*, Devon Carney's *Swan Lake*, Alexander Ekman's *Cacti*, and Jiří Kylián's *Petite Mort*. Ms. Hod is a choreographer as well as a dancer. She discovered her passion for choreographing during her time at Miami City Ballet School while creating a piece for their Student Choreographic Workshop. During her apprentice year, she choreographed her first work on the Main Company for New Moves and co-choreographed a work on the Second Company the year prior. Ms. Hod is thrilled to begin her fifth season with Kansas City Ballet.

## New Company Apprentices

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

### Amira Hogan

Texas native Amira Hogan began her dance journey at age 6 at the YMCA and fell in love with ballet. She continued her training at Robert Underwood's School for dance, TKB Center for Ballet & Dance and graduated from Vitacca Vocational School for

Dance in 2023. Ms. Hogan is a Youth America Grand Prix Hope Award recipient, a three-time YAGP Finalist, two-time YAGP Final Round participant, YAGP Champion and YAGP Nervi Intensive Festival participant. Ms. Hogan was also selected as an ADC/IBC Finalist and advanced to the final round twice. She received the World Ballet Competition's Promise Award and was awarded Emerging Artist. She has received numerous scholarships and offers worldwide. Ms. Hogan is excited and honored for her newest chapter as a company member of Kansas City Ballet.

### **Elliott Rogers**

Elliott Rogers is a native Chicagoan and began dancing at the age of 2. He trained with Ruth Page where he received many opportunities such as participating in an exchange program with the Cuban National Ballet School and a partner Spanish school. At 14, he moved to Houston and began training with the Houston Ballet Academy's Professional Division for 4 years. After his time in the Professional Division, he joined Houston Ballet II for 2 years. He widely expanded his repertoire and in 2023 he was selected to represent HBII in "Assemblé International", a program where 37 schools from all over the world come together to perform hosted by the National Ballet School of Canada. Completing his training with the HBA, he joins the Kansas City Ballet as an apprentice as his first step as a professional dancer.

### **KCB II**

KCB II, part of the Second Company of Kansas City Ballet, is Kansas City Ballet School's emerging professionals' program, giving talented young dancers a professional company experience. These dancers receive professional experience performing corps de ballet roles in Kansas City Ballet full-length productions.

The KCB II program is committed to arts education, community engagement, and the development of aspiring young artists preparing them for professional dance careers. KCB II provides a platform for emerging performers 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.

### **New KCB II Dancers**

#### **McKibben Needham**

Born in Siberia, McKibben Needham began dancing with Dancer's Workshop in Jackson Wyoming under Babbs Case. Mr. Needham went on to dance on full scholarship with Jeff Rogers at Ballet West Academy. During his time with BWA; he notably performed the roles of Sugarplum Cavalier, Snow Prince, Russian and Arabian, Balanchine's *Western Symphony*, excerpts from *Jewels*, and also various roles on the Ballet West main stage. Placing in YAGP regionals, he attended finals in New York in 2019. He is the 2018 FQ Lawson Scholarship Award recipient. In 2023, Mr. Needham completed his graduating year with American Ballet Theatre's JKO school, while representing the school in upstate New York performing the role of Sugarplum Cavalier.

## Promoted KCB II Dancer

### Troy Monger-Levin

Troy Monger-Levin began his training in 2019 with Gina Illingworth in Camino, California. After training at Camino Classical Ballet for a year, he began to train with Pamela Hayes in El Dorado Hills, CA. After spending his first Summer Intensive on scholarship with Ellison Ballet, he accepted a place in the Kansas City Ballet School Daytime Program on scholarship. After a year with KCBS, Mr. Monger-Levin accepted a Trainee contract with Kansas City Ballet, and a season later was promoted to Kansas City Ballet II. During his time with KCB, he has performed Corps De Ballet roles in Devon Carney's *The Nutcracker* and *Giselle*, Mark Morris' *Sandpaper* Ballet and had the opportunity to understudy in Alexander Ekman's *Cacti*.

### New Trainee Dancers

The Trainee Program, which is a tuition-based program of Kansas City Ballet School, aims to nurture and develop young aspiring post-secondary 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 perform in tandem with KCB II in their own educational and community outreach performances throughout the year.

Graduates of Kansas City Ballet School **Sage Guillot**, **Dylan Wills**, and Kansas City Ballet Summer Intensive student **Elena Victoria** will also join the Trainee Program. New Members **Ava Bernardo**, **Emma Blake**, **Gordon Camplejohn**, **Jake Lapham**, **Laila Madison**, **Mei Marcia McArtor**, **Olivia Pearsall**, **Reagan Pender**, **Maya Sprague**, and **Aaron Williamson** will join the Trainee Program.

### Media

Visit [www.kcballet.org](http://www.kcballet.org) for more information about Kansas City Ballet's 2023-2024 season and [www.kauffmancenter.org](http://www.kauffmancenter.org) for a downloadable media kit about the Kauffman Center. Find high-res photos with IDs and photo credits at [www.flickr.com/photos/67555847@N06/sets/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/67555847@N06/sets/), B-roll with IDs and credits at [www.youtube.com/user/kansascityballet](https://www.youtube.com/user/kansascityballet) and digital content with IDs and credits at <https://vimeo.com/kcballet>.

### Ticket and Season Subscriber Information

If you would like to learn more information about new subscriptions and renewals, please call the Kansas City Ballet ticket office **816.931.8993** or visit [www.kcballet.org/subscriptions](http://www.kcballet.org/subscriptions). Single tickets are now on sale.

### Additional Information

Visit [www.kcballet.org](http://www.kcballet.org) for more information about Kansas City Ballet's 2023-2024 season and [www.kauffmancenter.org](http://www.kauffmancenter.org) for a downloadable media kit about the Kauffman Center.

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## About Kansas City Ballet

*MISSION: To Inspire and Engage Through the Beauty, Power & Passion of Dance*

*VISION: Outstanding Dance Experiences Accessible to All*

Founded in 1957, Kansas City Ballet is a professional ballet company led by Artistic Director Devon Carney and Executive Director David Gray. Kansas City Ballet is an indispensable community asset through exceptional performances, excellence in dance training and quality community engagement and education programs for all ages. Kansas City Ballet is home to Kansas City Ballet School which, with an enrollment of more than 1,000 children and adults, offers professional training for the career-minded student as well as for those simply seeking a healthy lifestyle.

Through the professional company, second company (KCB II & Trainees), and Community Engagement and Education Department, Kansas City Ballet seeks to nurture and develop artists, audiences, and students in the values inherent in the creativity, diversity, and joy of dance. The company's 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, positions Kansas City as a destination for dance. Visit [www.kcballet.org/kansas-city-ballet-press-releases/](http://www.kcballet.org/kansas-city-ballet-press-releases/) for more info.

Kansas City Ballet's website is mobile and ticket-purchase friendly. Receive daily updates by joining the KCB Fan Page, [www.facebook.com/kcballet](https://www.facebook.com/kcballet), and following @kcballet on Twitter. Follow our blog at [www.kcballet.org/blog](http://www.kcballet.org/blog). Watch videos at [www.youtube.com/kansascityballet](https://www.youtube.com/kansascityballet), and view photos at <https://www.instagram.com/kcballet/>.

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