



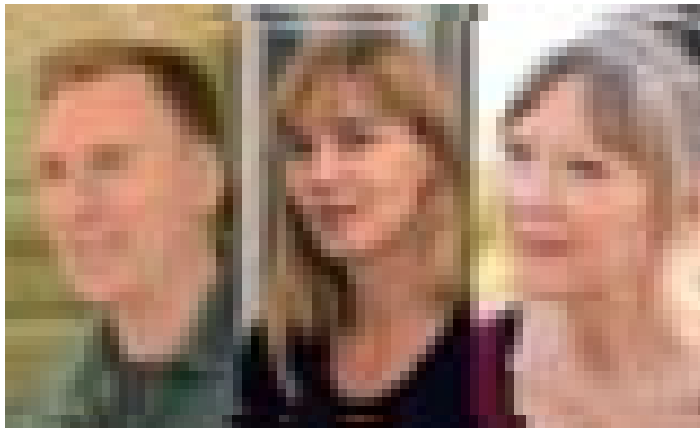
Amy Brandt
Oct. 03, 2018 02:33PM EST

News →



Kelsie Nobriga and Matthew Pawlicki Sinclair in rehearsal for August Bournonville's "Napoli." Photo by Yi Yin, Courtesy OBT.

This week marks a milestone achievement for Oregon Ballet Theatre: **October 6–13**, the company will unveil Danish choreographer August Bournonville's full-length *Napoli*. OBT is only the second American company to perform the full-length version (Ballet Arizona was the first, in **2015**), and it is the first to build a production of Bournonville's 1842 ballet from scratch by investing in its own sets and costumes. In addition, a "dream team" of staggers with deep Royal Danish Ballet roots has come to Portland to stage the work.



Artistic director Kevin Irving notes that OBT currently only owns two full-length productions: *Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*. He felt *Napoli*, which follows the love story between Teresina and Gennaro, a young fisherman, would make a popular addition to the repertoire. "It's a simple journey to a culmination that celebrates coming together in a community, and I think that's what makes it timeless," he says.



Eva Burton in rehearsal for Bournonville's "Napoli." Photo by Yi Yin, Courtesy OBT.

Irving's plan to produce an evening-length *Napoli* has been years in the making. He started by having the company perform Act III, famous for its rousing tarantella, in 2015. "I hoped that by doing the third act, we would create some momentum for doing the full ballet," he says. He brought in Bournonville producer and former Royal Danish Ballet artistic director Frank Anderson to stage it, and even **sent a group of five dancers** to Copenhagen to train in the Danish style. "Frank and I talked about it—first let's whet the appetite, give the company a chance to dabble in and get accustomed to the Bournonville style and then see how it goes." To realize the full-length production, Irving commissioned Marie í Dali to design the sets and costumes and brought back Anderson, as well as



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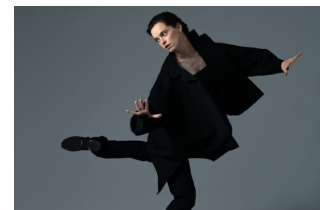


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former Royal Danish Ballet stars Dinna Bjørn and Eva Kloborg, to stage it. "It's really useful to have deep immersion in a style in order to inform really great artistry and versatility," says Irving. "And Bournonville is a deep dive."



Bournonville stager Frank Anderson with OBT principal Peter Franc. Photo by Yi Yin, Courtesy OBT.

Mastering the Danish choreographer's fleet-footed choreography is not easy, but OBT's dancers are prepared. Much of the current troupe danced in 2015's Act III performances, and Bournonville variations have since been integrated into OBT II's curriculum so that younger dancers are familiar with the style. Plus, Anderson, Kloborg and Bjørn came to Portland six months ago to cast the ballet and stage some initial material before returning in early September. "For the men, there's so much petite allégo, grand allégo, beats and double tours and they all have to be extremely precise," says principal dancer Peter Franc, who stars as Gennaro in the opening night cast. "You need a lot of lower leg stamina, yet the arms are very calm."



OBT principal Xuan Cheng in rehearsal for "Napoli." Photo by Yi Yin, Courtesy OBT.

Principal Xuan Cheng, who plays Teresina alongside Franc, notes that perfecting the upper body's simplicity is harder than it looks. "The shape of the fingers, how you open your arms from first to second position—everything has to be so graceful, like it's nothing, even if you're dying!"



Visiting stager Dinna Bjørn. Photo by Yi Yin, Courtesy OBT.

In addition, the ballet's copious amounts of mime—so central in Bournonville ballets—must also be perfected. Anderson, Bjørn and Kloborg have worked extensively with the dancers on getting it right. "All of the mime has music, and there are so many details," says Cheng. "We repeat again and



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again and again." Franc agrees. "We work on the mime as much as we work on the dancing," he says. But he adds that the Danish team's passion for Bournonville is contagious. "They just love what they're doing, and it spreads to everybody else in the room."



Stager Eva Kloborg works with Franc and Cheng in rehearsal. Photo by Yi Yin, Courtesy OBT.

Irving hopes the OBT production will inspire other directors to bring *Napoli* to American stages. "It's warm, it's accessible, it's a great tool for pushing your dancers' artistic growth," he says. "And it's somewhat of an antidote to the world around us. You get the sense that everybody, no matter how different, can come together when they're dancing."

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 **Julia Guiheen**
Oct. 18, 2018 12:58PM EST

Ballet Stars →



Diana Adams and Irving Davies in "Invitation to the Dance," via YouTube.

Elegant, enigmatic and versatile, Diana Adams was a muse to the choreographic visionaries of her day. She originated roles in works by Agnes de Mille, Antony Tudor, George Balanchine and Gene Kelly, most famously the **edgy pas de deux** in Balanchine's *Agon* alongside the recently departed **Arthur Mitchell**. But outside the ballet world she may be better remembered for her role in Gene Kelly's 1956 film *Invitation to the Dance*. In a swanky, style-blending duet, Adams's polished pointework and long lines juxtapose British tap dancer and choreographer Irving Davies' suave, grounded style.



Diana Adams and Irving Davies - Invitation to Dance

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Oct. 18, 2018 01:19PM EST

Teresa D'Ortone, Rock alumna, ABT Studio Company

For over three decades, The Rock School for Dance Education, under the leadership of Bo and Stephanie Spasoff has been developing dancers with a clean, strong technique and artistic refinement.

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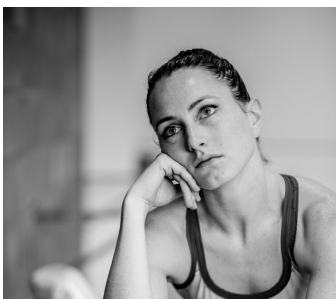
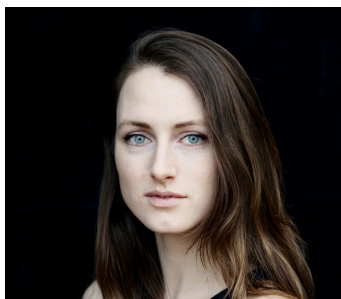
Chava Lansky
Oct. 17, 2018 04:06PM EST

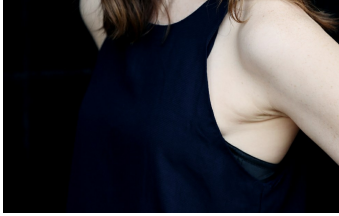
[Ballet Stars](#) →

Shelby Williams as her alter ego, Biscuit Ballerina. Photo by Nicha Rodbon, Courtesy Williams.

Last fall, Instagram's dance community blew up when an account titled Biscuit Ballerina started posting videos of an anonymous dancer doing laughably bad ballet. With a look of fierce determination, she would awkwardly make her way through well-known variations, stumbling over her pointe shoes. Comments ranged from hilarity to criticism to confusion: Who was this dancer?

The answer is Shelby Williams, a [soloist with Royal Ballet of Flanders](#). Growing up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Williams didn't become serious about ballet until age 11. At 15 she left home to train year-round at The Washington School of Ballet, and a year later transferred to the Houston Ballet Academy, where she quickly entered Houston Ballet II. As a student, Williams often felt crippled by self-criticism. "I was doing something I was passionate about every day, but I hated it," she says. Eventually she went to a sports psychologist who helped her learn how to enjoy the process and not take herself too seriously. After class, instead of feeling ashamed by the mistakes she'd made, Williams started to overexaggerate what she'd done, making herself and her classmates laugh.





Shelby Williams as herself. Photo by Kensilav Kanev/De-Da Productions, Courtesy Williams.



Williams as Biscuit. Photo by Nicha Rodboon, Courtesy Williams.

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Natalia Boesch

Oct. 16, 2018 04:33PM EST

Ballet Training →

Torija coaches BalletMet Dance Academy summer intensive student Polina Myers. Photos by Jennifer Zmuda, Courtesy BalletMet.

It's the complex transfer of weight that makes piqué turns en dehors—commonly called "step-overs"—so tricky. Maria Torija, director of the BalletMet Dance Academy, shares her ideas on how to successfully navigate these inevitable variation-ending turns.

What's in a name: " 'Step-over' is the American way," Maria Torija explains. But the turn has many names. "Vaganova calls it 'tour dégagé.' 'Lame-duck'—that's the English! Maybe we should go to the French. The Paris Opéra calls it 'tour piqué en dehors.' "

Walk the line: Whether you tombé front or side, Torija stresses the importance of precision in consecutive piqués en dehors. "Hold the passé until you finish the turn, and then tombé right in the path you're going, like on a tightrope." The leg doesn't extend to the front or side. That's a different step. "Tombé means you fall into it. It's a very quick motion."

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Oct. 16, 2018 03:46PM EST

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Josephine Lee
Oct. 16, 2018 12:22PM EST

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Josephine Lee exploring Oklahoma. Photo Courtesy Lee.

Earlier this summer, we followed master pointe shoe fitter [Josephine Lee](#) of the California-based [The Pointe Shop](#) as she made her on a pointe shoe fitting tour around the [West Coast](#) and [California](#). Now she's back, this time on a 45-day tour from California to Chicago, educating students on all things pointe shoes and helping them to find their perfect fit. Lee's making stops at top ballet companies and academies across the country, interviewing school directors and chatting with professional ballerinas to find out how they customize and break in their pointe shoes. Below, check out Lee's stop at Oklahoma City Ballet. She touches base with company soloist [Amanda Popejoy](#) and school director [Penny Askew](#). Stay tuned for more!



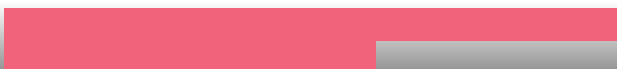


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Amy Brandt

Oct. 16, 2018 11:09AM EST



Sarah Beth Marr. Photo by Oliver Endahl of Ballet Zaida, Courtesy Marr.

Several years ago, Sarah Beth Marr, then a dancer with Mejia Ballet International in Arlington, Texas, went to see a famous ballerina give an interview at a nearby theater. She was eager to hear the dancer's insights on navigating a ballet career. "I was hoping for some kind of secret sauce in order to keep going," she says. When it came time for a question and answer period, several in the audience asked the ballerina about what got her through challenging times. "Her answer was that she worked really hard and pushed herself and tried to be the best," says Marr, "and there's a lot of truth in that." But she was left with a heavy feeling inside. "Is it all about working really hard and striving and carving my own path, or is there something deeper?"

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Chava Lansky

Oct. 15, 2018 09:52PM EST

News →

Joffrey Ballet's April Daly, Yoshihisa Arai and Amanda Assucena in Christopher Wheeldon's *Swan Lake*. Assucena will make her debut in the role of Odette/Odile this week. Photo by Cheryl Mann, Courtesy Joffrey.

Wonder what's going on in ballet this week? We've pulled together some highlights.

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Kathryn Holmes

Oct. 15, 2018 02:26PM EST

Ballet Training →

Remie Goins, a student at International City School of Ballet in Atlanta, performs at the YAGP finals. Photo by VAM, Courtesy YAGP.

You've watched *First Position*, the 2011 documentary about dancers at Youth America Grand Prix. You've studied videos of past ballet competition winners online. Now, you're interested in joining those elite ranks by entering a competition yourself. But what if your school doesn't have a program set up to guide you through the process? Pointe asked four experts to break down what ballet competition newbies need to know.

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Chava Lansky

Oct. 15, 2018 12:00PM EST

[News](#) →

Joseph Gordon, pictured here in George Balanchine's *Who Cares?*, became New York City Ballet's newest principal this weekend. Photo by Paul Kolnik, Courtesy NYCB.

On October 13, the evening before the close of New York City Ballet's fall season and longtime principal **Joaquin De Luz**'s retirement performance, Jonathan Stafford, the leader of the company's interim artistic team, promoted seven company dancers: six men and one woman. In addition to De Luz, NYCB lost three other principal men this fall. Chase Finlay, Zachary Catazaro and Amar Ramasar **were fired** last month in the midst of a scandal surrounding the sharing of sexually explicit communications. With principal Adrian Danchig-Waring out of commission **while recovering** from a broken foot, the company has been in need of male dancers to bolster its upper ranks.

Joseph Gordon has been promoted to principal, and **Daniel Applebaum**, **Harrison Coll**, **Claire Kretzschmar**, **Aaron Sanz**, **Sebastian Villarini-Velez** and **Peter Walker** have been promoted to soloist. All seven made a number of debuts throughout the year and shone in featured roles; we've rounded up some of their recent accomplishments below.

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Chava Lansky

Oct. 12, 2018 04:52PM EST

[News](#) →

From left: ABT principals Devon Teuscher, Christine Shevchenko and Gillian Murphy in *Praedicere*. Photo by Marty Sohl, Courtesy ABT.

Last spring American Ballet Theatre artistic director **Kevin McKenzie** announced the company's *Women's Movement*, a multi-year initiative to support the creation of new work by female choreographers. ABT's fall season, running **October 17–28** at Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Theater, sets the project in full swing. The opening gala features a world premiere by tap extraordinaire **Michelle Dorrance**. A co-commission with the Vail Dance Festival, this work marks ABT's third collaboration with Dorrance this year: She created *Praedicere*, a pièce d'occasion for ABT's spring gala, as well as a work on company dancers at Vail last summer. The gala performance also includes past and present works by two female choreographers:

Twyla Tharp's 1986 *In The Upper Room* and [Lauren Lovette's](#) 2017 *Le Jeune*, which will be danced by the ABT Studio Company.

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Oct. 01, 2018 04:01PM EST

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Sarah Lane and Jeffrey Cirio in *Harlequinade*. Photo: Erin Baiano

American Ballet Theatre's two months of performances at New York City's Metropolitan Opera House can be an exciting but demanding time for the dancers. With nine ballets in eight weeks including *Whipped Cream* and *Harlequinade*, a night off is hard to come by.



James Whiteside as Harlequin in *Harlequinade*. Photo: Rosalie O'Connor

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