

LOUISVILLE BALLET

SWAN LAKE



ÉTOILE

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Company Artist Sarah Bradley
Cover: Company Artists Sarah Bradley and Nicholas Bentz
Photos by Andrew Kung

A LETTER FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Louisville Ballet Friends,

Swan Lake is a remarkable and delicate ballet that has transcended time. During my career, I was fortunate enough to perform the role of Siegfried many times in different versions of the ballet. Each rendition was unique and influenced by the company performing it, the community surrounding it, and the country where it was staged. Having seen and experienced the nuances of movement, I wanted to share this with you and our dancers.

For our Artists, the principal roles of Odette/Odile and Siegfried are defining moments in a person's career. The dance is purely classical but embodies an emotion that changes a dancer's approach to their art. Watching them grow into the roles has been one of the most gratifying experiences of my life. I hope you enjoy the show as much as we have enjoyed creating it.

Sincerely,



Anthony Krutzkamp

Artistic Director

ÉTOILE

HALLIE BEARD

Editor

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Contributing Photographer

WELCH PRINTING

Printer

FEBRUARY 27–28, 2026

SWAN LAKE

THE BROWN THEATRE

Choreography after Marius Petipa

Stage Manager: Megan Meyer

Costumes courtesy of Philadelphia Ballet

Music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Scenic Design by Karl Anderson

Lighting Design by Jesse Alford

Run time: Approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes, including one 20-minute intermission.

This production is generously sponsored by Jim and Marianne Welch.
The performances are generously sponsored by the Jennifer A. Moore Foundation.
The pre-performance talks are generously sponsored by Highland Cleaners.

The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty — Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Philharmonia Orchestra, John Lanchbery, conductor.

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Complete Ballets — Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre, Valery Gergiev, conductor.

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PROLOGUE

Long before our story begins, Odette, a beautiful princess, falls under the spell of the wicked sorcerer Von Rothbart, enchanted to take the form of a swan by day, returning to her human form at night. Only true love will free her from her captor.

ACT I: *The Prince's birthday party*

It is Prince Siegfried's twenty-first birthday, and he is celebrating with friends. The Queen Mother arrives to give him his present, a crossbow, and reminds him that, as he will become King, he must choose a bride at the ball the next evening. She leaves, bidding him to enjoy himself, but reminds him again to think about his royal obligation to be wed. Siegfried's mood sinks, realizing that his carefree days are at an end. His close friend Benno, in an attempt to lift his spirits, suggests a hunting excursion to break in his new crossbow. Siegfried, Benno, and men from the village disperse, excited for the sport.

ACT II: *That night, by the lake*

Siegfried and his companions find themselves in a moonlit clearing by the lake. Siegfried, still feeling the weight of his mother's bidding to choose a bride, seeks solitude and sends the others away. Suddenly, he sees a magnificent swan in flight. He carefully takes aim, but to his astonishment, the bird transforms into a breathtakingly beautiful girl, and he withdraws into the trees to observe her. Unable to resist his curiosity, he steps out, only to startle and frighten her. He assures her he will do her no harm and asks her to explain the marvel he has just seen. Impressed by his gentleness, Odette unburdens her story. She tells him she is a Princess of high birth who fell under the spell of an evil sorcerer and is now a swan by day; only in the hours of darkness may she assume her human form. Indeed, this very lake is filled with her mother's tears. She tells him she is condemned for eternity; the spell can only be broken if a prince swears eternal love to her and marries her. But if he is untrue, she will remain a swan forever. At that moment, the sorcerer appears. The Prince, in his passion, reaches for his crossbow, but Odette immediately protects the sorcerer with her body, for she fears that if he is killed before the spell is broken, she too will die. The sorcerer disappears. As they dance together under the light of the moon, Siegfried realizes his fate is now entwined with hers. Dawn approaches, and Odette is compelled to return to her guise as a swan. Siegfried is left awestruck.

INTERMISSION

ACT III: *The Great Hall*

Heralds and trumpets announce the start of the ball. Eligible young princesses from all over the world arrive to be introduced to Prince Siegfried so that he may choose a bride. They present their national dances for the entertainment of the Prince and the Queen Mother. The prospective brides dance for them, and the Queen Mother reminds Siegfried that he must choose one for his wife. As Siegfried struggles with his responsibility to marry, his mind remains with Odette, and he cannot choose. Trumpets announce an unexpected guest. It is Von Rothbart with his daughter Odile. Despite all efforts by the eligible princesses to win over Prince Siegfried with their charm and entertainment, Odile seduces him as Von Rothbart holds the court in thrall. Siegfried is beguiled and announces his intention to marry Odile. Von Rothbart asks Siegfried to swear his love. He realizes too late that he has been the victim of a terrible plot. The scene darkens; Odette is seen at the castle window, weeping. Grief-stricken, Siegfried rushes to the lakeside.

ACT IV: *The lakeside*

Odette lingers at the lakeside, mourning her fate while Von Rothbart looms above, victorious. Siegfried, bursting into the glade, discovers Odette and begs her forgiveness. Odette understands that Siegfried was deceived by her captor, Von Rothbart, and does not hold him responsible for what has happened. As dawn approaches, Von Rothbart reappears. Siegfried takes up his crossbow in a desperate act of love and shoots down Von Rothbart, vanquishing him and breaking the curse. Odette is transformed back into her human form, united with Siegfried in true, everlasting love.

The Louisville Ballet Artistic team is grateful to the late Alun Jones and Bruce Simpson for generously allowing us to draw artistic inspiration from their previous iterations of *Swan Lake*.

Company Artist Sarah Bradley
Photo by Andrew Kung





Company Artist Sarah Bradley in rehearsal
Photo by Kateryna Sellers



Artists in rehearsal
Photo by Kateryna Sellers

HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

On transformation, happy endings, and Swan Lake's surprising political history



Swan Lake street art in Yekaterinburg, Russia, by the artist Philippenzo

With its grand score, virtuosic choreography, and ethereal dancers, *Swan Lake* is regarded as one of the most famous ballets of all time, second only to *The Nutcracker*. But beneath its beautiful surface, the ballet has a complex history. The original work, which premiered in 1877 in Moscow, was considered an absolute failure; its successful revival by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov came almost two decades later. Through the years, it transformed into the bastion of elegance, strength, and beauty we know today — but in Russia, it also became a symbol of war, death, and political unrest.

Swan Lake is a story about young love, but it's also a story about control. The young prince Siegfried feels bound by duty and obligation and wants nothing more than to pursue his beloved, Odette. Odette has no autonomy; captured and controlled by Von Rothbart, she is cursed to live as a swan by day. The young protagonists' desires are simple: they want love, acceptance, and freedom. In most versions, the couple only finds that freedom in death. But in other interpretations, including Louisville Ballet's, the lovers defeat Rothbart and live happily ever after. The Bolshoi Ballet's version also features a happy ending — one that's complicated by its status as a coded political signal.

In 1982, after the death of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, state television stations aired the Bolshoi Ballet's *Swan Lake* on a loop. For days, moonlit swans flooded TVs without explanation. This bizarre broadcast was deployed again in 1984 and 1985, after the deaths of Brezhnev's successors Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, and in 1991, after the failed coup against Mikhail Gorbachev.

Thus, the graceful ballet came to symbolize political upheaval and the death of Soviet leaders. In 2018, graffiti artists protested Vladimir Putin's fourth inauguration by tagging a wall with the iconic four interlinked swans, reclaiming the ballet's iconography as an act of resistance. After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, more swans decorated city walls. And when



an independent TV station was banned for its coverage of the invasion, they chose Bolshoi Ballet’s infamous recording as their final broadcast.

When asked why she choreographed a happy ending for our version, Senior Rehearsal Director Mikelle Bruzina said, “I want the audiences to believe in true love and to leave with hope for the future.”

Swan Lake teaches us that transformation is always possible: An idea that was deemed a failure is now world-famous. Art used by the government to suppress is now used by the people to resist. An ending known for tragedy is now full of promise. The poet Emily Dickinson wrote that hope “is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul / And sings the tune without the words.” Perhaps this wordless performance of *Swan Lake* will stay with you and offer you what you need most — whether that’s an escape, a moment of inspiration, or a reminder of the enduring power of hope.

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

–Emily Dickinson, 1891



Company Artists Lexa Daniels
and Caleb Emory in rehearsal
Photo by Kateryna Sellers



Company Artist Brienne Wiltsie in rehearsal
Photo by Kateryna Sellers



Company Artists Sarah Bradley
and Joel Morin-Kensicki in rehearsal
Photo by Kateryna Sellers

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ANTHONY KRUTZKAMP

Artistic Director

Anthony Krutzkamp is the former Artistic and Executive Director of Sacramento Ballet, where he led a dynamic revitalization of the company. Under his leadership, Sacramento Ballet achieved record-breaking ticket sales, launched a groundbreaking Second Company, and awarded more than \$125,000 annually in student scholarships. He expanded the repertoire to include works by George Balanchine, Alejandro Cerrudo, Penny Saunders, Ihsan Rustem, and others, while also creating acclaimed productions of *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*.

A former principal dancer with Cincinnati Ballet and Kansas City Ballet, Krutzkamp performed leading roles in both classical and contemporary works, from *Romeo and Juliet* to Balanchine's *Concerto Barocco*. He co-founded the Kansas City Dance Festival and Moving Arts, fostering national and international collaborations, and directed Kansas City Ballet's Second Company. Recognized as a visionary leader, Krutzkamp blended artistry, community engagement, and strategic growth to position Sacramento Ballet as a vibrant cultural force. A Kentucky native, he is also a husband and father of two girls.



LESLIE SMART

Chief Executive Officer

Leslie Smart, CFRE, is a seasoned nonprofit leader with deep and enduring ties to Louisville Ballet. Smart also chairs the national Dance/USA Tier 2 Executive & Managing Directors Network, serves on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors for Leadership Kentucky, and is Chair of the Music and Arts Committee for the Rotary Club of Louisville. She also serves on the Advisory Council of the international nonprofit Surfing Moms, advancing maternal wellness initiatives.

Smart has held several significant leadership roles, including two terms as president of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Greater Louisville Chapter, and service on the Committee on Directorship for the International Association of Fundraising Professionals. She is the co-founder of Lexington Forward, has been a board member of many nonprofit organizations in Lexington and Louisville, and is a graduate of Leadership Lexington, Leadership Kentucky, and Leadership Louisville.

Smart also brings a lifelong connection to ballet. She danced with Louisville Ballet in the 1970s and studied at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Dance and the School of American Ballet, the official school of New York City Ballet.



MIKELLE BRUZINA

Senior Rehearsal Director

Born in Lexington, Kentucky, Mikelle Bruzina is a graduate of The Royal Winnipeg Ballet. In her 15 years as a Louisville Ballet Company Artist, she performed soloist and principal roles and was recognized for her diversity in classical, modern, and contemporary ballets. As a dancer, stager, and rehearsal assistant, she has worked with a breadth of choreographers. Mikelle has choreographed works for Louisville Ballet including *Gloria*, *Harmony of Contrasts*, *Life Rhythms, continuum*, *Sansei*, and *Tinny Wits*. She has also created ballets for Memphis Ballet, Boca Ballet Theatre, Lexington Ballet, Milwaukee Ballet, and The Louisville Ballet School.

Mikelle began teaching in Japan in 1991 under the guidance of Emi Okajima. Having worked under the direction of Alun Jones, Bruce Simpson, and Robert Curran, she carries a vast experience in teaching, staging, and coaching in classical, modern, and contemporary styles of dance.

She was Ballet Mistress for thirteen seasons, Artistic Director for two seasons, and is the former Co-Artistic Director of the Louisville Ballet Studio Company.

Together with her husband and their son, Mikelle has lovingly called Louisville home for 30 years. She is thrilled to continue her stewardship in the growth and successes of Louisville Ballet.



HELEN DAIGLE

*Principal Repetiteur +
Senior Rehearsal Director*

Originally from Baton Rouge, Helen Daigle began her training at Decatur School of Ballet in Decatur, Georgia. Upon her family's return to Louisiana, she continued her training at Dancer's Workshop under the tutelage of Molly Buchmann and Sharon Mathews. She has also studied at Joffrey Ballet School and School of American Ballet. She started performing with Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre junior and senior companies and began her professional career with Feld Ballets/New York. She has also danced with Ballet Hispanico and Miami City Ballet.

Helen joined Louisville Ballet in 1998 and enjoyed 20 wonderfully fulfilling seasons. She performed featured roles in a range of works including *Lark Ascending*, *In the Glow of the Night*, *Who Cares?*, *Serenade*, *Lamberena*, *Scheherazade*, *Company B*, *Etesian* and *Cold Virtues*. She has performed principal roles in such full length ballets as *The Magic Flute*, *Don Quixote*, *Giselle*, *Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *La Sylphide* and *A Cinderella Story*.

She is also Shoe Director for the Company, Children's Cast Director for *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker*, and a member of The Louisville Ballet School's faculty. She is thrilled to continue working for Louisville Ballet as Principal Repetiteur + Senior Rehearsal Director.



JILL MARLOW KRUTZKAMP

Artistic Director of the Studio Company

Jill Krutzkamp is the former Second Company Director of Sacramento Ballet, where she expanded the Second Company’s geographic diversity across 19 states and three continents. There, she curated, choreographed, restaged, and produced performances for a variety of audiences and events. Her leadership reflects a strong commitment to developing adaptable, confident artists prepared for the demands of professional ballet careers.

Jill enjoyed a distinguished career as a professional ballet dancer with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Cincinnati Ballet, and Kansas City Ballet, performing an extensive range of soloist and principal roles. Her repertoire includes the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, the lead role in George Balanchine’s *Allegro Brillante*, and a featured Stomper in Twyla Tharp’s *In the Upper Room*.

Jill holds a Bachelor of Science in Health Education from the University of Cincinnati and has served as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Missouri–Kansas City Conservatory. She is the founder of Movehealthier, a Pilates and wellness practice grounded in the philosophy that thoughtful movement fosters a healthy mind, body, and spirit. She resides with her husband, two daughters, and family in Louisville, KY.



KARL ANDERSON

Scenic Designer

Karl has worked in Louisville as a freelance scenic designer for over 30 years. He has designed, built, and painted dozens of sets for StageOne Family Theatre, designed numerous sets for Actors Theatre of Louisville and CenterStage, and worked for many seasons with Pandora Productions, Theatre [502], and Bunbury Theatre. He also designed *Three Decembers* for Kentucky Opera and has been the Scenic Designer for Kentucky Shakespeare Festival in Central Park. He graduated from University of Kentucky with a BFA in Theatre Design and Technology. Karl is also a Fine Artist represented by Kore Gallery (IG: @karlandersonart) and is married to costumer Allison Anderson. They have two wonderful boys.



JESSE ALFORD

Lighting Designer

Jesse is a freelance lighting designer proudly based here in Louisville. Recent designs with Louisville Ballet include *Sleeping Beauty*, *Vibes*, *Swan Lake*, *Rite of Spring*, and more. He also regularly designs with Kentucky Shakespeare, Kentucky Opera, Louisville Orchestra, The Va Va Vixens, Circus Flora, and Pandora Productions. Other past collaborators include The Big Apple Circus, The Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis, The Mary Shelley Electric Co., and others across the country. Working primarily in dance, circus, and theatre, Jesse specializes in the moments and productions that happen in between those disciplines.



TARA SIMONCIC

Music Director

Tara Simoncic served as music director of Ballet West from 2015–2018 and is a frequent guest conductor with Louisville Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, and New York City Ballet. She recently made her conducting debut with the ballet at Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Ms. Simoncic is principal conductor of the Flexible Orchestra in New York City as well as music director of the Greenwich Symphony's Young People's Concerts. She holds a BM in Trumpet Performance from the New England Conservatory, an MM in Orchestral Conducting from Northwestern University, and a Professional Studies Diploma in Conducting from Manhattan School of Music.



**PYOTR ILYICH
TCHAIKOVSKY**

Composer

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was a Russian composer of the Romantic period. He was the first Russian composer whose music made a lasting impression internationally, bolstered by his appearances as a guest conductor in Europe and the United States. Tchaikovsky is most celebrated for his ballets, specifically *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*.

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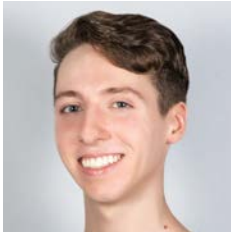
LEIGH ANNE ALBRECHTA

Joined Company: 2009
Hometown: Fremont, OH



SARAH BRADLEY

Joined Company: 2022
Hometown: Cincinnati, OH



IAN ANDERSON-CONLON*

Joined Company: 2025
Hometown: Madison, WI



LEXA DANIELS

Joined Company: 2016
Hometown: Stoneham, MA



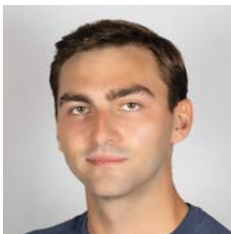
CHRISTOPHER BALBUENA*

Joined Company: 2025
Hometown: Alpharetta, GA



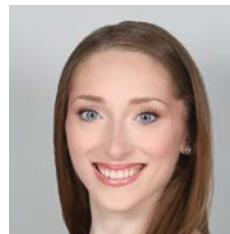
CALEB EMORY

Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: Corpus Christi, TX



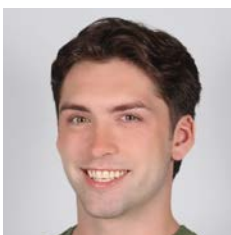
FLETCHER BARR

Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: Owensboro, KY



ANNA FORD

Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Lilburn, GA



NICHOLAS BENTZ

Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: St. Louis, MO

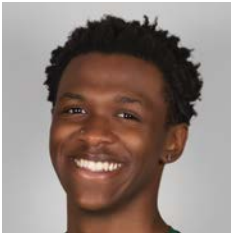


NICHOLAS BRADLEY GRAY

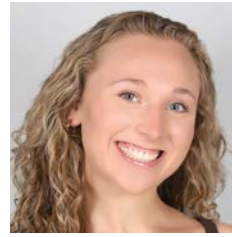
Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: Milwaukee, WI

Headshots by
Kateryna Sellers

**COMPANY
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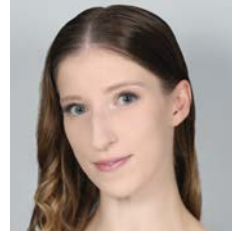
KHALIL JACKSON
Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Dallas, GA



JORDAN NOBLETT
Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Gastonia, NC



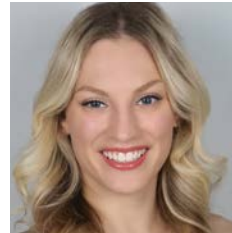
ALEXANDER KINGMA
Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Lafayette, IN



ELEANOR PRINCE
Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Louisville, KY



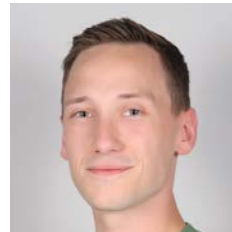
CAITLIN KOWALSKI
Joined Company: 2021
Hometown: Radcliff, KY



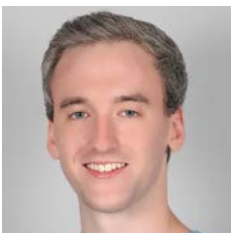
**ELIZABETH ABBICK
PEMBERTON**
Joined Company: 2022
Hometown: Overland Park, KS



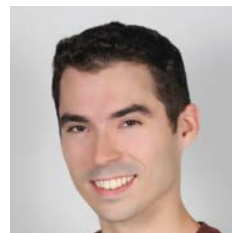
MARK A. KRIEGER JR.
Joined Company: 2012
Hometown: Alexandria, VA



ALEKSANDR Q. SCHROEDER
Joined Company: 2019
Hometown: Anderson, IN



JOEL MORIN-KENSICKI
Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: Chapel Hill, NC



DANIEL SCOFIELD
Joined Company: 2022
Hometown: Louisville, KY

* New Company Artist

**COMPANY
ARTISTS**



ASHLEY THURSBY
Joined Company: 2008
Hometown: Richmond, MO



BRIENNE WILTSIE
Joined Company: 2018
Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA



KAYLEIGH WESTERN
Joined Company: 2025
Hometown: Lexington, KY

RESIDENT CHARACTER ARTIST



PHILLIP VELINOV
Joined Company: 2006
Hometown: Sofia, Bulgaria

Headshot by Andrew Kung



AMBER WICKEY
Joined Company: 2022
Hometown: Tenafly, NJ



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TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR
COMPANY ARTISTS AND
STUDIO COMPANY ARTISTS**

STUDIO COMPANY ARTISTS



LEVEL 10

Julia Enwright, Emmaline Fontanilla, Ezra Paisley, Sameer Rhodes,
Natalie Schreiner, Marissa Soluri, Gaven Stevens

LEVEL 9

Joe Henn, Sarah Hutchison, Ava Dhira Metzger,
Guinevere Nelson, Abigail Wyrrick

LEVEL 8

Athena King, Eva Pregont, Arlen Milo Sapien, Ella White

LEVEL 7

Samuel Blincoe, Barbara Booth, Ava Carroll,
Madison Dunham, Addison Koerner

Photo by Kateryna Sellers



JORDAN NOBLETT

@jordan.noblett on Instagram

A proud native of Gastonia, North Carolina, Jordan Noblett began dancing at Gaston Dance Theatre and Open Door Studios. In 2018, she continued her training at Kansas City Ballet School for two years, where she had the opportunity to perform Neapolitan in Devon Carney's *Swan Lake* and original, award-winning works by Duncan Cooper and Ryan Jolicoeur-Nye at the Youth American Grand Prix. In 2020, Jordan joined Cincinnati Ballet as a Trainee, where she enjoyed performing and being featured in works by Amy Seiwert, Adam Houglund, and Victoria Morgan.

After dancing with Louisville Ballet for two seasons in the Studio Company, Jordan was promoted to Company Artist in 2023. Some of her favorite roles she has performed are Nikiya in *La Bayadère*, the Pas de Trois in George Balanchine's *Emeralds*, and the Autumn Fairy in Alun Jones' *Cinderella*. Jordan is thrilled to continue sharing art with and for the Louisville community.

What do you love about ballet?

I love ballet for its discipline and dedication, how it challenges me to constantly refine both body and mind. I love the way it becomes a language of its own, allowing me to communicate stories and emotions that words can't fully capture. Ballet is both deeply expressive and profoundly artistic, with the power to move audiences and create a shared, unspoken connection. There's something sacred about those moments in the theater when the world feels still, when you could hear a pin drop, and you sense that everyone is breathing in the same story together.

When did you begin dancing?

Did you always love ballet the most?

I began dancing at age three, and funny enough, my parents put me in dance because I was so shy, as an attempt to break me out of my shell. Over time, I completely fell in love with ballet and knew it was something I wanted to pursue professionally if possible.

Favorite Louisville businesses?

Hard question! Biscuit Belly and Quill's.

Favorite TV show and movie?

TV: *Little House on the Prairie* — so wholesome, simple, and perfect in every way! Movie: *Mamma Mia* — such a feel-good movie!



ANNA FORD

@annaflower02 on Instagram

Anna Ford is originally from Lilburn, Georgia. She began her training at the Northeast Atlanta Ballet. After graduating in 2020, Anna moved from her hometown to Louisville to join Louisville Ballet's Studio Company.

While training in the Studio Company for three years, Anna performed featured roles including Marie in Val Caniparoli's *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker* and Cygnet in Robert Curran's *Swan Lake*. Her repertoire also includes Robert Curran's *Coppélia*, Alun Jones' *Violin Concerto*, George Balanchine's *Emeralds*, Adam Houghland's *Sleeping Beauty*, and George Balanchine's *Scotch Symphony*.

In 2023, Anna was honored with a promotion to the Company. Recent highlight performances include Second Shade in *La Bayadère* and Autumn Fairy in Alun Jones' *Cinderella*. Additional credits include performances in *Raymonda*, *Giselle*, *Romeo & Juliet*, Andrea Schermoly's *Appalachian Spring*, Ching Ching Wong's *502*, Stephen Mills' *Light / The Holocaust* & *Humanity Project*, and Adam Houghland's *Broken Totem*.

Now entering her third season with the Company and her sixth year with Louisville Ballet, Anna is excited to continue sharing her artistry with the community.



How do you prepare for a performance?

I make sure to warm up and eat a snack. I love to listen to relaxing music, use calming essential oils, and remind myself of positive affirmations to help me feel ready and confident.

What do you love about ballet?

I love that ballet combines discipline with creativity. The daily training pushes me to keep growing, but the joy comes from turning my hard work into performing and sharing my artistry on stage.

Favorite Louisville business?

I am always in the mood for a sweet treat! Louisville Cream is my favorite spot for ice cream, and I love stopping by local bakeries to enjoy a cookie or pastry!

What's one thing you couldn't live without?

Peppermint chewing gum.





KAYLEIGH WESTERN

@kayleighwestern on Instagram

Kayleigh Western is from Lexington, Kentucky, and began her dance training at the Lexington Ballet School. Her studies continued there and at the School for the Creative and Performing Arts before becoming a student of Cary Ballet Conservatory's Professional Training Program. Kayleigh went on to dance three seasons with Louisville Ballet's Studio Company and thereafter joined Lexington Ballet Company. There, she danced principal roles in *The Nutcracker*, *The Firebird*, excerpts of *Romeo and Juliet*, and several original works by Eric Trope. Throughout her career, she has attended programs at Pacific Northwest Ballet, Boston Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre and performed works by George Balanchine, Ronald Hynd, Val Caniparoli, and Juliano Nuñez. Kayleigh has been featured in *Pointe Magazine*, *Dance Teacher Magazine*, *Ballet Rosa's Créateur Catalog*, as well as the album cover art for Whirr's *Raw Blue*. Kayleigh is thrilled to return to Louisville Ballet for the 2025-2026 Season.

Favorite ballet?

Romeo and Juliet and *Giselle* are my favorite ballets of all time. The musical scores of each are so devastatingly beautiful and really reflect the emotional roller coasters of their storylines.

How does ballet make you feel?

Both watching and dancing ballet make me feel every emotion under the sun. One of my favorite things about the art form is how it can evoke a spectrum of emotions.

When did you begin dancing? Did you always love ballet the most?

I started ballet at 3 years old! I was originally signed up to start Irish dance lessons, but my mom and I exited the elevator on the wrong floor. I saw the ballet studios and that was it for me!

Favorite movie?

Unironically, *Twilight*.

Fun fact?

I am a dual citizen of the US and Ireland. Also, I'm a Scorpio!



ELIZABETH ABBICK PEMBERTON

@elliempemz on Instagram

Originally from Overland Park, Kansas, Elizabeth (Ellie) began her dance training at Legacy School of the Arts. She continued her education at Butler University on the Presidential Scholarship, performing soloist roles in works such as Gerald Arpino's *Viva Vivaldi*, Paul Taylor's *Piazzolla Caldera*, and George Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*, as well as Snow Queen and the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*. She graduated magna cum laude in 2018 with a BFA in Dance Performance with highest honors, and a minor in Mathematics. She completed the University Honors Program, writing a thesis discussing the importance of K-12 arts funding. Ellie danced as a trainee and in Louisville Ballet's Studio Company for three seasons before joining as a Company Artist in 2022. Her favorite performances at Louisville Ballet include dancing the Survivor in Stephen Mills' *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project*, Scots Lady in George Balanchine's *Scotch Symphony*, Effie in *La Sylphide*, Dawn in Robert Curran's *Coppélia*, the Spring Fairy in Alun Jones' *Cinderella*, and roles in Jones' *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Liebestraume*, Ching Ching Wong's *502* and *Grass is Green*, and Val Caniparoli's *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker*. Ellie is looking forward to her fourth season as a Company Artist!



What do you love about ballet?

The way it makes me feel! Telling a story to let the audience escape.

When did you begin dancing?

Did you always love ballet the most?

When I was three! I tried all sorts of different sports, but I wasn't any good. Ballet stuck!

How do you prepare for a performance?

I get nervous. Lots of visualization and deep breathing. I need to do my hair and makeup in a certain order, and I sew my pointe shoe ribbons with an "X."

If you could have a superpower, what would it be?

Reading minds.

Cats or dogs?

Dogs.

Morning or night?

Night.



IAN ANDERSON-CONLON

@ian_andersonconlon on Instagram

Originally from Madison, Wisconsin, Ian trained and graduated from Indiana Ballet Conservatory's Advanced Pre-Professional Day Program on full scholarship. He then joined Kansas City Ballet as a Trainee on full scholarship, and after one year was promoted to Kansas City Ballet II. Thereafter, Ian joined Ballet Austin as an Apprentice. Ian has danced numerous roles in Val Caniparoli's North American premiere of *Jekyll and Hyde*, Michael Pink's *Dracula*, Septime Webre's *The Wizard of Oz*, Mark Morris' *Sandpaper*, Devon Carney's *Peter Pan*, *Giselle*, and *Cinderella*, George Balanchine's *Jewels*, and Stephen Mills' *The Nutcracker* and *Romeo and Juliet*. He has performed works by Peter LeBreton-Merz, Rex Tilton, Parrish Maynard, Christopher Ruud, Gabriel Lorena, Christopher Swaim, and Jimmy Orrante. Ian also performed at The Kennedy Center in Devon Carney's *The Nutcracker*.

How do you prepare for a performance?

I prepare days in advance with knowing everything I need to do to have a successful performance — making sure I have healthy food to eat throughout the day and that I have everything needed for the performance. I always triple check my hair to make sure it looks neat on stage, I rosin the heels of my shoes so they don't move around or fall off, and then, lastly, before going on stage, I always get in the zone by relaxing for a minute, deep breathing, and focusing on exactly what I'm going to do.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy cycling, cooking, and spending time with my cat.


Favorite Louisville business?

Any of the cute little shops in the NuLu district.

Favorite musical artists?

Dua Lipa, Sabrina Carpenter, and Lady Gaga.





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Artists in rehearsal
Photo by Kateryna Sellers



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Artists as the four cygnets in rehearsal
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