

Talking Pointes

April 2018 News

Jane Sheridan
508-367-4949 jes02655@comcast.net

From the Desk of the President

Barbara Jacob 561-573-6868
barbjacob@gmail.com

It's been an honor to serve as Interim President of the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet (FSB) for the past year. I'm pleased to be turning over the reins to **Richard March**, who has been elected to fulfill this position for the next 2 years. With the fabulous **Donna Maytham** as his Vice-President, I am confident that FSB will thrive as we move forward under their leadership.

But you won't see the last of me! My work as a volunteer will continue at **Dance – The Next Generation** (DNG). I am thrilled that these kids, designated by their teachers as at-risk, are being given an opportunity to succeed. It would be remiss of me if I did not personally thank Lisa Townsend, her staff and all of the volunteers who give both their time and leadership to this amazing project. You can read more about DNG in the article about the **On Pointe Luncheon**. I am so proud of all of the Friends who showed their support at this amazing event.

As this Season ends, I would also like to thank every Officer, Board Member, Committee Chair, Volunteer and Friend for his or her hard work and support. Your collective efforts allowed us to fulfill our Mission — to support the performances and programs of The Sarasota Ballet through advocacy and fundraising.

If space permitted, I would honor each and every one of you by name. Please permit me to highlight the efforts of two groups — the Special Events Committee (SEC) and Dancers' Suppers Committee (DSC).

Much has been accomplished by the **SEC** under **Donna Maytham's** leadership. We will have held four *Showcase Luncheons*, including the *April Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon* that will

feature **Christopher Hird**, Director of Education.

With guest speakers (**Principal Dancer Logan Learned, Assistant Director & Repetiteur Margaret Barbieri** and **Director Iain Webb**) at the earlier luncheons, we have had exceptional attendance. I hope that next Season more of you will be able to take advantage of these opportunities to learn more about the inside workings of The Ballet!

The Committee also organized two memorable evening events, **Meet Me at the Barre** and **Love in Bloom**. These were opportunities to meet and mingle with dancers and staff in a convivial environment. In addition to funding our operations, the luncheons and cocktail parties raised funds that allowed the Friends to present a check for **\$15,000** to **Director Iain Webb** on behalf of The Sarasota Ballet at the *March Showcase Luncheon*.

DSC, chaired by the indefatigable **Peggy Sweeney** and assisted by **Laurie Fitch**, went to great effort to ensure that the dancers were provided food between performances at the FSU Center for the Performing Arts and at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. Many of you brought food or donated money to provide meals, for which we are very grateful. What many of us don't realize is that Peggy and Laurie not only have to set up the donated food, they have to go back the morning after the final performance to clean the kitchen area. So, please join me in offering my sincerest thanks for what they do!

It is likely that the *April Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon* will have taken place before this newsletter is mailed. As noted last year, the organization benefits from the many volunteers who do outstanding work year after year.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the **2017–2018 honorees:**

Backstage Tours — **Laurie Hofheimer**
Box Office — **Phyllis Myers**
Dancers Suppers — **Charlotte Hedge**
Dance – The Next Generation — **The Staff**
appreciates every DNG Volunteer
Special Events — **Bobbye Schott, Donna Cubit-Swoyer and Lauren Walsh**
Information Desk — **Doug Endicott**

In closing, please accept my personal thanks for allowing me to serve as President of the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet. It has been an honor and a privilege.

From the Desk of the Special Events Coordinator

Donna Maytham 941-351-5361
pavlova03@comcast.net

Special Event — Love in Bloom
Jane Sheridan

February 13th was a magical night for the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet. Michael's Wine Cellar was transformed into a romantic wonderland with beautiful flowers, candlelight and a harpist playing background music. With tables scattered around the room, approximately 100 attendees had the opportunity to mix, mingle and enjoy the delicious appetizers and libations.

Director Iain Webb, along with staff members including **Christopher Hird, James Jordan, Marjorie Floyd, Ed Levesque, Anna Passalacqua, Ngoc Phan, Barbara Epperson** and others, chatted with attendees. People were excited to have the chance to talk with many of the dancers who were able to attend including **Ricky Rhodes, Victoria Hulland, Ricki Bertoni, Lucas Erni, Jamie Carter, Asia Bui, Madysen Felber** and **Daniel Pratt**, to name a few.

Such events provide Friends with the opportunity to learn more about The Company. Iain and the dancers shared stories about working with the legendary **Sir Anthony Dowell** in preparing for **The Dream**. Their enthusiasm was infectious, leaving those who were fortunate enough to be a part of the conversation even more excited to see the performance.

In addition to being an opportunity to get up close and personal with staff and dancers, this cocktail party was a fundraising event for The Ballet. It would not have been possible without the efforts of **Donna Maytham** and her team of volunteers — **Peggy Abt, Colleen Curran, Laurie Feder, Betty Ferguson, Marilyn Nordby, Bobbye Schott** and **Lauren Walsh** (who also donated the floral arrangements). This dedicated group secured underwriters, sponsors, donors and auction items while ensuring that everyone had a wonderful evening.

Following two Irish ballads sung by harpist, **Olivia Swaan**, a bidding war ensued for the top three items in the Silent Auction. **Pat Golemme** offered a sunset champagne cruise on a private yacht that was successfully won by **Laurie Fitch!** For the second year in a row, **Jim Long** outbid everyone for a private dinner for eight donated by **Jeremy Hammond-Chambers of Innovative Dining**.

After being told how popular the brunch at his house had been in the past, Ballet Master & Repetiteur, **James Jordan**, generously offered to host **two** brunches. Demand still outstripped availability. **Hillary Steele/Pat Golemme**, as well as **Pat Anderson/Sandra Miranda** and their guests will be brunching with James!

Love in Bloom was made possible by the support of the following:

Underwriters — Donna Maytham, Caroline Amory (Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate Long Boat Key) and Marilyn Sellman

Sponsors — Barbara Jacob and Laurie Fitch

Patrons — Peggy Abt, Donna Cubit-Swoyer, Fred & Linda Doery, Patricia Golemme and Richard & Helen March

Other Silent Auction Donors - Peggy Abt, MoZaic Restaurant, Meliss Swenson, Charlotte Hedge, Andrea Mihalfy, Jola Bremmer, Evoke Studio, Peterbrook Chocolates (Karen Andrews), Pave Chocolatier (Dabe Gadah), Manatee Players (Rick Kirby), Salon 41 (Jim Reese), Virginia Tashian and Donna Maytham

We would also like to thank the many volunteers who assisted with greeting people, the Silent Auction and checkout. The success of *Love in Bloom* was very much a team effort. With the financial support, donations in-kind, ticket sales and silent auction proceeds, along with everyone's hard work, we were able to raise \$10,000 to support The Sarasota Ballet.

Showcase Luncheons

Jane Sheridan

15 January 2018

The Friends' new year got off to a great start when **Assistant Director & Repetiteur, Margaret Barbieri**, was interviewed by **Marjorie Floyd**. If we recapped Margaret's career — even just the highlights, there would be no room for what she said! So, we'll focus on a few key points she shared with the audience of more than 100 guests.

She discussed the difference between her responsibilities as the Assistant Director versus Repetiteur. A repetiteur is responsible for ensuring that the steps accurately reflect the choreographer's intent. For example, **Sandra Jennings** from the **Balanchine Trust** allowed Margaret and **Ballet Master, Pavel Fomin**, to initially rehearse Mr. Balanchine's choreography. Ms. Jennings would then supervise final rehearsals — ensuring that the final product adheres to the Trust's standards.

As Assistant Director, Margaret is responsible for the overall staging. It is her job to check everything before performances. It was quite fascinating to note that she considers lighting to be the most important element in the final staging of every ballet.

She took us through the staging process. For someone who has danced a particular ballet, memory is an important component — both music and muscle memory. If the work is something unfamiliar, you must do your homework. Everything from DVDs and original videos are used to recreate a ballet. However, she noted that some productions have differences. So, the stager does everything possible to go back to the original choreography.

In terms of casting, **Director Iain Webb** and Margaret have nurtured their dancers over the years. So, it is easier for them to select casts. Ms.

Jennings, for example, will email suggested casts since she is also quite familiar with The Company. Final decisions about the dancers will be made when she arrives for final rehearsals.

There are at least two and sometimes three casts, depending upon the ballet. Having the opportunity to learn a role, whether or not it is immediately danced, helps the individual develop skills and technique.

Margaret discussed the particular challenges of performing in multiple venues. A week after beginning rehearsals for the triple bill, **Metropolitan**, there were already studio rehearsals for **John Ringling's Circus Nutcracker**. In addition, the male/female casting for **Troy Games** and **Valsinhas** added to the complexity of rehearsing and performing.

Another example relates to **The Dream**. It was necessary to initially stage the ballet in September, even though it would be performed in March. **Sir Anthony Dowell**, upon whom the role of Oberon was choreographed by **Sir Frederick Ashton**, was only available for a week in February.

With staging well in hand, he came to Sarasota for a week to oversee final rehearsals. Margaret noted that throughout the year, the dancers were essentially learning three or four ballets at the same time.

The luncheon attendees were enthusiastic in their response to her remarks. We all left with a deeper understanding of what it takes for The Sarasota Ballet to stage the incredible performances we're privileged to see each Season.

12 March 2018

There's a first time for everything and the March Showcase Luncheon was it! With **Director Iain Webb** as the guest speaker, approximately 150 people wanted to hear him discuss "**Ballet 101 – Everything You Wanted to Know.**" Since this exceeded the capacity available at Michael's on East, it was necessary to move the luncheon to the Bird Key Yacht Club.

The attendees got everything they hoped for and more. With microphones passed on both levels of the dining area, Iain gave thoughtful and insightful answers to as many questions as time allowed.

For example, he was asked about the process of selecting new Company members. He said that there were 600 applications this past year, making it impractical for everyone to try out or be interviewed. To pare down the applications to a manageable number, they looked at background, experience and technical abilities of each dancer.

For those who made it to auditions and interviews, personality was a critical factor. The Sarasota Ballet is a family and new members must be able to fit in smoothly.

One person asked the status of current Company members. Here are a couple of highlights. Iain mentioned that **Danielle Brown** is recovering from the injury that kept her from performing this year. She will be returning next season, fully recovered and excited to resume dancing.

He also indicated that **Ricky Rhodes** will be returning for his 11th season. Iain spoke with pride about how Ricky has matured as a dancer.

As an aside, Friends might be interested to learn that there is another member of The Sarasota Ballet team who has helped Ricky become the dancer he is today. That is **Christopher Hird, Director of Education**. He previously taught him at the Boston Ballet School, where he also worked with **Victoria Hulland**. Ballet really is a small world!

The mission of the Friends is to support The Sarasota Ballet through advocacy and fundraising. To this end, **President Barbara Jacob** presented **Director Iain Webb** with a check from the Friends for \$15,000. It was a great way to end the program.

On Pointe Luncheon

Jane Sheridan

The Friends of The Sarasota Ballet were out in full force at the February *On Pointe Luncheon*, a fundraising event for **Dance – The Next Generation** (DNG). Friends hosted 18 tables for this wonderful drop-out prevention program.

DNG is a program for at-risk youth that inspires, motivates and educates students to graduate from high school through the joy and discipline of dance. Originally, the program was for seven years. However, **Director Iain Webb** extended it to 10 years, to carry the students through 12th grade. Students who are academically qualified may apply for four-year gap scholarships at State College of Florida or USF Sarasota-Manatee.

The goal of the luncheon was to raise \$160,000 to close the shortfall in this year's \$400,000 operating budget. There wasn't a dry eye in the room after listening to two families for whom DNG has been life changing.

First to speak were **Ry-Asia Hennessy** and her mother, **Marie**. When they moved to Sarasota, they were homeless. Her mother did not want her daughter to have negative influences in her life. When DNG auditioned at her school, Marie enrolled Ry-Asia in the program which gave her tools to succeed. After 10 years in DNG and graduating from Booker High School, she is now enrolled at State College of Florida where she is majoring in Business Marketing and Dance.

Ry-Asia talked about how DNG helped her move beyond her comfort zone and explore the possibility of dance as a career. Her dream is to open a dance studio for children with disabilities. In the meantime, whenever she can, Ry-Asia comes back to DNG to help Miss Townsend with the younger students.

We didn't think anything could top Marie and Ry-Asia. But, then came "Dance Dad", **Kristian Brommeland** and his daughter, **Susan**. Kristian is a single dad who obtained sole custody of his daughter after learning many years ago that she had missed 11 of the first 20 days of school.

Susan has been a DNG member for seven years. This program has given her the stability to cope with life's challenges. After losing her stepmother who passed away after two years, DNG was a lifeline that kept her focused. All she wanted to do was dance! She is a straight-A student at Booker High School where she is a part of the ACE program.

The discipline of DNG makes her strive for something more. In addition, dancing takes her mind off bad things that happen. Susan talked about how important this program is to help youth achieve their full potential.

By the time father and daughter finished speaking, people at my table were visibly moved by the impact DNG has had on these students and their families. I'm sure this happened at other tables as well.

Their stories galvanized many attendees to make long-term commitments of financial support. These multi-year donors are now part of what is called the "**On Pointe Society**".

It's critical to invest in prevention programs. Since high school dropouts are far more likely to end up in low-wage jobs, have health issues or even end up in jail, it is more rewarding and cost effective to fund programs like this. DNG has a record we can be proud to support, since 100% of students who have completed DNG also graduated from high school.

Although the *On Pointe Luncheon* was a huge success, it's not too late to donate to DNG. Simply call **Marjorie Floyd, Marketing & Development Director**, at 941.225.6504.

Observing Company Class

Jane Sheridan

Director Iain Webb issued a special invitation to the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet to observe the Company taking class. This was in appreciation for their efforts in helping this Season. Space limitations in the studio restricted numbers, so those who signed up were split into two groups.

Following coffee and snacks, Friends were able to watch as the dancers went through their morning routine. The first group attended class on April 3 with **Ballet Master, Pavel Fomin**. The second on April 10 were in for a great treat, as Iain himself led class.

It is such a learning experience to watch the hard work that it takes **before** the dancers even begin to rehearse for a performance. Since the final product always looks so effortless on stage, we are grateful for the opportunity to peek behind the curtain!

This is truly a **special benefit** to being a Friend!

From The Desk Of The Membership Director

Betty Ferguson 917-885-4699
bcamarest@yahoo.com

We have had a concentrated effort to introduce new people to the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet this Season. After all, Friends "act as the **lifeblood of The Sarasota Ballet community**, forming close bonds through a mutual love of the art form and play a vital part in the continued success of The Sarasota Ballet."

These efforts have been highly successful, bringing in approximately 30 new memberships. I'd like to offer my sincere thanks to **Donna Maytham** and everyone who introduced their "friends" to our "Friends!"

By the time this newsletter is mailed, you should already have received your renewal notice for next Season. Thank you in advance for promptly returning your payment.

From The Info Desk Coordinator

Virginia Tashian 941-966-2515
veetash@comcast.net

With one more performance still ahead this season, the Information Desk team enjoys interacting with Ballet audience members who stop before performances or during intermissions. We talk about membership and activities of the Friends, as well as upcoming Ballet events. Most importantly, we reach out with a welcoming spirit.

It's my pleasure to announce that **Doug Endicott** will be assuming the role of Info Desk Coordinator next season. Doug has been volunteering for many years and will be a great leader moving forward.

I would personally like to thank all those volunteers who have participated this year.

From The Desk Of The Volunteer Coordinator

Barbara Fischer Long 941-228-9899
bflong@comcast.net

Congratulations to the outstanding volunteers who were honored on Wednesday, April 18 at the annual Friends of The Sarasota Ballet ***Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon***. It was a special afternoon to welcome and thank all of our wonderful volunteers who support our magnificent ballet.

A total of 2,426 volunteer hours were recorded in the months of December, January, February, and March. Using the \$22 per hour grant rate, this is the equivalent of more than \$53,000 during this four-month period. For the **entire Season**, the efforts our volunteers have made are the **equivalent of over \$82,000**.

From The Desk Of The Backstage Tour Coordinators

Andi Lieberman, Virginia Tashian
friends@sarasotaballet.org
941-228-9899

Backstage Tours were a great success this Season. We had a heavy demand for bookings in early 2018. All guests who participated expressed great appreciation to the guides.

All of those who work on the tour team are enthusiastic about sharing the experience and grateful to the dancers and the Ballet staff for contributing their time and knowledge to our visitors. As the Season comes to an end, we look forward to resuming the tours in the fall.

Calendar At a Glance

As we go to press, the following is a listing of all scheduled events for The Sarasota Ballet and the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet. Any additional events will be advised via an email blast.

27 – 28 July 2018— **International Intensive Performances, FSU Center for the Performing Arts** (check website www.sarasotaballet.org for times)

14 – 19 August 2018, **The Joyce Theater Presents The Sarasota Ballet**. For tour information, contact Marjorie Floyd at 941.225.6504. For ticket information, see the Joyce Theater website (www.joyce.org).

26 – 28 October 2018 — **Program 1**
Martha Graham's Appalachian Spring (company premiere)
Ricardo Graziano's Symphony Of Sorrows
Galina Samsova's Paquita
FSU Center for the Performing Arts

16 – 17 November 2018 — **Program 2**
Sir Frederick Ashton's Rhapsody (company premiere)
Christopher Wheeldon's There Where She Loved
Jerome Robbins' The Concert (company premiere)
Sarasota Opera House

14 – 15 December 2018 — **Program 3**
Sir Frederick Ashton's Les Patineurs
Sir Frederick Ashton's Enigma Variations
George Balanchine's Diamonds
Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall

25 – 28 January 2019 — **Program 4**
David Bintley's Four Scottish Dances
Ricardo Graziano's World Premiere
Sir Frederick Ashton's Varii Capricci (company premiere)
FSU Center for the Performing Arts

15 – 17 February 2019 — **Program 5**
The Sarasota Ballet Presents The Martha Graham Dance Company
FSU Center for the Performing Arts

8 – 9 March 2019 — **Program 6**
Sir Frederick Ashton's Apparitions (company premiere)
George Balanchine's Stars And Stripes
Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall

26 – 27 April 2019 — **Program 7**
Sir Peter Wright's Giselle
Sarasota Opera House

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