



Talking Pointes

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Thank you for your support of the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet. We would like to take this opportunity to wish you the happiest of holiday seasons. May the New Year bring you health, happiness, and more wonderful performances by our beloved Company!

2019 - 2020 Friends Events

Showcase Luncheon

Dominic Walsh, Choreographer

Monday, January 20, 2020, Michael's on East, 11:30 AM

Showcase Luncheon

Ricardo Graziano & Iain Webb, 10 Years with The Sarasota Ballet

Monday, February 10, 2020, Michael's on East, 11:30 AM

Showcase Luncheon

Peter Schaufuss, Dancer & Director

Monday, March 16, 2020, Michael's on East, 11:30 AM

Showcase Luncheon

Margaret Barbieri and "The Italian Job"

Monday, April 6, 2020, Bird Key Yacht Club, 11:30 AM

From the Desk of the President

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The new Season is off to a fabulous start, with an exciting and diverse series of performances to come! I hope that most of you were back in town to see *Graziano, Retrospective*. The performances were outstanding. The Company and staff deserve well-earned congratulations. It was fascinating to see Ricardo Graziano's growth as a choreographer and he deserves special kudos.

The second program at the Opera House, *Symphonic Tales*, was quite fantastic, demonstrating the incredible range of our dancers. It also challenged the audience. Between two completely different styles of dance choreographed by Balanchine was a stunning piece, Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Las Hermanas*. The stark staging coupled with a dark story was beautifully performed, leaving the audience somewhat drained and ready for the lighter fare of *Western Symphony*. The audience's enthusiasm was evident in the standing ovation the dancers, guest conductor Ormsby Wilkins, and the Sarasota Orchestra received at evening's end.

We are fortunate to have live music for performances at the Opera House and Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. The music greatly enhances the performance and is loved by the dancers. If you enjoy the orchestra as much as I do, please consider making a donation to the Ballet Live Music Fund to help offset the expense of mounting these productions.

The Friends have also hosted two successful events, *Meet Me at the Barre* and the *November Showcase Luncheon* featuring Octavio Martin. You can read about these events elsewhere in this newsletter. There are four more luncheons this Season. Choreographer Dominic Walsh will be the guest speaker at the next one on January 20th.

We are a growing group of ballet lovers, with our membership passing 400 in October, including over 80 new members since last Spring. Many of our new and long-term members have taken advantage of the opportunity to volunteer – our most important way of helping the Ballet. If you would like to help, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Barbara Fischer Long (bflong@comcast.net). Among other opportunities, we particularly need help to assist students at *Dance – The Next Generation* (DNG). Our DNG volunteers always describe this as a very rewarding activity.

Peggy Sweeney (peggysweeney@verizon.net) who coordinates the Dancers' Suppers program could also use more "cooks" for her kitchen.

Speaking of DNG, their annual fund-raising event was held in October at the FSU Center. It was heart warming to watch these children dance and to hear some of their stories. This is a remarkable program for children at risk of dropping out from our local schools. If you were unable to attend but would like to support DNG, you can do so by contacting Amy Hernden (ahernden@sarasotaballet.org) at the Ballet. The program is free to the participants. Funds are needed to support existing students and to potentially expand the program. So please consider making a contribution.

Please feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail to discuss the Friends. I am always interested in ways to make our organization better for all its members.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a Happy Holiday Season. I look forward to seeing you in the new year!

Bubbly flowed as guests arrived. The program started promptly at 6:00 PM when Iain Webb, Director of The Sarasota Ballet welcomed Friends and their guests. Iain was in a festive mood, introducing the administrative and artistic staff before introducing the Company by rank. The audience broke into applause when Iain shared the fact that Victoria Hlland is expecting her first child. As a result, she will not be dancing this Season as she performs her most important role as mother-to-be!



Asia Bui, Luke Schaufuss, Ellen Overstreet, Carol Arscott, Baptiste Robert, Samantha Benoit

From the Desk of the Events Coordinator

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Meet Me at the Barre

October 19, 2019

Oh, what a night! The traditional start to the 2019-2020 Season was truly something special – an event so well-attended that one level at the FSU Center for the Performing Arts couldn't hold everyone. With approximately 180 in attendance including Friends, guests, staff, and dancers, the buffets and tables were set up on both the lobby and mezzanine levels.

Fingers were crossed as the Event Committee under the leadership of Donna Maytham watched the attendees spread out through the FSU Center. How would things work with people on two floors? The answer was fabulous! With more room to spread out and dancers circulating throughout the evening, guests had the opportunity to spend more time chatting with the dancers. More than one person was heard saying that this was the best MMATB ever.



Jan Sirota, Board Chair Dick Johnson, Rose Marie Proietti and Alison Gardner



Zerbe Sodervik, Jane Reed, Micki Sellman, Marjorie Floyd and Caroline Amory

Meet Me at the Barre (cont'd)



Bobbie Schott, Jane Sheridan, Donna Maytham,
Barbara Fischer Long

We would like to thank the following individuals for their generous support:

Event Sponsors — Ken & Peggy Abt and Richard & Helen March

Patrons — Carol Arscott, Laurie Fitch, Dick Johnson, Harry Leopold & Audrey Robbins, John Lindsey, Donna Maytham, and Jean Volpe

In addition, special thanks go to those who sponsored dancers: Pat & Ann Kenny (four), Barbara Epperson (three), Barbara Jacob (three), and the 18 other Friends who collectively sponsored 22 dancers.

2019 - 2020 Season

**JOHN RINGLING'S CIRCUS NUTCRACKER
(Program 3)**

20 – 21 December 2019

Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall

Choreography by Matthew Hart
Music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Design by Peter Docherty

REDEFINED MOVEMENT

(Program 4)

31 January – 3 February 2020

FSU Center for the Performing Arts

Les Rendezvous

Choreography by Sir Frederick Ashton

Music by Daniel Auber

Brandenburgs (Company Premiere)

Choreography by Paul Taylor

Music by Johann Sebastian Bach

I Napoletani

Choreography by Dominic Walsh

Music by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi

The Sarasota Ballet Presents

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY (Program 5)

28 February – 1 March 2020

FSU Center for the Performing Arts

The Sarasota Ballet Presents: Paul Taylor Dance Company

ROMEO & JULIET (Program 6)

27 – 28 March 2020

Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall

Romeo and Juliet (Company Premiere)

Choreography by Sir Frederick Ashton

Music by Sergei Prokofiev

BEYOND WORDS (Program 7)

24 – 25 April 2020

Sarasota Opera House

In the Night (Company Premiere)

Choreography by Jerome Robbins

Music by Frédéric Chopin

Dante Sonata (Company Premiere)

Choreography by Sir Frederick Ashton

Music by Franz Liszt

The Spider's Feast (Company Premiere)

Choreography by David Bintley

Music by Albert Roussel

Tickets to all performances are now on sale on the website at www.sarasotaballet.org or by calling the Box Office at 941.359.0099.

November Showcase Luncheon

To say that our first luncheon of the Season was fabulous would be an understatement! Our guest speaker, Octavio Martin, was in rare form. The "old Havana" floral arrangements, courtesy of Lauren Walsh, were stunning. The approximately 100 Friends and guests were excited to get together again after the long, hot summer.

It's hard to know where to begin. As moderator, Jean Volpe asked one question — "what is the role of a Ballet Master?" — which sent Octavio off and running. I believe his first words were "I'm exhausted." You would never know it as he told stories and answered questions from Jean and attendees.

Octavio described some of the many things a Ballet



Octavio Martin and Jean Volpe
All photos by Shirley Blair

Master does: teach daily class; work with the repetiteur during rehearsals — helping with music, taking notes, observing corrections; assist the dancers with certain moves; and perhaps most



Donna D'Agostino, Lauren Ann Walsh, Marlene Mitchell, Vlatka Ivanisevic and Janet Tolbert

importantly, encouraging them as they work through the demands on their bodies and minds.

When discussing daily class, he emphasized how he always considers what ballets they are rehearsing or performing. For example, if the Company is working on a Balanchine piece, he will structure a class that builds to fast-paced combinations. On the other hand, if they are doing something by Ashton, class would include more upper body work.

Octavio shared some funny moments from his introduction to the stage, describing himself as a "big boy who loved ice cream" in his native Cuba. At age nine, he auditioned for the Cuban National Ballet School. After completing his training, he danced for 13 years with the national company and he toured the world doing romantic ballets.

At age 32, when the company was performing in Mexico City, Octavio struggled with issues relating to life and his career. He took a leap of faith and decided to defect. What must have been a harrowing experience was described with humor and self-deprecation. Let's just say that it involved numerous bus trips over several days with no money before he safely reached his brothers in Miami and, ultimately, his new home with The Sarasota Ballet.



Marilyn Nordby, Sara Robinson and Carol Tillotson

Jean then asked him about his experience after joining the Ballet. "What a fantastic seven years" is how he replied. He described how this experience marked his career as an artist. No longer was he performing only romantic roles — merely dancing the steps. The roles he was given here were more theatrical, allowing him to both develop a character and tell a story.

November Showcase Luncheon (cont'd)

Octavio described one of his favorite roles in *The Rake's Progress*. In it, he had to sit without moving for seven minutes while looking crazy. During dress rehearsal, he started shaking in this position. Glancing over, he saw Margaret Barbieri with tears in her eyes. Knowing that he had moved her was a fantastic memory.

The Lesson was another role he treasured. In this ballet, he performs as a private teacher who becomes obsessed with his student (danced by Sara Sardelli) and ultimately kills her. Karol Foss was sitting at my table. Describing how terrifying he was in this role, Karol went to Sara and asked if she was afraid of Octavio. Of course, the answer was no. What a testament to his ability to become the character!

The final role that he discussed was *Othello*, as this was a very personal moment for him. After rehearsing in the morning, Octavio received a call from his brother who told him that his father had passed away. Iain Webb brought him to his office and offered to let the second cast perform that night. He replied that his father always said that "the show must go on." So, with a heart filled with sorrow, he went out and performed his best in his dad's honor.

A guest asked if his family in Cuba suffered any repercussions following his defection. Although Octavio was initially concerned, the government left them alone. He also indicated that his fellow dancers supported his decision to leave.



Lauren Ann Walsh and Octavio Martin

What was his favorite role? He replied Albrecht in *Giselle*. An interesting aside is that Marcelo Gomes said the same thing at the Boys from Brazil Showcase Luncheon last season, but for very different reasons. Marcelo described how the character begins as one person and becomes another by the end of the ballet. For Octavio, the answer was very personal.

In the Cuban National Ballet, a male dancer can only be promoted to Principal after he performs Albrecht. Octavio had been named to the third cast and had been rehearsing with Alicia Alonzo on the subtleties of the role. For example, she spent time working with him to maximize the impact of dropping his cape at the end of Act 2.

One afternoon, he was told that Alicia wanted to see him. When they met, she told him that the Principal Dancer who had been scheduled to perform was injured. Octavio would be dancing Albrecht in three days. Shortly after this performance, he was promoted to Principal.

When asked what the greatest lesson he learned from Alicia was, he replied — "Ballet is not about tricks; it's about details." He described letting your entire body talk; using your face and arms; and displaying energy through your feet. It struck me that Margaret used similar language in the *Inside the Studio for Giselle*.

In closing, he was asked "how do you bridge from Cuban training to English?" When he came to The Sarasota Ballet, he was hungry to learn how to move in different ways. By listening to Iain, Margaret and the different répétiteurs with whom he worked, he was able to do this. He considers it his responsibility as an Assistant Ballet Master to help create artists who are versatile, with an ability to excel in different styles. With his personality and charm, we have no doubt that he will be achieve this goal.

Inside the Studio – Las Hermanas

If you love The Sarasota Ballet and have not been to an *Inside the Studio*, my advice is to run, not walk, to the next one. These behind-the-scenes glimpses into dancers rehearsing upcoming productions are exciting to watch. They also impart a fundamental understanding that make the performances themselves truly come alive.

Grant Coyle, a respected répétiteur who has worked with Sir Kenneth MacMillan, started the session with an overview of the Symphonic Tales program. He described how *Las Hermanas* is an intense narrative ballet by MacMillan with a small cast. It is performed between two Balanchine pieces involving the full Company. The contrast between the choreography is striking.

Las Hermanas — *The Sisters* — is the story of five sisters, their dominating mother, and a cocky young man. In an arranged marriage, he is engaged to the older “spinster” but attracted to the beautiful, younger daughter. The ballet, choreographed by MacMillan, is based upon a play by the Spanish poet and playwright, Federico Garcia-Lorca. Coyle explained that in the play, the young man is behind a screen and never seen



Danielle Brown and Marcelo Gomes Photo by Frank Atura

on stage — a convention that would be impossible in a ballet. So, MacMillan created two major *pas de deux* for the suitor.

Before working with the dancers, Coyle discussed the three major elements that come together to create a ballet: choreography, music, and set. He described this choreography as small and intimate, with an overlay of sexual tension. The music which was composed by Frank Martin is highlighted by a pianist playing harpsichord off stage. It “fits the ballet like a glove.” The set, which was designed by Nicholas Georgiadis, is influenced by the Spanish painter, Salvador Dali. Together they combine to create an amazing ballet that has been a favorite of Sarasota audiences when previously performed.

This was an unusual *Studio* as Ricardo Graziano, lead of the second cast, substituted for Marcelo Gomes at rehearsal. Ricardo and Danielle Brown, cast in the role of the oldest sister, had not danced this *pas de deux* together. As we watched the physical, push-pull tension between the characters, Coyle noted that Danielle was overcoming the height difference between Ricardo and Marcelo.

His coaching was exciting to watch. Coyle moved across the floor demonstrating both male and female steps. He placed special emphasis on the need for Danielle to demonstrate her disgust for this man through handwringing and facial expressions.

Marijana Dominis joined the rehearsal as the youngest sister — one of Margaret Barbieri’s signature roles. She and Ricardo practiced this sensuous, mad *pas de deux* that proceeds at a feverish pace. After complimenting her scissor kicks, Coyle asked her for “crazy feet” and to “lean down Ricardo’s body.” Iain Webb suggested that Marijana try pushing on Ricardo’s shoulders which seemed to accomplish what Coyle was looking for.

I think the audience was a little “spent” after watching such an emotional and highly sensual rehearsal. So, there were fewer questions than usual. Iain asked each of the dancers for their thoughts about this ballet.

Marijana commented that she was very excited to be dancing the role of the youngest sister in her first Season with the Company. Danielle noted that the roles are very complex and take mental strength to be successful.

Ricardo shared insight onto how he prepares for such a role. Before doing anything with a ballerina, he wants to make sure that she is comfortable at every step along the way. Then, there is no holding back during the performance — something you will have seen for yourself by the time you read this article!

Welcome to Our New Members

Congratulations to a team effort which has increased membership in the Friends to 430 individuals as of November 20, 2019. Since mid-April, Betty Ferguson (Membership Chairperson) with assistance from Dick Johnson (Board Chair – The Sarasota Ballet), Richard March, and Donna Maytham has managed a successful recruitment campaign! Betty sent letters to Ballet subscribers in September. This mailing resulted in 62 new Friends, including over 20 Patrons or Sustaining Members.

We take this opportunity to welcome them and look forward to their becoming active and involved members of the Friends.

Patrons: Linda Fiorelli, Peter & Joanne Powers, Saul & Naomi Cohen, and Shari & Stephen Ashman

Sustaining Members: Andrea (Pandy) Anderson, Alexander & Irene Cass, Bob Kloss, Carol & Erwin Segal, Florence Wildner, Fremajane Wolfson, Gerald & Deborah Hamburg, Janis Goodman & Scott Grier, Judith Stern, Judy Fireman, Mac Stevenson, Richard & Clare Segal, and Sharon Petty

Friends: Priscilla Adams, Barbara & Bruce Keltz, Barbara & Julian Hansen, Barcy Grauer & Bruce Wertheimer, Beryl Nord, Carol Chawkins, Carol Tillotson, Carol Von Allmen, Carole & Ira Singer, Carolyn & Thomas Drew, Cynthia & Gregg Baran, Cynthia Burnell, Deborah R. Kalb, Donna Hecker, Dr. Heidi Riveron, Dr. James Griffith & Barbara Sanderson, Elinor Rogosin, Faith Goldman, Gail Conway, Helen & John Habbert, Jacqueline & John Thompson, Jacqueline Massari, Joan Kiernan, John & Nancy Harris, Karen Selwyn, Kristie Cox, Linda Elliff, Linda Neal, Marcia Hendler, Marge Barpal, Mary Johnson, Merle & George Chorba, Michael Score, Nancy & Jack Rozance, Norma Schatz, Paul Cantor & Michelle Roy, Peter & Teresa Masterson, Peter Miller & Martha Harrison, Phil & Phyllis Lieberman, Sara Curtis Robinson, Sue Guarasci, Victoria & Frank Chester, Vielka Sheppard, and Zerbe Sodervick & Jane Reed

Getting to Know You...

Q and A with Dierdre Miles Burger, Assistant Education Director

By Bruce Ensinger

When did you first become interested in ballet?

I gravitated towards dance as a young child, but only started serious lessons when, at age 10, I saw ballet dancers on the Ed Sullivan Show. My grandmother was a librarian. I asked her to find all the ballet-related books in the library for me which then I read voraciously. Seeing this, my parents decided that they should find some serious training for me. They took me to a young woman who had danced with Boston Ballet. Once I started lessons, I couldn't get enough! I started traveling into Boston for lessons with Boston Ballet at age 12.

What inspires you to continue with dance?

I started teaching in my 20's while dancing professionally. I have always been passionate about the art form. In my 30's, I began to increase my knowledge in dance notation and dance pedagogy in order to position myself to stay in the field. As I have grown and developed skills in other areas, I continue to have the desire to work with young dancers and hopefully, to inspire them to love dance in the same way I do.

Who was your most influential teacher and why?

It would be very hard to choose one teacher that has been most influential. I have had several over the years that have been strong mentors. If I really had to choose, I would have to pick Anna Marie Holmes, as I worked with her the longest. She not only was a prime teacher and coach during my performing years, she also guided me as I moved into teaching and working in the artistic staff of a professional company.

What was the most challenging work you danced?

When I was nearing the end of my career, I was chosen to dance the principal contemporary role in Twyla Tharp's *Brief Fling*. The role requires an athleticism and modern dance aesthetic that was very foreign to me. It took a lot of practice and extra hours, not to mention moments of frustration. But in the end, it turned out to be one of my greatest successes as a performer.

What would be the dream role you've never danced?

I always wanted to dance Giselle and did have the opportunity to learn the role on two occasions. Unfortunately, the one time I was most likely to be cast in the role I sustained an injury. My other dream role, Juliet, in *Romeo and Juliet*, I danced numerous times throughout my career.

If you could go back in time, what advice and lessons learned would you have given your "younger self"?

When I look back on my younger years as a dancer, I think I wasted too much energy on self-doubt and being overly nervous about performing. My advice to myself would be to try to enjoy every opportunity and experience as the years pass quickly. I also realize how very fortunate I was to have had a performing career in such an incredible art form.

What are some little-known facts about yourself that you want others to know?

I think people would be surprised to know I am a big "Rolling Stones" fan — thanks to my husband!

What are your hobbies?

I can't say I have any hobbies since much of my free time is taken up with ballet. However, I cherish time with my husband, David, and our dog, Gracie. I enjoy making a pleasant home for us as well as traveling and spending time with family.

What are you currently reading?

At the moment, I am reading "Small Great Things" by Jodi Picoult.

Sip, Shop and Support the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet

The first of what we hope will become many opportunities to raise funds for the Friends was a "sip and shop" event on November 20th at the Sara Campbell Boutique on Main Street. Under the leadership of Laura Feder, Sponsorship Development Chairperson, and Friend Niki Newell, the event was a huge success – not to mention a fun shopping experience.

Friends, along with Board Members of The Sarasota Ballet, enjoyed "modeling" Sara Campbell clothes and Charleston Shoes. Shoppers enjoyed a 10% discount and the Friends received 10% of the proceeds. What a win-win for us!

In the afternoon, attendees were treated to two short performances by the charming students from The Sarasota Ballet School, including DNG participants. They were adorable and everyone was delighted to watch them.



Students from The Sarasota Ballet School

Perhaps “sipping while shopping” was the reason that the Sara Campbell boutique rang up a high volume of sales. Or the enthusiastic young dancers? Whatever the case, the event was a huge success and we were the lucky beneficiary of over \$700!



“Models and Shoppers”

From the store’s perspective, it was such a great day for them, the manager expressed interest in doing it again. Not too bad for our first time “sipping and shopping.”

Fun Facts - John Ringling’s Circus Nutcracker

- Did you know that the Nutcracker was originally based upon an E.T.A. Hoffmann story, “The Nutcracker and the Mouse King?”
- Twelve year old Stanislava Stanislavovna Belinskaya was the original Clara at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia.
- More than a century after its debut in 1892, choreographer Matthew Hart staged Sarasota’s own *Nutcracker* in 2012.
- Our very first Clara was danced by Sara Sardelli.
- Logan Learned danced the role of John Ringling’s nephew, North/The Nutcracker.
- Kate Honea performed the role of the flamboyant Trapeze Artist, Sugar.
- Our Resident Choreographer and Principal Dancer, Ricardo Graziano, took on the role of the other Trapeze Artist, Prince.
- Victoria Hulland and David Tlaiye embodied Mable and John Ringling in the beautiful “Waltz of the Flowers,” set in Mable’s beloved rose garden.

2019 – 2020 Season at a Glance

December

- December 1 – **Winter Dreams, Sarasota Ballet Studio Company and Margaret Barbieri Conservatory Trainees in collaboration with Key Chorale**, 4:00PM
December 7 – **Winter Wonderland, Sarasota Ballet School, Margaret Barbieri Conservatory, and Sarasota Ballet Studio Company**, 6:00PM
December 9 – **Principal Film Series: The Male Dancer: Danseur Noble**, 6:00 PM
December 20 – **John Ringling’s Circus Nutcracker**, 7:30 PM
December 21 – **John Ringling’s Circus Nutcracker**, 2:00 PM, 7:30 PM

January

- January 5 – **The Sarasota Ballet’s 29th Season Gala**, 5:00 PM
January 15 – **Inside The Studio: Brandenburgs: Baroque Modernity**, 6:00 PM
January 20 – **Showcase Luncheon: Dominic Walsh, Choreographer**, 11:30 AM
January 31 – **Redefined Movement**, 7:30 PM

February

- February 1 – **Redefined Movement**, 2:00 PM, 7:30 PM
February 2 – **Redefined Movement**, 2:00 PM, 7:30 PM
February 3 – **Redefined Movement**, 7:30 PM
February 10 – **Showcase Luncheon: Ricardo Graziano & Iain Webb**, 11:30 AM
February 10 – **Principal Film Series: Paul Taylor: Creative Domain**, 6:00 PM
February 28 – **The Sarasota Ballet Presents the Paul Taylor Dance Company**, 7:30 PM
February 29 – **The Sarasota Ballet Presents the Paul Taylor Dance Company**, 2:00 PM, 7:30 PM

March

- March 1 – **The Sarasota Ballet Presents the Paul Taylor Dance Company**, 2:00 PM, 7:30 PM
March 9 – **Principal Film Series: Danielle Brown, Principal of The Sarasota Ballet**, 6:00 PM
March 11 – **Dali Nights at Selby Gardens, Sarasota Ballet Studio Company and Margaret Barbieri Conservatory**, 6:00 PM
March 16 – **Showcase Luncheon: Peter Schaufuss, Dancer & Director**, 11:30 AM
March 18 – **Inside The Studio: Romeo and Juliet: Romance and Tragedy**, 6:00 PM
March 27 – **Romeo & Juliet**, 7:30 PM
March 28 – **Romeo & Juliet**, 2:00 PM, 7:30 PM

April

- April 6 – **Showcase Luncheon: Margaret Barbieri and “The Italian Job”**, 11:30 AM
April 6 – **Inside The Studio: Dante Sonata: Darkness and Light**, 6:00 PM
April 15 – **Inside The Studio: The Spider’s Feast: Nature and Artistry**, 6:00 PM
April 24 – **Beyond Words**, 7:30 PM
April 25 – **Beyond Words**, 2:00 PM, 7:30 PM
April 28 – **Images of Dance**, 7:00 PM

May

- May 17 – **Alice in Wonderland Sarasota Ballet School**, 2:00pm
May 17 – **DNG End of Year Performance**, 6:00pm