



# Talking Pointes

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## 2019 - 2020 Friends Events

### 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 Editor

Jane Sheridan

Friends President Richard March asked me to take his normal spot in *Talking Pointes* this month. I'm honored to do so.

It was so exciting to see Matthew Hart's vision in *John Ringling's Circus Nutcracker* – a first for me. The performances were outstanding. I attended the Saturday matinee whose audience was filled with children. What struck me was how quiet they were as they sat spellbound by the magic on stage. It was quite remarkable!

Next, of course, was the stunning Ballet Gala which was featured in January's Brief *Talking Pointes*. This was an opportunity to showcase The Company, along with The Sarasota Ballet Studio Company and Margaret Barbieri Conservatory students. Our dancers excelled alongside internationally-known guest artists including Marcelo Gomes, Diana Vishneva, Misa Kuranaga, and Angelo Greco. The evening raised \$600,000 for The Sarasota Ballet.

The *January Showcase Luncheon*, discussed elsewhere in the newsletter, featured Jean Volpe interviewing Dominic Walsh. Let's just say that it was a great introduction to *I Napoletani*, the final piece in the REDEFINED MOVEMENT program – a smorgasbord of delights that includes Ashton's *Les Rendezvous* and The Company premiere of Paul Taylor's *Brandenburgs*. As most now know, this was the first time that *Brandenburgs* had been performed by an outside company, another achievement for The Sarasota Ballet.

Movement was indeed the operative word – from traditional classical choreography, to a non-stop, breathtaking flow of energy, and finally to fun-filled hand gestures. It was a feast for the eyes and the soul.

My one regret was that I was unable to attend *Inside the Studio* in January. This would have enhanced even further my enjoyment of *Brandenburgs*. Friends who attended described the collaborative way that Michael Tr

usnovec, the Paul Taylor repetiteur, worked with Marcelo Gomes, Danielle Brown, Katelyn May, and Ellen Overstreet. The results certainly showed on stage.



Helen and Richard March.  
All Photos by Shirley Blair

Read about the Live Music Matching Fund Grant in Helen's memory on page 2.

As we look forward to the remainder of the Season which includes the Paul Taylor Dance Company, *Romeo & Juliet*, and the BEYOND WORDS program, we have *Showcase Luncheons* in March and April. Personally, I can't wait to see what *Margaret Barbieri* and "*The Italian Job*" is all about!

We are also delighted that The Company has again been invited to perform at both the Joyce Theater in New York and the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. To quote the Jacob's Pillow website: "they bring a new program to close out Festival 2020, featuring Ashton's lavish *Birthday Offering*, a classical favorite which highlights his quintessential traits: 'charm, wit, humanity, affection, love of dance itself' (*The New York Times*)." What an exciting way to lead into the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season of The

### ***From the Desk of the Events Coordinator***

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### ***January Showcase Luncheon***

January 20, 2020

Director Iain Webb certainly knows how to engage his audience – not only in on-stage programming but also with guest speakers. The *January Showcase Luncheon* was no exception!

Former Resident Choreographer Dominic Walsh was welcomed back to Sarasota by an enthusiastic audience of Friends and guests.



Joseph and Jean Volpe with Dominic Walsh

The room was decorated in the colors of the Italian flag – red, white, and green – with beautiful floral arrangements courtesy of Lauren Walsh. The décor reflected the spirit of *I Napoletani*, Dominic's homage to the city.

Following lunch, Jean Volpe was an exceptional interviewer who clearly enjoyed learning about his life and career as much as we did. With a mother who was a dancer, Dominic shared that his childhood revolved around two things – drawing and dancing.

As a child artist, he found the visual components of lighting and set design fascinating, something which later informed his work as a choreographer. After studying gymnastics and ballet, he began his classical training with Ruth Page and Larry Long at age 14 in Chicago.

### ***Live Music Fund Matching Grant***

We will miss Helen March's wonderful smile that lit up many Friends of The Sarasota Ballet events. The photo on page 1 was taken at the November 2019 Showcase Luncheon. This is how we will always remember her - with a radiant smile and Richard's arm around her shoulder.

One of Helen's last outings was to attend SYMPHONIC TALES at the Sarasota Opera House. She not only loved ballet, she particularly enjoyed ballet with live music.

To support Helen's love of these performances, Richard March has established a Matching Fund Grant in her honor. He will match all donations to the Live Music Fund up to \$10,000 through March 31, 2020.

You may make a donation online by going to [sarasotaballet.org](http://sarasotaballet.org) and clicking on the link to "donate." Please indicate "Live Music Fund - Helen March" in the Recognition Note box, or contact Lauren Stroman, Development Officer at 941.225.6510 to make your donation over the phone. (If you prefer, you may also mail a check to The Sarasota Ballet, 5555 N Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34243 Attn: Development Office.)

He was offered opportunities to study in New York and San Francisco. However, he went to the Houston Ballet Academy and joined the Company after graduating at age 17, working with his mentor, Ben Stevenson. Initially, his dancing career focused on classical roles in *Romeo & Juliet*, *Giselle*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. In the 1990s, Houston Ballet had a 52-week contract. This lengthy season allowed Stevenson to introduce contemporary works into the Company and Dominic danced the entire repertoire.



He was in the unusual position of choreographing his first piece at age 19. However, when he was asked to choreograph another ballet, he said no – explaining that he had much more to learn first. (Jean observed that this insight was something quite remarkable.)



Bob Griffiths and Victoria Chester

At age 27, he was ready to choreograph and he created *Flames of Eros* on the Houston Ballet. After creating three more pieces for them, he left to form his own company which focused on more avant-garde works.

## 2019 - 2020 Season

**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](http://www.sarasotaballet.org) or by calling the Box Office at 941.359.0099.

One of the most important things he learned from Ben Stevenson was that dance is “first and foremost about telling a story.” For Dominic, choreography is about developing the story through the language of music and movement. When working with dancers in the studio, he described “channeling their energy” into the choreography.

Dominic discussed how the Karl Jung Center asked him to speak about his creative process. He shared how his work incorporates images from dreams, as well as the journey to and from a dream state. For him, the initial scene in *I Napoletani* is like a dream that represents the spirit of dance – somewhat strange but at the same time, beautiful.

The other scenes in *I Napoletani* reflect the energy of musical theater of the 1940s and 1950s. With his partner, he lived the culture of Naples and fell in love with the humor and charm of its people. He created the ballet in 2007 and brought it to The Sarasota Ballet the following year, beginning a long-term relationship with The Company.



Martha Harrison, Peter Miller, and Laura Feder

Dominic talked about how much he loves working with the dancers here. They take responsibility for absorbing the choreography and, in addition, help each other out. He is amazed at how well they adapt to the many different styles in their repertoire. Another reason he is excited to be in Sarasota is that he has the opportunity to again work with Marcelo Gomes. Their collaboration was joyously expressed during the performances.



Elaine and Bernard Pfeifer

During the Q&A session with the attendees, someone who had previously seen the ballet asked about the hand gestures. Dominic confirmed that he had personally observed this “silent language” while living in Naples. With much laughter from the audience, he also shared that they were not all “G-rated.”

Another Friend asked how his relationship with Iain and Margaret had developed. He told us that he had met them in Japan where he was performing as a guest artist. After having dinner together, he was invited to come to Sarasota to make a ballet. As many of you know, the result was *Wolfgang for Webb*. This led to his becoming the Resident Choreographer in 2009. He also presented his own Company here a couple of years later.



Dominic's Many "Friends" in Sarasota

In closing, Dominic shared how he has developed a program for professionals called the Compass Coaching Project. This is based upon the Alexander Technique and includes movement therapy as well as anatomy. His goal is to give dancers useful tools that can help them excel in their careers. He truly believes that the “new generation of dancers could shift the art form of dance” as we know it.

### ***Fun Facts - I Napoletani***

Naples, Italy is approximately 46 square miles and has 972,000 residents.

Over seven million foreigners visited Naples in 2017.

Did you know that Naples is the birthplace of the wood-fired, Neapolitan pizza? (Maybe that's why I craved pizza after seeing the performance!)

## Getting to Know You...

Q and A with Sara Robinson, Director of Development

### What motivated you to enter the field of Fundraising and Development?

As a Visual Arts Major right out of college, I was offered a job as Assistant to the Curator of Asiatic Art at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston. With an interest in arts administration, this seemed like a good place to begin my career. Since the Asiatic Department was preparing to celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I spent the next two years helping the Curator organize the Centennial. We added some beautiful artwork to the collection, took a patron trip to NYC, and held numerous fundraising events. Without knowing it, I had fallen in love with fundraising. The experience started my career in fundraising.

### What inspired you to join The Sarasota Ballet?

In March of last year, I met General Manager **Joe Volpe** and Director **Iain Webb** for dinner in New York City to explore the opportunity at The Sarasota Ballet. As we discussed The Company, I could see their energy and enthusiasm for the future of the organization. It became clear to me that I might be able to help with some of the opportunities at hand. The artistic growth over the past twelve years has been incredible and truly inspiring. Building on this foundation, my role is to implement programs that expand our audience and bring our patrons closer to The Ballet's wonderful work on stage and in the community. This mission motivates me in every way.

### What do you see as your greatest opportunity in Sarasota?

I have arrived at The Ballet at an incredibly exciting time. With the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season fast approaching, The Company is positioned to do so much in the years ahead. Over the past six months, we have developed a strategic plan that will strengthen all aspects of the organization — from the wonderful work that you see on stage to the outreach efforts that touch so many people in our community. The organizational growth that lies ahead for The Sarasota Ballet is the greatest opportunity and I am delighted to be part of this fantastic team.

### What is your greatest challenge?

The greatest challenge (always) is making sure that The Ballet has the resources that it needs to fulfill its artistic vision. Iain and Margaret have so many wonderful ideas for the future. It is our job in Development to make sure that they have the resources to achieve their objectives. In addition, **Christopher Hird**, Director of Education, oversees fabulous educational and outreach programs. He needs resources for teachers and students in The Ballet School, The Conservatory, and *Dance — the Next Generation*. We must do a good job in articulating all of these needs to our patrons in order to gain support for The Ballet in the years ahead.

### Who was your greatest influence?

My greatest professional influence was my first boss – **Wu Tung**, Curator of Asiatic Art at MFA. I learned so much from his work style. He was always positive, kind, and supportive, and had a wonderful way of asking for help. It made us feel good about the work that we were doing. I hope I have been able to capture some of this in my own work style.

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

Relax and have faith that life will unfold as it is supposed to.

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

I am crazy about my kids. I have three boys (ages 25, 24, and 20) and I absolutely love watching them grow up.

### What are your hobbies?

I have been a runner for most of my life. I also enjoy reading, going to the beach, traveling, and photography.

### What are you currently reading?

I am currently reading *City of Girls* by Elizabeth Gilbert.

*Exciting Partnership*

## Welcome to Our New Members

Our membership has continued to grow! We now have 443 Friends. We have been challenged by Dick Johnson, Board President – The Sarasota Ballet, to reach the 500-member mark. With your help in introducing your friends to the Friends, this is a goal we would love to achieve in 2020 as The Sarasota Ballet enters its 30<sup>th</sup> Season!

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

Patrons: William & Janice Farber

Sustaining Members: Karol Foss, and Jo & William Haraf

Friends: Elaine Bankoff, Dennis Ciborowski & Meryl Gale, Jim & Peggy Lang, and Barbara Struth

We would also like to thank Friend Audrey Heimler who upgraded her membership to the Sustaining Level.

## The Sarasota Ballet and the Neuro Challenge Foundation



Kate Honea, Principal Dancer and Assistant Ballet  
Mistress  
Photo M. Holler



Christopher Hird, Director of Education  
Photo M. Holler

The Sarasota Ballet launched a community initiative with the Neuro Challenge Foundation called *Dancing Through Parkinson's*. This effort, which has been spearheaded by Kate Honea who leads the class every other week, alternating with Christopher Hird, is featured in the latest issue of Sarasota Magazine. The full article can be found at [sarasotamagazine.com/health](http://sarasotamagazine.com/health) or on The Sarasota Ballet's Facebook page.

To see a free demonstration of the class, you are invited to attend the [The Parkinson's Expo](#), which takes place 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 29, at the Bradenton Area Convention Center, 1 Haben Blvd., Sarasota