

# En l'Air

News from  
MASSACHUSETTS  
ACADEMY of  
BALLET  
Educational Training  
Association

# FALL 2012



*Amber Fournier (above), Madeleine LaChance (bottom right), Amber and Madeleine (above right)*



## MAB Parent Voices

### Erika LaChance

We started bringing our daughter to MAB back in 2008. Our first experience was with the summer week-long dance camps with Miss Cathy. By the end of the week I was astounded at how much my little six year old had learned about ballet. In just one week she learned beyond “just” the ballet steps; she learned about ballet stories, how to create them and perform them. I was so impressed with the experience and our daughter had so much fun we couldn’t wait to come back that fall, and we’ve been here ever since.

Throughout the past four years at MAB, my husband and I have never ceased to be impressed with the quality of the dance instruction and the environment in which the students learn. We have watched the teachers, with great fascination, as they teach the students ballet technique, each step building on the last, and have enjoyed watching the transformation of these young dancers. I have always savored the fact that MAB teaches their students

“pure” ballet with a strong foundation and precise technique, all while in a truly supportive environment. I asked Madeleine what she likes about MAB and she replied “Everyone is so nice; they expect you to do well, but you are not afraid to make a mistake, you are not afraid to learn.” That environment seems pervasive throughout the school; all of the students seem so respectful of each others dancing and supportive of themselves and each other.

As we sat watching the spring performance this past year, we were so inspired by the talent both on the stage, and behind it, we just kept thinking what an absolute treasure MAB is, and how lucky we are to have MAB right here in Holyoke!

### Jessi Fournier

My daughter, Amber, has been attending MAB for nearly seven years. The school has become an integral part of her life, as well as our family’s, and each year I have watched Amber’s skills develop dramatically because of the dedication and patience of her teachers. Not only has MAB helped to cultivate her passion for ballet, but it has also played a critical

role in developing her confidence and her belief in her ability to achieve her goals, both in ballet and in everyday life. Amber loves that when she comes to MAB she is encouraged to express herself, and she always feels that she receives individualized attention and instruction when she is in class. Having a ballet school as personable and professional as MAB in our area is a gift for every student who truly has a passion for learning ballet.

## The Massachusetts Academy of Ballet

4 Open Square Way, Studio 403•Holyoke, MA 01040•413.536.6200•massacademyofballet.com



At the Massachusetts Academy of Ballet we strive to inspire and challenge each and every student from year to year. As we begin our eighth year, we acknowledge the many accomplishments of our students, from those who are dancing professionally to others who are continuing their dance studies at ballet academies and college programs, as well as the students who have studied with us for years but decided to pursue other interests. Regardless, we hope that in each student our teaching has fostered a love of dance and the discipline and drive to succeed in whatever they choose to do.

On the cover of this issue we are featuring two families who have been at MAB for many years, and offer insights on the training and philosophy of our school. There is also a calendar of events, reflections on summer programs, alumni news and an array of photos from our spring performance, summer program, summer conferences and fall rehearsals. We return to Barnes and Noble in November and are already rehearsing Nutcracker & Sweets for our performances at Wistariahurst! Please call and reserve your ticket now!

We wish to thank all our past and present board members, volunteers and teachers, as well as our many supportive parents.

With each new year, we are happy to see both new and returning faces. It is a joy to work with each and every student as they grow, progress and embrace the art of ballet.

Sincerely,

Rose and Charles Flachs

*Thank you* to the individuals, organizations, and businesses who donated so generously to MABETA's 3rd Annual Silent Auction!

- |                                |   |                             |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Gretchen Lytle                 | Neil Homstead                             | It's All About Me           |
| Big Y Foods, Inc.              | Greater Holyoke YMCA                      | Joe Bullock                 |
| The Majestic Theater           | Eighty Jarvis Restaurant                  | Elegant Knits /Deb Gauthier |
| Springfield Symphony Orchestra | Enchanted Circle Theater                  | Springfield Museums         |
| Claudette Lambert Peterson     | Sutter's Jewelry                          | Deborah & Matt Haas         |
| River Valley Market            | Yankee Pedlar Inn                         | Ralph & Susan Chamberlain   |
| The Odyssey Bookshop           | Mt. Tom's Homemade Ice Cream              |                             |
| Mimi's Creations               | Whitestone Marketing Group and Go Graphix |                             |
| Divina Acker                   | Vega Yoga & Movement Arts                 |                             |
| Anonymous MAB Parent           | Tavern on the Hill                        |                             |
| MIFA Victory Theatre           | Serene Salon & Spa                        |                             |
| Anne & Jesse Lytle             | Wistariahurst Museum                      |                             |
| New Century Theatre            | Holyoke Rows                              |                             |
| Children's Museum at Holyoke   | The Claw Foot Tub                         |                             |
| Delaney's Grill & The Mick     | Jacob's Pillow                            |                             |
| Timna Tarr                     |   |                             |

## Honors for Rose Flachs

at CORPS de Ballet International Conference



Rose Flachs and Alonzo King

Rose and Charles Flachs are founding members of the Council of Organized Researchers of Ballet, an organization dedicated to the development, exploration, and advancement of ballet in higher education.

This year, the CORPS de Ballet International's annual conference was hosted by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, and was attended by MAB faculty Cathy Johnson and guest artist, Matisse Madden.

The CORPS de Ballet's 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Alonzo King of LINES Ballet, and the Annual Outstanding Service Award was given to Rose Flachs for her volunteer work for the CORPS. This is the second time Rose has received this award.

Charles Flachs is also a two-time recipient of the award.

The conference included master classes by Anna Marie Holmes and Cynthia Harvey as well as many interesting and invigorating presentations and discussions. Next year's conference is June 19-23 in Paris, France. [www.corps-de-ballet.org](http://www.corps-de-ballet.org)



Photos, clockwise from left: Charles and Rose Flachs with Rose's award, Rose with Matisse Madden, and Rose with Cathy Johnson at Jacob's Pillow's Ted Shawn Theatre

## Alumni Updates

**KELSEY CHAMBERLAIN** is a senior at Mercyhurst College and is creating her portfolio for auditioning this spring. Kelsey will return to MAB to perform the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy in our *Nutcracker & Sweets*.



**KARA JOHNSON** currently lives in Basel, Switzerland, where she has been taking ballet classes at Theater Basel, taught by company members of the Basel Ballet. Kara also has been training at, and will perform with, the Basel Dance Academy, under the direction of former Basel Ballet soloist Galina Gladkova-Hoffmann.

**MATISSE MADDEN** is performing the *Nutcracker* with the Hartford City Ballet at the Wadsworth Atheneum, December 22 at 6pm. She is dancing the role of Dew Drop.

**JACQUELINE WURZER** is an apprentice with Ballet Theater of Maryland and busy rehearsing for the *Nutcracker*.

## Massachusetts Academy of Ballet Faculty

Rose and Charles Flachs,  
Artistic Directors

Cathy Johnson, Pre-ballet Division  
and Adult Ballet

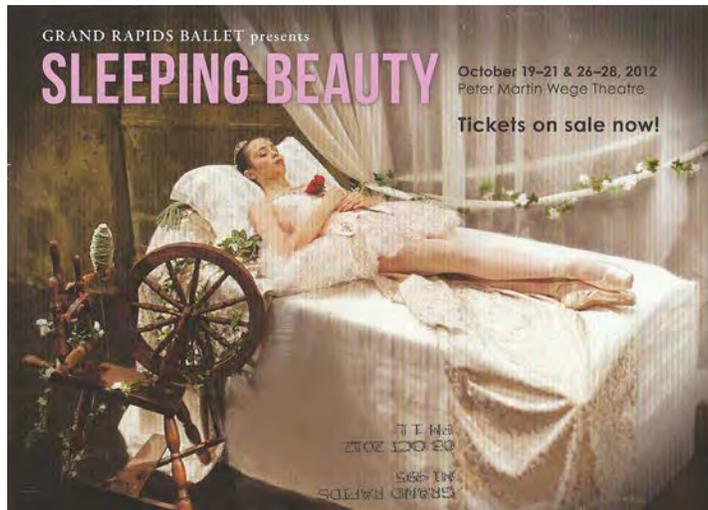
Debra Vega, Jazz and Tap



Newsletter design and production:  
Loran Diehl Saito

**CONNIE FLACHS** is performing the role of Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty* with the Grand Rapids Ballet Company. She also performed in David Parson's *The Envelope* for the announcement for the Grand Rapids Art Prize and in Twyla Tharp's *Sinatra Songs* for the "Bravo Attila" event! Congratulations Connie!

**DAN GRZELAK** is dancing with Colorado Ballet's Studio Company, the second Company of Colorado Ballet. He performed in their production of *Sleeping Beauty* and is in rehearsal for the *Nutcracker*. Congratulations Dan!



MAB alumni perform in *Sleeping Beauty* productions: Connie Flachs as Aurora in Grand Rapids Ballet's production, and Dan Grzelak in Colorado Ballet's production

## 2012-2013 MABETA Members

- Izzy Luu-Li Haas
- Emlyn Fenwick-Homstead
- Anna Lally
- Erica Maillet
- Louisa Rader



# Spring Performance 2012

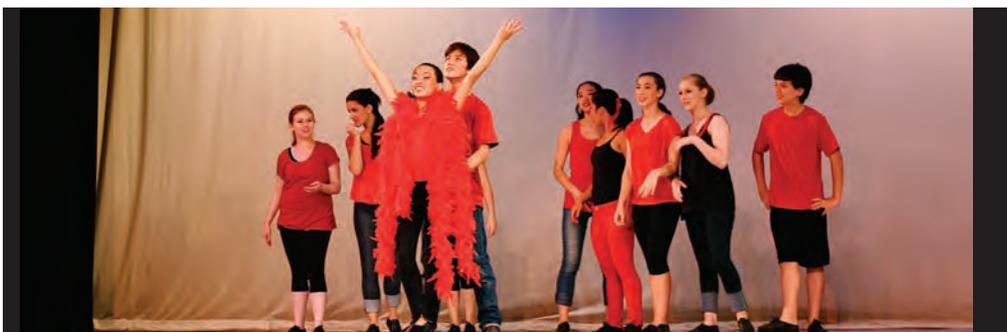
JUNE 9, HOLYOKE HIGH SCHOOL

## MABETA Board

Andrew Butler  
Charles Flachs  
Rose Marie Flachs  
Deborah Haas  
Cathy Johnson  
Brittney Noble  
Navae Rodriguez  
Loran Saito  
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## Thank you MABETA donors!

Dan Czitrom and Meryl Fingrutd  
Roland and Mary Haas  
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Bruce & Cristine Rockwell  
Springfield Women's League  
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Massachusetts Cultural Council



*Spring performance photos by Veronika Helmer and Charles Flachs*



## Summer Experiences 2012

### The Faraway Land of Pennsylvania

by Louisa Rader

Last summer I went down to Pennsylvania to spend two weeks with a host family and to dance in Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet's summer intensive program. The experience was unlike anything I have ever done before. I was surrounded by unfamiliar people and places, and was thrown in the deep end. When I began my first day, I realized that PAB was very similar to Massachusetts Academy of Ballet, just larger. There was nothing to worry about. There were a couple of other dancers from MAB, and I knew a few PAB dancers who had come up to Massachusetts before. Another unnecessary worry I had was that the teaching style would be startlingly different than what I am used to. In PAB, there are a few differences, though the basic teaching style was similar to MAB's. I walked around the town of Narberth, where PAB is located, several times and enjoyed both the dance store in town and the Japanese store across the street.

The entire experience was incredible, though meeting all the people was what made the trip so special. I made many friends in Pennsylvania and loved the host family I stayed with. The Duncombes were very nice and welcomed me into their family. I became more independent, while still having the comfort of a family and people being there for me. I loved going down to Pennsylvania and making so many friends. That was an incredible experience and it is something I will never forget.

### Freedom and Training

by Emlyn Homstead-Fenwick,  
with Izzy Luu Li Haas



Last summer Izzy and I had the amazing opportunity to dance at the Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet in Narberth with Mr. and Ms. White. It isn't the first time either of us have been away from home, but it was definitely a new experience. The freedom, training, and teachers were the best parts about the trip. Izzy was there for three weeks, and I went for two. Izzy would definitely stay for more than three weeks next time, as would I. Staying with a host family was great for both of us, as well as being able to stay together. It was a comfortable way to be away from home without having to worry. Plus we were doing too many fun things to think about being homesick. We came home every night and fell fast asleep, on the couch, floor, kitchen chairs, and occasionally where we were supposed to, in our beds.

Everyone in Pennsylvania was wonderful to us. We stayed with the Dyals who were incredibly warm and welcoming. When I joined their household on the second week, I felt right at home. Personally, Izzy and I think Ms. Dyal deserves an award for feeding three dancers. We went through a lot of food. Meg's brother Brennen was also very nice, even if he did finish our grapefruit juice. Also in the Dyal family were three fabulous and cuddly dogs: Lola, Brody, and Bentley.

Everyone at the studio was also welcoming. We made a lot of wonderful friends, and played some pretty intense board games dur-

ing our breaks. The teacher were very kind, and we both improved a lot. Their critiques were always helpful and informative, and the classes were always fun to take, even if we did crawl down the stairs some mornings because we were so sore. We were both taking four to five classes a day—morning class, two regular technique classes, variations or partnering, and either jazz, pilates, or gyro as the last class of the day, Monday through Wednesday. Thursday was movie night. We watched *Corsaire* and *Flames of Paris*, to name a few. One of the highlights for us at PAB was dancing with live piano. It really helps to connect to the music, and Tanya, the pianist, was very nice. The Whites were very inspirational teachers, and had amazing stories to tell.

Now, of course, because Izzy and I love food, we feel the need to talk about the fantastic food in Pennsylvania. In Narberth, across the street from the studio was a little store called Mido, where we would frequently buy lunch. Also in Narberth was a pizza place, and a corner store with good drinks. We also went to Handles, a delicious ice cream shop, which also sold delicious soft pretzels. However, above all was a little French bakery, with mini Nutellas and the absolute best mango smoothies ever (Mrs. White's favorite). We brought my step mom there when she picked us up, and we are still trying to find the type of juice used to make the smoothies so we can make them at home. If we can't, we will have to endure the drive south to Narberth to get mango smoothies, not to mention see all the wonderful people we met.

## Whirlwind to Winnipeg

by Lorán Diehl Saito

Living 1,800 miles from home in a foreign country? Sure. Performing under the direction of a living legend of dance? No sweat. Writing an article for *En L'Air*? Now *that* is stressful. Or so says Liam Saito, so this article is written by his mother, from my point of view.

A year ago at this time, we never imagined that we would have one less kid in our household, but Liam's journey really began last fall, when he launched his preparations for the Youth America Grand Prix Competition with Rose and Charles. After a successful performance at the regional competition in Torrington, CT, Liam went on to New York, where he met some of the best young men dancers from around the world. Although he did not advance in the competition, Liam was tapped by the director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School (Canada), who offered him a scholarship to participate in the school's summer intensive.

Just after his 15th birthday, Liam began his summer with two weeks at Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet, where he enjoyed re-connecting with the Whites and other teachers there. He felt he learned a lot, and was warmed-up and ready when I drove him straight from Narberth, PA to La Guardia Airport, from which he flew alone for the first time to Winnipeg.

Liam spent four weeks at RWB School's summer intensive and greatly enjoyed the new experience of taking class with a large group of guys his age. Around the 3rd week of the program, RWB School Director Arlene Minkhorst began calling parents to inform them if their child had been selected to

enroll in the school's year-round Professional Division. I received one of those calls with a mixture of pride, excitement, and shock at the idea of Liam being so far away.

After many phone calls and e-mails negotiating financial aid and getting used to the idea, and with Liam's assurance that this was the right place for him to be, we made the commitment for him to continue at RWB School in the fall.

Liam was very happy to return to MAB and spend the last three weeks of the summer intensive with the friends he has danced with since he was five years old.

Liam's grandmother and I joined him on his trip to Winnipeg and helped him settle into his dorm room, registering him for his classes at the Collegiate (high school division) of the University of Winnipeg, and saying goodbye two days later.

Shortly after he arrived, Liam was called for an audition with Twyla Tharp, who was in town to produce her new ballet *The Princess and the Goblin*, co-commissioned by RWB and Atlanta Ballet (Atlanta premiered it in February). The cast featured company dancers, with guest star Paloma Herrera, principal dancer of American Ballet Theater. A cast of children included roles for two teenagers—one boy and one girl. After two weeks of auditions, Twyla finally selected Liam and one of his classmates (double-casting) for the role of the teenaged boy. Liam performed in four of the six shows when the ballet opened October 17-21.

Even though it made for an extremely challenging and intense start to his experience in Winnipeg, Liam was grateful for the chance to work with Twyla Tharp and the RWB Company. He said, "Twyla's choreography is interesting and she is interesting to work with. She's demanding but also gentle and interested in dancers as individuals." In addition to the group choreography, Liam had a short solo and a pas de deux with a female classmate. He noted that Twyla customized the solos according to the dancers she was working with—for example, his solo was a little different than that of the other boy dancer in the same role.

Liam says, "My role was pretty small, but

it was great working with Twyla and a really awesome cast. The dancers at RWB are phenomenal. The U.S. companies I have seen have flashy superstars, but I'm impressed with the way RWB's company is so cohesive and works so well together."

Now that the show is over, Liam is finally getting a taste of what regular life at RWB School is like. His classes at RWB include Men's ballet, Men's Coaching, Men's Strength Training, Repertoire, Modern, Art, and Music. At The Collegiate, he takes Math, Science, and English classes (this is his first school experience of his life, so he is getting used to the homework and tests!)

Liam feels he made a good decision in going to Winnipeg because of all the opportunities afforded to him as a young male dancer in the company of peers. He was recently invited to set technical, artistic, personal and class goals against which he will be able to measure himself later in the year. He misses his MAB friends and teachers and looks forward to seeing them when he is home on breaks, and he wants to express his appreciation (as do his parents!) for all the care and training that Rose, Charles, Cathy, and Debra provide to their MAB students every day.

# MABETA Calendar

**November 11, 11 am to 3 pm**  
MABETA Book Fair Fundraiser  
Barnes & Noble in Holyoke

**December 14, 7:00 pm**  
**December 15 and 16, 1 pm and 3 pm**

Nutcracker and Sweets  
Wistariahurst Museum  
\$10.00 Adults, \$1.00 Children  
*This project is supported in part by a grant from the Holyoke Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.*

**March 14, 7:30 pm**  
Group excursion to Joffrey Ballet, UMASS  
Fine Arts Center

**April 6, 3:00 pm**  
Dance to Stop Hunger, Open Square  
Contributions encouraged

**June 8, 1:00 pm**  
Spring Performance  
Holyoke High School  
\$10.00 Adults, \$5.00 Children



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*Massachusetts Academy of Ballet Educational Training Association*

**Sunday, November 11, 2012**  
Barnes & Noble  
7 Holyoke Street, Holyoke, MA

In-store performances 12:30 - 3:00 p.m.

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