



T W E N T Y Y E A R S O F

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

newsnewsnewsnewsnewsnewsnewsnewsnewsnewsnews WINTER 2017



ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

WINTER 2017 NEWS

- 04 New Work: Cherice Barton
- 06 Sponsor Profile
- 07 Wedding Bells
- 08 2017 Winter Season
- 10 Dancer Spotlight
- 11 ASFB On Tour



PHOTO: ROSALE O'CONNOR

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Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! We've wasted no time hitting the ground running in 2017 with new creations and tour destinations. Our quest for uncovering choreographic voices led us to our latest discovery, Cherice Barton. Originally from Canada, Barton began her career as a classical ballerina, but is now an in-demand choreographer whose work can be seen anywhere from television to Broadway. This wide-ranging background gives her work a refreshing feel, and the openness and passion she brings to the creative process is inspiring for our dancers (pg. 4). We are looking forward to the performances in Aspen (February 18 & April 1) and Santa Fe (April 8). This new ballet will further forge the unique identity of ASFB that drives our popularity at home and on tour.

Recently returned from a successful company debut in Miami, FL, it is with pride that ASFB embarks on an extensive multi-city tour with stops in favorite cities like Denver, Los Angeles, Irvine, Palm Desert, Scottsdale, Philadelphia, and Houston. We are also thrilled to be returning to the Joyce Theater in New York City for an astounding eighth appearance! (pg. 11)

ASFB looks forward to sharing the amazing spectacle that is Pilobolus performing their internationally-touring hit, *Shadowland*, in Santa Fe (February 28) and Aspen (March 2). (pg. 8)

Love was in the air this winter, as we celebrated the weddings of four of our dancers! Seia Rassenti and Joseph Watson wed at the home of trustee Barbara Gold; longtime dancer Emily Proctor married former ASFB dancer Peter Franc in Maui; and Craig Black exchanged vows with Hubbard Street dancer Kevin Shannon in San Francisco. (pg. 7)

Our newest dancer, Anna Gerberich, comes to us from The Joffrey Ballet. She thrilled Aspen and Santa Fe audiences this winter with her mesmerizing performances of the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*. Find out more about Anna in this issue. (pg. 10)

We were touched by the support you showed us with your year-end giving and for the enthusiasm you show us all year round. As we continue to celebrate ASFB's 20th anniversary milestone, your generosity inspires us to keep moving forward.

See you at the theater!

Tom Mossbrucker
Artistic Director

Jean-Philippe Malaty
Executive Director



Meet Cherice Barton, ASFB's Newest Choreographer

by Debra Levine

Debra Levine is a Los Angeles dance critic blogging on artsmeme. She is a 2016 Fellow at the Center for Ballet and the Arts at NYU.

She's part of a tribe of young dance makers who hop fluidly between entertainment hot-spots—Las Vegas, L.A.'s Staples Center, Broadway, and Hollywood. Clients include Katy Perry (at the Grammy Awards); George Lucas (in a Disney film); Spider-Man (vaulting above Broadway); and two darling daughters ages three and four. Relishing her return to the ballet world (now a leading commercial choreographer, she danced with the Alberta Ballet at 17), Cherice Barton joins an elite club—choreographers creating new works for Aspen Santa Fe Ballet. For a theme, she's been cogitating on a commodity both rare and elusive.

"What is happiness?" queries Barton in her new work, her first serious choreographic foray onto the concert stage. She addresses this essentially spiritual question with the tools of her trade, the human body. The eldest of three dancing sisters (Aszure and Charissa complete the trio), the Ontario-born, Edmonton-raised choreographer spoke by phone during her recent Aspen residency.

"Happiness is huge as a concept—and the universal search for happiness provides infinite layers to be explored," she said with a tinge of solemnity.

The ballet, wittily entitled *Happimess*, is commissioned by the esteemed Valley Performing Arts Center, located in the northern reaches of Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, and ASFB patrons Toni and Jim Kaplan. VPAC Executive Director Thor Steingraber put ASFB directors Tom Mossbrucker and Jean-Philippe Malaty under tight constraints when selecting a choreographer. First, the work would have its world premiere March 3, 2017, at VPAC, the frothy multi-arts theater located at Cal State, Northridge, where ASFB is in its second year as dance company-in-residence. Aspen audiences, however, can catch a preview of *Happimess* on February 18 at the Aspen District Theatre (repeated on April 1). Santa Fe gets its turn on April 8, while audiences across the country may see it performed during this 2017 winter tour.

Mossbrucker picked up the gauntlet with glee. "Thor asked us to select a Los Angeles-based choreographer," he explained. "We were delighted to discover Cherice, with her strong choreographic voice. She fits the bill on all counts."



Steingraber, an impresario known for his eclectic taste, agreed. “There is something uniquely Hollywood about Cherice’s aesthetic and her approach to dance and performance,” he says. “It’s very much rooted in storytelling, embracing humor, and while unpacking a complex concept—the quest for happiness—it is also openly embracing of a kind of entertainment value.”

Entertainment is not a dirty word at Aspen Santa Fe Ballet. Said Mossbrucker: “We think it is quite interesting that she comes from the commercial [dance] world, where the emphasis is on accessibility, connection to the audience, and thinking about who you are trying to reach.”

“In curating new works, we always consider how will our audience will feel. Like an outsider, or will they feel like part of it? Cherice suits our aesthetic, and since she was originally part of the ballet world, we are cut from the same cloth.”

The theme felt timely. Barton explains: “I have had a really full dance career as a director and as a choreographer, from Cirque to Broadway. I have a dream husband, two beautiful children; we moved from NY to LA with my two babies. It was time for me to look within; not that I was a depressed person, but you get to a point where you cannot blame anyone anymore that you don’t have that job, or that woman or man in your life, or that you don’t have the money you want. I spent a year doing that and realizing that happiness is fleeting and it comes from within.”

Barton’s journey toward *Happimes*s began last March in workshop time with the dancers. “When I returned to L.A. and revisited my workshoped choreography that one particular idea resonated and stuck. I love Jimmy Durante, and I’ve always wanted to pay tribute to the physical comedians like Donald O’Conner.”

Durante and singers Nick Cave and Warren Ellis deliver songbook-chestnuts like “Make Someone Happy” and “Smile (When Your Heart is Breaking)” courtesy of sound design by Jeremy Jurin (Barton’s husband). Barton’s young kids chime in with their own musings, as does Barton:

“The score includes voicing fragments we all hear in our own heads, for example, ‘stop beating yourself up,’ ‘be happy,’ and ‘don’t you realize how lucky you are?’”

Steingraber watched the dance take shape with amusement and some trepidation. “When Cherice told me her theme, I spent a few seconds worrying, like, that could be reductionist,” he said. “But instead, I was reminded that happiness is an incredibly complicated thing. And she demonstrates through movement just how complicated happiness is.”

“We’re very excited about Cherice,” says Mossbrucker, whose well-trod sense of adventure also kicked in. “We are the first to commission Cherice,” he said, adding, “she hasn’t [yet] worked in the concert dance world.”

For Barton, the gig has resulted in...well, happiness.

“I have been put in the fire, in the trenches of large-scale productions where there was so much pressure, so much money, and so little time,” she said. “Working in a concert dance environment is irreplaceable: the simplicity of it, the beauty of having a studio, dancers, and time to make mistakes. Five weeks to create a new work—not being pulled by a producer or a director—is unheard of in the commercial world. Tom and JP gave me a completely blank slate—that is, blank with a top-off of 25 minutes!”

Her joy approached rapture. “Returning to the ballet studio grounds me; it makes me feel most like myself,” said Barton, admitting, “it’s like going to church.”

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet Performances
 Aspen District Theatre
 February 18 & April 1
 The Lensic, Santa Fe
 April 8



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Wedding Bells

Seia Rassenti & Joseph Watson

Seia and Joseph met in Chautauqua, NY while they were both dancing for North Carolina Dance Theater (now called Charlotte Ballet). Legend has it, their first interaction resulted from Seia attempting to steal a french fry from right under Joseph's nose. It was a case of love at first fry, but the pair decided to cultivate a friendship before starting anything romantic. Fate was in their favor as they both separately auditioned and received contracts from Aspen Santa Fe Ballet and have been dancing together ever since.

Emily Proctor & Peter Franc

Emily and Peter (a dancer with Oregon Ballet Theatre) met while both dancing for Aspen Santa Fe Ballet. On the day of his audition, Peter walked in and decided to stand next to Emily at barre. After a brief conversation, Peter told Emily they had actually met before at the Houston Ballet Summer Program in the summer of 2001. Peter was 15 and Emily was 16, so they were in different levels, but Peter remembered a conversation the two of them had in the student lobby. Who knew back then that Peter would eventually be proposing to Emily on top of Basalt Mountain with dear Cassie (Peter's dog) by their side.

Craig Black & Kevin Shannon

Craig met Kevin (a dancer with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago) while ASFB was on tour to Chicago in 2013. The two first connected at a joint company party thrown by Hubbard Street Artistic Director Glenn Edgerton. Craig noticed Kevin, but was unsuccessful in making a connection at the party. During a technical rehearsal in the HSDC theater, fellow dancer Emily Proctor acted as a matchmaker and got the two to hang out after the performance. One month later Kevin was on his way to visit Craig out in Aspen and the rest is history!



PHOTO: KAREN SANTOS



PHOTO: KAREN SANTOS



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PHOTO: PACIFIC DREAM PHOTOGRAPHY

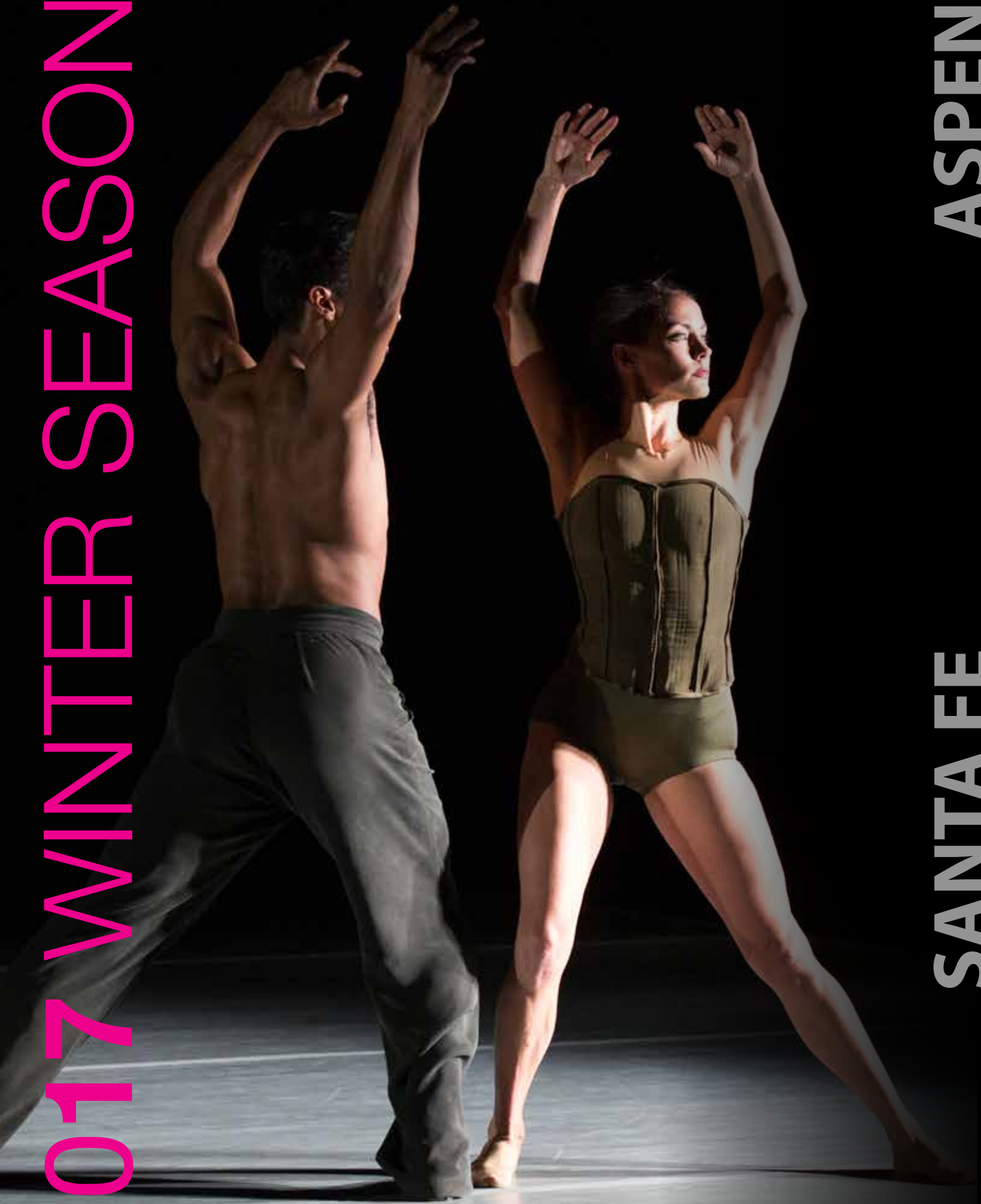


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2017 WINTER SEASON



SANTA FE

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PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

February 18 | 7:30pm

April 1 | 7:30pm

Generously underwritten by Bebe and David Schweppe

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet brings the heat this winter, as the company unveils the world premiere of a ballet by ASFB newcomer Cherice Barton. This Los Angeles-based artist's much-lauded choreography for Broadway and Las Vegas gained her worldwide attention, but her versatility in movement styles and background as a classical ballet dancer make her an excellent fit for the dynamic dancers of ASFB. Also on the program are Alejandro Cerrudo's magical *Little mortal jump* and master choreographer Jiří Kylián's haunting *Sleepless*.

"Aspen Santa Fe Ballet is ready for its Hollywood close-up."

– Los Angeles Times



PHOTO: IAN DOUGLAS

SHADOWLAND by PILOBOLUS

March 2 | 7:30pm

Generously underwritten by Melinda and Norman Payson

Created by famed dance company Pilobolus, *Shadowland* is a first-of-its-kind performance combining legendary modern dance with high-energy, fast-paced multimedia, merging front-of-screen choreography with projected images and moving screens of different sizes and shapes. *Shadowland* has the fluid logic of a dream powered by the grace of an acrobatic dance, evincing surprise and joyous delight in a way that is uniquely Pilobolus.

"...an amazing spectacle of inventiveness which is unclassifiable and inspiring."

– Le Parisien

► Performance Information

All shows take place at the Aspen District Theatre
335 High School Road, Aspen, CO

► Purchase Tickets

► Online

www.aspensantafeballet.com

► By Phone

Aspen Show Tickets
970-920-5770 or toll free 866-449-0464

► In Person

Visit Aspen Show Tickets at the Wheeler Opera House
320 E. Hyman Street, Aspen, CO



PHOTO: IAN DOUGLAS

SHADOWLAND by PILOBOLUS

February 28 | 7:30pm

Created by famed dance company Pilobolus, *Shadowland* is a first-of-its-kind performance combining legendary modern dance with high-energy, fast-paced multimedia, merging front-of-screen choreography with projected images and moving screens of different sizes and shapes. *Shadowland* has the fluid logic of a dream powered by the grace of an acrobatic dance, evincing surprise and joyous delight in a way that is uniquely Pilobolus.

"...an amazing spectacle of inventiveness which is unclassifiable and inspiring."

– Le Parisien



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

April 8 | 7:30pm

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet brings the heat this winter, as the company unveils the world premiere of a ballet by ASFB newcomer Cherice Barton. This Los Angeles-based artist's much-lauded choreography for Broadway and Las Vegas gained her worldwide attention, but her versatility in movement styles and background as a classical ballet dancer make her an excellent fit for the dynamic dancers of ASFB. Also on the program are Alejandro Cerrudo's magical *Little mortal jump* and master choreographer Jiří Kylián's haunting *Sleepless*.

"Aspen Santa Fe Ballet is ready for its Hollywood close-up."

– Los Angeles Times

► Performance Information

All shows take place at the The Lensic, Santa Fe's Performing Arts Center
211 West San Francisco St., Santa Fe, NM

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www.aspensantafeballet.com

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Tickets Santa Fe at The Lensic
505-988-1234

► In Person

Tickets Santa Fe at The Lensic
211 West San Francisco St., Santa Fe, NM

Spotlight: Anna Gerberich

by Jessica Moore



PHOTO: PCSALE O'CONNOR

Pennsylvania native Anna Gerberich, the newest member of Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, has already made her mark in performances of Jiri Kylian's *Sleepless* and as the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*. She began her training at the noted Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet (CPYB) before being invited in 2004 to apprentice with the Charlotte Ballet by directors Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux and Patricia McBride. One year later, at age 16, she became the youngest person ever hired into the company and was promoted to Principal within four years. After 11 years with Charlotte Ballet, Anna accepted a position with the Joffrey Ballet where she danced last season before making the leap to come join ASFB. Learn more about the newest member of the company in her own words:

What is your earliest memory of dance?

I remember when my older sister started taking ballet and my mother and I would drive her to her classes and wait until she was done, as it was a very long commute to the dance school. I insisted on always wearing my red tutu and dancing right outside the studio where my sister was in class. I loved trying to copy the steps, and, of course, adding my own flourishes. I begged my mom for two years after that to start dance, and she finally gave in!

When did you decide you wanted to pursue dance, specifically ballet, as a career?

When I was 12 years old I was chosen to perform the role of Sugar Plum Fairy at my school (CPYB). Every year the school would hire a principal dancer from New York City Ballet to perform the role of Cavalier, so I got to go to NYC and rehearse on the Lincoln Center stage with Benjamin Millepied. It was beyond exciting! It was a very eye-opening experience as a young student to all of sudden be working alongside a professional. I remember looking out into the empty theater and thinking, "I am meant to be a dancer and I will do anything to make it happen."

What first drew you to ASFB?

ASFB has always had an amazing reputation in the dance world. I would hear things here and there about how well the company takes care of their dancers, the amazing repertoire, and the incredible touring opportunities. When I finally made it to Aspen, I watched the company rehearse and perform and was totally blown away. I had never seen a company quite like this one. It made me want to be a part of something so special.

You've worked mostly with large ballet companies; how was the transition to a small, contemporary ballet company?

The biggest challenges I've found when switching to a new company, whether it is big or small, contemporary or classical, are creating a good work environment with the other dancers, getting to know your directors and their personal tastes, learning the repertoire, and embodying the company aesthetic. Something unique about ASFB, and something I really love, is that we keep performing a piece of work for a year or two, so you can really immerse yourself in your role and make it your own on stage. In other companies you sometimes only get to perform a work for a week or two, so just as you start to feel comfortable with it, it's over.

Had you ever spent time in Colorado before moving out here for ASFB?

No, I had never been to Colorado, but it's a place I had always wanted to visit. I have mainly stayed on the east coast, so I didn't know what to expect. You have to see it to believe it! It's one of the most magical places.

What's your ideal next vacation?

The Northern Lights are number one on my bucket list. I have wanted to see them since I was seven. The Kakslauttanen in Finland lets you rent these beautiful glass igloos during the Northern Lights season. They also include dog sledding, reindeer safaris, ice fishing, and Santa's home. Going to the Kakslauttanen would be my ideal next vacation.

What profession do you think you would pursue if not dancing?

When I was younger and making the choice if I wanted dance as a career, I almost went into acting because I truly love it as well. It is another form of completely losing yourself in your art. It's so fun and challenging to portray someone that is not you. Once I realized I could act in my dancing, the decision was easy. However, I think I would have really enjoyed pursuing an acting career.

What song or artist are you currently listening to on repeat?

My heart lies with Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, etc. Not a day goes by that I don't listen to that era of music. Their music is just too good to pick one song to repeat, so I repeat them all! It fills a special place in my soul, which nothing else can fill.

Where do you see yourself 20 years from now?

Owning my own Pilates studio and a successful Papillon breeding business.

What are you enjoying most about living in Aspen?

Wow, that is a hard question. Everything is so magical and wonderful! I love living in a small town. It brings peace and calm to my life, especially after living in Chicago. I have never felt more safe and at home.

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

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March 7

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March 9

SCOTTSDALE, AZ

Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts
April 13 & 15

HOUSTON, TX

Cullen Theater, Wortham Center
April 21

NEW YORK CITY, NY

The Joyce Theater
April 26 - 30

PHILADELPHIA, PA

Prince Theater
May 3 - 7



PHOTO: JORDAN CURET

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

www.aspensantafeballet.com

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***SHADOWLAND* by PILOBOLUS**

SANTA FE

February 28 | 7:30pm

ASPEN

March 2 | 7:30pm

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