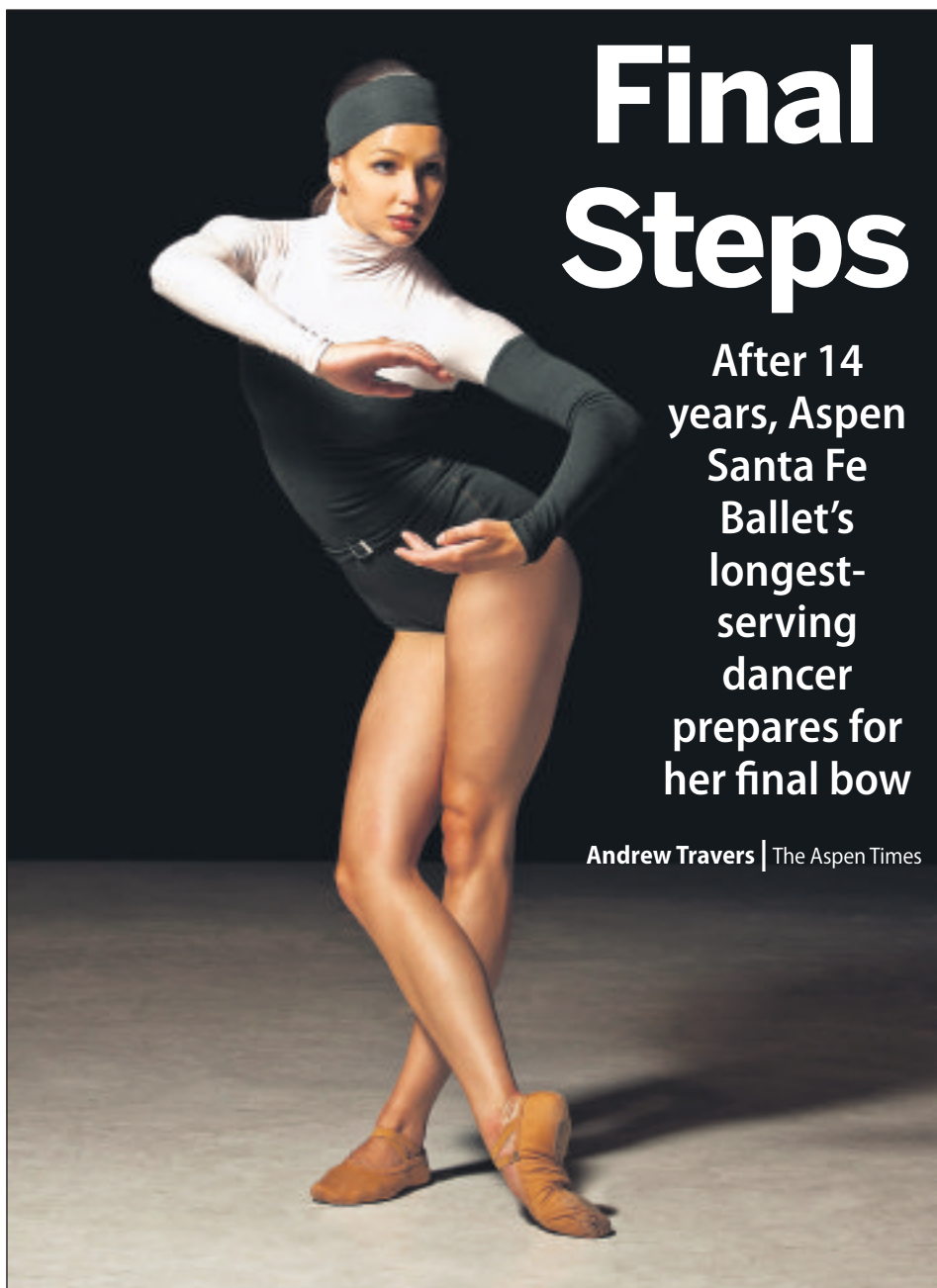


THE ASPEN TIMES

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Final Steps

After 14 years, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet's longest-serving dancer prepares for her final bow

Andrew Travers | The Aspen Times



“What I’ll miss is being inspired by the people around me. I’ll miss being a part of something and having that sense of camaraderie.”

Samantha Klanac Campanile
Dancer, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet

ABOVE: Samantha Klanac Campanile is retiring after 14 years with Aspen Santa Fe Ballet.

LEFT: Klanac Campanile in the Aspen Santa Fe Ballet studio with choreographer Cayetano Soto in 2009. The pair have collaborated on several ballets through the dancer’s career. Soto’s “Huma Rojo” will be included in the program during her final Aspen performances this month.

LYNN GOLDSMITH/SPECIAL TO THE ASPEN TIMES

Over the past 14 years, Samantha Klanac Campanile has been a constant onstage presence with Aspen Santa Fe Ballet. The statuesque dancer has helped shape and define the contemporary company’s elegant athleticism as it has grown into a prestigious global touring group and a forum for international choreographers.

Klanac Campanile, 33, will retire after the company’s fall tour. She gives her final Aspen performances on Tuesday and Aug. 27.

In keeping with Aspen Santa Fe’s ensemble-driven creative approach, the final program is not focused on Klanac Campanile or some of her more prominent solos from the past decade and a half. Rather, it showcases three works from choreographers who have formed close relationships with the company, which is honoring its 20th anniversary all year.

“The celebration is less ‘Oh my God, look at me!’ and more ‘As a group, let’s have a fun night,’” Klanac Campanile said this week outside the company’s studio at Colorado Mountain College.

Aspen Santa Fe Executive Director Jean-Philippe Malaty said that Klanac Campanile had some input on the selections for her final program and supported closing with Cayetano Soto’s flamboyant “Huma Rojo,” which debuted last winter.

“Even though she’s not featured more than others, she wanted to do this for her last performance,” Malaty said.

Klanac Campanile worked with Soto on four ballets during her time in Aspen.

“He’s one of my favorite choreographers,” she said. “I love his movement. I’ve gotten to do many of his ballets, and he’s become a personal friend. So that makes me really happy.”

The program also includes Alejandro Cerudo’s “Silent Ghost” and the local premiere of Jiri Kylian’s “Sleepless.”

Along with Soto, Klanac Campanile developed fruitful creative partnerships with choreographers like Jorma Elo and Nicolo Fonte over the years. Her first performance with the company, in 2002, was in a piece by Fonte.

“Nicolo guided me in my career; he’s been a mentor and a friend,” she said. “He’s someone I know I’ll continue to have a relationship

with and who has advanced my career as a dancer tremendously.”

A native of Buffalo, New York, Klanac Campanile went into Manhattan with a friend for auditions after her freshman year in the dance program at the State University of New York at Purchase.

“I went just to practice auditioning, really,” she recalled.

But on that audition she caught the eye of Malaty and Aspen Santa Fe Artistic Director Tom Mossbrucker. They invited her to perform with the company during the summer of 2002, after which she went back to school for a semester before signing on with the company full time at 19 (she completed her degree through correspondence classes from Aspen).

As Klanac Campanile joined the company, its international profile expanded along with its tours. In her first season, Aspen Santa Fe made its debut in Hawaii. New York and the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival soon followed, then tours in Italy and Greece, and later Russia.

“You get to travel the world with your best friends and do what you love,” she said. “It doesn’t get any better than that.”

But some of the most memorable shows on tour over her career weren’t necessarily in the meccas of dance that have welcomed the company.

“We had a great show in Wichita (Kansas) that I always remember,” she said. “The way the group chemistry was onstage was really magical. My fondest memories involve

the chemistry onstage and with a partner and with my friends.”

Of course, for a professional dancer, the times spent under the lights in front of an audience are preceded by countless hours in the ballet studio. Through the ritual of morning class and the rigors of dancing together every day, she said, she’s bonded with her colleagues.

“What I’ll miss is being inspired by the people around me,” she said. “I’ll miss being a part of something and having that sense of camaraderie.”



DANCER, A8

Samantha Klanac Campanile joined Aspen Santa Fe Ballet at age 19 in 2002. She will retire after the company’s fall tour.

LYNN GOLDSMITH/SPECIAL TO THE ASPEN TIMES

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DANCER

From page A1

As intense and demanding as being an Aspen Santa Fe Ballet dancer is, Klanac Campanile counts herself lucky to have worked in a company where a spirit of mutual admiration, support and encouragement prevails over competition.

"In some dance companies it's horrible and people are mean to each other," she said. "We have a great little bubble down in that basement. People don't get to see that part of it. It's a beautiful thing."

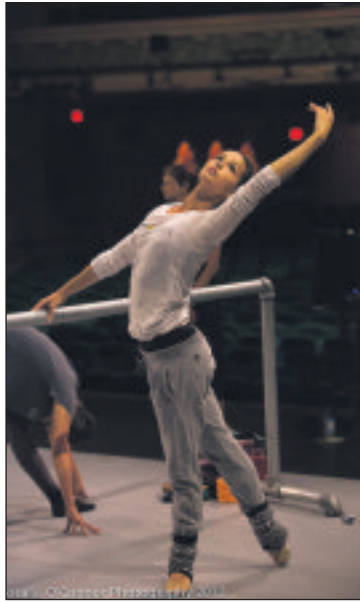
She's still figuring out what she wants to do with the next phase of her life. But after spending her whole adult life with the company, Klanac Campanile is looking forward to spending more time with her husband as a "normal couple" and doing some of the things she's missed out on due to the demands of a dancer's life.

"You miss your friends' weddings, you miss family events and things you want to do because of shows," she said. "You can't call in and say, 'I'm taking a day off.' I'm looking forward to that freedom."

Like most dancers, due to the risk of injury, she's also never skied in Aspen.

"I feel like I have to do it — I've been here so long," she said. "Hopefully you'll see me on one of the mountains this winter, probably Buttermilk."

As her final performances approach, Klanac Campanile



ROSALIE O'CONNOR/COURTESY PHOTO

Samantha Klanac Campanile in ballet class with Aspen Santa Fe Ballet.

has been writing and reflecting on her time with the company and on her gratitude for having found a creative home with Aspen Santa Fe Ballet. She's known for about two years that this season would be her last, which has allowed her to prepare emotionally to say goodbye. But it's still been overwhelming at times. After Thursday's rehearsal wrapped, Klanac Campanile wept for the first time about her retirement.

"Finally," Mossbrucker said as he wrapped her in a hug.

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SHAREN BRADFORD/COURTESY PHOTO

Samantha Klanac Campanile in Nicolò Fontana's "The Heart(s)pace."

IF YOU GO ...

What: Aspen Santa Fe Ballet

Where: Aspen District Theatre

When: Tuesday, 8 p.m.; encore performance Aug. 27, 8 p.m.

How much: \$25 to \$94

Tickets: Wheeler Opera House box office;

www.aspen-show-tix.com

More info: The program includes Jiri Jylian's "Sleepless," Alejandro Cerrudo's "Silent Ghost" and Cayetano Soto's "Huma Rojo."



ROSALIE O'CONNOR/COURTESY PHOTO

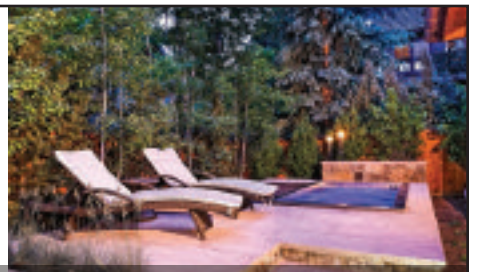
Samantha Klanac Campanile in Jorma Elo's "1st Flash."



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