

LOUISVILLE BALLET

THE  BROWN-FORMAN
NUTCRACKER

Choreography by Val Caniparoli



ÉTOILE

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Company Artist Anna Ford
Photo by Andrew Kung

A LETTER FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Louisville Ballet Friends,

Thank you for joining us for *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker*! I can't think of a more iconic start to the holidays. Even before the curtain rises, the magic is everywhere: you hear it in Tchaikovsky's score when shopping for gifts, you see it on mantles guarded by colorful nutcracker figurines, and you feel it when gathering with loved ones to watch a story come to life, as you are about to do now.

One of my favorite things about this staple of the season is that it showcases every star of Louisville Ballet, from our veteran professional Company Artists to the nearly 100 children who dance proudly alongside them. We perform almost 20 times in two weeks, and with five alternating casts, multiple dancers get to put their signature on principal roles like Marie and the Sugar Plum Fairy. It's a gift to watch the company grow and shine through this annual tradition.

Holiday magic might be holiday madness without our dedicated community of staff, artists, and patrons. Your support allows us to journey through the land of snow each season, and we hope you will continue to help us keep this local tradition alive for years to come.

I'm so glad you're here. Now, let the holidays officially begin. Adventure awaits!

Sincerely,



Anthony Krutzkamp
Artistic Director

ÉTOILE

HALLIE BEARD

Editor

ANDY PEREZ

Designer

KATERYNA SELLERS

Staff Photographer

ANDREW KUNG

Contributing Photographer

VIVID IMPACT

Printer

THE  BROWN-FORMAN
NUTCRACKER

Choreography by Val Caniparoli

DECEMBER 12–22, 2025

**WHITNEY HALL
THE KENTUCKY CENTER**

Choreography by Val Caniparoli

Music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
performed by the Louisville Orchestra

Scenic + Costume Design by Peter Cazalet

Lighting Design by Michael T. Ford

Magic + Illusion Design by Marshall Magoon

Russian Variation Choreography
by William Christensen

Stage Manager: Megan Meyer

Run time: Approximately 2 hours, including one 20-minute intermission

Live music is generously sponsored by LG&E and KU.

The performance on December 12
is generously sponsored by Vivid Impact.

The performance on December 19
is generously sponsored by KERTIS.

The matinee performance on December 20
is generously sponsored by Cambria.



Photo by Kateryna Sellers

ACT I

SCENE I: *Herr Drosselmeyer's Workshop*

Our story begins on Christmas Eve. Herr Drosselmeyer is putting the finishing touches on special toys that he has lovingly made for his godchildren, Marie and Fritz. He plans to give these toys to them this evening at the annual party held at the home of the Stahlbaum family. As he prepares to close his store, Marie and her Mother make a surprise visit to do some last-minute shopping. Marie immediately becomes infatuated with a toy, the Nutcracker, which is not quite finished. Herr Drosselmeyer tries in vain to distract Marie from this special toy. . .

SCENE II: *Marie's Bedroom*

Marie can hardly contain her excitement as she prepares for the party.

SCENE III: *The Party*

The Stahlbaum home is festive and alive with dancing and holiday celebrations. A magnificent Christmas tree adorns the parlor. Suddenly, Herr Drosselmeyer bursts into the room bearing gifts, including amazing dancing dolls; he also performs a number of magic tricks. He gives Fritz a gift that resembles a menacing rat, which is later banished from the room because Fritz behaves so mischievously with it.

Drosselmeyer, saving the best for last, presents Marie with the special Nutcracker that she so admired in his workshop earlier that evening. Marie immediately falls in love with her wonderful gift. It seems that the Nutcracker was meant to be Marie's all along, and she

begins to dance with him. Fritz, in a fit of jealousy, grabs the Nutcracker from Marie and accidentally breaks it. Fortunately, Drosselmeyer is able to repair the broken Nutcracker. The festivities draw to an end as Marie and Fritz's grandparents lead the final dance of the evening. The guests depart into the night and the family retires for the evening to dream of Christmas morning.

SCENE IV: *The Battle*

With everyone asleep, Marie sneaks downstairs into the darkened parlor to search for her beloved Nutcracker. As the clock strikes midnight, Marie, feeling tired, falls asleep on the daybed and slips into a vivid dream. In her dream, she is startled as two rats steal her Nutcracker. The room appears to transform itself and the Christmas tree also seems to grow and grow before her very eyes.

A fierce battle ensues between the giant rats and the toy soldiers. The Nutcracker escapes the rats' clutches and challenges the Rat King to a duel. With Marie's help, the Nutcracker fatally wounds the Rat King. Magically, the Nutcracker is then transformed into a handsome prince who invites Marie to join him on an enchanted journey.

SCENE V: *Journey through the Land of Snow*

Marie and her Nutcracker Prince begin their magical journey through a swirling snowstorm.

INTERMISSION

ACT II

SCENE 1: *The Journey to the Land of the Sugar Plum Fairy*

Marie and her Nutcracker Prince continue their travels to the Land of the Sugar Plum Fairy under Drosselmeyer's watchful eye.

SCENE 2: *The Palace of the Sugar Plum Fairy*

Marie and her Nutcracker Prince arrive at an ornate palace under a starry sky where the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier reside. The palace is decorated with columns that seem to be made of spun sugar. It is an enchanting land graced by several dancing angels. Marie and her Nutcracker Prince are greeted by Drosselmeyer, the Sugar Plum Fairy, and her Cavalier. Marie is astonished that the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier resemble the very dolls that Drosselmeyer presented at the party. Marie and the Nutcracker Prince are entertained by several dances from distant lands — chocolate, tea, coffee, and caviar representing Spain, China, Arabia, and Russia, respectively. These are followed by the French Pastilles, deliciously danced by four beautifully clad maidens. A comical but fantastic Madame Derby with eight tiny guests then entertain Marie. Next, a beautiful Rose appears, accompanied by her bouquet. Finally, the most wonderful dance of all is danced by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her gallant Cavalier. As Marie and the Nutcracker Prince prepare to leave, everyone returns for one last farewell as, alas, all dreams must come to an end. Or was it a dream?

PRODUCTION ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Scenic Artwork

YWorks: Cape Town's Scenic Studio (South Africa)
Magic by Marshall Magoon (Los Angeles, CA)
Craig Grigg (New York) - Remote Controlled Props
Ron Riall and the Scenic Construction Crew of Louisville Ballet

Costumes

Shari Cochran of Actors Theatre of Louisville
Margret Fenske of Actors Theatre of Louisville
Teresa Greer (Indiana)
Charles Heightchew and the Boston Ballet Costume Shop
David Heuvel and Cindy Farrimond of Ballet West
Patricia Mallet (New Jersey)
Sarah Havens (Rhode Island), milliner
John Hiatt (Salt Lake City, UT), bootmaker
Jim McGough of Virginia Opera, wig and facial hair maker
Dan Fedie and the Costume Shop of Louisville Ballet

Character Masks and Bodies

Allison Anderson of StageOne
Donna Bailey (Louisville)
Donna Lawrence-Downs (Louisville)
Headpieces constructed by Alun Jones (Louisville)
We sincerely thank these talented artists for their dedication.
This production would not be possible without them.



Company Artists Brienne Wiltsie
and Joel Morin-Kensicki
as the Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier
Photo by Kateryna Sellers

Photo by Kateryna Sellers



A STORY FOR ANY AGE

BY VAL CANIPAROLI

Growing up in the suburbs of Seattle, Washington, I was interested in music, theatre, and literature, and I was obsessed with old movies. If I had any notion of dance, it was through watching the films of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. I didn't have any preconceptions about ballet as I wasn't exposed to the existence of the art form, and in fact only started to dance as a teenager.

I first experienced *The Nutcracker* at the San Francisco Ballet School. Unlike many dancers, I was never one of the children in Act I; in fact, the first roles that I learned were some of the same character roles that I'm still performing, including Drosselmeyer. But what I remember most strongly is the music for the snow scene: I just thought "How gorgeous is this music?" — and I've felt the same way about it for almost 50 years.

The first production of *The Nutcracker* that I was a part of was Lew Christensen's iconic version, and later on Willam Christensen's, whose version was the first complete production in the U.S., premiering on December 24, 1944. San Francisco Ballet was the first in the U.S to make the ballet an annual Holiday tradition. Lew Christensen himself coached me in the role of Drosselmeyer in 1972, and was a huge inspiration to me as a dancer and as a choreographer.

Louisville Ballet's *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker* was the second version out of five that I choreographed. Each version is very different, but I would say that the common thread is that I try to stay true to E.T.A. Hoffmann's original story and my inspiration of the Christensen brothers with a slight nod to their Vaudeville ballet background and legacy.

I remember fondly working closely with then Artistic Director Bruce Simpson along with the collaborative team of Scenic + Costume Designer Peter Cazalet, Lighting Designer Michael T. Ford, and Magic + Illusion Designer Marshall Magoon years before the actual world premiere. It proved to be a magical team. It is an honor to continue this wonderful relationship with Louisville Ballet and *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker* under the artistic leadership of Anthony Krutzkamp. I hope that the audience will continue to be entertained and, as if they are watching through children's eyes, will leave their troubles and cares behind. Everyone should bring someone they love with them to share the special joy of *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker*.



Nutcracker in the battle scene
Photo by Kateryna Sellers



The Rat King in the battle scene
Photo by Kateryna Sellers



Soldiers in the battle scene
Photo by Kateryna Sellers

Studio Company Artist Abigail Wyrrick and
Company Artist Amber Wickey in the snow scene
Photo by Kateryna Sellers



Company Artist Elizabeth Abbick Pemberton, French Pastilles
Photo by Kateryna Sellers





Company Artists Eleanor Prince and Caleb Emory, Arabian Coffee
Photo by Kateryna Sellers

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Choreography by Val Caniparoli



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ANTHONY KRUTZKAMP

Artistic Director

Anthony Krutzkamp is the former Artistic and Executive Director of Sacramento Ballet, where he led a dynamic revitalization of the company. Under his leadership, Sacramento Ballet achieved record-breaking ticket sales, launched a groundbreaking Second Company, and awarded more than \$125,000 annually in student scholarships. He expanded the repertoire to include works by George Balanchine, Alejandro Cerrudo, Penny Saunders, Ihsan Rustem, and others, while also creating acclaimed productions of *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*.

A former principal dancer with Cincinnati Ballet and Kansas City Ballet, Krutzkamp performed leading roles in both classical and contemporary works, from *Romeo and Juliet* to Balanchine's *Concerto Barocco*. He co-founded the Kansas City Dance Festival and Moving Arts, fostering national and international collaborations, and directed Kansas City Ballet's Second Company. Recognized as a visionary leader, Krutzkamp blended artistry, community engagement, and strategic growth to position Sacramento Ballet as a vibrant cultural force. A Kentucky native, he is also a husband and father of two girls.



LESLIE SMART

Chief Executive Officer

Leslie Smart, CFRE is a seasoned nonprofit leader. In addition to her role as CEO at Louisville Ballet, she serves as faculty at the Center for Nonprofit Excellence's School of Fundraising and Engagement. She has served as a two-term president of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), Greater Louisville Chapter, Committee on Directorship for International AFP, and a forum moderator for Young Presidents' Organization's Bluegrass Chapter. She is a graduate of Leadership Kentucky, Leadership Lexington, and Leadership Louisville.

Smart currently serves on the board and executive committee of Leadership Kentucky, the board of OperaLex, and is a member of the Rotary Club of Louisville, where she chairs the Music and Arts Committee. This year, she is also serving as chair of the Dance/USA Tier 2 Cohort.

Smart also has a unique experience having danced with Louisville Ballet in the 1970s and studied at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Dance and the School of American Ballet, the official school of New York City Ballet.



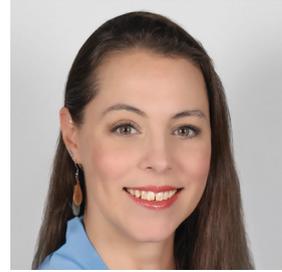
MIKELLE BRUZINA

*Senior Rehearsal Director +
Co-Artistic Director, Louisville Ballet Studio Company*

Born in Lexington, Kentucky, Mikelle Bruzina is a graduate of The Royal Winnipeg Ballet. In her fifteen years as a Louisville Ballet Company Artist, she performed soloist and principal roles and was recognized for her diversity in classical, modern, and contemporary ballets. As a dancer, stager, and rehearsal assistant, she has worked with choreographers such as Val Caniparoli, Mark Godden, Adam Hougland, Ronald Hynd, Lucas Jervies, Alun Jones, Ben Needham-Wood, Helen Pickett, Andre Prokovsky, Brandon Ragland, Domy Reiter-Soffer, Andrea Schermoly, Ching Ching Wong, and many others. Mikelle has choreographed works for Louisville Ballet including *Gloria*, *Harmony of Contrasts*, *Life Rhythms*, *continuum*, *Sansei*, and *Tinny Wits*. She has also created ballets for Memphis Ballet, Boca Ballet Theatre, Lexington Ballet, Milwaukee Ballet, and The Louisville Ballet School.

Mikelle began teaching in Japan in 1991 under the guidance of Emi Okajima. Having worked under the direction of Alun Jones, Bruce Simpson and Robert Curran, she carries a vast experience in teaching, staging and coaching in classical, modern and contemporary styles of dance.

Mikelle was Ballet Mistress for thirteen seasons, Artistic Director for two seasons, and is also Co-Artistic Director of the Louisville Ballet Studio Company. This marks her 30th year with Louisville Ballet.



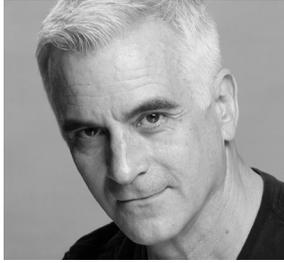
HELEN DAIGLE

*Principal Repetiteur +
Senior Rehearsal Director*

Originally from Baton Rouge, Helen Daigle began her training at Decatur School of Ballet in Decatur, Georgia. Upon her family's return to Louisiana, she continued her training at Dancer's Workshop under the tutelage of Molly Buchmann and Sharon Mathews. She has also studied at Joffrey Ballet School and School of American Ballet. She started performing with Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre junior and senior companies and began her professional career with Feld Ballets/New York. She has also danced with Ballet Hispanico and Miami City Ballet.

Helen joined Louisville Ballet in 1998 and enjoyed 20 wonderfully fulfilling seasons. She performed featured roles in a range of works including *Lark Ascending*, *In the Glow of the Night*, *Who Cares?*, *Serenade*, *Lamberena*, *Scheherazade*, *Company B*, *Etesian* and *Cold Virtues*. She has performed principal roles in such full length ballets as *The Magic Flute*, *Don Quixote*, *Giselle*, *Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *La Sylphide* and *A Cinderella Story*.

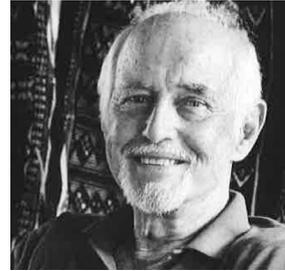
She is also Shoe Director for the Company, Children's Cast Director for *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker*, and a member of The Louisville Ballet School's faculty. She is thrilled to continue working for Louisville Ballet as Principal Repetiteur + Senior Rehearsal Director.



VAL CANIPAROLI

Choreographer

Val Caniparoli's versatility has made him one of the most sought after American choreographers internationally. He is most closely associated with San Francisco Ballet, his artistic home for more than 50 years, where he also served as resident choreographer. Caniparoli has contributed to the repertoires of more than 50 companies, including Finnish National Ballet, Texas Ballet Theater, Joffrey Ballet, Louisville Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet, BalletMet, Kansas City Ballet, Scottish Ballet, Boston Ballet, Hong Kong Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Northern Ballet Theatre, Pennsylvania Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Ballet West (resident choreographer 1993–97), Washington Ballet, Israel Ballet, Richmond Ballet, Singapore Dance Theatre, Atlanta Ballet, State Theatre Ballet of South Africa, Grand Rapids Ballet and Tulsa Ballet (resident choreographer 2001–06). He has also choreographed for the Chicago Lyric Opera, San Francisco Opera, and The Metropolitan Opera. He has worked on several occasions with the San Francisco Symphony and with San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.).



PETER CAZALET

Scenic + Costume Designer

Born in a mining town in Zambia, Peter Cazalet's first contact with ballet was at the University of Cape Town, where he was pursuing a degree in architecture. He began taking ballet lessons and eventually emigrated to London, where he danced with various companies for 14 years. During this period, Mr. Cazalet rose to the rank of principal dancer with Scottish Ballet. He was also designing for Scottish Ballet and Ballet Rambert (now Rambert Dance Company). Following a spinal injury, which brought a halt to his professional dancing career, he returned to Cape Town and began designing full time. He created numerous full-length ballets and operas and became the Head of Design for Cape Town Opera. Over the past 35 years, Mr. Cazalet has designed over 200 theatrical productions, including classical and one-act ballets in South Africa, throughout Asia, Europe, and the United States.



TARA SIMONCIC

Music Director

Tara Simoncic served as music director of Ballet West from 2015–2018 and is a frequent guest conductor with Louisville Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, and New York City Ballet. She recently made her conducting debut with the ballet at Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Ms. Simoncic is principal conductor of the Flexible Orchestra in New York City as well as music director of the Greenwich Symphony’s Young People’s Concerts. She holds a BM in Trumpet Performance from the New England Conservatory, an MM in Orchestral Conducting from Northwestern University, and a Professional Studies Diploma in Conducting from Manhattan School of Music. Ms. Simoncic is Louisville Ballet’s Music Director.



JARED OAKS

Conductor

Jared Oaks, one of the leading young ballet conductors in the United States, is Music Director of Ballet West. Since joining the company in 2008, Jared has maintained a rigorous conducting schedule, in addition to playing for rehearsals and classes. He is a regular guest conductor for The Sarasota Ballet, and has conducted performances for Houston Ballet and Ballet Des Moines. He has worked with the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Sinfonietta, and the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, among others.

He recently conducted the premiere of Steve Roens’ chamber opera *Look Both Ways*, as well as the premiere recording of a new oratorio by Deon Nielsen Price, which is available through Naxos.

Jared’s numerous compositions include an oratorio about Joan of Arc, with poems by Suzanne Lundquist, and chamber ballets for Ballet West, Charlotte Ballet, Mid-Columbia Ballet, and Victoria Ballet Theatre. Jared is a fellow of the American-Scandinavian Foundation and co-founder of the Composer Discovery Initiative.



MICHAEL T. FORD

Lighting Designer

Michael Ford started his career with Louisville Ballet in 1974 as the light board operator for *The Nutcracker* and became Lighting Designer and Production Stage Manager in 1978. He has worked with former Artistic Directors Alun Jones and Bruce Simpson on over 60 new ballets. Michael served as Production Manager of Iroquois Amphitheatre, resident Lighting Designer for the Corning Glass Center in Corning, New York, and guest designer for North Carolina Dance Theatre, American Ballet Theatre, Cincinnati Ballet, Tulsa Ballet and Smuin Ballet. He has designed several ballets for KET — including the Emmy award-winning *Lucy* — and corporate designs for Intel, KFC, Churchill Downs, and the state of Kentucky. Michael would like to thank Warwick Musson and his much-missed wife Jan for their many years of support in his work and all the arts in Louisville.



**PYOTR ILYICH
TCHAIKOVSKY**

Composer

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was a Russian composer of the Romantic period. He was the first Russian composer whose music made a lasting impression internationally, bolstered by his appearances as a guest conductor in Europe and the United States. Tchaikovsky is most celebrated for his ballets, specifically *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*.

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**COMPANY
ARTISTS**



LEIGH ANNE ALBRECHTA

Joined Company: 2009
Hometown: Fremont, OH



SARAH BRADLEY

Joined Company: 2022
Hometown: Cincinnati, OH



IAN ANDERSON-CONLON*

Joined Company: 2025
Hometown: Madison, WI



LEXA DANIELS

Joined Company: 2016
Hometown: Stoneham, MA



CHRISTOPHER BALBUENA*

Joined Company: 2025
Hometown: Alpharetta, GA



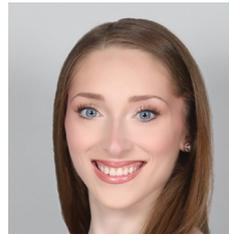
CALEB EMORY

Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: Corpus Christi, TX



FLETCHER BARR

Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: Owensboro, KY



ANNA FORD

Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Lilburn, GA



NICHOLAS BENTZ

Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: St. Louis, MO



NICHOLAS BRADLEY GRAY

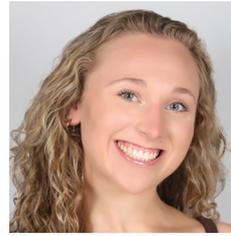
Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: Milwaukee, WI

Headshots by
Kateryna Sellers

**COMPANY
ARTISTS**



KHALIL JACKSON
Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Dallas, GA



JORDAN NOBLETT
Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Gastonia, NC



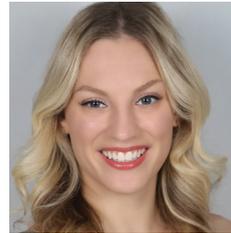
ALEXANDER KINGMA
Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Lafayette, IN



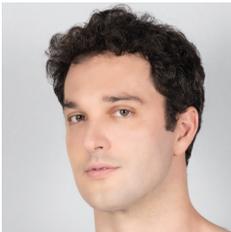
ELEANOR PRINCE
Joined Company: 2023
Hometown: Louisville, KY



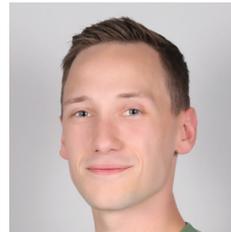
CAITLIN KOWALSKI
Joined Company: 2021
Hometown: Radcliff, KY



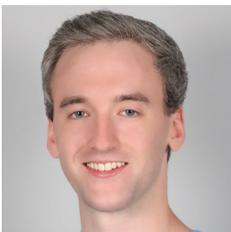
**ELIZABETH ABBICK
PEMBERTON**
Joined Company: 2022
Hometown: Overland Park, KS



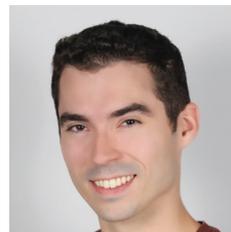
MARK A. KRIEGER JR.
Joined Company: 2012
Hometown: Alexandria, VA



ALEKSANDR Q. SCHROEDER
Joined Company: 2019
Hometown: Anderson, IN



JOEL MORIN-KENSICKI
Joined Company: 2024
Hometown: Chapel Hill, NC



DANIEL SCOFIELD
Joined Company: 2022
Hometown: Louisville, KY

* New Company Artist

COMPANY ARTISTS



ASHLEY THURSBY
Joined Company: 2008
Hometown: Richmond, MO



BRIENNE WILTSIE
Joined Company: 2018
Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA



KAYLEIGH WESTERN
Joined Company: 2025
Hometown: Lexington, KY

RESIDENT CHARACTER ARTIST



PHILLIP VELINOV
Joined Company: 2006
Hometown: Sofia, Bulgaria

Headshot by Andrew Kung



AMBER WICKEY
Joined Company: 2022
Hometown: Tenafly, NJ



SCAN HERE
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR
COMPANY ARTISTS AND
STUDIO COMPANY ARTISTS

STUDIO COMPANY ARTISTS



LEVEL 10

Julia Enwright, Emmaline Fontanilla, Ezra Paisley, Sameer Rhodes,
Natalie Schreiner, Marissa Soluri, Gaven Stevens

LEVEL 9

Joe Henn, Sarah Hutchison, Ava Dhira Metzger, Guinevere Nelson,
Kirsten Smerud, Abigail Wyrick

LEVEL 8

Athena King, Eva Pregont, Arlen Milo Sapien, Ella White

LEVEL 7

Samuel Blincoe, Barbara Booth, Ava Carroll,
Madison Dunham, Addison Koerner

Photo by Kateryna Sellers



LEXA DANIELS

@lexakdaniels on Instagram

Originally from Stoneham, Massachusetts, Lexa began her dance training at the Northeast School of Ballet under the direction of Denise Cecere. She continued her education at the University of Utah, graduating magna cum laude with a BFA in ballet performance. She began her professional career with Portland Ballet in Maine before joining Louisville Ballet as a trainee in 2014 and later as a Company Artist in 2016. A few of her favorite roles include Rose and the Sugar Plum Fairy in Val Caniparoli's *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker*, Myrtha in *Giselle*, the Wife in Andrea Schermoly's *Appalachian Spring*, the Lilac Fairy in Adam Houglan's *Sleeping Beauty*, and Nikiya in an excerpt from Kingdom of the Shades in *La Bayadère*. In 2025, she was honored to help portray the life story of Naomi Warren by performing as the Survivor in Stephen Mills' *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project*. Lexa is deeply grateful to have had the privilege of performing works by a variety of choreographers over the course of her career, including George Balanchine, Twyla Tharp, Serge Lifar, Alun Jones, Andrea Schermoly, Adam Houglan, and Ching Ching Wong. She is also a faculty member of The Louisville Ballet School, teaching in the Pre-Professional Program. Lexa would like to thank her family for their endless love and support throughout her career.

What do you love about dance?

I love the freedom of expression that dance allows. Dance is a language of the body where I am continuously trying to speak more clearly and eloquently. I'm constantly trying to refine my communication of an emotion or idea — it's a never ending process that changes daily based on my experiences and environment. When you get to a place where you really feel like you are expressing the essence of what you want to say — that process is so deeply fulfilling.

How do you prepare for a performance?

If our rehearsal schedule allows, I like to make a cup of tea a few hours before the show, lay down, and visualize myself going through the sequence that I'll be performing. Bonus if I get to take a quick nap!

What are your hobbies?

I love riding my bike through Cherokee Park. Also working on training my cat to jump through a hula hoop — slow progress so far.

Favorite musical artist or album?

Recently I've been listening to James Taylor because it reminds me of my parents.



ELEANOR PRINCE

@elliejprince on Instagram

Raised in Louisville, Kentucky, Eleanor (Ellie) Prince trained at The Louisville Ballet School from the earliest programs through the Pre-Professional Division, then performed as a Trainee with the Company. She continued her training at Stanford University under Alex Ketley and Anton Pankevich, where she also graduated with recognition for leadership in the arts and ballet, a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, and graduate studies in Robotics. She is also an alumna of The School at Jacob's Pillow, where she performed in world premieres by choreographers Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Silas Farley.

Since joining the Company, her repertoire has included the Sugar Plum Fairy and Arabian divertissement in Val Caniparoli's *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker*, *La Bayadère*, *Giselle*, *Raymonda*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Cinderella*, *Napoli*, George Balanchine's *Rubies*, and Adam Hougland's *Cold Virtues*, as well as works by Stephen Mills, Andrea Schermoly, Lucas Jervies, and Ching Ching Wong.



How does ballet make you feel?

Fully expressed in a way I don't anywhere else, connected to music, and exhausted in the most rewarding way.

When did you begin dancing?

At age three—I can't remember a time before dancing.

What are your hobbies?

Listening to music constantly, hiking outdoors, tinkering with projects and puzzles, and watching standup comedy.

Favorite TV show or movie?

Steve Martin's *The Pink Panther*.

What's one thing you couldn't live without?

Laughter!



NICHOLAS BRADLEY GRAY

@nicholas.bradley.gray on Instagram

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Nicholas Bradley Gray began his performing arts training at Milwaukee Ballet School and at First Stage Children's Theater. Following his graduation from The Nutmeg Ballet Conservatory, Nicholas received his Bachelor's Degree in Ballet with a minor in Theatre and Drama from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music. Throughout his youth, Nicholas attended summer intensives at Pacific Northwest Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and Chautauqua Institution. In 2018, Nicholas moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he lived for six years. He worked as a faculty member at Grand Rapids Ballet School and at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre's School of Theatre Arts, as a freelance Director/Choreographer for Collegiate and Community Theatres, and as a frequent Guest Artist with Grand Rapids Ballet. Nicholas is thrilled to have accomplished so much in his first season as a Company Artist with Louisville Ballet. He has been honored to perform such roles as The Nutcracker Prince in Val Caniparoli's *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker* and The Prince's Friend in Alun Jones' *Cinderella*. Nicholas is a proud faculty member of The Louisville Ballet School and serves his peers as the elected Dancer Representative. He is grateful for every single day he has the privilege to do what he loves.

What do you love about dance?

I love the feeling of catharsis and escapism the audience experiences when they suspend their disbelief for two hours and go on a magical journey with us through a beloved story.

Favorite story ballet and favorite contemporary ballet?

Michael Pink's *Peter Pan* and Paul Taylor's *Company B*.

Favorite Louisville business?

Nouvelle (honorable mention to Pizza Lupo).

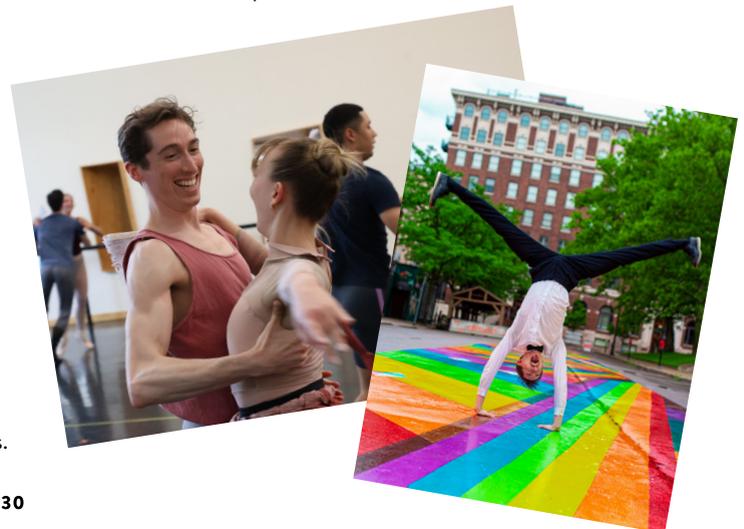
Dogs or cats? Cats

What are your hobbies?

I host elaborate dinner parties at my house, plan European vacations for me and my husband Justin, and dabble in portrait photography! You'll often find me rearranging the furniture in my house or decorating my walls with a new color. I have dreams of training to be fluent in Italian, taking art lessons, and becoming a certified sommelier.

Favorite TV show or movie?

Gilmore Girls is my comfort show. *Call me by Your Name* is my favorite film.

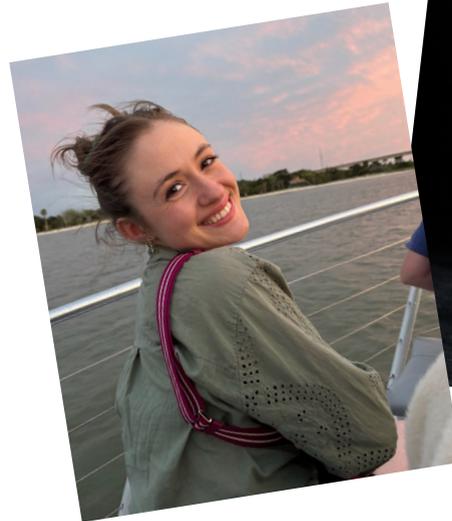


CAITLIN KOWALSKI

@c.a.kowalski on Instagram

Caitlin started dancing in Radcliff, Kentucky. She was inspired by the Louisville Ballet alumni she had as teachers and attended The Louisville Ballet School's summer intensive in 2014. She attended the Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts in 2016 as a dance major and then joined De La Dance Center in Cincinnati as a trainee. In 2017, she returned to Kentucky as part of Louisville Ballet's trainee program, now known as the Studio Company, and was invited to join the Company in 2021.

Since coming to Louisville, she has had the privilege of performing roles and works such as a demi soloist in Balanchine's *Serenade*, Pas De Trois in George Balanchine's *Emeralds*, The Sylph in *La Sylphide*, Marie and divertissements in Val Caniparoli's *The Brown-Forman Nutcracker*, and Ching Ching Wong's *Grass is Green*. She is excited and grateful to begin a new season with Louisville Ballet!



What do you love about dance, and how does ballet make you feel?

I love the opportunity to play different characters and embody different personalities! Ballet makes me feel inspired and happy, like the most whole version of myself.

How do you prepare for a performance?

I try choreography on stage and start getting ready as late as possible (so there's no time to sit and get nervous!).

When did you start dancing?

Did you always love ballet the most?

I began dancing at four, and I've always been a bunhead!

Favorite TV show or movie?

Avatar: the Last Airbender and *Love Island USA*

Favorite Louisville business?

Red Tree and Darling's

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Gentle Movement is one of Louisville Ballet’s many adaptive dance offerings for the community and invites the aging population to engage with dance in a safe and supportive environment. Through a unique partnership with Norton Neuroscience Institute and Bellarmine University, Louisville Ballet is honored to provide an extension of this program through a Gentle Movement class designed specifically for adults with movement disorders*. The program addresses concerns of balance, flexibility, and coordination as activities build strength, endurance, and muscle memory. In addition, the class environment aims to create a community that promotes mental health and social well-being while decreasing feelings of isolation. The Bellarmine Doctor of Physical Therapy Program is conducting research to demonstrate these functional improvements for participants, including the impact on quality of life.

**Eligible movement disorders include Parkinson’s disease, essential tremor, Huntington’s disease, dystonia, and ataxia. No prior dance experience is required to participate. Caregivers, family members, and friends are welcome to join as partners in the class.*

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January 7-March 27, 2026
Wednesdays and Friday mornings, 10–11 a.m.
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4121 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, KY 40207

This program is FREE to participants. Space is limited and registration is required to participate. Call 502-629-1234 or visit NortonHealthcare.com/NNIClasses



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Save the date for our
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Spring semester:
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Our *Fall Showcase* performances include callbacks to the repertoire that brought our dancers to the level they have achieved today — from works by Company Resident Choreographer Andrea Schermoly and Dayton Ballet Artistic Director Brandon Ragland to excerpts from the great classic, *La Bayadère*.

Our *Spring Dance Festival* includes a very special Louisville Ballet Youth Ensemble Gala performance featuring the opening of George Balanchine's *Serenade*. The Youth Ensemble was granted permission by the Balanchine Trust to present the iconic opening movement of this masterpiece in honor of our 50th Anniversary school year.

We hope you join us in celebrating this monumental milestone! Stay up to date on performances and events at thelouisvilleballetschool.org



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NUTCRACKER GIFT SHOP!

Find t-shirts, tote bags, ornaments, nutcrackers, books, and more in the North Lobby. All proceeds benefit The Louisville Ballet School.

2025 merchandise design by Layla Schreiner

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JAMES AND KARYL BELZA IN HONOR OF ALL STUDENTS FROM LOUISVILLE THAT ASPIRE TO BECOME A MEMBER OF LOUISVILLE BALLET
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KATE AND JEFF BONNER IN HONOR OF SHELBY SHENKMAN
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ELLEN TODD BROWN IN HONOR OF HELEN STARR JONES
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LINDA TILLER IN MEMORY OF DON GLASER AND GENE STOTZ
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For more information, please contact 502-583-3150 ext. 238 or Regan Nichols, rnichols@louisvilleballet.org.



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Musical arrangement and Orchestration by James Lowe
English lyrics and book by Kelley Rourke
Based on *La Périchole* by Jacques Offenbach, Henri Meilhac, and Ludovic Halévy



February 13, 2026 | 8 PM
February 15, 2026 | 2 PM
February 17, 2026 | 7:30 PM

Company Artist Jordan Noblett in the snow scene
Photo by Kateryna Sellers



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