

# La Bayadère Divertissement



Rivalry



Intrigue



A  
Love  
Triangle



Jealousy



Murder

BESFI 2019





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# BALLET EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP FUND, INC.

## *Benefit Performance*

### ~ ABOUT THIS EVENING ~

Following the precedent set last year, the 2019 BESFI performances will be presented in two acts with a single 20 minute intermission. Two new selections will be presented: the classical work, *La Bayadère Divertissement* by Vaso Kikna, and a contemporary piece, *Altalena*, by Elena Sgouramani. Set to the score by Ludwig Minkus and utilizing the original choreography of Marius Petipa as a point of departure, the *Divertissement* diverges from the full-length classic libretto. It is a series of small excerpts that when taken together do not attempt to tell a coherent story but are rather a collection of balletic vignettes to be enjoyed for the merits of the music and choreography. For *Altalena*, the waltz rhythm leads the dancers as they move through space, creating ephemeral shapes.

The tapestry of dance movements is additionally broadened by the jubilant **Character Dance Miniature - Kazachok** - plus an exciting array of pas de deux. On the lighter side are the jaunty *Flower Festival in Genzano Pas* and the frolicsome *Giselle Peasant Pas*. By contrast, the romantic *Raymonda Pas* and the elegant *Grand Pas Classique* are juxtaposed around the simmering *La Esmeralda Pas*.

It is said "for every thing there is a season." Two very popular principal dancers are departing to continue their education. This is their last BESFI Benefit, and they will be showcased in opposing roles in *La Bayadère Divertissement* alternating as *Gamzatti* and *Nikiya* opposite guest artist Alvin Tovstogray who portrays *Solor*. The journal cover frames the lovers' travails, and we encourage reading the program notes on Page 13.

As we look back over the past forty years of BESFI at the Staller Center (1980-2019), a compendium of some of the stars who have graced the Staller stage include Oğulcan Borova, Boyco Dossev, Rasta Thomas, Gil Boggs, Cory Stearns, Stephen Hanna, Luis Fuente, Petter Jacobsson, Hagop Kharatian, Peter Morrison, Sergio Neglia, Jock Soto, Edward Stierle and Michael Cusumano. The breadth of Summer Program instructors is equally broad. Here is a sampling: Eleanor D'Antuono, Ann Marie DeAngelo, Nanette Glushak, Cynthia Harvey, Darla Hoover, Andre Kramarevsky, Alexei Moskalenko, Georgina Parkinson, Danilo Radojevic, Jurgen Schneider, Victoria Hall, Lupe Serrano, Elie Lazar, Paul Southerland,

Violette Verde and Patricia Wilde.

BESFI always strives to bring the best of the best to Suffolk County. The list of ballets presented by BESFI through the years includes choreography by Sonia Morianova, Vaso Kikna and Valia Seiskaya. Morianova brought us **Orpheus and Eurydice**, **The Life of Paganini**, **J.C.F. Bach Symphony #6** and Berlioz's **Requiem**. Following Kikna's triumph with *Don Quixote Divertissement* she will again regale us with the *La Bayadère Divertissement*. Valia Seiskaya's signature ballets: **La Boutique Fantasque**, **Seasons**, **Walpurgis Night**, **MASK** and **Street People** have become repertoire mainstays. Please enjoy your evening.

### BESFI PERFORMANCE 2018 ~ IN REVIEW

#### A New Generation Blossoms at Seiskaya Ballet's BESFI Benefit Performance

By: Christina Pandolfi

"For forty-four years, Seiskaya Ballet has empowered and trained some of the nation's most accomplished dancers. With such a rich history and proven methodologies, the St. James, NY ballet institution could just rest on its laurels and stay satisfied with the status quo.

Instead, Seiskaya Ballet continues to challenge its dancers at every turn, demanding they rise to any occasion with polish and professionalism, which is exactly what the company did during its 39<sup>th</sup> BESFI performance at the Staller Center for the Performing Arts. Forgoing their traditional performance format, Seiskaya Ballet presented a show consisting of a mixture of pas de deux, character dance miniatures, and a Seiskaya Ballet original series, staged by longtime friend and teacher, Vaso Kikna entitled, *Don Quixote Divertissement*.

The show opened with the beloved *Sleeping Beauty Pas De Deux*, danced by Eva Pyrros and Guest Artist, Nicholas Sipes. Blessed with long, lithe limbs, the couple complemented each other well in both stature and artistry, showing off their control of Petipa's choreography. The dramatic and contemporary *Hooligans Pas De Deux* followed, danced by a lovely Lara Caraianni and newly minted Principal Dancer, Max Lippman. The couple's technique was clean, and Max continues to shine as a strong, ca-



pable partner. But it was his commitment to the performance that shone the brightest. Brand-new *Kati Neo Character Dance Miniature* was up next, choreographed by Seiskaya Ballet veteran, Nicole DiFiore. A dynamic piece that featured the company's junior corps members, the group danced with infectious energy and enthusiasm.

The program continued with the ethereal *La Bayadère Pas De Deux*, performed by Graciela Carrero-Sagona and Guest Artist, Alvin Tovstogray. Carrero-Sagona's facilities are easy to see: sky-high extensions, soaring jétes, and precise pirouettes. But as time progressed, it became clear that her true talent is confidence: her ability to deftly navigate choreography and move through the steps into a well-rounded performance was more than impressive. It was memorable. Tovstogray provided the perfect balance to Carrero-Sagona, offering her strength and support at every turn. Act I ended with the romantic *Les Sylphides Pas De Deux*, danced by Julia Virnelli and a returning Sipes. Virnelli's sweetness and supple movement quality were a delight to behold, and the two made a handsome pair.

The start of Act II's *Don Quixote Divertissement* began with exciting energy and color, as the corps de ballet danced with fervor in the Village Square. Showing off their penchant for performance, Guest Artist, Alexandra Tsivitis and Julia Virnelli lit up the stage with synchronized chaînés and développés. Other standouts included the adorable Toreadors, Principal Dancer, Brianna Jimenez as Mercedes, who danced with dazzling bravura and solid technique, and a returning Max Lippman as Basilio with guitar. A passionate dancer, Lippman puts extreme care into every step of the choreography, and always works to make sure his partner shines.

In this instance, Lippman's partner was Principal Dancer, Diana Atoian, dancing the coveted role of Kitri. A calm and collected dancer with confidence to spare, Atoian brings her truest self to every ballet she dances. Blessed with a solid command of ballet vocabulary and port de bras, Atoian's consistency was captivating, performing a series of complicated variations and pas de deux with composure. Accompanied by a returning Tovstogray, it was thrilling to behold and concluded the performance on a high note.

It's always a joy to see how far Seiskaya Ballet has grown every year. But more so than that, it's a privilege to have a small place in this company's history."

*Christina Pandolfi is a professional copywriter and contributes to Broadway World. She is also an accomplished dancer who attended NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.*

## ABOUT BESFI

The Ballet Education and Scholarship Fund, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization incorporated in the State of New York with the primary purpose of promoting ballet education in Suffolk County. By providing grants and scholarships and offering workshops to local dancers, BESFI enables young artists to participate in ballet programs that are not readily available to them or which are beyond their financial resources. By providing professionally staged dance performances, BESFI is able to promote the arts by catering to the need for young artists to perform and the community's desire for quality entertainment. To everyone's benefit, BESFI has had unparalleled success in bringing noted guest artists and teachers to Long Island.

This year BESFI owes a great debt to several volunteers who gave selflessly of their time. In particular, we are proud to recognize Karin Engel, Yan Yu, Erik Muller, Pam Donnelly, Lisa Lee, Lorna Jaramillo, Linda Pandolfi and Sergey Butkevich.

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## BESFI SUMMER PROGRAM

Returning instructors for 2019 include Mary Carpenter, Alexandra Bergman, Andrea Bergeman-Rak, Amy Ruggiero, Laura Feig, Elena Sgouramani and Vaso Kikna. Joining us this season for the first time will be Oğulcan Borova. The Advanced level continues to feature four daily classes which reflects the broadening of class offerings. The Summer Program will run from July 8th to August 16th. The 2019 brochure is available online at [www.besfi.com](http://www.besfi.com). For information telephone: (631) 584-0192.

## BESFI SCHOLARSHIPS

BESFI awarded \$5,000 in summer program scholarships in 2018, pushing total cumulative scholarships and stipends past the \$285,000 mark. To encourage more male dancers to attend BESFI, the scholarship pool will be expanded. Traditional support should be approximately \$5,000. As in previous years, a jury of prominent ballet adjudicators will determine the winners of the annual scholarship competition. The competition date is set for June 2, 2019. Specific check-in times for advanced and intermediate candidates will be announced in local papers. For information, contact: BESFI SCHOLARSHIPS, P.O. Box 2146, St. James, NY 11780, call (631) 584-0192, or email us at [info@besfi.com](mailto:info@besfi.com).



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...an important group of individuals, without whose efforts this journal could not have been produced. Our inexhaustible fundraisers have, again, succeeded in gathering an astonishing array of advertising pages and gifts for our annual raffle. *Bravo!!!*

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## VALIA SEISKAYA



Russian-born Valia Seiskaya took her first ballet lessons in Greece at the age of six. Her teacher was Adam Morianoff, also a Russian *émigré*. (Valia was experiencing difficulty learning Greek; thus, it was natural for her mother to seek out a fellow countryman.) At nine she became a scholarship student, showing prodigious technique—for example, *entrechat huit*, eight beats, in centre—by age ten. *Pointe* work also started at ten, character ballet at twelve. Thereafter, Mme. Seiskaya rapidly developed the combination of strong technique and high elevation which would become her hallmark as a

professional.

At fifteen, Valia continued her training under Sonia Morianova, the niece of Adam Morianoff, who had recently retired from the National Opera of Greece. She became a member of the National Opera at seventeen, soon attaining the rank of featured soloist, and touring Europe and Russia with the company. At the National Theater her preparation continued under resident ballet masters and choreographers, including the Bolshoi's Asaf Messerer, Boris Kniazev, Nina Kyrzanova and Olympia Yelodari (former judge at the *International Ballet Competitions* held in Varna, Bulgaria and Moscow).

In Greece, as in most European countries, ballet students wishing to become professionals must pass comprehensive national level examinations and obtain a license. Mme. Seiskaya fulfilled all of her requirements and was granted both a diploma and a license.

The Seiskaya Ballet School was founded in 1974, one year after Mme. Seiskaya retired from the National Opera of Greece. At that time she taught all fifteen class sections. In 1976 Studio A was doubled in size to its present 2,500 square feet, and in 1981 Studio B was opened, adding another 1,500 square feet to the dance facility. That year also saw the establishment of the Seiskaya Ballet Academy.

The Academy was designed as a professional training program for serious dancers who display the determination, physical attributes and musicality of the career-oriented dancer. Admission to the Academy is by audition only. Since the inception of the Seiskaya Ballet programs, eighty students have opted for professional careers. The OPEN program was developed in 2006 to complement the Academy and accommodate requests for more scheduling flexibility.

All Academy students are encouraged to participate in the guest teacher seminars and summer workshop programs offered by the Ballet Education and Scholarship Fund, Inc. (BESFI). As part of their professional preparation, Academy students' participation in auditions for company schools, summer workshops, internships and major dance companies is routinely encouraged.

Seiskaya students have compiled an outstanding record of achievement.

4 Through the years, full scholarships have been awarded by every major institution

for which they have auditioned, including schools affiliated with American Ballet Theatre (ABT), New York City Ballet, and the San Francisco, Houston, Joffrey, Pacific Northwest, Pittsburgh, Eliot Feld, and Boston Ballets. Some of the many dance companies Seiskaya students have joined: ABT (5), Atlanta Ballet (2), Boston (2), Ballet West, Fort Worth, Hartford, Pacific Northwest, Pittsburgh, Royal Swedish, State Ballet of Missouri, Ballet Arizona, Tennessee, Milwaukee (3), New Jersey, Alabama, Washington, Louisville, Austin, Tulsa Ballets and Momix.

In 1994 Seiskaya student Michael Cusumano captured a bronze medal and Special Commendation at the *International Ballet Competition (IBC)* in Varna, Bulgaria and a coveted Jury Award (a gold medal-level award) at the *Prix de Danse*, Paris, France. Valia Seiskaya was nominated that year as the Best Teacher and Coach at Varna, one of the few Americans ever to be so honored.

In 1996 Kirov student Rasta Thomas, coached by Valia Seiskaya, reached the pinnacle: a gold medal in the Men's Junior Division at the *17th IBC*, Varna, Bulgaria. Incredibly, he was the first American male dancer ever to win a Junior Division gold and the youngest male dancer ever to do so. In addition, his triumph ended a sixteen-year stretch in which no gold medal was awarded in the Junior Men's Division.

In 1998 Seiskaya student Elizabeth McGrath represented the U.S. in the *18th IBC* in Varna, Bulgaria. In late '98 she was a top finalist in the *8th Concours International de Danse de Paris*, France. Among the numerous awards earned during the current decade: Anna Craddock earned 2nd prize in the 2008 American Ballet Competition, Miami, Fl. and in 2009, the grand prize in the 9th International Dance Competition - Hellas (Greece). Seiskaya alum Cory Stearns (ABT principal) won the vaunted 2008 Erik Bruhn Prize in Toronto, Canada. In 2012, Danielle Lovetro earned 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the regional Youth American Grand Prix while Anna Craddock swept to a 1<sup>st</sup> place finish at the American Ballet Competition in Houston, Texas and a 1<sup>st</sup> place finish in the senior division at the 2013 YAGP regional. Seiskaya students have captured more than twenty national/regional awards, including those from the National Arts and Letters Competition; National Arts Recognition and Talent Competition (Presidential Scholar in the Arts); Saraband, Ltd; and the Amilita Hoffman Memorial Ballet Competition.

During her seventeen-year professional career with the National Opera of Greece, Mme. Seiskaya gained an affinity for the grand sweep of story-line ballets and operas staged by the company. Her own choreographic works, such as **Street People**, **Las Damiselas**, **Forest**, **MASK**, and the **Nutcracker**, reflect that interest. Fresh interpretations of classical favorites **La Boutique Fantasque**, **Walpurgis Night** and **A Night on Bald Mountain** complement her signature ensemble works **Grand Waltz**, **Seasons** and **Dance of the Hours**.

Valia Seiskaya is listed in *Who's Who Among Outstanding Americans* and was *The Village Times* 1985 Woman of the Year in the Arts. Thrice, she has been awarded Teacher of the Year by YAGP. She has received commendations from, among others, President Reagan, Governor Pataki and Congressman Forbes. In 2011, Mme. Seiskaya was elected to the Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame for her work nurturing young talented dancers. Valia Seiskaya is Long Island's grande dame of ballet.



**VALIA SEISKAYA, LFB**  
*ARTISTIC DIRECTOR*



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*Julia Virnelli*

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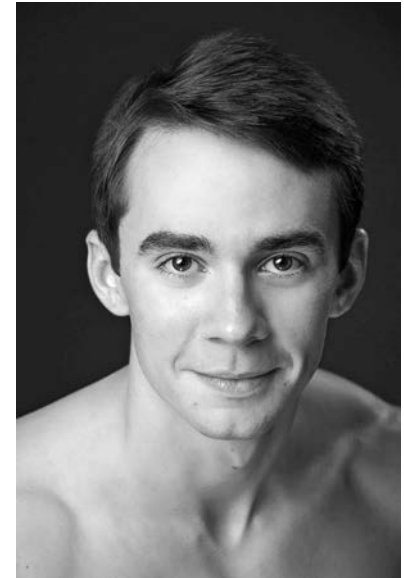


~ *Best of Luck* ~

*Congratulations*

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and  
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## Guest Artist



**ALVIN TOVSTOGRAY**

Appearing courtesy of the Oklahoma City Ballet, Principal Dancer Alvin Tovstogray's professional journey has been one of significant effort, achievement and reward. Mr. Tovstogray began his training at the age of eight graduating in 2008 from Dnipropetrovsk State Choreographic School. After competing in the 2008 YAGP NYC Finals, he continued his training at The San Francisco Ballet School under Parrish Maynard and Jorge Esquel. In 2010 he joined the Washington Ballet Studio Company. He joined the Oklahoma City Ballet as a company dancer in 2012, was named Soloist in 2014 and promoted to Principal in 2015. Mr. Tovstogray's repertoire includes works by George Balanchine, Anthony Tudor, August Bournonville, Nacho Duato, Twyla Tharp, Stanton Welch, Septime Webre, Margo Sappington, Matthew Neenan, Amy Seiwert, Brian Enos, Yui Sato, Robert Mills, and others. An award winning international ballet competitor, he has garnered a 3rd place at the Istanbul International Ballet Competition (2010), a Bronze medal at World Ballet Competition Orlando (2011) and a Gold medal at Tanzolymp (2012). Bringing his talents to BESFI 2019, he will dance as *Solor* in the production of **La Bayadère** and perform the *Esmeralda* and *Raymonda Pas de Deux*. These performances feature Mr. Tovstogray opposite Principal Dancers Jenna Lee, Diana Atoian, Brianna Jimenez and Lara Caraiani.



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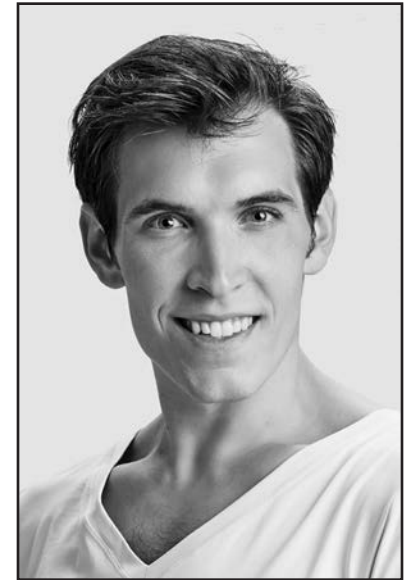
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## Guest Artist



**DANIEL WAGNER**

For Guest Artist Daniel Wagner, acclimating to five different Seiskaya *Sugar Plum Pas de Deux* partners during *Nutcracker 2018* was an unusual challenge. But, according to Valia Seiskaya, “As the Cavalier, Daniel adjusted marvelously. Each dancer was very different; however, they share a solid technical foundation and have extensive pas de deux experience.” He was so successful with the “*Nutcracker Five*”, that we decided to do it to him again! Partnering for a second time, Daniel and Principal Graciela Sagona will perform the challenging *Grand Pas Classique*. He will then lend his talents to the *Flower Festival Pas de Deux* paired with First Soloists Eva Pyrros and then Julia Virnelli. He will partner First Soloist Jordan Jaramillo in the *Giselle Peasant Pas de Deux*. Daniel received his initial training under the tutelage of Balanchine and Joffrey protégé, Craig Williams at Pasadena Civic Ballet. He attended the American Ballet Theatre in New York City and Kirov Academy in Washington, D.C., and trained at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Additional training came at Houston Ballet under Claudio Muñoz and Andrew Murphy and he later danced professionally with Cincinnati Ballet, where he performed principal roles in a variety of pieces including George Balanchine’s *Serenade*. A choreographer himself, he has performed his own piece, *Nannerl*.



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*“You can start late, look different, be uncertain and still succeed.”*

*—Misty Copeland*

*Thank You Valia and Dimitri for  
your endless support and encouragement.  
Truly grateful and proud to be a part  
of Seiskaya's family  
xo Girie*

## Guest Artist



### **GINAMARIE CARRERO - SAGONA**

An expressive dancer who has garnered acclaim for her acting ability and polished technique, Ginamarie has been featured as *Clara*, *Dew Drop* and *Flower Soloist* in several **Seiskaya Nutcracker** performances. Among her BESFI performance credits are the charismatic *Esmeralda Pas de Deux* and the hauntingly beautiful *Les Sylphides Pas de Deux* both opposite renowned guest artist Oğulcan Borova. She was featured with guest artist Matthew Dibble in the jaunty *Can-Can Pas de Deux* considered the centerpiece of the BESFI 2014 production of **La Boutique Fantasque**. For BESFI 2019, as a rehearsal mistress, Ginamarie lends her talents to the contemporary selection, *Altalena*, which will enjoy its Long Island premiere. Dancing a bevy of roles in **La Bayadère Divertissement**, they include a soloist in *Jump Dance* and in the *Pas de Trois III* and the *Parrot Dance*. While still considering a career in the performing arts — Ginamarie is graduating this month with a BFA in English and Media & Communications from SUNY Old Westbury. A stellar student and talented writer, Ginamarie intends to pursue a Masters Degree. In April 2018, she was inducted into the prestigious Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society — as she says, “The possibilities are endless!” Ginamarie continues to guide and inspire younger performers as both a ballet instructor and rehearsal mistress.

### Flower Festival in Genzano

Bournonville's **Flower Festival** is a fantasy contrasted with everyday characters and incidents. The great pas de deux was inserted by H. Lander in his one-act version of **Napoli** for the London Festival Ballet in 1954, and has since been a popular number for star dancers.

#### Altalena

The music, *Altalena*, by Lino Cannavacciuolo, inspired choreographer Helena Sgouramani to create the contemporary dance premiering tonight. Sgouramani gives this insightful description of her work. "The waltz rhythm leads the dancers as they move through space, creating ephemeral shapes. This continuous sophisticated transfer of weight works as a shelter for the beauty which emerges from the simplicity and the verity of dancing as an ensemble. Just like a dream...."

#### La Esmeralda Pas de Deux

Based on Victor Hugo's novel, **The Hunchback of Notre Dame**, the ballet tells the story of the character Quasimodo's hopeless love for the gypsy *Esmeralda* and his attempts to shield her from the machinations of Frollo, a lustful priest. Against this backdrop, a romance between *Esmeralda* and the student *Gringoire* develops. The pas de deux depicts a joyful street scene featuring *Esmeralda* and her suitor *Gringoire*.

#### Grand Pas Classique

This showcase for virtuoso performers is a display of technical fireworks. First danced by Yvette Chauvre and Vladimir Skouratoff in 1949, it was presented by the Royal Ballet in 1963 and by American Ballet Theatre with Cynthia Gregory and Ted Kivitt in 1972.

#### Raymonda Pas de Deux

A Petipa ballet set to the music of Glazounov, **Raymonda** has become a classical yardstick for ballerinas. Raymonda dreams that her lover, who is away at war, descends from his portrait and leads her into the garden to dance a pas de deux. But the vision is dispelled and in her lover's place she finds the sinister Saracen who renews his advances.

## BALLET EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP FUND, INC.

### 2019 Benefit Performance

Friday, May 17th, 7PM & Saturday, May 18th, 2PM

Staller Center for the Arts

#### COMPOSER/CHOREOGRAPHER

#### PERFORMERS

### FLOWER FESTIVAL IN GENZANO PAS DE DEUX

Helsted/Bournonville

Julia Virnelli (Fri.), Eva Pyrros (Sat.)  
Daniel Wagner

### ALTALENA

Cannavacciuolo/Sgouramani

Corps

### LA ESMERALDA PAS DE DEUX (Fri.)

Pugni/Perrot

Brianna Jimenez, Alvin Tovstogray

### RAYMONDA PAS DE DEUX (Sat.)

Glazunov/Petipa

Lara Caraianni, Alvin Tovstogray

### KAZACHOK CHARACTER DANCE MINIATURE

Folk Music/Guzikova

Corps

### GRAND PAS CLASSIQUE (Fri.)

Auber/Gsovsky

Graciela Carrero-Sagona  
Daniel Wagner

### GISELLE PEASANT PAS DE DEUX (Sat.)

Adam/Perrot, Coralli

Jordan Jaramillo, Daniel Wagner



## TWENTY MINUTE INTERMISSION



## LA BAYADÈRE DIVERTISSEMENT

Premiere May 17, 2019

Choreography: Kikna after Petipa

Composer: Minkus

Staged By: Vaso Kikna

Costume Mistresses: Sue DiFiore, Johanna Hsu

Lighting Design: Liz Silver

Rehearsal Mistresses: Johanna Hsu,

Stage Manager: Liz Silver

Ginamarie Carrero-Sagona, Eva Pyrros

#### Cast

Solor

Alvin Tovstogray

High Brahmin

Andrew Nittoli

Gamzatti

Diana Atoian (Fri.), Jenna Lee (Sat.)

Nikiya

Diana Atoian (Sat.), Jenna Lee (Fri.)



## Act I: Outside Temple in the Sacred Forest

Temple Girls K. Allgaier, R. Bland (Sat.), M. Butkevich (Fri.), L. Caraiani (Fri.),  
Gr. Carrero-Sagona (Sat.), L. Hoglo, J. Jaramillo (Fri.),  
B. Jimenez (Sat.), E. Pyrros, M. Valenta, J. Virnelli

## Act II: The Palace

Children's Fan Dance A. Boryushkina, A. Franco, V. Franco, M. Lettiere, C. Ruotolo,  
A. Savino, M. Storke, E. Tramontana, S. Villagrancia, A. Wigand

Fan Dance H. Alonso (Sat.), D. Baranowski, B. Borch, D. Kent, A. Samara,  
Vv. Ye, N. Zhang (Fri.)

Parrot Dance K. Allgaier, R. Bland, F. Brazeau (Fri.), M. Butkevich,  
Gi. Carrero-Sagona, L. Hoglo, J. Jaramillo (Fri.), S. Neuf (Sat.),  
E. Pyrros, M. Valenta, J. Virnelli, N. Zhang (Sat.)

Drum Dance Soloist: K. Hughes  
Demi Soloists A. Brogan, M. Martufi, C. Muller, V. Pennachio, K. Urso, D. Vaisman  
Corps S. Carter, A. Chandler, S. Li, I. Morlas, A. Murphy (Alt.), A. Nyvall,  
A. Tramontana, Vc. Ye, A. Zhang

Little Drum Dancers O. Dekeris, A. Perez-Canoa

Manu Dance The Water Girl: D. Baranowski  
Girls: B. Borch, K. Kent, A. Samara, Vv. Ye

Jump Dance Soloists: Gi. Carrero-Sagona, E. Pyrros  
K. Allgaier, R. Bland, F. Brazeau (Fri.), M. Butkevich, S. Creedon,  
L. Hoglo, S. Neuf (Sat.), R. Sama, M. Valenta, J. Virnelli, N. Zhang

Pas de Quatre L. Caraiani, Gr. Carrero-Sagona, J. Jaramillo, B. Jimenez  
Pas de Trois I A. Brogan, M. Martufi, D. Vaisman - (Fri.)  
C. Muller, V. Pennachio, K. Urso - (Sat.)

Pas de Trois II K. Allgaier, F. Brazeau (Sat.), M. Butkevich (Fri.), M. Valenta  
Pas de Trois III R. Bland (Fri.), Gi. Carrero-Sagona (Sat.), E. Pyrros, J. Virnelli

Nikiya's Variation Diana Atoian (Sat.), Jenna Lee (Fri.)  
Pas de Deux Diana Atoian (Sat.), Jenna Lee (Fri.), Alvin Tovstogray

Shades Variation I B. Jimenez  
Shades Variation II Gr. Carrero-Sagona  
Shades Variation III L. Caraiani

Solor's Variation Alvin Tovstogray  
Gamzatti's Variation Diana Atoian (Fri.), Jenna Lee (Sat.)  
Coda Diana Atoian, Jenna Lee, Alvin Tovstogray and Corps

## *Giselle Peasant Pas de Deux*

First presented in 1841 with Italian ballerina Carlotta Grisi as *Giselle*, the story is based on a libretto by Theophile Gautier. Village peasants dance in celebration of the harvest. *Giselle*, a lovely village maiden, brings out two peasants to entertain the hunting party of nobles from the nearby feudal castle. She presents them to the *Countess* and the pas de deux commences.

## *La Bayadère Divertissement*

The iconic 19th-century Russian ballet, **La Bayadère** was first performed at the Bolshoi Theatre in St Petersburg in 1877. Unknown in the West until the Kirov Ballet toured with the "Kingdom of the Shades" scene in 1961, Natalia Makarova's 1980 production of *La Bayadère* for American Ballet Theatre was the first full-length production to find a permanent place in the repertoires of western ballet troupes.

The enduring tale of love, betrayal, and redemption is considered one of the best-loved classical ballets of all time. Nikiya, a temple dancer, is in love with the warrior Solor. The High Brahmin also desires Nikiya, and when she rejects him, he plans to take revenge on Solor. When the High Brahmin tells the Rajah about Solor's secret love, the Rajah decides that Nikiya, not Solor, should be killed. Princess Gamzatti is to be married to Solor. She overhears and tries to bribe Nikiya to give up Solor, but Nikiya refuses. The Rajah and Gamzatti arrange for Nikiya to be killed by a snake bite during the engagement festivities. Despondent, Solor is filled with remorse and haunted by visions of Nikiya. He cannot complete the wedding ceremony. The gods are angered and destroy the temple with all inside it. In the afterlife, Solor and Nikiya are finally united.

The **Divertissement** is a collection of balletic vignettes to be enjoyed for the merits of the music and choreography. Vaso Kikna has staged several full-length classical ballets in Athens, Greece.





*14 years since my first ballet class. 8 since my first pair of pointe shoes. 6 since my first pre pro class. 4 since becoming a principal dancer. My last year for farewells. Time may have swept past me too quickly, but I will never let the cherished Seiskaya memories pass me by. This is my second family. Valia and Dimitri have watched over me for many years, and words aren't enough to describe the strength in wisdom and self-discipline they've imparted on me. I've been taught to keep my wits about myself, to never let anyone's doubts overshadow my confidence and ambition, and that hard work is the only answer to achieving success. These gifts that they've given me are priceless, and my gratitude is boundless. The friends I've made here are my sisters. The bond that we've created all these years, growing up together, and going through it ALL is what made the experience here that much more memorable. I'm going to miss these long rehearsal nights, backstage butterflies, Dimitri's lectures, Valia's iconic classes, the rush of adrenaline from performances, debating with my girls about whose shoes are the most dead, the blisters, bruises, and final bows... my home. I love my Seiskaya family with all my heart, and I am absolutely blessed to have been mentored by the charming, and feisty Valia Seiskaya. Throughout the years, Valia's "I kill you stupid kid!" remarks had instilled enough fear in me to work to the bone, yet somehow I feel more alive than ever.*

*Love you all,  
Diana (psami)*

## Principal Dancer



**DIANA ATOIAN – Age 17**  
**Sachem High School East**  
**Twelfth Grade**

With strikingly expressive features and the perfect blend of ethereal grace and technical exactitude, Diana will once again enchant audiences during her BESFI performances. She will portray regal *Princess Gamzatti* and will reunite with Oklahoma City Ballet's Principal Dancer Alvin Tovstogray during the pas de deux in **La Bayadère**. She will take the stage Saturday, again in **La Bayadère**, mesmerizing the audience as the seductive *Nikiya* and in the contemporary piece *Altalena*. Following her performance as *Kitri* in BESFI 2018, she garnered praise from the *Smithtown Messenger*. "A calm and collected dancer with confidence to spare, Atoian brings her truest self to every ballet she dances.... Atoian's consistency was captivating, performing a series of complicated variations and pas de deux with composure." Her stage presence and musicality were captivating in **Nutcracker 2018**, dancing with an elegance all her own, the roles of *Sugar Plum Fairy*, *Clara*, and *Dew Drop*, while showing her range as a dancer with high ballroom jumps and precision turns in *Chinese*. A top finisher in each of her six years in the BESFI competition, in 2016 Diana competed on the international stage, winning 3rd place in the Hellas International Competition in Athens, Greece.





*Jenna,*

*Congratulations on everything you have accomplished this year in dance and your academic life. You are a kind, beautiful, smart young woman. Can't wait to see what comes next. Good luck to you and all the Seiskaya dancers. You'll always be our Ballerina Baby!*

*Love,  
Arammy and Papa*



*Dear Jenna,*

*We watched you grow from a tiny baby into a beautiful young woman. We look forward to watching you grow into a successful person in whatever you choose to do.*

*Love,  
Poppy and Grandma*



## Principal Dancer



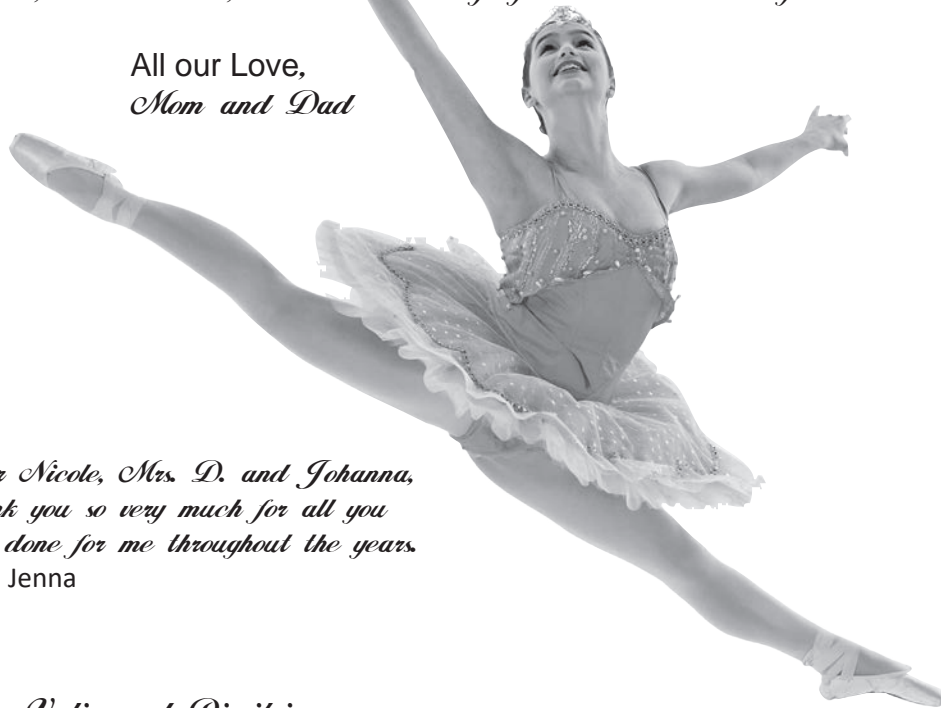
**JENNA NICOLE LEE – Age 18**  
**St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School**  
**Twelfth Grade**

Artistry, musicality and graceful charm abound when Jenna takes the stage tonight as the seductress, *Nikiya* in *La Bayadère*, and later in the contemporary work, *Altalena*. With effortless strength and versatility Jenna will seamlessly transition into the majestic *Princess Gamzatti* for Saturday's performance of *La Bayadère*, opposite Oklahoma City Ballet's Principal Dancer Alvin Tovstogray. In *Nutcracker 2018* she brought a sophisticated, lyrical quality to her rendition of the *Sugar Plum Fairy*, along with her technically flawless *Chinese* and glistening *Dew Drop*. Known for her exceptional athleticism and unwavering endurance, Jenna's performance as *Chocolate Soldier* was lauded by the *Smithtown Messenger* "...while Seiskaya Ballet veteran Jenna Lee as the *Chocolate Soldier* was a crowd favorite. Her soaring split leaps and dynamic fouettés à la seconde really showcased her experience and confidence. She has grown so much as a technician and I couldn't be prouder." As *Kitri* in BESFI's 2018 production of *Don Quixote* Jenna combined technical precision and musicality, while playfully interacting with Mr. Tovstogray. A multi-year BESFI scholarship recipient, she is the single designee to represent Seiskaya in community outreach demonstrations.

*Jenna,*

*As we watch you perform this weekend know that we are reminded of how fun, fearless, tenacious and strong you are, both on and off the stage. We are beyond proud of what you have accomplished, and so very excited to see where your journey in life continues to take you. Have fun this BESTI weekend, soak it all in, and enjoy each and every moment.*

All our Love,  
*Mom and Dad*



*Dear Nicole, Mrs. D. and Johanna,*  
*Thank you so very much for all you have done for me throughout the years.*  
Love, Jenna

*Dear Valia and Dimitri,*  
*When I was 3 years old sitting in the audience at my first Seiskaya Nutcracker and saw the Chocolate Soldier, I turned to my Grammy, and said, "I want to do that". Nine years later my dream came true when you cast me in that role. I cannot begin to thank you for all you have taught to me and guided me through and for the gift of your time both in and out of the studio. Thank you for having the confidence in me, for always pushing me to do better and the countless life lessons. I am forever grateful.*

*Σε αγαπώ !*

*Jenna*



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*“Let them praise  
His name with dance”  
Psalm 149*



*Congratulations Brianna Jimenez  
and all the Seiskaya Ballet dancers  
on your 2019 BESFI performance.*

## Principal Dancer



**BRIANNA LYNN JIMENEZ – Age 16**  
**Ward Melville High School**  
**Tenth Grade**

Brianna has a singular talent born of focus and passion for her craft. She is unfailingly in character when she performs. As the *Shopkeeper's Assistant* in **La Boutique Fantasque**, a very young Jimenez in a seminal moment had the audience transfixed with her consummate dancing and acting skills. Her technical prowess continues to defy her youthful age as seen in **Nutcracker 2018** when she reprised her roles as the regal *Sugar Plum Fairy* and *Dew Drop*. Her performance as *Clara* caught the eye of the *Smithtown Messenger*: “Brianna Jimenez’s rendition of Clara immediately set the tone in Act I. With natural vibrancy that can’t be taught, Jimenez is effortless and ebullient...” In BESFI 2018 her portrayal of *Mercedes* in **Don Quixote** elicited this review: “...Brianna Jimenez as Mercedes...danced with dazzling bravura and solid technique...” This BESFI she will once again illuminate the Staller Center as she dances opposite Alvin Tovstogray in the riveting *Esmeralda Pas de Deux*. Her exquisite feet and musicality will be center stage in her roles as a *Temple Girl*, in the *Shades Variation I* and the *Pas de Quatre* in **La Bayadère Divertissement**. Adding to her many accolades she’s finished first place in the BESFI scholarship competition from 2016-2018.



*Sometimes  
a picture  
is worth a  
thousand  
words.*





**Graciela:**

***“Success isn’t handed to us. We earn it.”***

***—Misty Copeland***



*I am so very grateful for the support and encouragement I get from my teachers at Seiskaya. Thank you Valia and Dimitri for giving me the opportunity to be able to do what I love best. xo Graciela*

## Principal Dancer



**GRACIELA CARRERO-SAGONA – Age 16**  
**Harborfields High School**  
**Eleventh Grade**

One of the basic tenets of the Seiskaya philosophy is that dancers should maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. Seldom has a performer taken this challenge to the level accomplished by Graciela. Her strengths have become an endless stream of “WOW” factors. Blistering turns, bounding leaps and ethereal leg extensions are her forte. Her performance as the *Sugar Plum Fairy*, paired with her dashing *Cavalier*, Daniel Wagner, formerly with Cincinnati Ballet, garnered praise from the *Smithtown Messenger* following her **Nutcracker 2018** performance. “A dancer with natural facilities – turnout, extension, feet, balance, you name it –Sagona proved her talent, which is quite a feat for such a young performer...I’m excited to see Sagona’s artistry continue to grow in the coming years.” She gave a riveting performance in BESFI 2018 in the *La Bayadère Pas de Deux* with Guest Artist Alvin Tovstogray. This BESFI she will capture the audience, again opposite Wagner, in the elegant, and challenging *Grand Pas Classique*. She later performs in the contemporary piece, *Altalena* and in the *Temple Girls* and *Pas de Quatre* in **La Bayadère**. The definition of a classical ballerina, Graciela has received multiple BESFI scholarships during her tenure at Seiskaya.



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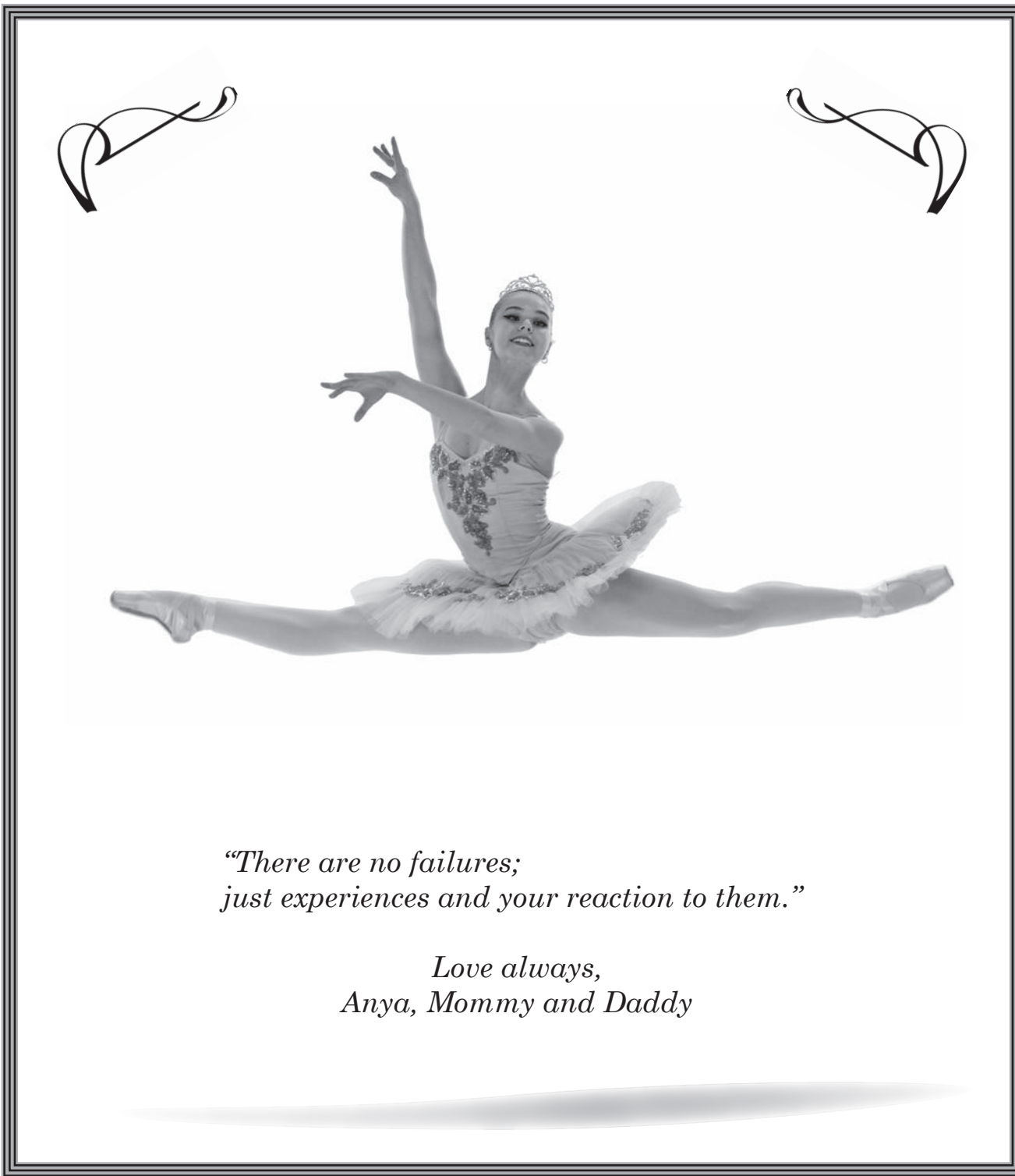


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*“There are no failures;  
just experiences and your reaction to them.”*

*Love always,  
Anya, Mommy and Daddy*

## Principal Dancer



**LARA SOPHIE CARAIANI – Age 15**  
**The Stony Brook School**  
**Ninth Grade**

Quality of movement is a term that is bandied about but requires more circumspect usage. The epitome of grace, poise and effortless classical technique, Lara has earned plaudits for several roles. Achieving her goal of promotion to Principal Dancer, Lara’s diligent work in the studio was evident during **Nutcracker 2018** with her eloquent interpretation of the *Sugar Plum Fairy*, and *Clara*. Following her performance as *Dew Drop* the *Smithtown Messenger* opined “...and the delicate Lara Caraianni, who was an ideal Dew Drop; an ever-dainty accent to accentuate her following of Flowers.” She received thunderous applause during BESFI 2018 after completing the fiery, and demanding, pas de deux, *Flames of Paris*; then she showed her range performing the spirited neo-classical *Hooligans Pas de Deux*. This BESFI the audience will witness Lara’s technical precision and charm as she performs with Oklahoma City Principal Dancer Alvin Tovstogray in the *Raymonda Pas de Deux*. She rounds out her weekend in the contemporary piece, *Altalena* and in *Temple Girls* and *Pas de Quatre* in **La Bayadère**. With elegant long lines and polished technique, Lara has been the recipient of several BESFI scholarships and garnered second place in last year’s senior division.



*Congratulations to Eva!  
We wish you continued success!  
With Love,  
The Vergos Family*



Dearest Eva,  
Congratulations on  
another beautiful BESFI  
performance. We love  
to watch you dance!

Love,  
Mom and Ted  
Teaken and Edward



## First Soloist



**EVA MARIE PYRROS – Age 17**  
**Ward Melville High School**  
**Eleventh Grade**

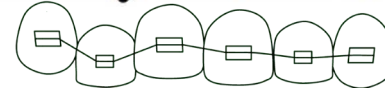
Elegant Eva will charm audiences this BESFI season as she partners with Daniel Wagner in the *Flower Festival in Genzano Pas de Deux*. She will also bring her exquisite extensions and sparkling stage presence to the contemporary piece, *Altalena* and to **La Bayadère** as a *Jump Dance* soloist, one of the *Temple Girls* and in *Pas de Trois III* and *Parrot Dance*. Eva showcased her versatility in **Nutcracker 2018** as *Doll*, *Snow Queen*, *Flower Soloist* and *Arabian Soloist*. Her technical precision as *Doll* and the ethereal regality of her *Snow Queen* has made her a perennial favorite among audiences. In BESFI 2018, Eva partnered with guest artist Nicholas Sipes in the enchanting *Sleeping Beauty Wedding Pas de Deux*. The *Smithtown Messenger's* Christina Pandolfi praised the couple, noting that, "with [their] long, lithe limbs," they "complemented each other well in both stature and artistry." She also took the stage in **Don Quixote Divertissement** as *Friend of Kitri* and in *Fandango* and *Seguidilla*. A BESFI scholarship winner, she has also attended The Rock and ABT workshops. Eva loves mentoring the younger dancers at Seiskaya and hopes to serve her community by pursuing a career in social work.





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## First Soloist



**JULIA ROCCA VIRNELLI – Age 17**  
**Ward Melville High School**  
**Eleventh Grade**

Prepare to be enchanted this BESFI when Julia partners with guest artist Daniel Wagner to perform the elegant *Flower Festival in Genzano Pas de Deux*. Julia will also be featured in the *Jump Dance*, *Temple Girls*, *Parrot Dance* and *Pas de Trois III* in the **La Bayadère Divertissement**. A lissome dancer with a gentle sophistication upon the stage, Julia performed pirouettes with aplomb as *Doll* in Seiskaya's **Nutcracker 2018**, while also lending her talents to the roles of *Snow Queen*, *Bo Peep*, *Flower Soloist* and *Chinese*. Of Julia's BESFI 2018 performance of *Les Sylphides Pas de Deux* with guest artist Nicholas Sipes, the *Smithtown Messenger's* Christina Pandolfi noted that, "Virnelli's sweetness and supple movement quality were a delight to behold, and the two made a handsome pair." A BESFI scholarship recipient in 2018, Julia has also attended summer intensive programs with the Gelsey Kirkland Academy and the Bolshoi Ballet Academy. Inspired by the dedication, sacrifice, and passion that ballet requires, Julia hopes to continue studying dance in college. A young woman with many interests Julia also writes for her school newspaper and works to inspire young people to become politically active.



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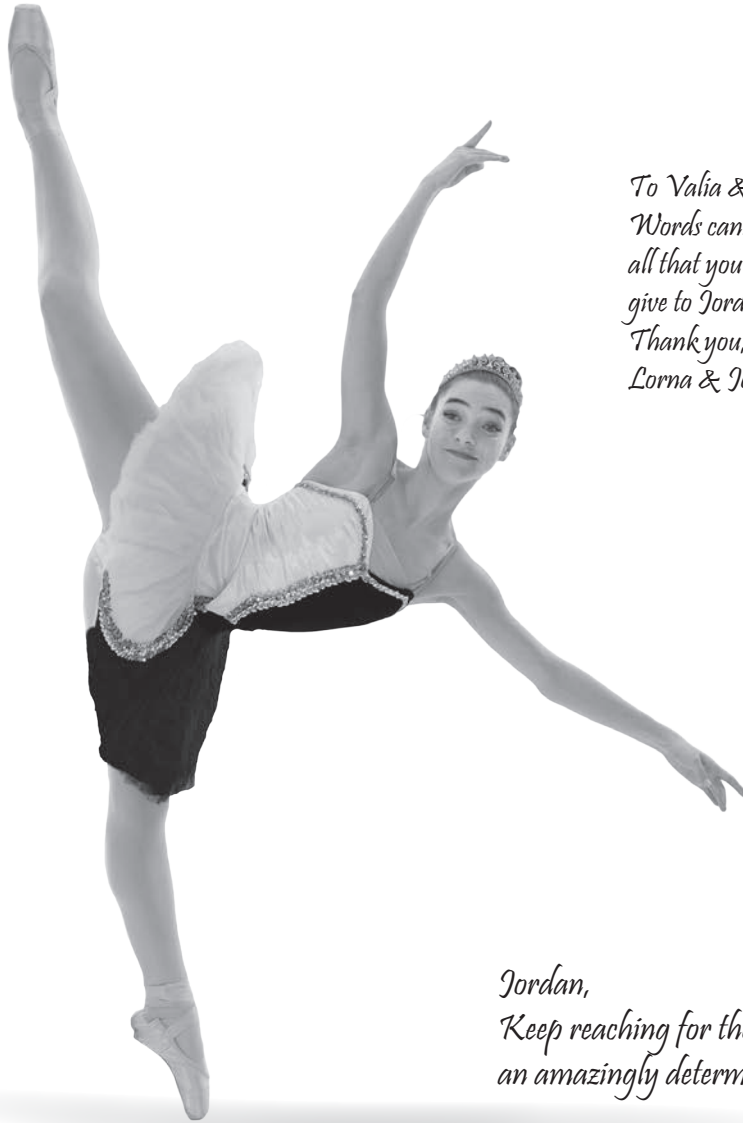
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– Oprah Winfrey



*To Valia & Dimitri,  
Words cannot express our gratitude for  
all that you have given and continue to  
give to Jordan.  
Thank you,  
Lorna & John*

*Jordan,  
Keep reaching for those stars! You are  
an amazingly determined young lady.*

*Love,  
Mom & Dad*

## First Soloist



**JORDAN LYNN JARAMILLO – Age 15**  
**Rocky Point High School**  
**Tenth Grade**

Jordan will delight you this evening as she takes to the stage with guest artist Daniel Wagner to perform the *Giselle Peasant Pas de Deux*. She will also be featured in *Pas de Quatre* and *Temple Dance* in this BESFI season's production of **La Bayadère**. With her long lines and charming stage presence, Jordan dazzled as *Snow Queen* in Seiskaya's **Nutcracker 2018**, while also demonstrating her strength and versatility as a dancer in the roles of *Doll*, *Chinese*, *Arabian Soloist*, *Snowflake*, *Friend of Clara*, *Fritz*, *Flower Soloist*, and *Trepak*. In last year's BESFI performance, Jordan showcased her technical precision in Vaso Kikna's staging of **Don Quixote Divertissement**, in the roles of *Bridesmaid* and *Seguidilla*, as well as performing in the enchanting *Don Quixote Pas de Trois*. Jordan is a BESFI scholarship recipient and veteran of the BESFI Summer Intensive Program. As dedicated in the academic classroom as she is in the ballet studio, Jordan is also a high honor roll student with aspirations toward a career in surgery. In her free time, she enjoys playing cello and piano, as well as snowboarding, horseback riding, and spending time with her friends from Seiskaya Ballet.

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*Dear Rachel,*

*We are so proud of you and all that you have accomplished this year. You have become such a beautiful ballerina, and your talent never fails to blow us away. Congratulations on your BESFI performance, and keep following your dreams.*

*All our love,  
Mom, Dad and Ashley*

## First Soloist



**RACHEL BLAND – Age 14**  
**St. John the Baptist High School**  
**Ninth Grade**

This weekend Rachel will dazzle the audience with her high extensions and graceful lines as she dances in *Jump Dance*, *Temple Girls*, *Pas de Trois III* and *Parrot Dance* in the 2019 BESFI production of **La Bayadère Divertissement**. This first place contemporary ballet solo winner's graceful lines and high extensions will delight the audience in tonight's contemporary piece, *Altalena*. Rachel gave a dazzling performance with her high jumps and graceful sophistication as *Snow Queen* in Seiskaya's **Nutcracker 2018**, in addition to her solo roles as *Doll* and *Chocolate Soldier*. Rachel complemented these roles with a charming display of versatility as *Friend of Clara*, *Chinese*, *Flower Soloist* and *Arabian Soloist*. Rachel enjoys drawing, boating, and traveling and she plans on attending BESFI's 2019 Summer Intensive. In the future, Rachel hopes to pursue a career as a professional dancer in a contemporary ballet company and also hopes to work as a Fashion Designer. She says, "Ballet is the foundation for all dance styles, and it will always be an important part of my training to become a Contemporary Ballet Dancer."





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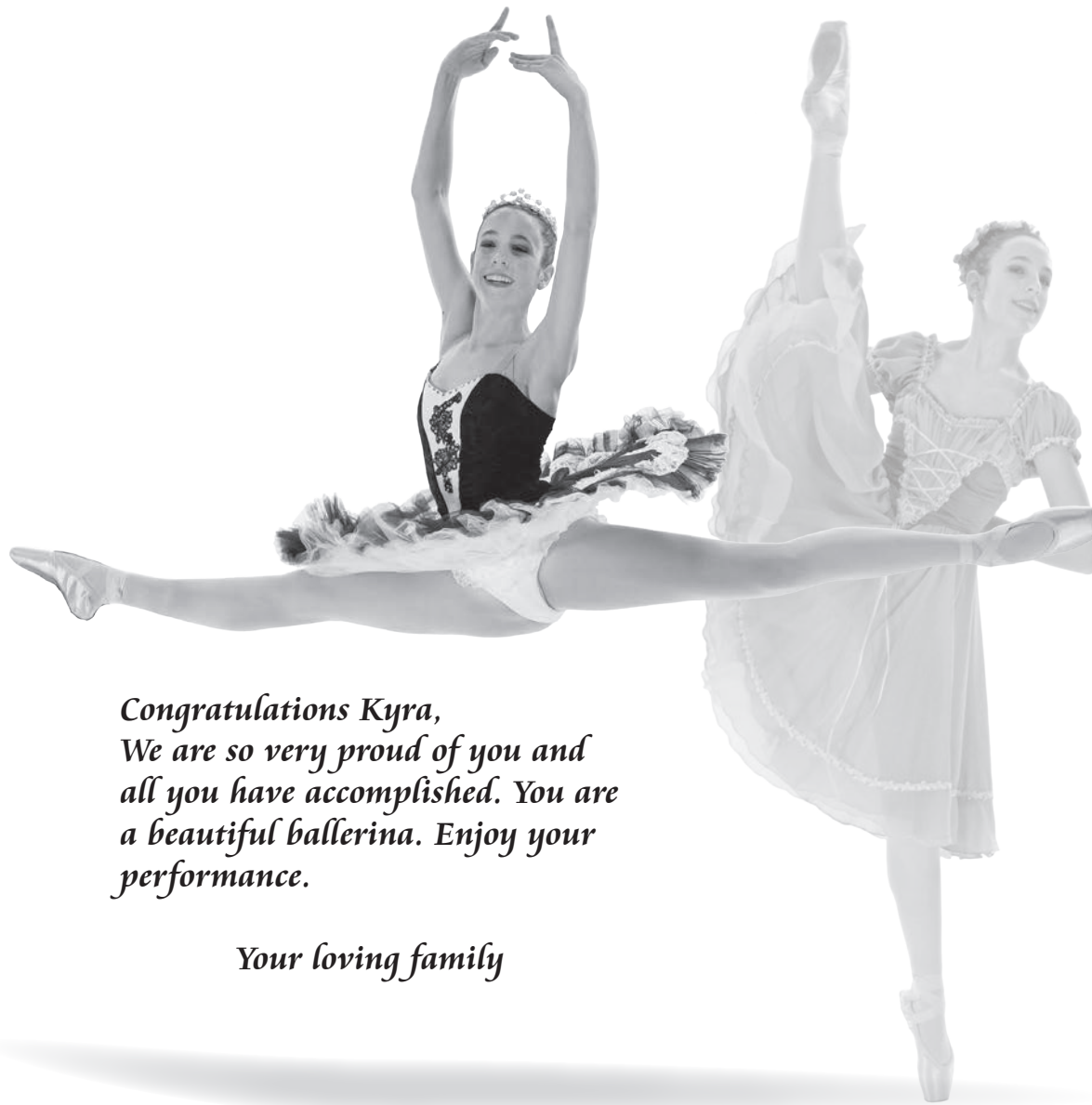
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*“We should consider every day lost on which  
we have not danced at least once.”  
–Friedrich Nietzsche*



*Congratulations Kyra,  
We are so very proud of you and  
all you have accomplished. You are  
a beautiful ballerina. Enjoy your  
performance.*

*Your loving family*

## Featured Soloist



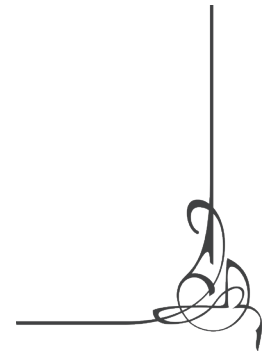
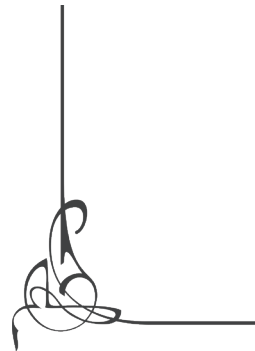
**KYRA LYN ALLGAIER – Age 13**  
**John F. Kennedy Middle School**  
**Eighth Grade**

Noted for her lithe extensions and explosive jumps, Kyra will dance in tonight's *Pas de Trois II* in Vaso Kikna's staging of *La Bayadère* and will dazzle the audience with her seamless versatility in the contemporary piece *Altalena, Temple Girls, Parrot Dance* and *Jump Dance*. This young dancer's concentration and masterful technique were evident in her **Nutcracker 2018** roles of *Friend of Clara, Snow, Flowers, Arabian, and Trepak*. In BESFI 2018, Kyra lit up the stage with her spirited interpretation of *Queen of Dryads Pas de Trois* and *Seguidilla* in Seiskaya's rendition of **Don Quixote Divertissement**. Her determination has garnered her the 2018 BESFI Scholarship, as well as places in the ABT and BESFI Summer Intensives. A precocious student, Kyra is a member of the National Junior Honor Society, as well as a recipient of the Presidential Award. Kyra hopes to follow her true passion and continue her pursuit in dance. Outside of the ballet studio, Kyra enjoys playing violin in her school's chamber orchestra, basketball, bike riding and snowboarding.



*All the ills of mankind, all the tragic misfortunes that fill the history books,  
all the political blunders, all the failures of the great leaders have arisen  
merely from a lack of skill in dancing.*

*—Molière. "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme"*





*It may be possible to do without dancing entirely. Instances have been known of young people passing many, many months successively, without being at any ball of any description and no material injury accrue to either body or mind; - but when a beginning is made - when the felicitates of rapid motion have once been, though slightly, felt - it must be a very heavy set that does not ask for more.*

Jane Austen "Emma"



## Featured Soloist



**MAYA MARIA BUTKEVICH – Age 13**  
**The Stony Brook School**  
**Eighth Grade**

Maya will surely sparkle this evening in Vaso Kikna's staging of **La Bayadère Divertissement** as she performs in *Jump Dance*, *Temple Girls*, *Pas de Trois II* and *Parrot Dance*. With her effervescent stage presence, Maya won the hearts of audiences in **Nutcracker 2018** as the mischievous *Fritz*. She also danced the roles of *Flower Soloist*, *Snowflake* and *Friend of Clara*. Performing in the *Queen of Dryads Variation* and as a corp dancer in BESFI 2018's production of **Don Quixote Divertissement**, Maya showcased her elegant extensions and her ability to navigate complex footwork with ease. Known for her focus and dedication in the studio, she is a veteran of the BESFI Summer Intensive, and in 2018, she received a scholarship to the Bolshoi Ballet Academy Summer Intensive. Maya's experience overcoming injury this year has not only made her a stronger dancer but has also sparked her interest in the profession of physical therapy. A member of The Stony Brook School Chorus, Maya loves to sing and has received a perfect score in NYSSMA for her efforts. She also enjoys performing in Russian theatre productions through SchoolNova.



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*Dear Liv,  
Congratulations on another  
wonderful year of dance.*

*Your loving family  
and Paris*

## Featured Soloist



**LIV AMANDA HOGLO – Age 17  
Ward Melville High School  
Twelfth Grade**

Armed with an elegant stage presence and impeccable musicality, Liv will captivate the audience in the contemporary piece, *Altalena*, as well as *Jump Dance*, *Temple Dance* and *Parrot Dance* in tonight's BESFI performance of **La Bayadère Divertissement**. In Seiskaya's **2018 Nutcracker**, Liv demonstrated her effortlessly dramatic jumps as a feisty *Fritz*, playful *Friend of Clara*, demure *Bo Peep*, rhythmic *Arabian*, and in the ensembles of *Snow* and *Flowers*. This young dancer is also remembered for her intricate technique and charm in her BESFI 2018 performance of *Seguidilla* and *Fandango* in the production of **Don Quixote Divertissement**. Over the years, Liv has attended both the BESFI Summer Program, and Joffrey Ballet NYC. A well rounded student, Liv is a member of the National Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society and Tri-M Music Honor Society. She plays first chair cello with her high school's symphony orchestra and volunteers to tutor young music students through a Tri-M program. She will be attending Stony Brook University in the fall.





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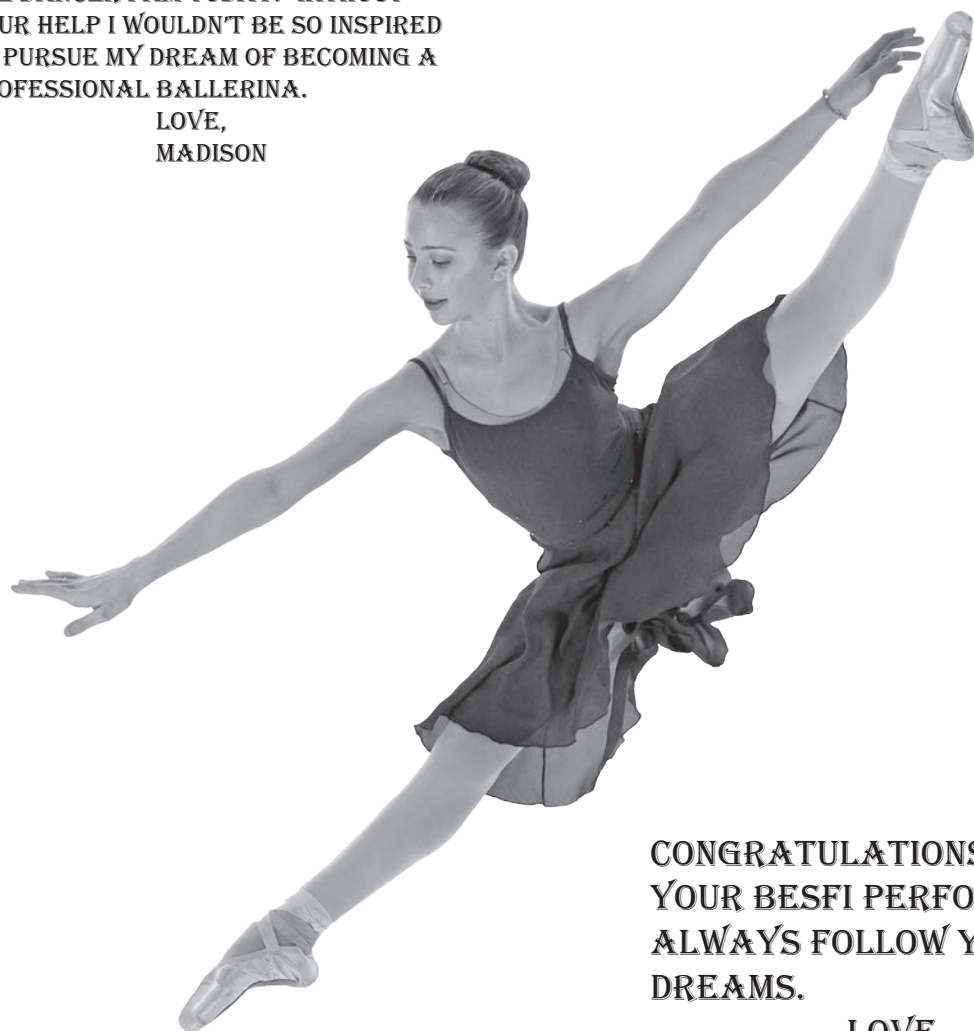
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VALIA, JOHANNA, DIMITRI,  
THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME TO BECOME  
THE DANCER I AM TODAY. WITHOUT  
YOUR HELP I WOULDN'T BE SO INSPIRED  
TO PURSUE MY DREAM OF BECOMING A  
PROFESSIONAL BALLERINA.

LOVE,  
MADISON



CONGRATULATIONS ON  
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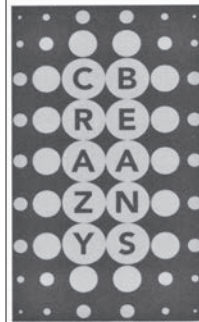
LOVE,  
MOM AND DAD

## Featured Soloist



**MADISON HOLLY VALENTA – Age 14**  
**Port Jefferson High School**  
**Ninth Grade**

With jubilant stage presence and playful musicality, Madison is not to be missed in this evening's performance of *Jump Dance*, *Temple Girls* and *Pas de Trois II* in Vaso Kikna's staging of **La Bayadère!** Lauded for her performance as the precocious, feisty *Fritz* in Seiskaya's **Nutcracker 2018**, Madison also demonstrated her range as a dancer in the roles of *Snowflake*, *Flower Soloist*, *Friend of Clara*, and *Arabian*. Known for her graceful balancés and precise pirouettes, she gave a sparkling performance in the *Don Quixote Pas de Trois* in BESFI 2018. A BESFI scholarship recipient in 2017, Madison went on to win first place in the junior division of the BESFI 2018 Scholarship Competition. She has also garnered acceptance and participated in the summer program with American Ballet Theatre, and dreams of one day becoming a professional dancer with ABT. A passionate student of the arts and quite creative, Madison plays the violin and is interested in design, particularly with regard to designing her own line of ballet leotards. In her free time, Madison enjoys visiting New York City, spending time with friends, reading, journaling, and catching up on her favorite films on Netflix.



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– Johnny Depp

We are so proud of you Drew!  
Love,  
Mom and Dad

## Soloist



**DREW SKYLAR BARANOWSKI – Age 13**  
**P. J. Gelinas Junior High School**  
**Eighth Grade**

Tonight, Drew's artistry, dedication and passion will be on display as she dances in the *Fan Dance* ensemble and the *Manu Dance* as *The Water Girl Soloist* in **La Bayadère**. In BESFI 2018, her elegant lines wowed the audience with her performance of *Toreador* and *Kati Neo*. With strength and agility Drew danced the diverse roles of *Friend of Fritz*, *Mouse Soloist*, *Snowflake*, *Trepak*, *Flowers* and *Arabian* in Seiskaya's **2018 Nutcracker**. A veteran of the BESFI Summer Intensive, Drew has attended the Bolshoi Ballet Summer Intensive for three years where she is recognized as an Ambassador. This National Honor Society student has a deep love for the French language and ballet. She plans to use this passion to move to Paris so that she can teach French students English and ballet. In her free time, Drew enjoys studying, playing the flute, and traveling. This summer she plans to attend the 2019 BESFI Summer Intensive.



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**VALIA AND THE ENTIRE BESFI CAST**



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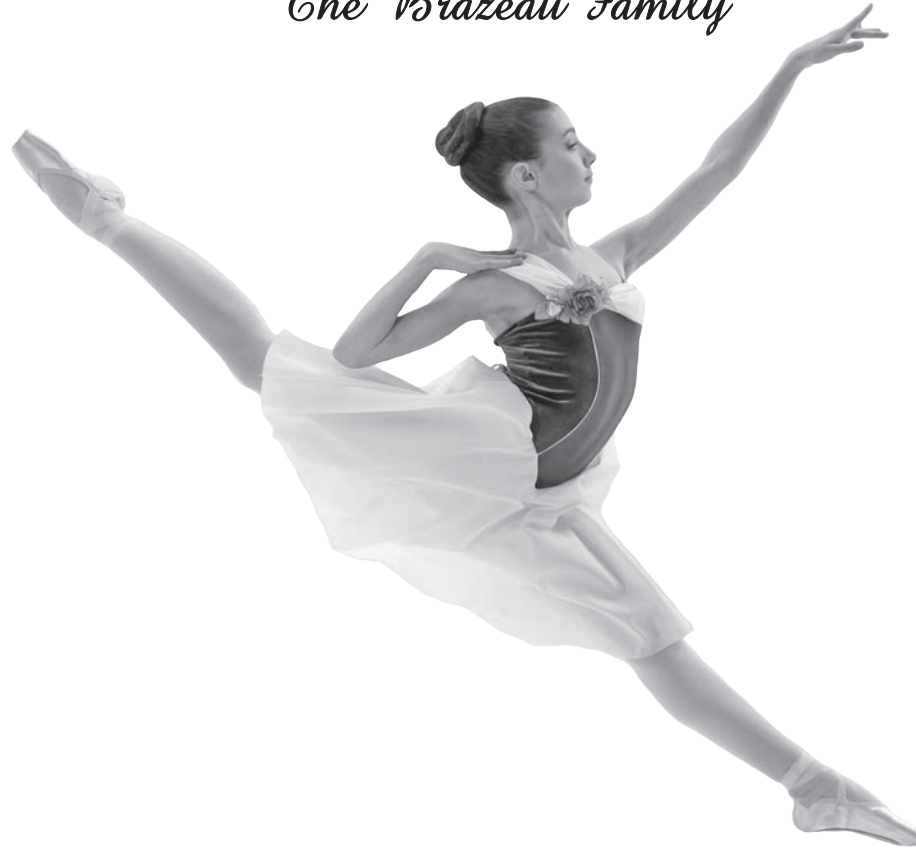
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*We wish all the BESFI dancers  
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## Soloist



**FERN LINA BRAZEAU – Age 13**  
**Henry L. Stimson Middle School**  
**Eighth Grade**

New to the Seiskaya family this year, effervescent Fern makes her BESFI debut this weekend. With a tenacity that belies her very pleasant demeanor, Fern's been hard at work in the studio preparing for her performances. First she will mesmerize the audience with her fluid port de bras and long lines in the riveting contemporary dance, *Altalena*. With grace and musicality, she will later take the stage in *Jump Dance*, *Pas de Trois II* and *Parrot Dance*. Fern's youthful enthusiasm was apparent as she took to the Staller Stage in 2018 for her first **Seiskaya Nutcracker** performance. She captured the audience in her performances as a mischievous *Mouse*, in the *Snow* and *Flowers* corps and in the rhythmically challenging *Trepak*. Her extensive summer ballet studies have included NYSSSA Ballet, ABT Alabama, SAB Young Dancers Series and the French Academy of Ballet. A diligent student in and out of the studio, Fern dreams of inspiring others by becoming a professional dancer.





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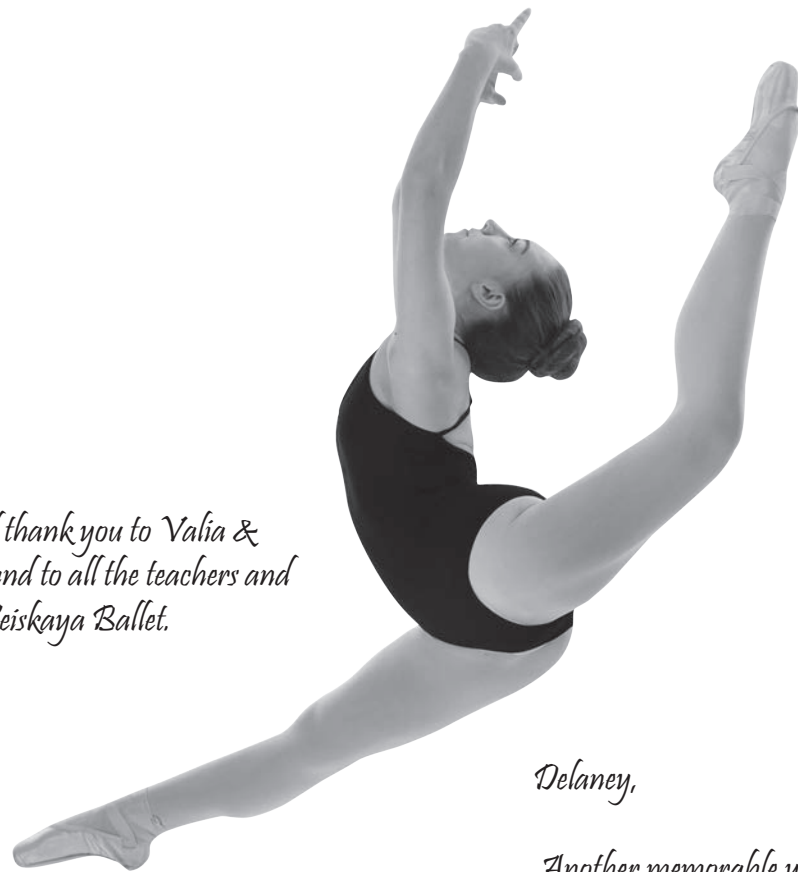
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*"Dance enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time."*



*A special thank you to Valia & Dimitri and to all the teachers and staff at Seiskaya Ballet.*

*Delaney,*

*Another memorable year at Seiskaya Ballet! You've exceeded all our expectations both in school and outside of school. We look forward to watching you perform at Seiskaya Ballet's BESFI 2019 performance of *La Bayadère*. You continue to amaze us! We love you so very much!*

*Love,*

*Mom, Dad, Rob, Daryn and Darby*

## Soloist



**DELANEY ANN KENT – Age 14**  
**P. J. Gelinas Junior High School**  
**Eighth Grade**

Look for Delaney tonight in her delightful performances of *Fan Dance* and the *Manu Dance* ensemble in *La Bayadère*, as well as the contemporary piece, *Altalena*. Her fluid lines, versatility and flawless footwork captivated the audience in her roles of *Snowflake*, *Flowers*, *Arabian*, *Trepak* and *Mouse* in Seiskaya's **2018 Nutcracker**. In BESFI 2018's rendition of **Don Quixote Divertissement**, Delaney's command of the stage was evident as she danced in the *Kati Neo* ensemble and in *Toreador*. Known for her development in sophistication and grace, Delaney will continue to perfect her skills in this year's BESFI Summer Intensive. She is an active member of her school's National Junior Honor Society, as well as a recipient of the prestigious Presidential Physical Fitness award. Outside of the studio, Delaney spends her free time practicing the flute, and delving into fine arts drawing.



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Congratulations to Skylar Neuf and  
all the Seiskaya Ballet dancers on  
your 2019 BESFI performance!



## Soloist



**SKYLAR JADE NEUF – Age 13**  
**Northport Middle School**  
**Seventh Grade**

New to Seiskaya Ballet, this up and coming dancer will be making her BESFI debut in tonight's performance of *La Bayadère's Jump Dance, Parrot Dance*, as well as the contemporary piece, *Altalena*. In Seiskaya's **Nutcracker 2018**, Skylar gave a stunning performance as *Arabian* and *Flowers*. In addition to her natural poise, Skylar's strengths as a dancer can be found in her arabesques, high jumps and beautiful extensions. She has an extensive dance resume, including BESFI's Summer Intensive, The American Ballet Theater Summer Intensive Alabama, Manhattan Youth Ballet and The American Ballet Theater Young Dancer Program. Along with her passion for dance, she also enjoys singing, acting and performing in musical theater productions. Skylar wants to pursue her love of dance and become a professional dancer or choreographer. She says "ballet is what inspires me everyday and truly makes me happy."



Congratulations to the entire BESFI cast!



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## Soloist



**ALANA CELESTE SAMARA – Age 12**  
**Port Jefferson Middle School**  
**Seventh Grade**

A dancer full of promise, Alana will brighten the stage with her signature grace and poise in tonight's *Manu Dance* and *Fan Dance*, as well as the contemporary piece *Altalena*. Alana demonstrated her effortless turns and extensions in the roles of *Flower*, *Sheep*, *Soldier*, and *Child at Party* in **Nutcracker 2018**. Her special aptitude and musical timing were on display in the *Kati Neo* ensemble, and in *Toreador* during BESFI 2018's showcase of **Don Quixote**. Alana has garnered acceptances to ABT's Young Dancer Summer Workshop, as well as BESFI's Summer Intensive; placing 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 2017 BESFI scholarship competition. Accompanying Alana's line of ballet recognition are her musical achievements, which include perfect scores in NYSSMA for her violin solos. In her free time, she enjoys animating and participating in her school's Science Olympiad tournaments. She hopes to continue her pursuit in the field of astronomy well into her college years and beyond.





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*I may not be there yet, but I am closer than I was yesterday.*



*Thank you to all the Seiskaya  
staff and faculty for helping  
me achieve my goals and make  
me become what I am today.  
Thank you for teaching me the  
art of classical ballet.*

*—Vivian*

## Soloist



**VIVIAN ZIJIA YE – Age 12**  
**P. J. Gelinas Junior High School**  
**Seventh Grade**

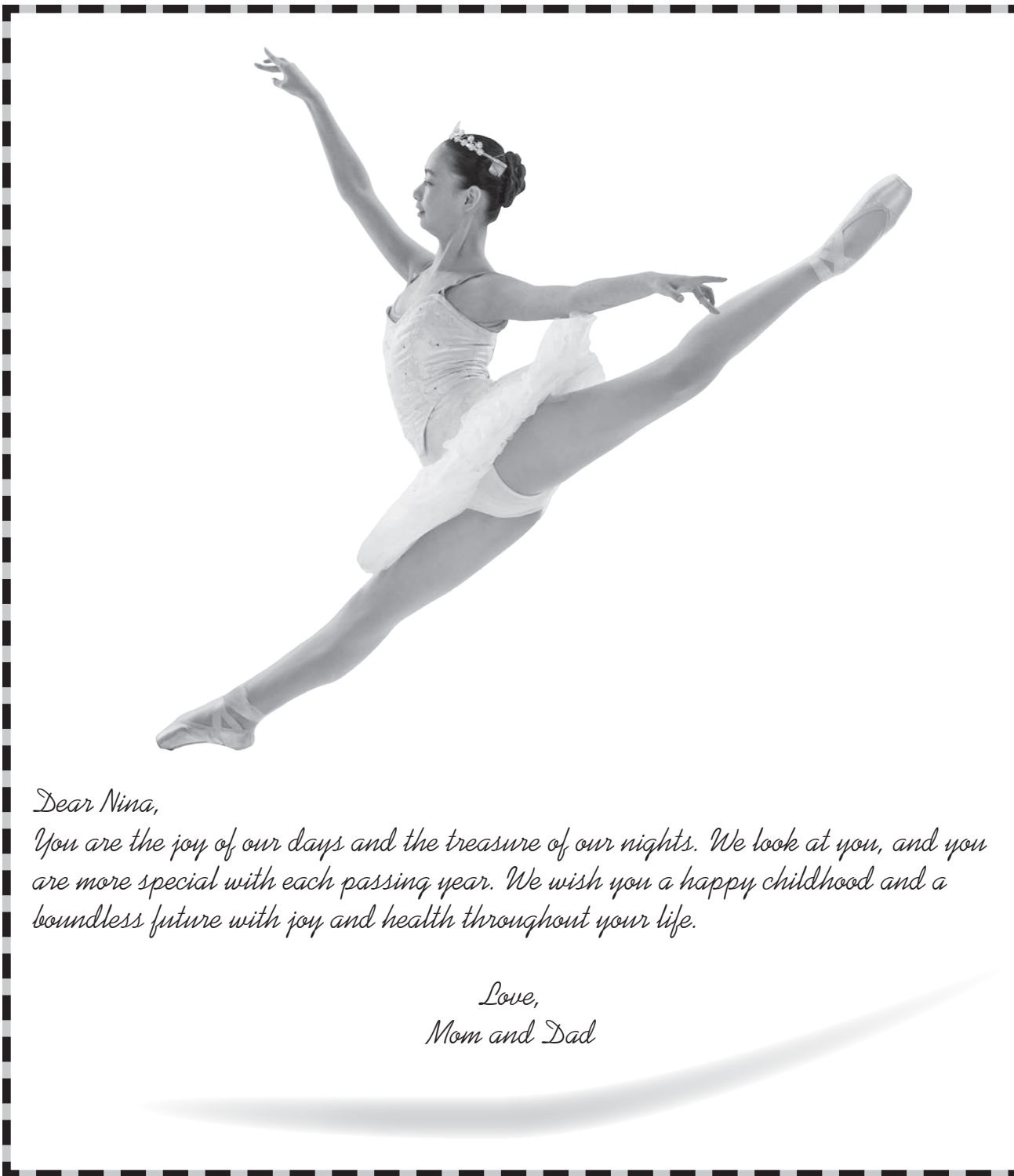
Focus and an exemplary work ethic have propelled Vivian to the top echelon of her Academy class. Her deft ability to effortlessly segue from classical to contemporary to character was showcased in **Nutcracker 2018** and will be on display in BESFI 2019. As a first time *Friend of Clara*, she rose to the challenge of performing this very demanding role and doubling back for a quick change to *Snow* ensemble at the conclusion of Act I. Both roles require tremendous stamina because the dancer is en pointe, for what is tantamount to, the whole first act. Her execution was flawless – she “nailed it!” This evening Vivian will bring her range to bear as she performs in the *Fan Dance* and then, *Manu Dance* in the production of **La Bayadère Divertissement**. The exhilarating contemporary dance, *Altalena*, will test her physical limits and expand her movement vocabulary. Vivian plans to attend the 2019 BESFI Summer Intensive.



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*Dear Nina,*

*You are the joy of our days and the treasure of our nights. We look at you, and you are more special with each passing year. We wish you a happy childhood and a boundless future with joy and health throughout your life.*

*Love,  
Mom and Dad*

## Soloist



**NINA LEMONG ZHANG – Age 12**  
**P. J. Gelinas Junior High School**  
**Seventh Grade**

The embodiment of a classical ballerina, with long flowing lines, effortless turns and astounding flexibility, Nina will be one to watch this BESFI season. Her technical strength and playful stage presence brought joy to the audience in her performances as *Friend of Fritz*, as a member of the trio *Trepak*, and as a mischievous *Mouse* in Seiskaya's **2018 Nutcracker**. She further delighted the holiday audiences with her graceful turns and soaring jumps in *Flower* and *Snow*. This BESFI Nina will be center stage in the contemporary dance, *Altalena*, and in *Jump Dance*, *Fan Dance* and *Parrot Dance* in **La Bayadère**. Dedicated to her craft, Nina has garnered acceptances from the Bolshoi Ballet Academy's Summer Intensive in 2018 and BESFI Summer Intensives in 2017 and 2018. Nina looks to further develop her ballet technique this summer at this year's BESFI Summer Intensive. A diligent student, she aspires to pursue a career as a doctor or engineer.

## Behind the Scenes

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S. DiFiore, K. Kralik

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D. Lettiere, A. Savino

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E. Pyrras

Rehearsal Assistants: L. Caraianni, N. DiFiore,  
M. Immerman, J. Lee, J. Virnelli

Office Manager: K. Engel

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