

NEW FACULTY AT AMHERST BALLET

David Murray

“We learn more about math and physics in dance class than they teach us in school.” Sueann Townsend, the new Upper School Ballet Senior Instructor reports this as the reaction of one of her students to her bringing in to her ballet teaching one of the passions that occupy some of her free time: she reads physics and math books for fun. One of her former colleagues described this as “scary.”

Sueann is anything but scary. She’s warm and animated, and her face lights up even further when she talks about her favorite parts in the teaching process: “I like to analyze what’s going on, and find creative solutions to fix it. But my most favorite part is that “aha” moment, when the student figures it out for themselves, and I get to watch the light bulb go on.”

She hails originally from Illinois, where she began in ballet as a child, and went on to win a scholarship as a dance major to Interlochen. From there she has danced her way through Louisville, New York, and Las Vegas (including a detour to Berlin). After spending the last ten years in Las Vegas, she decided she wanted to move back to the East Coast. She submitted her resume several places, including a blind submission to Amherst Ballet based on an ad in Dance Magazine.

That turned out to be a lucky move for all involved. She started to fall in love with Amherst Ballet from the first phone interview with Catherine, which quickly transitioned from an interview to “two colleagues exchanging tricks of the trade.” It continued with a fantastic interview with the board, whom she was quite impressed by, and completed when she taught her practice classes and found the students well prepared and delightful.

When asked what special contribution she brings to Amherst Ballet, Sueann said, “My

extensive performing experience is a perfect compliment to Catherine’s extensive teaching skills. In addition to my lead roles, during my career I’ve been everyone’s understudy. I’ve got an excellent memory, so all that classical repertoire is locked in there [and available for transmission to the students].”

Sueann is trained in and teaches from the Vaganova syllabus, which she says many people think is a rigid method. That, she says, is a

“We learn more about math and physics in dance class than they teach us in school.”

misconception that probably arises from Vaganova ballet masters selecting for a particular body type from the start. In fact, the method’s thrust is to adapt to the body type of the individual dancer.

“The shape of the arabesque, for example, is not a box into which we force the dancer. It is, rather, a goal, and we search out and find the best way for an individual dancer to achieve that goal.” Vaganova saved Sueann from physical problems she had as a dancer early in her career, curing her lower back pain, and making her stronger and more versatile. She believes it will bring similar benefits to Amherst Ballet students.

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on the next page!**

E-News

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From Your Director

All About *Emily of Amherst*

Catherine Fair

This spring it will have been four years since our last big project and at Amherst Ballet we are not known for resting on our laurels! Creative juices are flowing, ambitions are great, and many people are hard at work on what may be our most exciting, and most complex ballet to date! *Emily of Amherst*, an original four act ballet about the life and work of Amherst's own Emily Dickinson, is scheduled to premiere at the Kirby Theater on the campus of Amherst College on May 15, 16 and 17, 2009.

The ballet will follow Emily Dickinson from her early years as a student at Amherst Academy through young adulthood and years as a working poet, and will close with a grand finale that demonstrates the impact that Dickinson has had upon people around the world. The ballet will depict Emily and her friends, family and community in a series of life events that had significant influence upon the poet's development. With narration taken from Emily's letters and poems woven into an original musical score, the ballet will create a new and renewed interest in her work by demystifying the poet and familiarizing audiences with her daily life in Amherst. Original sets depicting the Homestead (Emily's famous home) and Amherst Academy (which was located where the Amherst Cinema parking lot now sits) will give audiences a peek at the community as it was during Emily's time. It is exciting to bring this project to the stage as part of the town of Amherst's celebration of its 250th anniversary!

Plans for the ballet have been developed over the past three years by me and the director of The Emily Dickinson Museum, Jane Wald. Scholarly research on Emily has been directed by Jane and she has patiently guided my "Emily education" providing me with a great deal of material including biographies about the poet, copies of her letters and poems and books filled with photographs of 19th century Amherst, Emily and her many colleagues, friends and family. I have been overwhelmed and inspired by the wealth of material and find that there is much more to say than we could possibly incorporate into a ballet, even if

Scholarships at Amherst Ballet

Amherst Ballet knows that paying for dance lessons can be difficult for some. Amherst Ballet provides financial aid to several of its families; last year AB provided financial assistance which reduced families' tuition by about \$4700 and this year about \$6700 in financial assistance was awarded. One of the ways financial aid is awarded is through our Young Dancer Scholarship Fund.

The Young Dancer Scholarship Fund was established in 2001 by an Amherst Ballet Upper School dancer on the occasion of her Bat Mitzvah. In appreciation for the many years of joy she had attained from classes and performances, this dancer decided to donate a portion of her Bat Mitzvah gift money to enable other aspiring young dancers in our community to have the same opportunity. Since that time Amherst Ballet has received additional donations allocated for the Young Dancer Scholarship Fund, including a generous donation by another Upper School student upon celebrating her Bat Mitzvah!

The intent of this scholarship fund is to help *everyone have the chance to dance!* Each fall between 2 and 7 scholarships from the Young Dancer Fund are awarded to Lower School students (aged 5 to 11) whose families may not be able to afford full tuition. Last school year 7 dancers in the Lower School were awarded \$750 in Young Dancer Scholarships and this school year 4 dancers were awarded \$750 in Young Dancer Scholarships.

Amherst Ballet welcomes donations to the Young Dancer Scholarship Fund in any amount. Please help spread the joy of dance to elementary-aged children in our area by contributing to this scholarship fund.

From Your Director, continues...

we doubled the scope of what is now a decidedly ambitious venture! Jane has met with me multiple times, answered never ending questions and emails, and worked with me to develop an outline for the ballet, using sections of letters and poems as the basis for each scene in the ballet. The result is a true collaboration — which means that I cannot remember which of us had what idea, only that together we have developed what I think will be a fabulous venture!

While describing plans for the ballet to friends and supporters, I have noted more than a bit of skepticism about the ballet. Many people view Emily as a reclusive woman who did little in life but sit in her room and write; they ask how on earth can we make an interesting ballet about her? It is a reasonable question, one that I am quite eager to answer! Perhaps I can best do so by including an excerpt from an Emily letter and a poem, and giving a hint of the fascinating personality that we hope to capture on stage.

I am growing very handsome indeed! I expect I shall be the Belle of Amherst when I reach my seventeenth year. I don't doubt that I shall have perfect crowds of admirers at that age. Then how I shall delight to make them await my bidding, and with what delight I shall witness their suspense when I make my final decision. But away with such nonsense. I have written one composition this term, and I need not assure you it was exceedingly edifying to myself as well as everyone else.—**Written by young Emily while a student at Amherst Academy, this letter provides inspiration for a lively dance of school children showing Emily's relationship to her peers.**



Amherst College Archives and Special Collections. Used by permission.

*One Sister have I in our house
And one a hedge away.
There's only one recorded
But both belong to me.*

*One came the road that I came-
and wore my last year's gown-
The other, as a bird her nest,
Builded our hearts among.*

*She did not sing as we did-
It was a different tune-
Herself to her a music
As Bumble bee of June.*

*Today is far from Childhood-
But up and down the hills
I held her hand the tighter-
Which shortened all the miles-*

*And still her hum,
The years among,
Deceives the Butterfly;
Still in her Eye,
The Violets lie,
Mouldered this many May.*

*I spilt the dew-
But took the morn-
I chose a single star,
From out the wide night's numbers-
Sue- forevermore!*

Written by Emily in reference to her dear friend and sister-in-law, Susan Dickinson, this poem provides inspiration for a pas de deux that demonstrates the quality of the relationship between the two and Susan's influence upon Emily's development as a poet.

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Summer Intensives

Karen Schweitzer and Annette Cycon



Kenna Tyrrell ▲

Master Class:

Seth Orza, with the Pacific Northwest Ballet, corrects Maddison Stemple-Piatt, June '08

photos: Catherine Fair



Julia Biederman ▲

Aliya Cycon
photo: Janine Norton

Marissa Ho ▶



Last summer seven Amherst Ballet students challenged themselves by attending summer dance programs outside of Massachusetts. All seven students were accepted into all of the programs for which they auditioned. Aliya Cycon, Ethan Schweitzer-Gaslin and Kenna Tyrrell danced at the Joffrey Ballet School in New York City. Marissa Ho, Sara Moss-Horwitz, Ethan Schweitzer-Gaslin and Kenna Tyrrell danced at the American Academy of Ballet at SUNY-Purchase. Julia Biederman danced at Bates Dance Festival at Bates College in Maine, and Bryar Lofffield danced at the NYC Ballet School at Saratoga. This fall we sat down with these students to ask them to reflect on their experiences.

Unanimously, the students said they came away from the programs with positive experiences. Attending them built their confidence and they all spoke about how it opened their eyes to the quality of the dance training they receive here at Amherst Ballet. As Kenna said, "Because we are held to a high standard at AB, we could fit into the high standards at the other schools."

The audition process itself was a learning experience for these dancers. Though they were nervous and found it intimidating to walk into an unfamiliar studio with a number on your chest, dancing in a room full of other students in front of a teacher you didn't know, each of our dancers was surprisingly upbeat about the experience. Marissa said initially, "It makes you nervous because you want to get in so much," but later added, "You get more comfortable being watched by someone

after doing it a couple of times." Ethan talked about the benefits of the auditions even when you don't know the results right away. He remarked, "It's a good class and it's nice to get to take a class with a director of a [professional] school." While the audition process itself was rewarding, our students were additionally gratified by their acceptance letters.

For these 12 to 15 year-old students, going away from home and their "second home" of Amherst Ballet, was cause for some trepidation. While some of the dancers attended these programs with friends from Amherst Ballet, others had to go it alone. They shared that it was awesome to be there with another from Amherst Ballet because it was "so great to have friends there" and it was a bonding experience. It was a little more nerve wracking to go alone but Julia said, "I sometimes wished that I had a friend with me but it didn't take long to make new friends." Hanging out in the dressing room between classes is a natural place for dancers to make friends no matter where you are from and these teens confirmed that this was true at the summer programs as well. Aliya said, "I had to make an effort but it was worth it. I am still close to my roommate to this day."

Another learning experience for them was dancing with students who possess a wide range of abilities. We asked our dancers how this felt and they made two observations. First they all felt that their training at Amherst Ballet prepared them to dance with other talented dancers from around the country. And secondly, our dancers felt inspired by their fellow talented classmates, rather than daunted. "It pushed me to try harder to be like the other dancers that I looked up to," said Marissa. Aliya said, "I get inspired by people who are better than me." Kenna said, "AB prepared me so that I didn't feel intimidated," and Julia added "It was really inspiring. It was really nice to be around such good dancers." Commenting on the boys' classes Ethan said he "appreciated getting to be in an environment that was geared toward boys, where the primary focus was on boys."

continued on next page

Summer Intensives *continued*



Master Class:

▲ Richard Chen See with the Paul Taylor Company, Nov. '08

Ethan Schweitzer-Gaslin ►
photo: Janine Norton

All of the students loved the opportunity to take Pas de Deux classes that aren't offered here at home.

Our AB dancers also commented on the interactions they had with the teachers in these programs. Aliya said that the teachers there seemed like they would be scary but "they are really kind. If you want a personal relationship with them you can manifest that." In talking about the teaching, they all said that the corrections they got in the summer programs felt familiar and similar to those given at AB. This helped the dancers absorb those corrections and again made them feel good about the quality of training they receive at AB. Sara said, "I felt particularly prepared to give my best work and to really listen to the teachers. Some of the other girls complained a lot about how mean this teacher or that teacher was, even though they were just giving corrections." They also enjoyed the opportunity to work with a variety of professional dancers as their teachers. Julia commented that the teachers at Bates danced professionally themselves and it was amazing to be taught by them. The others all agreed.

We asked our dancers to compare their time studying away to the time spent at this summer's teen intensive at AB with

guest teachers Malcolm Burns and Jasmine Grace, both of the Richmond Ballet. They commented that the teaching in our teen intensive was comparable to the training they received at the other programs they had attended and that they loved the ability to develop a relationship with such fabulous and reputable teachers through Amherst Ballet. Director Catherine Fair believes that one of the benefits of our summer teen intensive is the chance to broaden our students' dance horizons here at home. Kenna said that it was, "great to experience other teachers in our homey environment." All of them enthusiastically spoke of the opportunity to work with teachers from a professional company while here at Amherst Ballet and especially to dance with a male teacher. Comparing the two programs, Sara said, "As much as I learned in New York, I think I got even better at the Amherst Ballet summer program because obviously the teachers paid more attention to me and gave me more corrections." Director Catherine Fair reported, "I was very proud of our students because the guest teachers really enjoyed working with them. Jasmine and Malcolm were impressed with their training, positive attitudes, and commented several times how pleased they were with the amount they were able to accomplish in one short week. Malcolm and Jasmine taught professional variations from *Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake* and our students worked hard to master the technique and presentation needed."

The conversation with our students made us feel very proud of them for taking the leap into the bigger world of dance and proud of Amherst Ballet for preparing our students to participate well in that world. We are also pleased that Catherine Fair is committed to providing equally challenging opportunities with world-class teachers here at home.



Sara Moss-Horwitz ▲

From Your Director *continued from page 3*

While *Emily of Amherst* is not a traditional story ballet because it is not based on a series of fictional events, it will tell a story: that of the poet's life. As the creators of the ballet, we saw many opportunities to shape *Emily of Amherst* into a story format, bringing to the stage many of the elements that make story ballets so engaging, moving and entertaining. With a series of scenes that range from dramatic and intense to light-hearted and filled with gaiety, the ballet promises to deliver an evening that is inspirational, educational and enjoyable. Truly Emily's life was filled with interesting events and people that provide

fodder for a great ballet: a cast of well-developed characters, lively variations depicting a series of themes and people prominent in the poet's life, large group dances depicting parties and social scenes, evocative pas de deux and solo variations and endearing dances for children.

The choreography for the ballet is being created by me and former Amherst Ballet faculty member Sam Kenney (choreographer for Amherst Ballet's version of *Shim Chung*, 2005) with Sueann Townsend, our new faculty member, serving as rehearsal

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Fall 2008 Tuition Raffle Winners

Tuition raffle winners were selected at June's Annual Meeting attended by dancers and their parents. Tuition Raffle tickets were sent in from far and wide throughout the country by friends and family of our dancers. This year's recipients are Gabrielle Engel (\$250), Jessamy Karras (\$500) and Maddison Stemple-Piatt (\$250).

Fourteen year old Gabrielle Engel has been dancing for six years and started dancing at Amherst Ballet in 2002. She loved dancing in last year's *Dance Diversity* excerpts from *Sleeping Beauty* because she loves Tchaikovsky's music. She has danced to more Tchaikovsky as an angel and a rat in *The Nutcracker* and as a village child in *Swan Lake*. She was also cast as a village child in *Dances from the Earth, The Arctic*. Gabrielle says that dancing ballet gives her discipline and an understanding about the human body and how it works. She sees modern dance as a way to become relaxed and almost as a form of meditation. She says that "dancing at Amherst Ballet teaches me to learn to be responsible for my own space and how to treat and respect my classmates and teachers. Being part of a community of dancers helps prepare me for when I am ready to be on my own."

Jessamy Karras, 13, has followed big sister Lia's footsteps into the Upper School at AB. Jessamy has been dancing since she was three or four years old and started at AB in Level 1 when she was five. She loves *The Nutcracker* in which she's danced as a

snowflake and a harlequin. Jessamy has also danced as a village child in *Swan Lake* and in *Dances from the Earth, The Arctic* and in the corps in last year's *Sleeping Beauty* and 2007's *Hungarian Festival of Dance*. Jessamy says she loves "to dance because most of the time when I dance I forget about everything else and be completely in the moment." At AB Jessamy "get[s] good friends to dance with and teachers who will help me learn more and help me become the best dancer I can be."

Maddison Stemple-Piatt, 13, began dancing when she was in second grade and has danced at several schools throughout the Valley. She was invited to audition for a role in *Ballet Stories* when she was 8 even though she wasn't yet a student at AB. She joined her mother Heidi Stemple and grandmother Jane Yolen on the stage when she was cast as a very memorable squid in *Shim Chung*. Maddison has been dancing at AB ever since. Other roles she's danced at AB include *Dances from the Earth, The Arctic* as a village child and a snow goose; being a member of the corps in last year's *Sleeping Beauty* and 2007's *Hungarian Festival of Dance* and really shaking things up in last year's Latin-inspired *Che Che Colé*. Mom Heidi says that Maddison "dances every minute of every day...and even though I have offered to send her to a closer dance school, she has said, 'but that other school won't be home. I won't love dancing there.' So, we drive the 40 minutes from school to AB."

Where are they now?

News of former AB students & faculty

Julia Griffin graduated summa cum laude from Connecticut College. Julia came back to AB to help hoist the flying fishes in *Shim Chung* as part of Amherst Ballet's *Ballet Stories* in May 2005... **Ella Stocker** is back in the Amherst area after graduating from Bard College with a B.A. in dance and historical studies (her senior history thesis was on Martha Graham's American Dances). Ella sent us email saying that while at Bard she "fell head over heels in love with dance all over again." From her email sent in June: "This spring I suffered a dancer's worst nightmare: an entirely unavoidable serious injury while dancing on stage in performance...I fractured my fifth metatarsal and seriously sprained my ankle...I finished the dance piece (adrenaline is a powerful chemical!) and

then was carried offstage by a fellow dancer." Her senior dance thesis involved a lot of collaboration with other dancers because of her injuries. "The result was a 13 minute work for 10 dancers called *Reasonable Certainties* that elicited gasps from the audience (the ultimate praise), made several people cry (in a good way, I think) and received a standing ovation...I was also the recipient of the Ana Itelman Prize for Choreography." Whew!...**Sam Kenney**, assistant professor of dance at SUNY-Fredonia and former teacher at AB was



back this summer teaching at the Teen Intensive Workshop. She is one of the choreographers of the upcoming *Emily of Amherst* ballet based on the poems and life of Emily Dickinson that you'll read about in greater detail in other parts of this newsletter... Former board of director members **Judith Cary-Glover** (a member in the 1980s) and **Nancy Huntley** (a treasurer of the board in the early 2000s) contacted AB to generously donate lovely objects (wood carvings and handmade jewelry) that they created for the Silent Auction and Harvest Fete. Many thanks to both of them!

Please let us know where **YOU** are these days and what you're doing. Send your news to info@amherstballet.org or drop us a card at 29 Strong Street. And if you're in the area, please stop in to say hello and see the changes to the building!

Our new "Young Dancer Floor"

Andrea Leibson

Three years ago at the celebration following the triumphant performances of *Ballet Stories*, Al Geller, a doting grandfather of one our dancers, pledged to replace one of the dance floors at Amherst Ballet. Dancers need little equipment beyond leotards, tights and dance shoes; the barres and dance floor are what make a studio. And Amherst Ballet was not equipped with a state-of-the-art sprung dance floor. Al and Norma Geller made good on their pledge and our upstairs studio now proudly sports its "Jillian Diamond" dance floor.

Dancing on the new upstairs studio floor was a joy for our dancers. Dancing on the downstairs studio floor was not. The time had come to assure all of our dancers they could dance on a state-of-the-art dance floor at AB. Even though their dancing granddaughter had long since graduated from Amherst Ballet, the Gellers once again pledged money for installation of a downstairs studio sprung floor.

Through the hard work of parent volunteers, economically priced dance floor materials were found and installed before our classes began this September. In fact the value of the materials research and installation labor equaled the cost of the materials themselves and so we are very grateful to Gloria McPherson for all her research and work in facilitating the selection and ordering of the floor. Many thanks also

to E.S. Fair, Ralph Hill, Michael Lally and Brian Plummer for their carpentry expertise and many hours of hard work spent to install the floor.

Our lean budget did not have money earmarked for this project and so we appealed to a small group of donors to help us raise the remaining funds needed to bring this to fruition. Grandparents of current and former AB dancers answered the call and completed the fundraising for the new sprung dance floor in record time. These grandparents are noted on a plaque commemorating their donations toward our new "Young Dancer Floor". Their contributions to our non-profit organization allow us to offer state-of-the-art dance floors to all our students from toddlers through adults.

Many thanks to:

Ron & Glay Abdow
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▲ In the Time of Knights and Castles, Summer Camp '08



▲ Dream Catchers, Summer Camp '08
photos: Catherine Fair

VOTE!

FSB Grants Program

Florence Savings Bank's annual \$50,000 Customers' Choice Community Grants Program is **now accepting votes** for non-profit organizations. Florence Savings Bank gives awards up to \$5000 and this year they will also be distributing \$500 grants to 6 non-profit organizations randomly selected from the pool of non-profits which receive less than 1% of the vote. ***Voting is limited to Florence Savings Bank customers*** and last year's winners needed only **68 votes to win**. We urge all of you who are FSB customers to cast your vote for Amherst Ballet by completing a ballot sheet (available at FSB branches and at Amherst Ballet) or by visiting their website www.florencesavings.com. There is only one vote per customer and all ballots must be completed and submitted by December 31, 2008. The grant awards will be announced in March.

Please help us win a Florence Savings Bank Customers' Choice Community Grant!

Peter & the Wolf

Andrea Leibson

As Director Catherine Fair reported in her article in the last AB newsletter, she had accepted an invitation for Amherst Ballet to perform *Peter and the Wolf* in March with the Smith College Orchestra narrated by *Sesame Street*'s Bob McGrath. This ballet, for which she created new choreography, proved to be quite popular and was performed in four local schools in April. Because of the wonderful reception it received, the ballet was again toured in October to four more local schools.

One of the most interesting aspect of the tours was the performance of *Peter and the Wolf* at The Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton. Below is a letter from a parent of one of our participating dancers:

The receptionist at the Clarke School has a daughter who is currently a professional dancer with the Columbia City Ballet in Colombia, SC. She knows a lot about ballet as a long time ballet mom, and after the performance yesterday her first comment to me was how wonderful she thought the choreography was. She noticed many of the details of the animal movements, and how accurate they are to nature, and well adapted to the dance. She also complimented the technique and the acting abilities of the dancers. She said she was amazed to see such a high quality production with such young ones. I thought I'd pass this along since it comes from a particularly well-educated source!!!

Thank you for taking the production to Clarke. I've gotten warm thanks from everyone there, and it means a lot for deaf children to have these opportunities. What an amazing world we live in, where deaf students can listen and watch such a production with no special adaptation!



Ethan Schweitzer-Gaslin and Isa Braun in *Peter and the Wolf*

The participants in *Peter and the Wolf* were Isa Braun, Sara Brink, Sophie Brown, Heather Eliot, Julia and Mercedes Fissore-O'Leary, Sahira Kemache, Anna Lally, Anna Plummer, Mark Roblee (parent), Ethan Schweitzer-Gaslin, Dae Tyner, Pixie Vickery, Henry Weis and Maraina Weyl. Special thanks to Ethan Schweitzer-Gaslin who designed and constructed the set and to parents Karen Schweitzer for her costuming work and Geoff Brown for prop construction. Thanks to parents Wendy Plummer, Rebecca Brown and Gloria MacPherson for their help arranging the school tours. And thanks to all the dancers' parents for driving to rehearsals and performances!

New Faculty at AB *continued from page 1*

The Ballet's other new staff member, Shannon Gauthier, was not as fortunate as Sueann in dealing with physical issues arising from dance, and it has had a similarly strong influence on her teaching style. After years of serious dance study, including commuting from Leominster to Boston four days a week

to study at the Boston Ballet, Shannon suffered a major injury that required extensive physical therapy. She had to completely retrain her body. She now informs all of her teaching with the



Simonson technique, which she loves, and which is "focused on injury prevention and working correctly for your personal body."

Shannon is currently teaching a wide variety of classes, including creative movement, ballet, and jazz. "You can see that we have her spread around the school quite a bit," says Catherine Fair.

Also like Sueann, Shannon has an interesting non-dance hobby. In her case it is history, an interest shared by her family. "My family will sit around Thanksgiving dinner and quiz each other with history questions," she says.

The new Amherst Ballet staff members bring to the Ballet rich life experience, a focus on working with each individual dancer's body to maximum effect and safety, a huge amount of dance experience, and above all a love of dance and dancers.

For more information about our new faculty, please visit our website.

director for all of Sam’s work. Amherst composer Ted Trobaugh is creating an original score based upon music from Emily Dickinson’s own portfolio of piano music housed at Harvard. Based upon a vision that Jane and I have developed, sets are being designed and created by Barry Magnani, set designer and builder for Amherst Ballet’s *Barefoot Books Ballet Stories*, *Swan Lake* and *Shim Chung*, 2005. Lighting designer is Gerald Stockman, the designer for *Ballet Stories* and *The Magician’s Nephew*, 2000. Costuming, a gargantuan effort for the more than 75 different roles in the ballet, is being spearheaded by the fabulous sewing volunteers who brought the beautiful costumes for last year’s spring performances to the stage. Based upon my vision for the ballet, Sueann Townsend, who is also a professional ballet costumer, will be working with a team of volunteers led by parents Heidi Stemple and Karen Schweitzer.

In order to reach a larger audience, AB will be participating in outreach efforts that will include school performances, distribution of reading materials and visits to local schools. A shortened daytime performance of *Emily of Amherst*, coupled with a media presentation by the Emily Dickinson Museum will be offered to western Massachusetts school districts on Friday, May 15. Included in the program will be a pre-show introduction of the characters in the ballet, distribution of a *Reader’s Guide to Emily Dickinson* to all audience members, and a teacher’s curriculum guide. Visits by an Emily Dickinson Museum guide together with representatives from Amherst Ballet will be made to upper elementary grades in the Amherst schools to introduce them to the poet as part of a plan to give free tickets to the ballet to participating school children.

I find myself, as I have in other big project years, wondering what I have gotten myself into! The sheer ambition of the project is almost audacious but is saved from being so by the professionalism and skill of all those collaborators and key artists involved. Of course without the dancers all the other elements are but details, and I have great confidence in the dancers! Never has Amherst Ballet had such a healthy population of eager, dedicated and talented dancers ready to put in the work to make the ballet a success. The dancers have been rehearsing since early October when the first piece of choreography was set, and are working hard to learn and absorb all they can. Some attended a guided tour to the Homestead and the Evergreens, as a means of learning more about the poet and “getting into character.” Thanks to the generosity of the museum, plans for all the dancers in the ballet to receive a free tour are in the works.

So, all that remains, beyond the hard work of all involved, is to put together the finances to fund the project. As always, we count on performance admission revenue but we will also need to rely more heavily this year upon our fundraising efforts and donations from our supporters. Included here is a budget for the project that will give you a sense of the cost of mounting this production. My hope is that you, our supporters, will be inspired and motivated to support this fantastic endeavor. We can’t do it without you!

Emily of Amherst projected performance expenses

1. Personnel	
Choreographer	\$3000
Travel and per diem, choreographer	\$750
Lighting design/Stage management	\$2000
Travel and per diem, stage manager	\$300
Costume construction consultant	\$5000
Part of faculty salary	
Rehearsal director	\$5000
Part of faculty salary	
Choreographer	\$5000
Part of faculty salary	
Administrator	\$5000
Part of staff salary	
Guest Artist	\$500
Production crew	\$3500
Museum guides	\$350
Composer	\$2000
Set designer	\$4000
Total personnel	\$36400
2. Consumable materials and supplies	
Costumes	\$3500
Set construction materials	\$2000
Props	\$500
Administrative materials	\$1000
Audio/video materials	\$250
Box office set up and ticket printing	\$500
Books	\$200
Total consumables	\$7950
3. Rentals	
Lights, scrim, backdrops	\$2500
Trucks for moving sets	\$300
Total rentals	\$2800
4. Advertising and promotion	
Advertising	\$1500
Radio/television spots	\$1500
Photography/videography	\$250
Promotional materials	\$1500
Total advertising and promotion	\$4750
5. Travel	
Travel	\$500
Total travel	\$500
6. Educational outreach	
School performances	\$200
Total educational outreach	\$200
TOTAL PROJECTED PERFORMANCE EXPENSES:	\$52600



Amherst Ballet
29 Strong Street
Amherst, MA 01002

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Andrea Leibson *Office Manager*
Therese Brady Donohue *Founder*

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Upcoming Events

SAT, DECEMBER 13 **Upper School Presentation 7:00pm**, Amherst Regional Middle School Auditorium. Lower School and public invited.
DECEMBER 15 – 20 **Visitors' week for Lower School**
DEC 21 – JAN 4 **School Vacation.** Classes resume Monday January 5

NOTE: Because of the scope of *Emily of Amherst* (our Emily Dickinson inspired ballet being performed in May) Amherst Ballet is not participating in Northampton's First Night.

FEBRUARY 18-22 **School Vacation.** Classes resume Monday February 23
MARCH 6 – 8 **Youth America Grande Prix** in Torrington, CT
MAY 15 – 17 **NO REGULAR CLASSES. Performances of EMILY DICKINSON BALLET and Lower School class dances** at Kirby Theater on Amherst College campus. Details to be announced.