



BEHIND THE SCENES

a publication of the Board of Directors
AMHERST BALLET THEATRE COMPANY

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from your DIRECTOR

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue

by Catherine Fair

WHILE THIS PHRASE is usually used in reference to a bride's attire, it comes to mind when I think of Amherst Ballet. Perhaps it is because of my recent conversations with faculty member and choreographer Jennifer Rockwell and her fiancé Ross Swartout that the phrase is on the tip of my tongue. I find many parallels as I watch the two young people embark on life's journey together, incorporating longstanding traditions that are relevant and meaningful to them, while bringing their own unique ideas to the planning of their wedding service.

In much the same way, Amherst Ballet has continued many of its historic traditions this year, while making changes that seem to "fit" who we are today. From the annual RAD examinations that founder Therese Brady Donohue began years ago, to the basic structure of the repertoire program, the foundation laid by Therese for Amherst Ballet many years ago continues to prove successful. More recent traditions such as our participation in Northampton's *First Night* (first performance, 2001) and our 2nd collaboration with the *Moscow Ballet* for *The Great Russian Nutcracker* were successfully continued this year. A collaboration with the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art was a resounding success; AB's production of *The Very Lonely Firefly* was seen by over 2000 audience members between September and December.

While Amherst Ballet's plans for a spring performance are similar in many ways to those in the recent past, there are some differences to watch for. First of all, there will be two! I have heard many heartfelt requests over the past several years from our dancers about performance opportunities. One shot at performing their work after a year of intense preparation is really not enough. An important part of the learning experience for developing performers is actually performing! There is nothing like it... (This also gives me the chance to double-cast a percentage of roles, giving more students a chance to learn additional roles!)

Another change you will see is that all our Upper School Dancers have been cast in at least one role. I have decided to expand the repertoire and cut the traditional Level A presentation. This inclusive philosophy is the result of a mutual commitment between this year's choreographers (all of whom are faculty members) and myself to encourage our students to achieve. We are confident that our dancers will pull through and show the strong technique that we are striving for during their numerous weekly classes!

While choral music was an important part of my productions of *The Magician's Nephew* and *An Evening of Music and Dance with Johann*

ETHAN SCHWEITZER-GASLIN
rehearsing Kelly Parsley's Boys Dance
Class piece for the upcoming performance
Choral Collaboration.



Sebastian Bach, it has never been part of the traditional Lower School Performance. As with dancing, I have derived much joy throughout my life from singing. From my earliest days learning folk songs at home, to later performances in choirs and musical theater productions, singing and dancing were an integral part of life. Being passionate about both art forms, I ardently desired to see greater symbiosis between them. I approached the Director of The Hampshire Choral Society Young People's Chorus, K.C. Conlan, about working together. The result, our *Choral Collaboration*, has been funded by the Amherst Cultural Council and promises to enrich the program as the dancers perform to musical selections from around the world accompanied by the choir and an ensemble of musicians. (To learn more, see page 2.) Another first, Musical Theatre will come to the stage in its true form as a part of Sam Kenney's saucy rendition of Cole Porter's *It's Too Darn Hot*. Live vocals, jazz piano, and fast footwork will light up the stage as Upper School dancer Rosie Elkinton sings, accompanied by Fred Bashour, and then leads a cast of eleven other dancers.

Other performance highlights include Rose Flach's classical creation *Nature's Waltz*, set to music by Prokofiev. Rose originally set this piece on her dancers from the Five Colleges, and adapted it to six dancers for our repertoire. *Theorem*, a new work by Sam Kenney, is a visceral, contemporary exploration of geometric

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IMPORTANT FUNDRAISER!

AMHERST BALLET SPRING FLOWER SALE

Annual flowers and potted plants including hanging baskets just in time for Mother's Day or your spring gardening projects.

🌸 **FIRST**, we will sell May Day flowers to the public on the Amherst Common on Saturday May 1, from 9:00 - 12:00.

🌸 **SECONDLY**, you may order flowers now to be picked up at Amherst Ballet Saturday May 8 (*the day before Mother's Day*). We have a wide selection of annual "six packs", potted plants and hanging baskets at very reasonable prices. You can take orders from your friends, neighbors and co-workers.

🌸 **ORDER FORMS AVAILABLE** at AMHERST BALLET

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forms to music by Dead Can Dance. *Out of Darkness*, my own contemporary new ballet, features seventeen dancers and is set to the stirring Allegretto from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Also on the program is Kenney's *Forge*, a dynamic fusion of jazz and modern that was premiered last season and performed again at First

Night. Senior dancer Lucy Segar will perform a flirtatious and jazzy pointe solo set to *My Baby Just Cares for Me*, choreographed by Jennifer Rockwell. The grand finale: *Variations from The Sleeping Beauty* will include excerpts from the classic fairy tale set to Tchaikovsky's timeless music.

"Something Borrowed, Something Blue"—The blue part wasn't too difficult... the rich jewel toned blue costumes for *Sleeping Beauty* are a continuation of the tradition of fine costuming by our founder

photo © 2004 Clive J. Mealey

Therese Brady Donohue. While she constructs and designs most of her costumes, some are ordered and embellished. Each costume in the repertoire will enhance the beauty of movement and provide a visual treat for audiences! As for "Something Borrowed," Faculty member Rose Flachs will bring her own dance floor and allow us to combine it with ours so that we can have the four panels of flooring we need to allow our many lovely dancers to grace the stage together without fear of falling! It is all very exciting, but reality dictates that we be concerned about the budget. With the addition of a performance, production expenses will be higher than they would have otherwise been... We are counting on you, our supporters, to help us fill the house both times! Join us for one performance, or both, and enjoy a magical afternoon or evening of music and dance.

SENIOR DANCER LUCY SEGAR will be a featured soloist in this year's upcoming Repertoire performance.

CHORAL collaboration interview with K.C. Conlan

THE CHORAL COLLABORATION planned for this year's Lower School Performance promises to bring a new and different twist to the event. Combining the talents of the 50 vocalists of the Hampshire Choral Society Young People's Chorus with the 100 dancers of the Lower School is a continuation of Amherst Ballet's commitment to fostering relationships with other local arts and education organizations. This project, funded by the Amherst Cultural Council, will bring the two art forms together in a powerful and moving performance. I have been working together with the director of the Young People's Chorus, K.C. Conlan, to create a program that allows both audiences and participants to enjoy music and dance from a broad array of ethnic and cultural influences. Music from Russia, Israel, Korea and the British Isles will be performed, along with several distinctly American pieces. A variety of instrumentalists will accompany the choir, such as piano, flute, percussion and violin.

Having several students in classes who are also in the choir has been a lot of fun for me. I sometimes ask them to sing the lyrics to help

the dancers rehearsing to hear where entrances and exits are. All the students are curious and are eagerly anticipating the chance to see the results of this whole process! I thought it would be interesting to hear from choir director K.C. Conlan about her experiences. What follows are her answers to a variety of questions I asked.

You recently attended a rehearsal for one of the dances your choir will be singing for. What did the experience bring to your perceptions about the program?

I came to the Level Two class because I had been asked to slow down the tempo for the piece they were working on. Once I saw the girls dancing to it, it became immediately clear why they required a slower tempo. The piece was "Bee! I'm expecting you!" (text by Emily Dickinson), and it was completely charming to see the children acting out the parts of bees and frogs. I realized then that the dancers bring a whole new visual and dramatic element to the music.

What benefits will your students gain from participating in the collaboration with the dancers?

We have participated in other collaborative projects (choral festivals, the Commonwealth Opera production of *Hansel and Gretel*), and I feel that every new performing situation stretches them as musicians and performers. In this instance, they will be exposed to an art form that many of them know little about.

You've been very involved with Amherst Ballet through your daughter Rosie, who will be in the repertoire performance; do you feel that her dance training has helped her as a musician/vocalist? Has her musical training contributed to her success as a dancer?

Yes, and yes! In my view, music and movement are inseparable. In some cultures singing and dancing really do go hand in hand (South African Choral traditions spring to mind.) Rosie

continued on next page

Choral collaboration, continued from page 2

was an older beginner at the ballet school, but her prior musical training (piano lessons, choral singing, and musical theater) helped her progress rapidly. Likewise, her dance training has helped her with her musical theater roles. Last summer she toured with a world music choir and had the opportunity to learn African and Bulgarian dances and picked them up quickly, thanks to her dance training.

Editor's note: the audience will have a chance to see Rosie in action both as a singer and a dancer in Its too Darn Hot during the repertoire performance.

The Hampshire Choral Society Young People's Chorus and Amherst Ballet share a number of students who will participate both as dancers and singers. How will this work?

We're planning for them to do it all! The dancers will perform with the choir, slip backstage one number before their dance and rejoin us when they are finished. We think that they can wear leotards under their white blouses.

How did you select the music for this program?

Catherine Fair and I met back in the winter to select the music. We were looking for danceable rhythms and engaging texts. We also wanted to have a variety of styles and cultures represented. Some pieces, the choir had already learned in the fall, but others were new to us.

What are your hopes for this collaboration?

My hope is that live choral music will enhance the dances, and vice versa. Our singers will have performed these pieces in a concert setting on Mother's Day, so I'll be curious to see what new dimension the dancing brings to the music. As a relatively young organization, we can benefit from the increased exposure this collaboration will bring. And I think it's always interesting for kids to see what other kids with similar interests are up to.

Who knows? Perhaps some of our singers will start taking ballet, and a few dancers may join the choir!

CF

LEVEL 3 RAD EXAM CANDIDATES
Isa Braun, Pilar Jefferson, and Camille Kemache
(above). **Level 5 RAD exam candidates, Rachel Bisiewicz, Abby Odell, Rebecca Sailer, and Sara Klugman**
(below).

RAD examinations



AMHERST BALLETS students participated in Royal Academy of Dance Examinations again this year. Fifteen students from Levels Three and Five worked very hard during classes and additional rehearsals to prepare work from the syllabus that is taught around the world. Says parent Karen Schweitzer, "When Ethan first decided to take the exams, I was unclear about their purpose. After seeing him and the other dancers go through the rehearsals, the presentation for parents and the exam itself, I understand why the process is so helpful. The dancers seem to have a renewed commitment to dance and a greater confidence in themselves as dancers." To achieve the standard that is

acceptable for exam candidates, students must memorize and perform a variety of classical ballet exercises that represent a sample ballet class, dance a short solo, perform several "free movement" exercises, and perform a character (a national dance from Eastern Europe) duet with a partner. Students are graded on technique, placement, musicality and performance quality by an RAD examiner. This year examiner Merle Seppyl, from South Africa, visited Amherst Ballet as a part of a tour of the North Eastern United States. Level Three students who elected to participate are Isa Braun, Aliya Cycon, Ethan Schweitzer-Gaslin, Camille Kemache, Pilar Jefferson, Alexia Ronnau, and Elora Simkins. Level Five students are Kristin Andres, Rachel Bisiewicz, Marissa Hashizume, Sara Klugman, Elizabeth Mealey, Abby Odell, Rebecca Sailer, and Marianne Wald. Just like last year the dancers all came out smiling and were clearly proud of their achievements! Says ten year old Ethan Schweitzer-Gaslin, "The RAD exams have really changed me as a dancer. Now I pick up choreography really quickly and usually get it right on the first try. I think studying for the exams really helped me learn better and it improved my technique."

CF



SUMMER WORKSHOPS

THIS SUMMER at Amherst Ballet will be filled with new and interesting opportunities for dancers of all ages. For our youngest dancers, we will continue our long tradition of putting on imaginative ballets by bringing stories to life. Therese Brady Donohue will be directing two workshops that combine dance, art classes, and costume making for young children. *Angelina and her Friends* (June 28-July 29, 9:30-3:30 Mon-Fri.) based on the mouse stories, for children ages 6 to 9. Due to popular demand, this workshop is already full!

There are still spaces available for *The Rosebud Elfins*, based on an original story, for children ages 7 to age 10 on July 12-July 16, (9:30-3:30 Mon.-Fri.) Faculty for both workshops will be Therese Donohue, Catherine Fair, Jackie Kinsman.

The Moscow Ballet will be in residence at Amherst Ballet for two weeks on July 19-30, when Russian Ballerina Svetlana Safranovna teaches classical and character repertoire from *Swan Lake* as well as daily ballet and pointe

classes. For dancers ages 11-18, this workshop will also include daily classes in Modern Dance, Dance History and basics of choreography with choreographer and Amherst Ballet faculty member Sam Kenney. While this workshop is filling up quickly, there are still some spaces available. Choreography set on dancers will be adapted to the stage for Amherst Ballet's upcoming production of *Stories of the Ballet*, premiering in May of 2005. Dancers can choose to enroll for one, or both weeks of the workshop.



MOSCOW BALLETT'S Svetlana Safranovna will be teaching at Amherst Ballet for two weeks this summer.

Ballet Technique classes will be offered from June through August for dancers at the intermediate and advanced levels for five two-week sessions.

Classes will be held three evenings per week and taught by Amherst Ballet faculty. Students may register for one or more two week sessions.

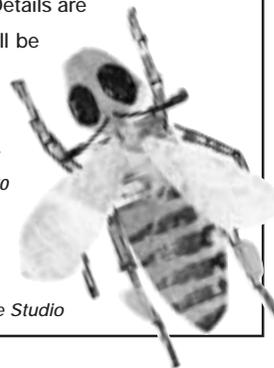
For more information on any of these programs, please call the studio at 549-1555.

NEW ERIC CARLE MUSEUM PRODUCTION

After last year's success of *The Very Lonely Firefly* production at the Eric Carle Museum, Amherst Ballet Founder, Therese Brady Donohue, is busy at work on a new special project. We are privileged to be one of a select few arts organizations that have been given special permission by Eric Carle to adapt his work to the stage. This September Amherst Ballet will open *The Honeybee and the Robber* based on Carle's only pop-up picture book. The same creative team that made *Firefly* a success has agreed to work together once again. Catherine Fair will choreograph, Karen Tarlow will compose, and Walter Carroll will narrate. Therese has been meeting with Carle's staff, and is working to create the costumes that will bring his delightful characters to life, replicating the movements of the moving pictures as well as enhancing each dancer's movements. Auditions for the children's roles will be held at Amherst Ballet for Lower School students on Saturday, May 29th. Details are available at the front desk and on the bulletin board. The ballet will be double cast using a total of twenty-two dancers.

Dancers must be available for a rehearsal workshop August 23 - Sept. 3rd which will take place at the museum for three hours each day except Sunday, August 29th. Each cast will perform every other Saturday September 18th to December 11th, giving two performances each time. Anyone interested in learning more about this project may contact Therese Donohue through the front desk at the studio.

image courtesy of Eric Carle Studio



Master Classes with New York City Ballet Dancers

AMHERST BALLETT is pleased to announce a series of master classes with New York City Ballet Dancers Sarah Ricard and Seth Orza. The dancers will be visiting AB during the summer and again in October to teach several classes (including Orza's work with the boys in AB's Boy's Dance Program.)

Ms. Ricard is pleased to have this opportunity to reconnect with Amherst Ballet where she received the training that provided her with a foundation in ballet.

Born in Durham, New Hampshire, Sarah Ricard began her dance training at the age of eight with the Amherst Ballet under the direction of Founder Therese Brady Donohue, where she



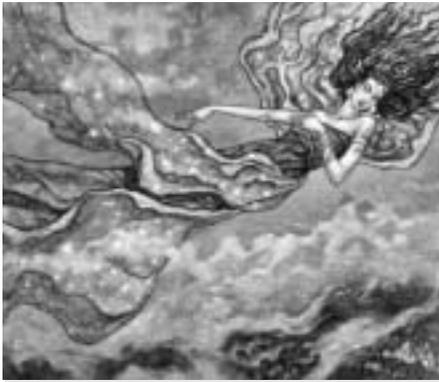
continued until the age of 12. She also studied with the Pioneer Valley Ballet in Northampton, and with Kenneth Lipitz at the New England Dance Conservatory in Longmeadow, Massachusetts. After attending the 1997 summer session at the School of American Ballet (SAB), the official school of New York City Ballet, Ms. Ricard was invited to continue her studies in the SAB winter session. Ms. Ricard was invited to become an apprentice with New



York City Ballet in June 1999 and joined NYCB as a member of the corps de ballet in February 2000.

Seth Orza was born in San Francisco, California. In 1994, he began studying at the Summer Program of the School of American Ballet (SAB), as a scholarship student. Mr. Orza entered SAB as a full time student in the fall of 1997, and in June 1999 was invited to become an apprentice with New York City Ballet. He joined the Company as a member of the corps de ballet in June 2000.

To learn more about Sarah Ricard and Seth Orza visit the official New York City Ballet website at <http://www.nycballet.com/>



MAGIC AMONG US

Something exciting is always cooking here at Amherst Ballet with so many talented people moving amongst us. Adult ballet student Rebecca Guay Mitchell attends classes regularly here and has been doing so for more than seven years. In addition to being a dancer, wife and mother, she also happens to be a well-known artist. Fans of the game *Magic* are certain to possess her ethereal watercolor paintings in their card collections. Her human figures and mythical creatures exquisitely convey movement and emotion with intricate detail and beautiful color. Rebecca once inspired us with a tutu adorned ballerina poised perfectly in an arabesque on one pointe. This chalk drawing appeared one day on the blackboard in the upstairs studio to the delight of all who saw it. Both students and faculty carefully wrote and erased around it attempting to preserve the inspiring figure indefinitely... one day it disappeared, we never found out who erased it.

No longer will fans of her beautifully drawn dancers struggle to preserve a vulnerable chalk drawing. Rebecca has been hired to illustrate well-known children's author Jane Yolen's new book titled *Stories from the Ballet* which will be available next September. Yolen will bring new life to classic ballet stories including *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Cinderella*. We look forward to seeing the result of their collaboration and rejoice that their work will create a fresh opportunity for a new generation to fall in love with the classic old stories of the ballet.

— CF

KEEPING UP WITH

LINDSAY SMITH...company dancer

SENIOR LINDSAY SMITH started dancing at age five, answering the call of a voice that has inspired many a budding ballerina: "Mom made me do it." It turns out that mom knows best, as Lindsay took to dance immediately. Dance, swimming, soccer, and softball all competed for time on her schedule, until the time came when she had to make a choice. Dance won out as her primary artistic and physical pursuit.

Lindsay's first performance memory is of her turn as the Rooster, at age 8 or 9, when Amherst Ballet collaborated with the Commonwealth Opera in a production of *Aida*. She was not particularly enamored of the role, "I hated it", she recalls. But she did love being on stage with so many "important, wonderful dancers and famous opera singers." This was back in the days "when I had no fear," she notes.

She got a chance to spread her rooster wings again in *Magician's Nephew*, which ranks among her favorite performing experience — less so for the feathers than for the grand scale and the energy of the production.

Lindsay has since performed *sans* feathers in numerous Company ballet and jazz pieces. Nowadays, nerves are part of the game when performing. Ballet tends to be a little more stressful, because of the technical demands. But once the piece starts, the training

kicks in and the nerves find a healthy outlet in her performance energy.

When asked to name the major influences in her dance life, she speaks of several teachers, of the girls she dances with, the friendships she's formed, and the experiences she's shared. And she mentions her mom: "when rehearsals pile up, when things get too intense, I can always talk to her."

Rehearsals have been piling up of late for Lindsay, as she prepares to dance in four pieces in Amherst Ballet's annual performance this May. She gets a taste of musical theatre in *It's Too Darn Hot*. "Thankfully, no singing for me." (She professes to have a voice made for dancing.) "But the dancing's fun! Real showy, lots of jumping about."

She's also reprising the role she danced last year in Sam Kenney's jazz/modern work *Forge* and metamorphoses herself in two ballet pieces: into a Sapphire Fairy in *Sleeping Beauty*, into a loon in *Nature's Waltz*. In their different ways, these two ballets—one classical, one contemporary, appeal to Lindsay for the stories they tell. "*Sleeping Beauty* is a great story for the audience to follow along with. It's especially fun for younger kids." She likes the way *Nature's Waltz* tells its story with movement, music and haunting sound effects. Portions of the piece are danced without music; the avian movements of the dancers are performed to sounds of loons calling across a wilderness lake.

Lindsay expresses an appreciation for several ways that dance has graced her life. She values the sense of responsibility all the classes and rehearsals have taught her. She speaks of the body awareness she's gained; her ability to appreciate the talents she was born with and those she's worked to develop. Thanks to dance, music she listens to is now infused with movement.

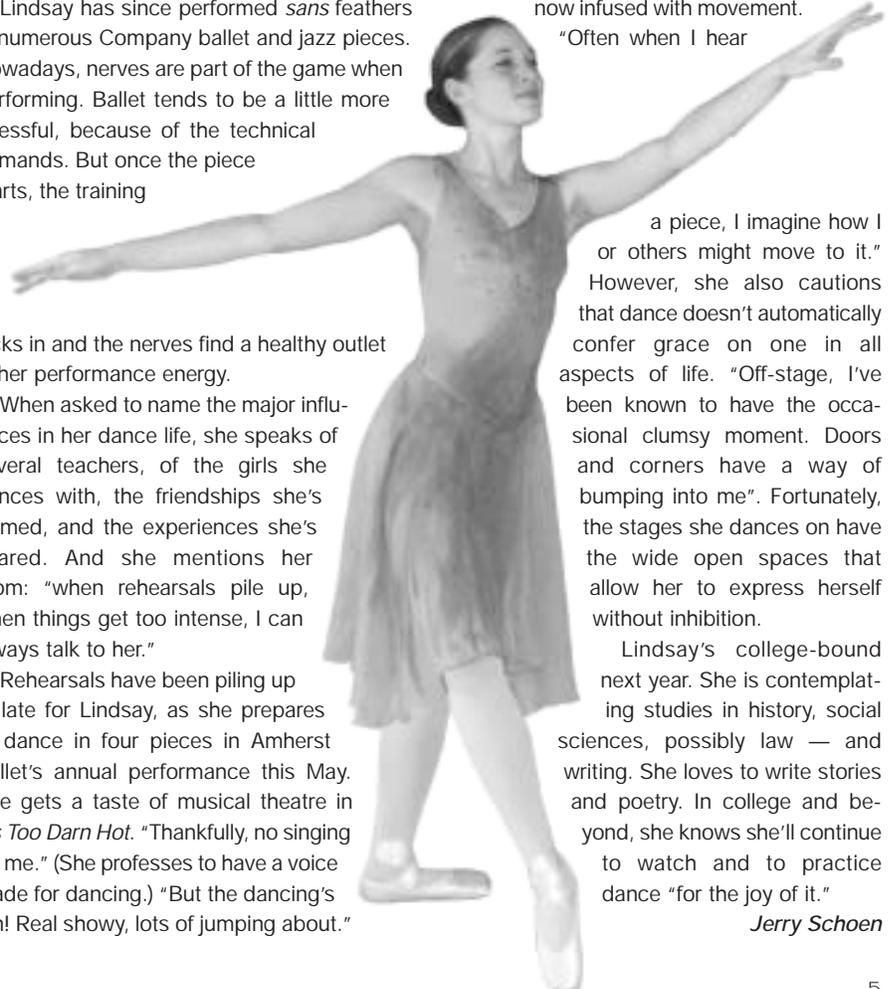
"Often when I hear

a piece, I imagine how I or others might move to it."

However, she also cautions that dance doesn't automatically confer grace on one in all aspects of life. "Off-stage, I've been known to have the occasional clumsy moment. Doors and corners have a way of bumping into me". Fortunately, the stages she dances on have the wide open spaces that allow her to express herself without inhibition.

Lindsay's college-bound next year. She is contemplating studies in history, social sciences, possibly law — and writing. She loves to write stories and poetry. In college and beyond, she knows she'll continue to watch and to practice dance "for the joy of it."

Jerry Schoen



ANNA GROSSLEIN... company dancer

YOU COULD SAY that Anna came into the world of music at birth. All of her family members are musicians, each playing different instruments in different genres. She remembers being a young child at contra dances accompanied by her father's band Swallowtail. Although she remembers just "hanging out" at dances when she was young, the rhythmic creaking of wooden floors must have somehow crept into her bones, for now Anna loves to dance. She has participated in a wide variety of dance activities such as contra dance, ballet, modern dance and step dance. She has a passion for step dance in the Cape Breton style that she learned at a music and dance camp several years ago. Anna's an accomplished musician herself. She is the principal flautist for the Amherst High School Wind Ensemble, and also plays with the school band and orchestra.

SENIORS Ella Stocker, Emily Smith, and Anna Grosslein (left to right) rehearsing Fair's *Out of Darkness*.



It was the recommendation of a friend that brought her initially to study ballet and later modern dance at Amherst Ballet four years ago. Anna feels that ballet has helped her in many different ways. She says that she is more focused in her thinking because of the discipline of ballet. The exercises and instruction given in class have helped her to think about the mechanics of human movement, and not just in dance. Anna says, "Even something like walking, I do differently." A knee injury in 2001, while a potential set back for many, was an opportunity for Anna to put her knowledge into practice. She feels stronger now, with a deepened understanding of movement, posture, and alignment.

When asked how she had changed over the course of her time at AB, Anna replies that she feels more confident now in both dance and in life. "I can do things now that I didn't think possible before, like turns en pointe..." As a young child, Anna often felt shy. She now finds herself speaking up more often and exudes an air

of determination. "I am able to ask questions in class without feeling embarrassed, and I feel in control of myself (physically)."

Anna appreciates the connections with other dancers and the community that results from a shared commitment to dance. The time before and after class with the other dancers is also something she enjoys. "We can have the weirdest conversations... you don't worry about what you say." She describes friendships that are both lasting and accepting, and friends who are interesting and fun.

Anna plans to attend Mount Holyoke College in the fall to pursue studies in English and modern dance. A relative latecomer to ballet, she encourages other dancers to follow what they enjoy regardless of stereotypical limitations such as age. "Believe in yourself if you find there is something you really love."

As for Anna, "I'm never happier than when I'm dancing... if the music is good I can dance all night."

Lesley Smith

EMILY SMITH

A KITCHEN CHAIR her stage, parents and siblings her audience, an improv routine starring Emily Smith, aerobics instructor her signature work; such is the stuff dance dreams are made of. From these auspicious pre-school beginnings, Emily has compiled a long and varied resume of dance, performance and learning experiences. She began taking dance classes at Amherst Ballet as a first grader, but soon moved on to other pursuits. Emily has taken modern dance at other local schools, been an intercontinental traveler, acted in *The Wizard of Oz* with the Arena Civic Theatre, played a party-scene mother in Pioneer Valley Ballet's *Nutcracker*, run track, and learned downhill skiing, sailing, and swing and belly dancing. In 7th grade, she channeled these disparate energies back to Amherst Ballet when she started taking jazz classes with Catherine Fair. Upon Catherine's advice, Emily resumed ballet training in order to improve her jazz technique.

She has little trouble expressing the joys she finds in any of these pursuits, nor in seeing

ELLA STOCKER... company dancer

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE Amherst Ballet without Ella Stocker's smiling face, positive attitude and outgoing friendliness. Ella is a senior at Amherst High School who takes honors and advanced placement classes, especially in history, literature and languages. Ella started at Amherst Ballet in first grade, then came back to dance in sixth grade, taking Jazz I when Mrs. Fair first began teaching at AB. Because of the enthusiasm, Mrs. Fair introduced Beginning Teen Ballet. Ella remembers how hard they worked and she is very proud that by eighth grade she was in Level A, en pointe, and taking many classes a week! "I loved the mental and physical challenge of dance. My brain works hard and it sharpens my focus in everything else I do. It helps me relax and release tension in a flexible and invigorating way. It satisfies me physically, mentally, and emotionally." Dancing has become an essential part of Ella's life ever since.

Ella appreciates the foundation that ballet has given her as a dancer, and the many other benefits she feels it has given her as well. "Ballet makes you very aware of your body in

space, it helps you know how to hold your body, how to present yourself, hold yourself tall, feel proud and calm." Ella's true passion as a dancer, however, is in modern dance. "It's so personal and expressive."

Ella also describes how important all the other girls at AB are to her. She remembers dancing with fellow senior Lucy Segar when they were six years old and still misses seniors that have gone before. "It's like having 20 sisters! We share in each other's great moments in class, get so close through performances, and support each other in everything. We share a common thread and know exactly where each other is coming from." She feels that AB has been a very supportive environment with enthusiastic teachers who are passionate about dance. "It makes you want to give back even a fraction of what they are giving." She especially appreciates teachers who "take time to notice and give positive feedback to all their students, not just the best ones."

Ella takes 2 ballet classes, modern, Pilates, and is often rehearsing several times a week.

Remember her as the sweetly graceful mother kangaroo in *The Magician's Nephew*? She also sings with the Amherst Choral, an audition-only ensemble, and is the Student Technical Director for the High School musicals. She has written a play and had the pleasure of directing it, casting her friend and fellow dancer, Libby Woodbridge, and seeing it through to its performance in the Student's Written Play Festival last year. "Sometimes I think my life would be a lot easier if I didn't take dance, but it is my own spiritual personal time. My body misses dance when I don't do it." Ella's recent claim to fame is as a reader for *The Vagina Monologues* at Amherst High. She was inspired by the support they received and by the profound impact the performance had on the audience.

Ella is currently choosing between two colleges for the fall. "I will probably always dance because it completes me in a way that nothing else does. It makes you aware of who you are and how you are living your life. It makes me realize things I never noticed before."

Annette Cycon

... company dancer

connections among them. "I like the forms, the rules of ballet" she explains. It may seem a little stilted, even bewildering at first, but "towards the end of the year it makes sense, because we're coming back to the same stance, the same familiar positions. The guidelines make it easy." Similarly, with modern dance, "individual movements may seem awkward at first, but when they're repeated within the music, when the piece starts, I see how it all fits together. The movements become fluid." With jazz, "the emphasis, the accents are what make it exciting." Even in belly dancing, which seems so different from ballet — in the bend of the knees, for example — "the same basic rules apply: keeping aligned, isolation of muscles, staying in control of my body". In essence, "it's all dance. The various forms are like different European cities. There's a different feel to each, but there's also a recognition, a familiarity that they all offer."

The ways in which movement appeals to her are as varied as the forms themselves. "I love the building anticipation that comes with

rehearsals, and the energy leading to performances. The chill that comes on stage in front of an audience. Stress is a good thing" she declares. A pause, then she adds, "but that comes with a letdown afterwards." She finds a remedy in classes, where dance is broken down into brief pieces, small moments. "We do a phrase, repeat it, and we get to do it again. In class, repetition is good."

She's looking forward to dancing in *Forge* and *Out Of Darkness* in the Company's upcoming annual performance. Both pieces provoke strong emotions in her. She enjoys the "shifting movements and moods inspired by contrasting musical interludes." In *Forge* (music by Peter Gabriel) a simple walking motion, delivered with attitude, conveys strength and energy. *Out of Darkness* (set to Beethoven's 7th Symphony) is attractive in part because of its large scope — seventeen dancers — and for the way they interact with one another and with the music: "individuals and groups of dancers weave in and out, representing different elements of the music, different phrases or instruments. And when the music gets faster,

it feels intense, spiritual. An upward movement of the arms at that point is a natural expression of the feeling."

Emily is in the dual enrollment program at Amherst High, and takes all of her classes at Greenfield Community College. Art history and literature (especially Virginia Woolf) are favorite subjects. Looking ahead, Emily plans to get her associates degree at GCC, then "study or bum around for a while in Europe." Her dad lives in England, and she may take up residence there for a while in order to acquire British citizenship. "Eventually, I'll probably come back to this area." Career choices are wide open at the moment. "Languages maybe?" Meanwhile, she expects to be working at Carmelina's this summer, and continuing her eclectic pursuits, cooking among them. Apple dumplings are one of her specialties. She sees dancing in all her life scenarios. "It's what gets my blood flowing. How do normal people exercise, anyway?" Among other things, she knows that somewhere out there, a tango experience is waiting for her.

Jerry Schoen



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Amherst, MA 01002

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IMPORTANT DATES

UPPER SCHOOL MEETING
Tuesday, May 4

NO CLASSES
Friday, May 21, *Rehearsal for Upper School at ARHS warm-up 3:30 - 4:30, plan to stay until about 10:00 PM*

NO CLASSES
Saturday, May 22, *Rehearsal for Lower School at ARHS 10:00 - 1:30*

PERFORMANCE
Saturday, May 22, *at ARHS Lower School: 6:30, Repertoire: 8:00*

MATINEE PERFORMANCE
Sunday, May 23, *at ARHS Lower School: 2:30, Repertoire: 4:00*

NO CLASSES
Monday, May 31, *Memorial Day*

BARN FETE
Saturday, June 12,
Important Fundraiser! with Dance, Dining, Music, and Silent auction

ANNUAL TAG SALE
Saturday and Sunday June 5 and 6,
Important Fundraiser!

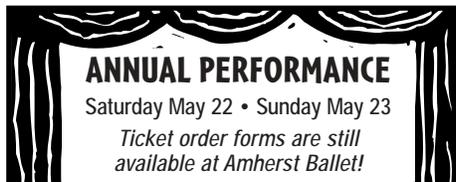
ANNUAL MEETING
Wednesday, June 16

AMHERST BALLET FETE

BE SURE TO KEEP THE EVENING OF JUNE 12 open for Amherst Ballet's First Annual Fundraising Fete. The event will include dining, music, a silent auction, and, of course, dancing — by some of our students and, we hope, later in the evening by you. It should be an elegant affair in the relaxed, rustic setting of the new Duda barn in Pelham. This will be an important event for the health of the Ballet, with funds raised through attendance, contributions, and the silent auction. Equally important is that this will be a fun way to bring our dance community together to support a great cause.

Although your Board is putting the event together, we can use your help to make it a success. If you can contribute anything of value to the auction, or can find someone who can, please let Andrea or Catherine know. We expect the donations to include both items and services, and to have a range of values over \$20. For example, one family has already offered a week's rental at their cottage on Nantucket, while another has donated a lovely tote bag. There also will be a week's rental of a home in the Berkshires and artwork from local artists. We hope soon to prepare a list of items that will be available at the auction, which we will include with the event invitations that should be in the mail by early May.

Thanks very much to each of you who can help, we look forward to seeing you all on June 12!



SPECIAL THANKS to *Dance Stuff* for help with underwriting the cost of producing this newsletter, to David Lenson for editorial assistance, to Clive Mealey for photography, and to Pam Glaven.