



# BEHIND THE SCENES

a publication of the Board of Directors  
AMHERST BALLET THEATRE COMPANY

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## from your DIRECTOR Catherine Fair

As you may have noticed, there have been many changes at Amherst Ballet. As most of you are aware, AB is a non-profit organization owned and run by a volunteer Board of Directors, who have spent the past year developing a staffing structure that will carry Amherst Ballet forward successfully into the 21st century. I have been asked to take the role of Director and oversee all aspects of the school, company, and performances in addition to my teaching duties. I am pleased to be employed in this capacity, and look forward to working with our Board of Directors, Special Projects Director and Founder, Therese Brady Donohue, and parent and Board secretary, Andrea Leibson, who is our new School Administrator and Office Manager. When you see Andrea at the front desk, introduce yourself and get acquainted. She is enthusiastic, friendly and efficient. I feel confident that together we'll make an effective team; there is something to be said for a group of folks who already know so much about Amherst Ballet and can put that knowledge to work for the organization.

We've had a very full summer of programs. Our technique classes ran from June 10th to August 21st and served many AB students as well as other local dancers, both teenage, and adult who

were looking for summer classes. (We were thrilled to have recent alums Melanie Lahti and Katie Hurwitz join us). Jennifer Rockwell, Sam Kenney and I taught six classes per week on the intermediate and advanced levels for a total of ten weeks.

Along with these classes, we offered a two-week Summer Intensive Dance program for teens. Fifteen participants had a wonderful experience and benefited from the small classes and intensive curriculum. Elizabeth Rising and I taught ballet in the mornings, while City of Springfield art teacher Heather Kasunick taught art in the Lower Studio. The afternoon's offerings included Musical Theatre with Sam Kenney who taught selections from the Broadway Musical *A Chorus Line*, Theatre Improvisation with pianist, actor and author Katherine Mayfield, and choreography classes with Jennifer Rockwell. The two-week program culminated with a demonstration in the Upper Studio watched by parents, friends, and other program participants. The laughter and good-natured enthusiasm of the small audience were a tribute to the all-around success of the program.

Lower School students also had plenty of opportunity to dance this summer. Therese Donohue put together two summer workshops



where the groundwork was laid for this season's performances in collaboration with the Eric Carle Museum. A two-week program enrolled fourteen young dancers who were taught the choreography for the fireflies in the new production *The Very Lonely Firefly*. Mornings were filled with art projects, dance classes with Sam Kenney, and choreography practice. In the afternoons, I set the production choreography that we practiced in the studio before driving to the Eric Carle museum to rehearse on stage. What a treat it was to have so many rehearsals on the stage! Our young dancers represented Amherst Ballet well; their conduct at the museum was something to be very proud of!

Twelve young dancers between the ages of seven and eleven years old participated in a Russian National Dance Workshop, also directed by Therese. I worked with Elizabeth Rising again, with assistance from alumna Melissa Chapman-Smith and teacher trainee Jillian Diamond to set choreography for a variety of dances that will be performed this fall at the Eric Carle Museum. Therese helped students to create their costumes and taught them to create trays in the Russian style of folk painting. She also worked hard to polish and refine the dancers' presentation of the choreography. During the second week of the workshop, we traveled with the students to several local nursing and retirement homes and the Bangs Senior Center to bring the joy and beauty of dance to the elderly. I experienced one of those moments

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ERIC CARLE with the cast of *The Very Lonely Firefly* at the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art.



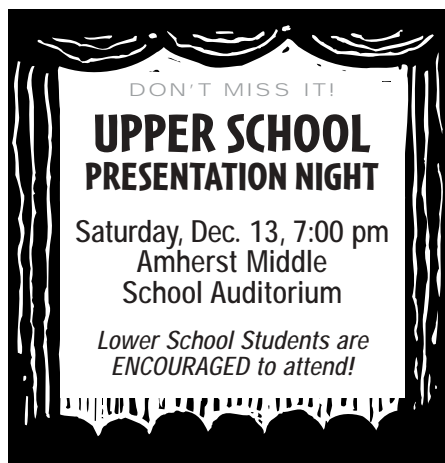


SUMMER WORKSHOP DANCERS Hannah Wildman-Lyon (left) and Marianne Wald (right) bring Russian Dance and smiles to the folks at Center for Extended Care (at Amherst).

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in life not easily forgotten; seeing the connection between some of the youngest and oldest members of humanity I was struck by the realization of the full circle of life and the affirmation that comes from bringing the generations together. I would like to see AB do many more projects like this one in the future.

Summer is well behind us, we have already had our first frost. Many aspects of life at AB are much like last year; I am teaching classes along with returning faculty members Rose Flachs, Sam Kenney, Elizabeth Rising, Jennifer Rockwell. You will also find many new people bringing their considerable skills, energy, and enthusiasm to our students. We have the privilege of living in an area where many promising young professional dancers and teachers live, work, and study; our current faculty is a reflection of the way Amherst Ballet benefits from this.



## WELCOME NEW FACULTY

JEAN IDA HOFFMAN is teaching Pilates Body Conditioning to ten Upper School Students. She can be found teaching a variety of fitness classes in various locales in Northampton, where she has been a physical education teacher in the public schools for many years. She holds degrees in Physical Education, Dance and Special Education. She is also certified through the American Council on Exercise (ACE) as a group fitness instructor and a Pilates Mat instructor. Jean came to the Pilates Method as a dancer and studied with Mary Bowen during the early 1980s.

JACKIE KINSMAN is teaching our very young Saturday morning ballet students in Pre-primary, Primary and Level One. She also teaches Jazz/Modern for students ages 8 to 11 and Modern I for Upper School Students. Jackie graduated magna cum laude from Rutgers University with a B.F.A. in Dance and a B.S. in Exercise Science. After graduation, she worked with Randy James Dance Works with whom she was an original cast member of *View From The Hudson*, a multimedia collaboration based on the tragic events of September 11th. She was a founding member of John Evans and Dancers, which premiered *Dividing Lines* last fall. She's enjoyed performing in the Valley with choreographers Fritha Pengelly, Rodger Blum, Mark Davis, Augusto Soledade, and her fellow graduate students. Jackie is a second-year M.F.A. student in the Department of Dance at Smith College. As a teaching fellow at Smith she's taught Ballet I, Jazz I and II, and Modern II. This spring, she will be teaching Ballet II at Mount Holyoke College, Ballet IV at Smith College, and will serve as a Teaching Assistant for Scientific Foundations, an anatomy class for dancers.

MOLLYE MAXNER is teaching Level Four Ballet on Tuesdays. Artistic Director of Chimaera Physical Theater, Mollye has taught, performed, and choreographed nationally and internationally. A graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts, she has worked annually since 1994 in Turkey, both for Modern Dance Turkey (Ankara) and for Mimar Sinan University (Istanbul). She has taught master classes at Mt. Holyoke College, Amherst College, and UMass. She works each summer with developmentally disabled adults at the Enrichment Center in North Carolina. Her pieces have been seen in America, Turkey, Germany, the Republic of Georgia, Armenia, Taiwan, and Germany. She is currently

studying at Mount Holyoke College as a Frances Perkins Scholar.

ANNE MOORE is teaching four-year-olds in our new Creative Movement Program. She is a recent graduate of Smith College where she minored in dance, and has much experience in teaching pre-schoolers.

KELLY PARSLEY can be found each Monday evening teaching his class of seven enthusiastic and energetic young boys. Kelly is a director, choreographer, and performer. He has two BFAs from the North Carolina School of the Arts, in Contemporary Dance and in Drama (Directing). As the artistic director of Chimaera Physical Theater, he has produced over 250 performances worldwide. He has choreographed for The Golden Mean Theater (Los Angeles), the Great Lakes Theater Festival, the Dallas Theater Center, One Arm Red (NYC), the Ankara State Opera and Ballet's Modern Dance Turkey, Dans Fabrikasi (Istanbul), Pioneer Valley Ballet, Serious Play Theater Ensemble, and the Theater Alliance (Washington DC). He has been a guest artist/instructor for the North Carolina School of the Arts, the South Carolina Governors School for the Arts and Humanities, and Mimar Sinan University (Istanbul). He has performed with the Ankara State Opera's Modern Dance Turkey in Turkey and Egypt. Kelly is in the MFA program in Dance at Smith College.

If you overhear rousing symphonic music that makes you want to leap from your seat and dance, chances are that JOHN WRZOS (pictured) is teaching a class. He has our young dancers turning with enthusiasm and energy to a variety of exciting pieces of music during the A, B, and C Level classes that he teaches. John also teaches the Level B/C Pointe and Variations. He began his dance training at New England Dance Conservatory in 1988. While on faculty there he completed the teachers certificate program at the school for the Hartford Ballet. He has performed with the Hartford Ballet, Connecticut Opera, Laura Glen/Works and Sonia Plumb. John obtained his BFA from the University of Massachusetts and in May received his Masters degree in dance from NYU's Tisch School for the Arts.

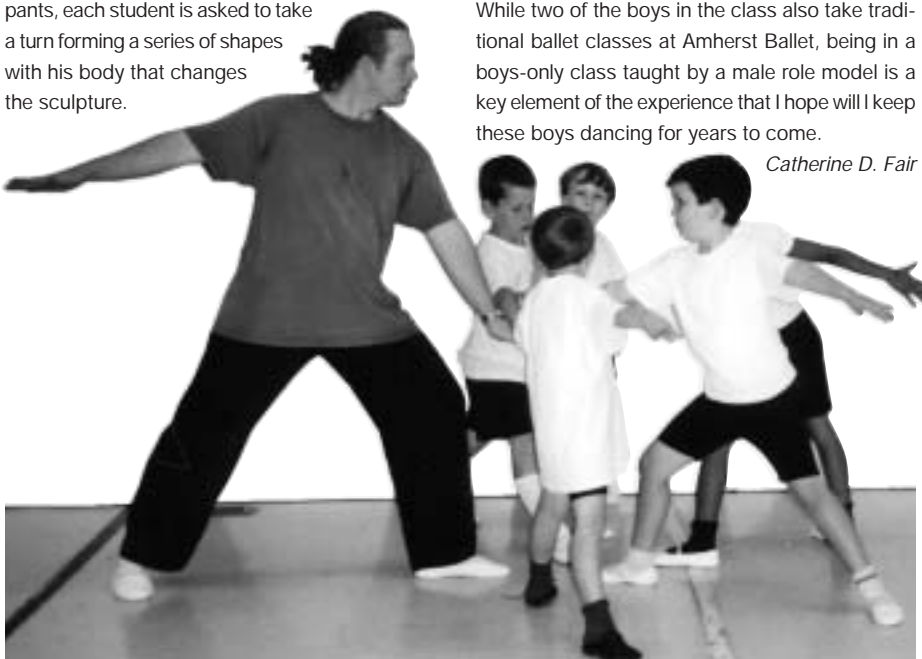


# being BOYS

WHAT IS THE FIRST thing that comes to mind when you think of young boys? As the mother of two boys ages twelve and three, I know that I think movement! Movement everywhere and all the time, until the quietness of sleep is upon them. I see my sons moving through the house at a pace my daughter never did; whether leaping with outstretched hand to hit the ceiling beams in an imaginary basketball dunk, or lunging forward on one knee while directing imaginary laser beams at unfortunate passersby. My boys don't walk through the room, they run!

After watching Kelly Parsley's Boy's Dance class, I realized that he has captured the fundamental essence of boyhood. Jumps, obstacle courses, lunges, gallops, leaps, and lots of imagination define his class. Transitioning skillfully from one activity to another, he keeps seven boys (ages 7-9 years) engaged and moving! Jumps on two feet moving forward across the space are given with the exhortation to do it "like Spiderman," while being reminded to bend and "use your pliés." Walks on the demipointe across the diagonal of the room are done as the boys are asked to think of walking on a tightrope "a million feet in the air." They embellish the analogies given by their teacher and become so caught up in the experience that any self consciousness is nonexistent.

Technical dance exercises are done in neat rows and are interwoven with improvised exercises such as one where teacher and students form what looks like a great human sculpture. While body contact is maintained between all participants, each student is asked to take a turn forming a series of shapes with his body that changes the sculpture.



The result? The unanimous opinion of the dancers' parents is "He loves it!" The boys seem eager to please their teacher and ask "Can I try it by myself?" more than once throughout the class. One mother says "this class has really built my son's self-esteem because he can be successful and proud of himself. I love the way Kelly teaches."

At the close of each class, the boys and their teacher form a tight circle, place their hands together in group handshake, and repeat a "cheer" thought up on the spot by one of the boys. Watching Kelly teach I think of my older son's soccer practices. The coaches run amidst their players, keeping them focused and giving them verbal feedback.

In Russia male ballet dancers are more esteemed than doctors, but in the U.S. boys who want to take ballet are often teased. In Russian culture traditional folk dances have historically been a means for men to express physical prowess, bravura, and strength. Our society often misses the point that dance is by necessity incredibly athletic. Perhaps the young male dancers at Amherst Ballet will grow up to help change the image of boys and men dancing in this country.

I am extremely pleased to have found Kelly Parsley, a natural when it comes to working with boys, and to have the opportunity to beat the unfortunate statistical odds for boys dancing in America. While two of the boys in the class also take traditional ballet classes at Amherst Ballet, being in a boys-only class taught by a male role model is a key element of the experience that I hope will keep these boys dancing for years to come.

*Catherine D. Fair*

## HEALTH ISSUES FOR THE YOUNG DANCER: *An Expanded Course for 2003*

Last Fall, "Health Issues for the Young Dancer" was a class I developed for and taught to some of our Upper School Dancers. This year, it is with pride and excitement that I'm offering a new, expanded version of this course as a free elective to all Upper School dancers interested in learning about anatomy, dance physiology, dance injuries, alignment, and nutrition. It is a wonderful opportunity for all involved.

"Health Issues for the Young Dancer" was originally designed to fulfill my senior BFA Dance major requirement, and was based on my work with Dr. Andrea Watkins. Dr. Watkins, now retired from the University of Massachusetts, is a pioneer in the field of dance physiology and science. She co-wrote a book with Dr. Priscilla Clarkson, who is now head of the Exercise Science Department at UMass. I will be working to improve and expand the course to fulfill my thesis requirement for the Commonwealth College Honors Program, and I am honored that Dr. Clarkson has agreed to serve as head of my thesis committee. Also serving on this committee will be Kenneth Lipitz, who is on the dance faculty at UMass.

There are currently thirteen eager and excited students enrolled in the course. They are hungry for knowledge about their own bodies, and how the body functions while dancing. There are even a few students who took the course last year and are enrolled in it again this year. Laura Cox, one of the repeat students, feels that, "The class really makes you more aware of things that you wouldn't have necessarily paid attention to, such as how to prevent and treat injuries." She also says, "It's in no way like social studies, where you're falling asleep from boredom. You get up and move around as you learn, and it's really a lot of fun."

While this class is instrumental in facilitating the development of stronger and healthier dancers, the lessons they learn will be relevant to them throughout their lives. With all the scientific knowledge and research available to us in this day and age, there is no reason for such vital information to be kept from our young dancers. They should have the knowledge and tools needed to care for and protect their bodies so that they may live healthy lives as dancers and as people. I am grateful that Amherst Ballet is allowing its dancers to take part in a very unique educational opportunity.

*Jennifer A. Rockwell*

# From your SPECIAL PROJECTS DIRECTOR...

**THIS HAS BEEN** an exciting but extremely busy role to fill this fall at Amherst Ballet. Our first special project began in the summer workshops as described by Catherine Fair and premiered for members and invited guests on September 7th at the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art. Not only did Eric Carle and his wife attend the opening, but actor John Lithgow brought his parents who are old friends of mine.

Catherine and I have worked with a total of twenty-seven dancers ages seven to fourteen, to create *The Very Lonely Firefly*. Lauren Bowie and Aliya Cycon have done a superb job of assuming the title role and dancing the full fifteen minutes of the ballet. Catherine Fair did a wonderful job creating the choreography to Karen Tarlow's music and Walter Carroll's narration. The entire cast of dancers met the challenge of dancing in masks and using electricity to tell this wonderful story. I had three special teen-agers backstage for all these performances. Anna Caldwell came every performance Saturday to help dress the children, be with them backstage, and oversee them during the break between the two performances. She made this experience very enjoyable for the little dancers. Denise Howard-Corrin and Kara Bowie divided the performances and stepped in to do a walk-on role with the owl pole puppet and also helped dress and oversee the children. We are blessed at Amherst Ballet to witness these very special young women who will develop into tomorrow's leaders with the confidence we are providing for them.

**ERIC CARLE** tries out some of the lights on the set of *The Very Lonely Firefly* at the Eric Carle Museum with Therese Donohue and Catherine Fair.

I spent the summer translating Eric Carle's illustrations into masks and costumes. Volunteers from the community helped to paint some of the fabric in the art room at the museum. The costs of the production were underwritten by grants from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, Art Angels, Xeric Foundation, Eric Carle Foundation, Dean's Beans, and individual contributions. Between our two casts, we have thirteen performances. Project number two also started in the summer workshops with choreographers Catherine Fair and Elizabeth Rising Musgrave. Touring local senior care facilities with a final performance at the Bangs Senior Center's Friday Showcase series, *Russian National Dances* was created to perform at the Eric Carle Museum in November in conjunction with an exhibition of Russian children's book illustrators. Fifteen dancers are participating in this event, which premiered for members on November 5th. We had an additional opportunity to perform several of these dances at a Russian Tea sponsored by the Providence Behavioral Health Hospital on October 21st, in conjunction with our third special project this fall, *The Nutcracker*.

The Moscow Ballet was so pleased with our collaboration last year for their *Great Russian Nutcracker* that they asked us to participate again this year. A company soloist, Svetlana Todinova visited Amherst Ballet giving five master classes and running a public audition for children wishing to participate in the production. We chose seventy-seven dancers representing thirteen area dance schools. They will be rehearsing every Saturday and Sunday with our faculty members Jennifer Rockwell and Sam Kenney.

I will simultaneously rehearse six little sentinels for the variations in Act II. The Moscow Ballet will arrive the day of the performance, hopefully in time for a run-through



## SPECIAL PROJECTS

**Saturdays, November 8 & 15**  
**RUSSIAN NATIONAL DANCES**  
 Eric Carle Museum  
 1:00 and 3:00  
 Free Admission

**Saturday, November 22**  
**RUSSIAN NATIONAL DANCES**  
 First Anniversary Celebration  
 Eric Carle Museum  
 12:15 and 1:15  
 Free Admission

**Saturdays, Nov. 29th and Dec. 13th**  
**THE VERY LONELY FIREFLY**  
 Eric Carle Museum  
 1:00 and 3:00  
 Admission \$1.00  
 Reservations 658-1113

**Saturday, December 6th**  
**MOSCOW BALLET**  
 The Great Russian  
 Nutcracker  
 2:00 PM and 7:30 PM  
 UMass FAC Concert Hall  
 Tickets: 545-2511



**SVETLANA TODINOVA** in class with Primary and Level 1, and after class with Level A.



before the curtain goes up. They travel with an experienced wardrobe mistress, who will fit each of the participating children in their costumes that day. The night before our performance they give two performances in Somerville, New Jersey, then get on a bus and head to Amherst!

Selecting children at the auditions depends on their size and height, as well, as their ability to follow directions and dance. The backstage experience for our young dancers mingling with these Russian professionals is a special memory for their lives. Most of the Company dancers do not speak English, but by their example of dedication and superb professionalism in their art, language is not necessary for the impact it will have on each of these participating children. If you have not yet seen this version of *The Nutcracker*, based on a theme of world peace and harmony, treat yourself this year to this spectacular production. The dancing is superb, our well-rehearsed children are wonderful!

*Therese Brady Donohue*

## LUCY SEGAR... company dancer

**D**ANCING AT Amherst Ballet has taught Lucy Segar how to be disciplined and focused. "The concentration and strength required by ballet dancers is so intense and all consuming that I've learned to tap into a part of my brain that does not get used all the time. Dancing at AB has also taught me how to become an individual and express myself within a set art form."

While she enjoys all of her classes, Lucy has a special love for ballet. "Ballet class will always take me back to that focused artistic place that I love so much, but as I grow as a dancer and a person, I feel drawn toward modern dance. The range of movement is exhilarating, and I hope to further this new passion."

AB has been home base for Lucy's dancing for 12 years, since she was 5 years old, but she has stretched out into a larger dance world more than most young dancers. She has studied locally at Smith College with Roger Blum, (who cast her in a Five-College piece last year) and farther afield in summer programs at Walnut Hill, the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, and Boston Ballet (see below). The most valuable part of all her summer programs was "what they taught me about myself as a dancer. They are a very good way to improve

one's training and to learn about the professional dance world. I learned the most at Boston Ballet, I really enjoyed the intense training and schedule."

One of her AB favorite performances was *Four Little Swans* with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra "This was my first truly inspiring ballet performance experience. It was so exciting to perform with a live orchestra." And last year's performance "was filled with beautiful pieces and very exciting to dance."

Lucy is a senior this year at Amherst Regional High School. "It's sometimes hard to juggle all of the work and pressures of high school, both academic and social, but I find that I'm able to complete my work better with a given time constraint. Dancing gives me a set schedule and keeps me busy, very busy!" Lucy volunteers at the Soup Kitchen in Amherst. She is working on an independent study in photography at school, where she

is also a member of SADD (Students Against Destructive Decision).

Lucy is looking at liberal arts colleges for next year, mostly schools on the east coast with dance programs. Although she's not planning to major in dance, "I will always be involved with dance, but I am looking forward to using the time at college to explore my

different interests." Lucy's interests include education and psychology, as well as literature and writing.

We can be sure she will shine in future pursuits, just as she shines on stage here at home. With her confidence and strength, and naturally exuberant style, Lucy Segar is one of those people who make it look easy. Watching Lucy perform, you can't help but smile with her, you can feel her enjoyment of dancing. That joy, and the discipline and focus she learned about at Amherst Ballet, are sure to guarantee her success!

Pam Glaven



## THE BARRES at Amherst Ballet

have a distinct feel. They are squeaky, the wood feels grainy beneath one's hands, and I know their shape and height by heart. At every studio where I have studied, while I plié and tendu, I silently compare the feel and height of the barre to the ones at Amherst Ballet. When I take class in Amherst I find a sense of familiarity and comfort in the timid squeak if I am holding on too tight, or the worn-down, soft patches where many dancers have held on.

When I first went away to Walnut Hill to dance for the summer I was unprepared for how different a studio, with its distinct mirrors and floors and barres, could make me feel. The barres at Walnut Hill were metal and the black paint on them was chipping, but I liked the way they felt cool under my palm. My experience at Walnut Hill opened my eyes to a world of dancers and teachers that I had never experienced. I loved dancing in the open, high-ceilinged, studios, and I learned that dance had an important place in my life. I was not entirely sure what this place was or where it would take me, but Walnut Hill was integral in building the passion I feel for dance and the

means by which I express that passion.

I remember returning to Amherst Ballet with new force and strength in my legs. My first class back I took hold of the familiar wood and felt a sense of ease flow gently through my muscles. The dancing at Walnut Hill had been surrounded by so many new things that I had never relaxed in the same way I could at Amherst Ballet.

My summer experiences have all been unique, and the six weeks that I spent at the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet differed in that although I was more prepared technically for the dancing than I had been the summer before, I was in no way prepared for the intensity of dance that I

would be exposed to. The number of classes and the new work ethic that I had gained, forced me to push past fatigue and really learn about my body and the physical effects of ballet. I left CPYB with callouses on my hands (not to mention my feet), little worn spots underneath my fingers from the hours I had spent holding on to the barre.

The barres at Boston Ballet were a sleek white metal that was inscribed with the names of all the donors who contributed money to the cost of the building. This past summer, as I stretched with my leg up on the barre, feeling my legs tingle, I would read the names and silently compose a small story about how this donor came to love the Boston Ballet. My experience at Boston Ballet taught me an incredible amount. I learned about *Giselle* and *La Sylphide*, I learned how to dance with a partner, I learned why I love the specific feeling of Amherst Ballet's barres under my hands, and I learned that no matter how or when, dance will always bring me joy and be a part of my life.

Lucy Segar

DON'T MISS IT!


## SMITH COLLEGE MFA THESIS CONCERT

February 12 - 14, 2004

Featuring choreography and  
performance by Amherst Ballet

Faculty Members

SAM KENNEY and  
JACQUELINE KINSMAN,  
and performance by Faculty Member  
JENNIFER ROCKWELL

 For more information call:  
(413) 585-ARTS

## SPIFFING UP AMHERST BALLET

You might have noticed a number of changes to Amherst Ballet since last spring. A group of volunteers worked throughout August and September to create a new office for Director Catherine Fair, create a dressing room for the faculty, relocate the computer and do some fall cleaning. Mailboxes for students and faculty have been moved onto the front porch (so no one can miss their messages and handouts as they walk out the door!), giving more space to the lobby for waiting families and homework-doing dancers. Shelves with photo albums, toys, costume catalogues and books have been moved around, we hope you will continue to enjoy them. Resale items (tights, leotards, ballet shoes) have been moved to the hall near the bathroom and faculty dressing room; the counter there makes looking through the boxes easier. And please check out our lovely selection of boutique sale items (t-shirts, notecards and keychains). They're not just for buying at performances!

Hooray for the hard working vacuumers, window washers, shelf builders, tile layers, carpet removers, desk builders, painters and boutique arrangers!! Many thanks to Margaret and Eliza Arsenault, Elaine Brighty, Elizabeth Duda, Catherine and ES Fair, Patricia Galvis-Assmus, Kathy Glime-LaMotte and her Auntie Mary, Jennifer Jones, Andrea Leibson, Katherine Mayfield, Cathy Osman, Criss Quigley, Howard Sonoda, Susana Breña, Maida Lanstein, and Alex, Jack, and Lydia Wileden.

KEEPING UP WITH

## JULIA GRIFFIN... company dancer

JULIA GRIFFIN is one of those fortunate people whose artistic gifts work together beautifully. Clearly a lovely dancer, she is multitalented and excels in music, art, and theater. The expressiveness and musicality seen in her dancing have been cultivated through her study of several art forms.

Julia plays the flute with the Amherst Regional Senior High Wind Ensemble, and has been in the

Western Mass District Band for the past two years. For three years she has been in the Hampshire Shakespeare Young Company, and has performed in *As You Like It*, *A Winter's Tale*, and *Love's Labor Lost*, along with attending eight weekly classes and numerous rehearsals at AB. In her spare time (something she doesn't have much of) Julia draws, paints, sculpts, and works with "whatever art project I can get my hands on." Last summer she attended a painting intensive at Putney Art School in Vermont.

How does she do it all? Julia feels that focus and time management are the keys to success. Her obvious enjoyment of what she does comes through whether she is performing, taking a dance class, or practicing her flute.

This enjoyment has enabled her to give extra time to the artistic pursuits that bring her so much pleasure. Julia also feels that the discipline and determination required to succeed as a dancer have taught her how to push herself farther than she previously thought possible. She feels that many aspects of dance are extremely challenging and require a significant commitment. "I am

so glad that when things have been hard I have kept going; I can't imagine what it would be like if it hadn't."

Julia began expressing her love for movement as soon as she could walk, and danced her way through early childhood. Her dance training began officially when she enrolled in the Pre-Primary class at AB. One of her fondest early memories is of rocking her stuffed rabbit while preparing a dance for the annual presentation. She continued her ballet lessons through Level Five (the last level in the Lower School) but felt unsure about making the commitment to training in the Upper School. Her love for dance coupled with encouragement from her peers and teachers convinced her to return to AB where she has been very involved ever since.

She finds it difficult to name one style of dance as her favorite. While she loves the precision of ballet, she enjoys the freedom of Modern dance and

a chance to "let go," and finds that Jazz dance allows her to show the confident side of her personality. Julia has performed in all three styles, but the performance that most stands out in her memory is *The Magician's Nephew* (2000 and 2002), in which she danced two roles. Working together with dancers of all ages, and the diversity and size of the cast was what made the experience memorable.

Amherst Ballet Theatre Company's recent tour to the Round Top Theatre in Maine was a great experience for Julia. She appreciated the chance to share dance with a completely different audience in a new community, and to develop even closer ties with her friends. "The best part of dancing at AB has definitely been spending so much time with so many wonderful people. (Julia has been taking classes since she was five years old with fellow seniors Libby Woodbridge, Lucy Segar, and Lindsay Smith). We've become so close and have had so many experiences together that this is really my second family. I don't think I'll ever meet a more open and friendly group of young women. I will miss everyone immensely when I leave."

While Julia will be leaving AB to attend college next fall, she certainly won't be leaving her love for dance behind. She is looking at several colleges and plans to major in art and possibly minor in dance. Although she is not sure where she'll be, she does know that dance will continue to be a part of her life, "Wherever I go, and whatever I do, I will definitely continue dancing."

Catherine Fair



## LIBBY WOODBRIDGE... company dancer

**"VIVACIOUS!" "DYNAMIC!" "An Original!"**

These are the words used by the teachers at Amherst Ballet to describe Amherst High School senior, Libby Woodbridge. Can anyone who saw her perform the role of the Cat in *The Magician's Nephew* ever forget her uncanny feline grace? Can anyone who has seen her perform later jazz pieces on stage forget the way her eyes blaze and seem to connect with every single person in the audience? Libby is unforgettable. But she does not save her intensity for the stage. "Dancing is dancing. Each class is a performance!"

Like many little girls, Libby started dancing in her living room to *The Nutcracker* with her sister Margaret. She began taking classes at Amherst Ballet in second grade and has always loved to dance. However, when she took her first jazz class in Level A, she found her element, her true passion in dance. "Jazz is where I really break out." Libby is unique at Amherst Ballet in that she has made jazz the focus of her dance training. This is not to say that she does not appreciate ballet, she does very much. "My ballet training has given me so much that I have taken into everything else

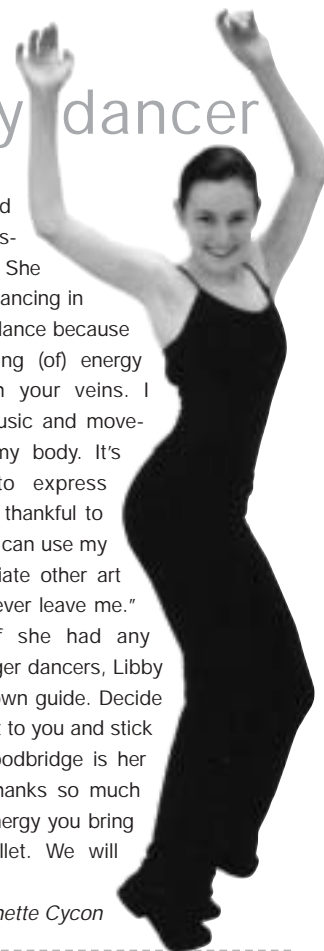
that I do (from) jazz to theater. Ballet is the base of dance. It teaches you how to control your body, how to move in your body, how to create a feeling or a character. Ballet teaches you how to hold your head high and how to perform no matter what kind of performance it is."

But once in the Upper School, Libby discovered that the classical ballet route was not really for her. She danced en pointe for one year and stopped. But she did not want to stop dancing, so with the support of her teachers, she created a dance program that allowed her to follow her heart. "I was much happier for it. I love jazz because it is so versatile, depending on the music, the feeling, the movement. There is more room to express who you are as an individual. Sam (Kenney) is a great teacher because she believes that each girl has something different to bring to dance and encourages us to not change ourselves, but to bring it out in our dancing." In addition to two jazz classes, Libby takes one ballet class to keep her in shape and focused on technique.

Future plans? Libby is looking for colleges where she can pursue a double major in some

liberal arts field and her other passion, the theater. She wants to keep dancing in college. "I love dance because I love the feeling (of) energy flowing through your veins. I crave feeling music and movement through my body. It's another way to express myself. I am so thankful to dance for that. I can use my body to appreciate other art forms. It won't ever leave me." When asked if she had any advice for younger dancers, Libby said, "Be your own guide. Decide what's important to you and stick to it!" Libby Woodbridge is her own woman! Thanks so much Libby, for the energy you bring to Amherst Ballet. We will miss you.

Annette Cycon



## From your BOARD PRESIDENT . . .

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE that I write my first message to you as Board President. There is so much happening at Amherst Ballet, and this is an exciting and challenging time to be associated with this wonderful organization. Most important from the Board's perspective is welcoming Amherst Ballet's new Director, Catherine Fair. Catherine is a treasure who brings artistry, compassion, and a commitment to running the Ballet, to each of her classes, and to her performance creations.

Jerry Schoen, who served on the Board for 3 years, including 2 as President, has moved on to other endeavors, leaving huge shoes to fill. Jerry has been tireless in his work for AB, leading the Board through difficult transitions and decisions, tracking down commercial sponsors and donors, carefully coordinating fundraisers, and cheerfully encouraging us all to do our little bit to help Amherst Ballet grow. Jerry's energy and dedication to the Ballet cannot be replaced, and we all will miss his leadership and insight. Thankfully, however, we have not really lost Jerry. He has graciously agreed to organize the Amherst Ballet Guild, a group of parents and other volunteers willing to give a little bit of their time and skills to help the Ballet thrive and grow.

The Guild will perform several functions that complement the work of the AB board and staff. For example, the Guild will organize informal activities to help families of new and current students get to know one another and the organization better. These activities will help parents understand the dance world their children are entering, and learn that the Ballet experience is so much more than what happens in the classroom itself. Members of the Guild may also give one evening, afternoon, or even just an hour during the year to help with one of the various fundraising events, such as the tag sale, bake sales, or performances. The Guild can help with tasks that take expertise, energy, and people—everything from recruiting ushers to helping with costumes, backstage organization, promotional materials, photography, and our computer system. The Guild will tap into the variety of talent and expertise that lies within the families associated with the Ballet and, by doing so, enhance the quality of experience of both our dancers and their parents, while also helping to keep tuition and costs to families down.

The Board and staff express their deep gratitude to Andrea Leibson and her fellow volunteers for all

the work they did during the summer to refresh and refurbish our building. There is a lighter and brighter feel to the school, and for that you can thank Andrea. Indeed, you can do that quite easily. It is often her smiling face that is greeting you as you come in. Andrea has taken on the job of Office Manager, relieving Therese Donohue of some of the day to day administrative duties of running the school. Mrs. Donohue continues to be very active with our dancers, but is now able to focus more of her energies on what she truly likes to do.

With support from Andrea and each of you, we all look forward to a great year. Thank you.

Jim Duda

The board, staff, and dancers of  
Amherst Ballet  
send love and sympathy to  
Company Dancer  
Irene Bright-Dumm  
and her family.



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 Director  
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