

WESTSIDE SCHOOL of BALLET



Westside School of Ballet Presents:

BEYOND THE BOX ADULT DANCE COLLECTIVE

Saturday, August 2nd, 2025
2pm + 5pm

New Roads School – Moss Theater
3131 Olympic Blvd, Santa Monica, CA

ARTISTIC COORDINATOR: SVEN TOORVALD

Westside School of Ballet has been offering adult ballet classes for over 50 years, catering to all levels of experience and ability. Whether a beginner or advanced dancer, if one wants to learn the basics or refine technique, wants to dance for fun or for fitness, Westside has a class for everyone.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OWNER: ALLEGRA CLEGG
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: MARTINE HARLEY
MANAGING DIRECTOR: RICHARD TAHVILDARAN JESSWEIN
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: ADRIAN BLAKE MITCHELL

"Beyond the Box" Adult Dance Collective
A Community Rooted in Growth, Generosity, and a Love of Dance

ARTISTIC COORDINATOR: SVEN TOORVALD
PRODUCTION COMMITTEE: ADDIE VAN GESSEL, MARY JO FRAZIER WILZIG
COSTUME DIRECTOR: LIZ KOK
COSTUMER: ELISA HAMED
ASSOCIATE COSTUMER: PAULINE CHENG,
MIDNIGHT WALTZ HEADPIECE: KIMBERLY OCHOA
MARKETING AND PUBLICITY: JEWELS SOLHEIM-ROE
TICKET SALES DIRECTOR: LESLIE WALLIS

BEYOND THE BOX MISSION STATEMENT

“Beyond the Box” Adult Dance Collective is a dynamic, intergenerational community of dancers united by a shared love of ballet and deep commitment to the future of the art form. As active participants in Westside School of Ballet’s adult program, we celebrate the joy of movement while serving as visible advocates and supporters of the youth academy that trains tomorrow’s professional dancers.

We recognize the essential role we play—not only as dancers ourselves, but as a sustaining force that helps ensure access, excellence, and opportunity for the next generation. Through our presence in the studio, performance attendance, fundraising efforts, mentorship, and volunteerism, we help provide a stable foundation for the Westside Ballet’s continued growth and artistic achievement.

The adult dance program fills a vital and often overlooked need in the cultural landscape: it offers a space for lifelong learning, connection, and self-expression—proving that dance does not end at a certain age or skill level. We are proud to be part of a community that models resilience, passion, and purpose for the aspiring dancers who look to us not just as audiences, but as collaborators in building a thriving dance ecosystem.

Please continue reading below to learn more about the dances, choreographers, and dancers.

And please consider making a donation to help keep this program thriving and growing. Your donations will support scholarships for next year. [@westsideballetofsantamonica](https://www.instagram.com/westsideballetofsantamonica)

Mutiny on the Boundaries

choreographed by
Chasen Greenwood

music

Outer, Adrian Berenguer,
Only Believe, Max Richter,
Constellation, Adrian Berenguer

dancers

Maya Zeevi	Kimberly Ochoa	Bari Grossman
Maria Pena	Emily Detmer	Chandler Eldridge
Laura Fuller	Emilie Feyler	Marisa Beresford
Rebecca Rainhart	Amanda Li	Hyunjin Kim
Shannon Erdmann	Madeline Duff	Antonina Anselmo

Come Together

choreographed by
Charlie Hodges

assistant to the choreographer
Rachel Lipstone

music
Joseph Haydn, String Quartet No. 5
in E Flat Major, No. 3 Presto in
D Major, The Angeles String Quartet

Aihui Wang	dancers Liliana Isella	Connie Bell
Jaelyn Lytle	Tina Peng	Sheila Ahorian

Too Good to Be True

choreographed by
Aihui Wang

music
Lin Hai, Friends

Zhuangzi dreamt he was a butterfly—fluttering freely with others, unaware of himself.
Was it Zhuang dreaming of the butterfly, or the butterfly dreaming Zhuang?
In a dream too graceful to be real, what we imagine begins to fracture, and we are left to wonder if knowing what's real
matters at all.

Ashna Madni	dancers Erika Snell	Caitlin Kreinheder
Samantha Gonzalez	Hiromi Levy	Erin Lewis
Alex Del Rosario.	Amanda Li	

Look

choreographed by
Charlie Hodges

dance captain
Rachel Lipstone

music
Ludwig van Beethoven, Violin Sonata No. 1 in D Major

Kirstin Poirier-Whiteleys	dancers Yael Hartstein	Leslie Wallis
Hillary McCarthy	Hiromi Levy	Mary Ruble
Perris McCracken	Mary Jo Frazier-Wilzig	Laura Fuller
Tina Peng	Maria Pena	Connie Bell
	Amanda Schachter	

“Look” is being filmed for a documentary that focuses on the indefatigable spirit of these adult dancers who pursue ballet, not just to feel beautiful, but also to feel accomplished. They are the embodiment of integrity through perseverance, discomfort, and grace.

Nuit de Lâme

choreographed by
Dani Savka

music
Vivaldi Four Seasons -
Summer 2+3 as arranged
by Max Richter

Nnenna Anyiwo.	dancers Ashna Madni	Erika Snell
Laila Madni	Lily Shih	Laura Fuller
Kelsey Bauman	Lauren Van Vleet	Chandler Eldridge
Katie Layton	Nan Lin	Jessica Nicole Todmann
Darlene Dirstine	Rebecca Rainhart	Melissa Taw
	Mimi Gu*	

Nuit de Lame is set to the evocative music of Max Richter, weaving intricate waltz-inspired movement with emotional depth. The ballet explores how light and darkness must often dance together within the human soul.

Midnight Waltz

choreographed by
Liz Wasynczuk

costume assistance
Kimberly Ochoa

music
Midnight Waltz, David Garrett,
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Jaelyn Lytle	dancers Kimberly Ochoa	Angelique Smith
Bari Grossman	Annabella Ferraiuolo	Caitlin Kreinheder
Yuri Nagahara	Eliana Lieberman	Suqin Duan
Lacey Strachan	Katie Layton	Marisa Beresford
Tracy Malone	Sheila Ahoraiian	Roseangelica DeGuzman

Swan Lake, Waltz Act 1

staged by
James Ady

assistant
Lydia Fabre

music
Swan Lake, Tchaikovsky

Mimi Gu	dancers Tanya Nobal	Angelique Smith
Jaelyn Lytle	Nnenna Anyiwo	Leslie Wallis
Rachel Oda	Samantha Gonzalez	Erin Lewis
Vanessa Melendez	Nan Lin	Yuri Nagahara
Kelsey Bauman	Kimberly Ochoa	Suqin Duan
Emily Detmer	Nicole Busken Shipman	Callie Bonne
Darlene Dirstine	Alex Del Rosario	Emerson Wong
Gigi Lauretta	Sage Biale	Megan Rara
	Zane Jesswein	

This Tchaikovsky waltz from Act I of Swan Lake is typically set in the castle ballroom of Prince Siegfried. In our version, the Prince and his Page are in the forest. Rather than hunt, the Prince decides, he'd prefer to dance. The local villagers are only too happy to accommodate this, performing for and dancing with Prince Siegfried.

Palladio Redux

choreographed by
Sven Toorvald
music

Palladio:1. Allegretto, Karl Jenkins,
Metamorphose String Orchestra

Annabella Ferraiuolo
Mary Jo Frazier-Wilzig
Monica Klimczak
Hiromi Levy
Madeline Duff

dancers
Samantha Gonzalez
Perris McCracken
Emerson Wong
Aihui Wang
Laila Madni

Leslie Wallis
Yael Hartstein
Emily Detmer
Jessica Nicole Todmann

A neo-classical, ballet that expresses precision movement, like the inner workings of a clock, in an abstract interpretation of music.

Smooth Steps, Shattered Hearts

choreographed by
Roxane Milotti
music

You Rock My World,
Much Too Soon by Michael Jackson

Lily Shih

dancers
Tanya Nobal
Melissa Taw

Emerson Wong

Love Me

choreographed by
Jeni Jones
music

I Can't Make You Love Me
by Bonnie Raitt

Louisa Foong
Mary Jo Frazier-Wilzig
Addie Van Gessel

dancers
Ashna Madni
Monica Klimczak
Ray Camacho
Sheila Ahorian

Erika Snell
Aihui Wang
Angela Check

"LOVE ME" is Jeni Jones's heartfelt, choreographic ode to unrequited love of all varieties. With an elevated concert jazz vibe, the piece is a timeless Classical Lyrical Jazz Dance honoring Jeni's deep roots training for decades in the Luigi style and technique with her beloved teachers, Hama and Frances J. Roach. Thank you. "Never stop moving, " ~ Luigi

Chau Paris

choreographed by
Damien Diaz
music

Astor Piazzolla,
Chau Paris + Libertango

Louisa Foong
Nnenna Anyiwo

dancers
Mimi Gu
Laila Madni

Annabella Ferraiuolo
Angelique Smith

Nan Lin
Perris McCracken
Alex Del Rosario
Melissa Taw

Monica Klimczak
Suqin Duan
Tracy Malone
Linda Pahl

Tanya Nobal
Gigi Laurreta
Hyunjin Kim

A classically based, Tango-inspired, ballet that expresses an abstract interpretation of how Cafe Society ladies, bound by the burdens and restrictions of upper-class social etiquette, dance innuendos of their innermost desires.

A note from the choreographer: "This experience has been incredibly rewarding to choreograph specifically for Out of the Box Dance Collective. When I began to work on this choreography, I only had a concept and some music. I did not know which dancers I would get to choreograph on because I did not choose them myself...actually, they chose me, which made the process unexpectedly wonderfully challenging and exciting. Through this process, not only did I get to learn about their abilities, but I also got to know them as people, primarily through this piece where I invited them to dance from a personal place. I believe I became a better choreographer through this experience mainly because I had to really feel what was best for the dancers and not just my own vision. Their vulnerability, strength, talent, and authenticity inspired me every rehearsal, and I am proud of them and the piece they let me choreograph just for them. Grand Merde to the dancers of "Chau Paris". You have my heart."

PRODUCTION



Co-Producer: Addie Van Gessel

Addie Van Gessel lives in Marina del Rey. She and her husband own 2 successful bar & grills in Venice and Santa Monica and proud to serve on the Santa Monica Chamber board of Directors since 2023. Addie has been dancing at WSB since 1994 and relishes the life-long friendships she's forged and the performance related opportunities she's been given is astounding. WSB is truly a second home for all its students and Addie is humbled to part of this ever-growing community.

Beyond honored to have been tapped by some WSB board members to produce the adult performance showcase in 2023. Creating the foundation, in collaboration with my dear friend Mary Jo Frazier-Wilzig, from which the adult dancer community continues to grow, has truly been the highlight of life in Los Angeles. There is nothing like the joy I see exuding from the dancers as they rehearse and perform on stage, many for the first time, and more so the growing number of talented dancers who are coming back to the stage after thinking this was behind them.



Co-Producer: Mary Jo Frazier Wilzig

Growing up in Kansas, classical piano competitions were where my journey began. Daily practicing, bi-weekly lessons, and a caring teacher prepared me for the stage. My path led me to Los Angeles where I began teaching dentistry at UCLA and had a private practice in Santa Monica. I was a busy mother of three, yet played the piano daily. 30 years ago, I walked into Westside School of Ballet and reignited my passion for classical arts. Today, I am a devoted student of ballet, one of the producers of the showcase, the adult liaison to the Board of Westside, and the unofficial Mayor. Coming daily to Westside has become my source of joy and connection to fellow dancers. I am forever grateful to Allegra Clegg for keeping Westside Ballet a haven for dancers of any age.



Ticket Sales: Leslie Wallis

Leslie works as an employment attorney. She is also a mindfulness facilitator. Leslie started ballet at 4 and studied in LA (Cecchetti with Olga Fricker and also with Margaret Hills and Stanley Holden) before going to the Royal Ballet School at 16. Leslie danced with the Maryland Ballet for a season, then was a ballet major in college. After college she danced for a few years in Germany (where she met my husband who was an Opera Singer at the same theater. Then law school. Leslie also taught ballet and she's still dancing! This process has been a joyous creative process of awakening, improving and creating and supporting community. It is a community that expresses itself through movement. Although as I have

aged, my body is not always cooperative, my heart still is, and I know I am so fortunate to be part of this amazing project.

Costume Director: Liz Kok

Costumer: Elisa Spanudis Hamed

Elisa is a passionate and experienced ballet professional with a global background in classical dance, tango, dance, runway modeling, and art entrepreneurship. She is the founder and owner of the Ballet Shop "Elisa" in Santa Monica, California which has served the dance community for over 26 years. Dedicated to helping amateur and professional dancers achieve artistic excellence by providing personalized guidance and professional quality dancewear. Elisa has international experience in Argentina and Egypt, including performances at the Cairo Opera House and fashion modeling in diverse cultural markets.

Associate Costumer: Pauline Cheng

Pauline is a Project Manager in Corporate Real Estate, responsible for managing interior construction projects for a major studio. She started ballet as an adult at Westside with Aimee Gaudio's intro classes and has never looked back! She has continued to take classes from a variety of teachers at the studio and at different levels and is in awe of the level of instruction available to adults at Westside (as well as the talented pianists who provide the musical inspiration for us in every class)! She has also found an amazing community of adult dancers with a variety of different dance backgrounds who inspire her in every class.

I participated in previous Showcases performances and loved the process, learning a lot about the performance aspect of ballet that helps me in class every week. This year when I didn't feel I could handle the physical rigours of Showcase training, I asked the Production team if I could assist behind the scenes. Working with the Costume Committee has been a joy, and allowed me to contribute the skills I have through my paid job on a project that is fulfilling in a very different way. I can't wait to see all of the wonderful dancers in their beautiful costumes!

ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHERS



Chasen Greenwood – "Mutiny on the Boundaries"

Newly director and choreographer of "The Realm Company", Chasen has produced several sold-out performances around California. Most recent work since the company launched includes "Billy Night" at Paramount Studios, a new movie coming out this year directed by Alec Roth featuring Al Pacino & Charlie Heaton, and "En Evant" for Neutrogena Studios.

Chasen has had the opportunity to work with artists such as Lady Gaga's choreographer Richy Jackson, and Director Neal Brennan for the Xbox Super Bowl commercial. He has been featured in Dancer Magazine as "one to watch", completing a nationwide tour as soloist with State Street Ballet. His choreography won "Best Young Choreographer" at Regional America Southwest.

Chasen began his career performing with Leann Rimes, and in the musical Casper (national tour) with Broadway legend Chita Rivera, training on full scholarship with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Houston Ballet, and Ballet Austin. Chasen performed in the West Coast premiere of "Newsies," as well as on the East Coast. [@chasengreenwood](https://www.instagram.com/chasengreenwood)



Charlie Hodges – "Come Together" + "Look"

Charlie Hodges has performed in more than 30 nations and 100's of cities, collaborating most predominantly with Sacramento Ballet, Im-ij-re, Twyla Tharp and Benjamin Millepied.

He is a former member of Phi Beta Kappa and a Mary Gates Research Scholar, graduating Summa Cum Laude from the University of Washington earning High Honors degrees in Dance and Architecture.

He was voted the Best Male Dancer of 2003 by the European Critics Choice Awards, made his Broadway debut in 2006 in the Tharp musical *Movin' Out*, and won the 2010 Fred Astaire Award for Best Male Dancer on Broadway for the creation of his role, Marty, in the Tharp/Sinatra musical *Come Fly Away*.

In 2012 Mr. Hodges became one of the founding members of L.A. Dance Project as dancer and Rehearsal Director.

After retiring from performing full-time in 2015 he enrolled in the prestigious Art Center for design. Charlie gets his dance fix teaching full-time at California Institute of the Arts, and he gets his design fix contracting with the Jet Propulsion Lab (NASA). His recent TEDx talk discusses how failure is a required tool for success.



Rachel Lipstone – Assistant to Charlie

Rachel trained in classical ballet starting at age 3, beginning her training at Ciara Dance Studio and California Dance Theatre. She later studied at Houston Ballet School and San Francisco Ballet School. After a long hiatus from ballet, Rachel returned to adult classes at Westside Ballet and has been working with Charlie Hodges as an assistant for the Adult Showcase. She is honored to have the trust of Charlie and the dancers to support the creation of this piece.

Aihui Wang – “Too Good to be True”



Aihui grew up in China and now is pursuing her PhD in Biochemistry at UCLA. Aihui began ballet in July 2021 at Western Ballet in the Bay Area, and joined Westside Ballet in Summer 2023 after moving to LA.

I feel very special and grateful to be both a dancer and a choreographer in this showcase. It's challenging but really rewarding to use dance to share a piece of my heart. Dancing in pieces choreographed by our teachers has also been a gift. Studying, feeling, and performing their work allowed us to connect with each other and with the movement in a soft yet powerful way. To me, this showcase is a celebration of community, where we tell stories with our bodies, and creating something that goes beyond words. [@aihuiawww](#)

Dani Savka – “Nuit de Lâme”



Danu Savka-Gallegos grew up training at the Pittsburgh Ballet Theater and the Central PA Your Ballet under Marchia Dale Weart. Since then, she has danced professionally as a freelancer in LA including acting on stage and in film, cinematography, and guest performing and choreographing with Ballet California. She also works as an executive to a philanthropist in the Beverly hills area and is very involved in 501c3 work. In 2021, she was invited to choreograph for Westside's Adult Showcase.

Dani holds a BA in Classical Dance from Point Park University. She is thrilled to be in her 4th year as choreographer in Westside's Adult Showcase.

Liz Wasynczuk – “Midnight Waltz”



Liz Wasynczuk began her early training at the Hartford Ballet School in Connecticut. She then moved to California and trained for 10 years with the former Ebsen School of Ballet in Pacific Palisades, and in the summer at the Rosella Hightower Dance School in Cannes, France.

Following her ballet studies, Liz pursued a teaching career and became co-director with Vilma Ebsen, presenting performances for children through adults.

As a member of Westside Ballet's faculty for over two decades, “Miss Liz,” as she's lovingly known, teaches the Pre-Ballet, Ballet 1 and Ballet 2 students in accordance with the syllabus of Yvonne Mounsey, co-founding director of Westside Ballet. Liz presents new ballets for the young students each year for their annual performances.

In addition to teaching, Liz is Co-Director of Westside Ballet's Wardrobe Department, and has costumed performances for the past 20 years.

James Ady – “Swan Lake, Waltz Act 1”



James Ady began dancing when he was 15 in Clinton, Iowa, before attending the North Carolina School for the Arts his junior and senior years of high school. After graduating from NCSA, he trained at the San Francisco Ballet School before joining Pennsylvania Ballet in Philadelphia. Ady danced numerous lead roles before leaving in 2002 to join American Ballet Theatre. While with ABT, he performed in Swan Lake, Le Corsaire, Romeo and Juliet, La Fille Mal Gardée, and toured nationally and internationally with the company. During his time with ABT, he worked with Lar Lubovitch, Natalia Makarova, Stanton Welch, James Kudelka, Georgina Parkinson and David Parsons. Ady returned to Pennsylvania Ballet in 2003 as a soloist and was promoted to principal dancer in 2005. Favorite leading roles include

Romeo in John Cranko's Romeo and Juliet, Albrecht in Giselle, Prince Siegfried in Christopher Wheeldon's Swan Lake, Colas in Sir Frederick Ashton's La Fille Mal Gardée, the 3rd Sailor in Jerome Robbins' Fancy Free, and in numerous George Balanchine ballets including Agon, The Four Temperaments, Slaughter on 10th Avenue, Valse Fantasy, Serenade, Ballo della Regina, Bugaku, and Concerto Barocco. After retiring in 2008, he graduated magna cum laude from Boise State University in 2012 with a degree in journalism.

In 2013, James accepted an offer to become Ballet Master with Ballet Memphis. This position gave James the opportunity to develop his pedagogy and combine various aspects of his dance experience, while teaching daily technique class for the company. During his time with Ballet Memphis, Ady staged numerous ballets including The Nutcracker, Matthew Neenan's Party of the Year, and Petr Zahrádník's Day and Night in FedEx City. Ady enjoyed extensive touring with the company to multiple dance festivals in Saint Louis, Baltimore, Shreveport, and Kansas City; preparing many ballets such as Trey McIntyre's In Dreams and Julia Adam's Devils Fruit.

In 2015, Ady became an assistant professor and lecturer for three years at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. While there, he taught all levels of ballet technique, partnering, men's and women's variations, pointe, and men's technique class. He assisted numerous choreographers, including Matthew Neenan in a world premiere, as well as Stacy Caddell, from the Balanchine Trust, staging George Balanchine's Walpurgisnacht.

James is currently teaching at Ballet Conservatory West, Westside School of Ballet, Santa Clarita Ballet Academy, and the Colburn School. He is also getting certified in the GYROTONIC Method at Movement Center Los Angeles.



Sven Toorvald – “Palladio Redux”

Sven Toorvald is an alumnus of Westside Ballet who has danced with Houston Ballet and Hubbard Street Dance Company. He regularly performs in Westside Ballet's production of **The Nutcracker**. Sven is also an alumnus of AFI, the American Film Institute. His highly-regarded documentary, The Ballerina Interviews, premiered on PBS in November 2003. Sven teaches primarily the adult level as well as the Introductory Pas de Deux class for the Children's Upper Division.

Roxane Milotti - “Smooth Steps, Shattered Hearts”



Jeni Jones – “LOVE ME”

Jeni Jones first danced on stage 30 years ago with the Joffrey Ballet at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and Segerstrom Center. She danced on scholarship at Defore Dance Center, where she began her Luigi-style Jazz Dance training with Hama and simultaneously joined the modern, Giordano-style company Jazz Spectrum under the direction of Christine Baltes. She studied Fosse and Theatre Jazz in Florida at the Broadway Theatre Project with Ann Reinking, Joel Grey, and Tommy Tune. Jeni earned her BA from Fordham University and her MFA from CalArts, while continuing to train at notable N.Y. and L.A. institutions with legendary Jazz dance educators, such as Luigi, Hama, Joe Tremaine, Jackie Sleight, and Claude Thompson, to name a few. She has also studied modern styles such as Graham, and Horton, which are often incorporated into her work. Jeni has performed on stages of all sizes, in musicals, in films, and has taught Master Classes and presented Jazz pieces at dance concerts including Jazz Dance Conference West, the I.E. Dance Festival, and the Arizona Dance Festival.

Jeni is also an award-winning filmmaker, actor, NAACP Award-winning theatre director, producer, martial artist, and rapper. She is currently directing and starring in a successful touring double bill production of Samuel Beckett's "NOT I" and "ROCKABY" which she recently performed in Scotland and will take to NY this Fall. www.JeniJones.com // IG: [@JeniAnneJones](https://www.instagram.com/JeniAnneJones) // IMDB: [imdb.me/jenijones](https://www.imdb.me/jenijones)

About Jeni's Jazz Class: With a focus on imparting musicality, vocabulary, technique and alignment, Jeni's gentle **Open Level/Beginner Jazz Class** is a timeless Jazz Dance Class designed for new and returning dance enthusiasts of all backgrounds. It is a safe place where beginners and professionals are encouraged to learn side by side. Every class begins with a thoughtful, easy-to-follow, therapeutic Luigi-style warm up, which incorporates conditioning, a lyrical jazz adagio, and a modern jazz port de bras, all set to feel good music. We then travel across the floor, working walks, technical progressions and turns. We learn achievable, original jazz dance choreography ranging from lyrical to Broadway to Fosse to commercial to contemporary Jazz. Lastly we seal in our hard work with Jeni's signature Jazz Reverence.

Jeni Jones is thrilled to bring her thoughtful, heartfelt Jazz Dance Class to Westside and is always delighted to answer questions related to her class and dance in general. Modifications to her movements can be made as necessary and are highly encouraged. No shoes are required to attend your first class.



Damien Diaz – Chau Paris

Damien Diaz, Co-Artistic Director of Luminario Ballet, was born in Montebello, CA. He studied classical ballet at the Académie du Ballet in Miami, FL, the North Carolina School of the Arts, the School of American Ballet in New York City, the Alabama School of Fine Arts, and the Houston Ballet Academy in Texas. Damien began his professional career with the Zürich Ballet in Switzerland and, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, danced with the Leipzig Ballet in Germany, where he became a principal dancer. Damien was a guest artist with the Warsaw Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Tokyo Ballet, Dallas Ballet, ClairObscur Dance Company, and the Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo. He danced with Luminario Ballet and acted as Rehearsal Director and choreographer from 2010 to 2018. He has received recognition for his dancing, coaching, and choreography nationally and internationally. Damien has been

Co-Director and choreographer of Luminario Ballet since January 2024 and is a teacher of classical ballet at Westside School of Ballet.

ABOUT THE DANCERS

Addie Van Gessel (see production bios)

Aihui Wang – (see choreographer bios)

Alexandra Del Rosario Alexandra is an entertainment and pop culture reporter. She is also the personal photographer to a beautiful bulldog named Henrietta. She grew up dancing with her three siblings at the Marat Daukayev School of Ballet in Los Angeles. She returned to ballet years after graduating from UCLA, taking classes at Westside. She grew up dancing with her three siblings at the Marat Daukayev School of Ballet in Los Angeles. She returned to ballet years after graduating from UCLA, taking classes at Westside. Connecting with dancers of all ages and experiences has been a salve. To me, this showcase is a reminder of the beauty, power and empathy that defines and strengthens a community. Thanks to the Westside team for orchestrating a wonderful performance!

Amanda Li – Amanda works as a growth marketing manager at Calm, the meditation app. Amanda Li grew up in the Bay Area dancing at San Ramon Valley Dance Academy, where she trained and competed in all styles including ballet, jazz, contemporary, tap, and hip hop. Ballet was always her first love, thanks in large part to her longtime teacher Holly Morrow—who, as fate would have it, is a Westside alumna herself. Amanda spent many summers at San Francisco Ballet's summer intensives and eventually went on to major in dance at UCLA. I love this little community Westside has built. Through participating in the adult showcase over the years I've made some of the most amazing friends. One of them even turned into a coworker! It's been such a gift to have a space to perform, especially as adult dancers are so rarely given the opportunity to share their work on stage. This process has reminded me just how much joy and connection dance continues to bring into my life.

Angela Check – As a proud Redondo Beach local, I discovered Westside School of Ballet two and half years ago, and began taking classes with David Prottas, Sadie Black, and Evan Swenson. What I thought would be just a hobby turned into a transformative journey—Westside is truly a hidden gem for adult dancers. The instructors treat students like company members, creating a safe, inspiring space to grow, learn, and connect. I never imagined I'd be dancing or performing on stage, especially having not trained as a child. That changed when I started Jazz dance classes at Westside with Jeni Jones, who brings the rare classical jazz technique of dance legend Luigi to life. This year marks my second showcase performance, and I'm deeply grateful for Jeni Jones and this vibrant adult dance community. It's just beautiful. From the incredible teachers to the friendships formed in class, Westside has given me purpose, and joy. I encourage anyone no matter what their age, or background is, to take class at Westside. It's never too late to learn and as Luigi once said, "Never stop moving."

Amanda Schachter –

Angelique Smith – (“Chau Paris” “Swan Lake” “Midnight Waltz”) Angelique is a model and actress. Angelique started dancing at a very young age in Chicago, Illinois where she was born and raised. Although exposed to many styles of dance she took an immediate attraction to modern dance. After High School, Angelique took an extended break from dance to pursue other passions. Upon relocating to Los Angeles in 2023 she has returned to dance with a concentrated focus on ballet. This process has allowed me to unearth a passion and an identity that I thought I had lost. I have been reunited with the spirit and life source of dance and it has been transformative and energizing. I want to thank Westside Ballet and the entire adult showcase team and dance collective for this amazing opportunity! A special thank you to each choreographer! You are a rare gift!

Annabella Ferraiuolo – (“Chau Paris” “Midnight Waltz” “Palladio Redux”) Annabella is an Event and Operations Coordinator in the Entertainment and Performing Arts industry. Annabella began ballet at 3 years old and graduated from the Hanover Theater Conservatory in Worcester, MA after completing a pre-professional ballet training program. She continued her dance education at California State University, Northridge graduating with a minor in dance. This experience has allowed me to continue ballet at a high level while getting to also pursue my career behind the scenes in the performing arts. I never thought I'd be able to continue dancing post high school/college especially while also working in the industry. I'm forever grateful to Westside Ballet and everyone apart of this program that make it possible for myself and others to continue dance education and performance opportunities as an adult!

Antonia Anselmo – (“Mutiny on the Boundaries” “Swan Lake”)

Ashna Madni – Ashna is an events coordinator for the UCLA Department of Philosophy. Ashna began ballet at 4 years old. She trained at Westside and the Los Angeles Ballet School before going to college at USC and dancing in the USC Chamber Ballet Company, where she served as co-director during her senior year. Today, she continues to take ballet, jazz, and contemporary classes. It means a lot to me to perform in this showcase. Dance has always been a big part of my life, and I feel grateful for the opportunity to learn from these choreographers and work toward a showcase with my fellow dancers. I'm lucky enough to be dancing with my sister Laila in this performance! She inspired me to start ballet, and we grew up dancing together until she went to college. Last year's showcase was the first time we performed on stage together in 16 years!

Bari Grossman – Bari currently works as a Customer Experience Manager at Liquid IV. Bari started ballet at around 5 years old, and danced until the end of high school. She joined Westside School of Ballet in late 2022, after a 16 year hiatus. She is overjoyed to be back in class, and to have this annual opportunity to perform alongside her friends and peers.

Caitlin Kreinheder – Caitlin is an Art Director at an advertising agency in Los Angeles. Caitlin began dancing at 2 years old. She trained pre-professionally at Academie de Ballet and performed with Masterworks Touring Company in Chesapeake, Virginia. She continued her dance education at the collegiate level performing in department dance concerts and receiving a minor in dance at the University of Virginia. Concurrently she trained and performed with the Dance Theater of Coastal Virginia. After moving to Richmond, Virginia, Caitlin continued her training at the West End Academy of Dance under Paul Ghiselin, and performed most recently in The Concert Ballet of Virginia's The Nutcracker under the direction of Scott Boyer and Lindsay Hudson. Having just moved to LA in January, the opportunity to continue performing and form a new community around dance has really helped me plants roots in LA!

Callie Bonne – Callie works 9-5 as a Client Service Analyst in wealth management and 5-9 as a cat mom. Callie started dancing during middle school, then pivoted to performing in high school and college color guard. She joined Westside about one and a half years ago after graduating college in 2023 and moving to Los Angeles. Performing has been a feature throughout most of my life and something I take joy in. Moving to a new city on my own away from a lot of the community I grew up with and starting a new job can feel isolating, but ballet at Westside helped me feel at home. And working with these other passionate and caring adults has been a heartwarming experience!

Chandler Eldridge – Chandler works as a Student Affairs Officer at UCLA, advising students in the Master of Data Science in Health program. Chandler began dancing at age 11 and began training pre-professionally at age 14 at Dimitri Kulev Classical Ballet Academy. She moved to Los Angeles in 2019 to pursue her degree at UCLA. At UCLA, she helped found Ballet Company at UCLA, UCLA's first ballet company in school history. She danced at Westside Ballet throughout college and has found her dance home there after graduating. The adult ballet showcase came into my life last year at a tumultuous time in my life personally. Having a group of amazing dancers to call friends and challenging pieces to perform was such a healing experience. This year has helped boost my confidence in dance and performance again, and I hope to participate for years to come.

Connie Bell – I was a dancer in what I believe to be Yvonne Mounsey's first student performance, Coppelia, in about 1966. Now 59 years later, in a full circle moment, I am thrilled to be performing in the Adult Showcase. I have always loved dance and still find every class to be challenging, rewarding and joyful. I started ballet as a child in Pennsylvania, then moved to Malibu, where I was able to take class in Santa Monica with Ms. Mounsey as my teacher. I went on to major in Aesthetic Studies: Dance Performance at UC Santa Cruz and later performed as a modern dancer in some small California based companies. I moved back to Malibu to start a family and have been there ever since, although sadly, I lost my home in the Palisades Fire. I hope to rebuild and come back home in the next few years. As always, though, the community of wonderful dancers and friends at Westside has sustained and nurtured me and brought me so much happiness.

Darlene Dirstine – Darlene currently works as a Physical Therapist and has her Board Certification as a Neurologic Clinical Specialist. She teaches at USC for the doctoral students of Physical Therapy in the neurologic curriculum. She loves all things have to do with the brain and the mind body connection. Darlene began dancing as soon as she could walk. She trained in Los Angeles with the Performing Arts Center and was a Music Center Spotlight Award Finalist in 1994. She moved to NYC in 1997 and retired in 2008. She was fortunate to dance with many great companies and choreographers, including Eglevsky Ballet, David Parsons and Earl Mosley. She also taught ballet at The Ailey School and did the dancing for Tasha from Nickelodeon's The Backyardigans. A HUGE thank you to James for creating such a welcoming and non judgmental environment in class where an old, injured, and retired dancer who has only taken 2 classes a year since 2008 feel the joy of dancing again. And holy cow!!! Pinks tights and pointe shoes again?!?!?! I'm having so much fun!!!

Eliana Leiberman –

Emerson Wong – During the day, Emerson is a rocket scientist working on Nasa's Artemis and Boeing's Starliner. He has danced in the Addams Family movie starring Raul Julia and Angelica Huston. He has also danced many restagings of Balanchines' Viennese Waltzes. Emerson also performed for the King and Queen of Sweden during their visit to the USA.

Emily Detmer – Ballet is one of the great loves of my life. I say that as someone who never danced professionally, as someone who knew early on that I wasn't the type of person who would make it in that world. But as much as I felt ballet didn't love me, I loved it still. I started dancing at twelve years old, after being a competitive gymnast and realizing that my favorite parts of gymnastics were the handful of dance moves we did on floor and beam. I was lucky to go to a studio that cared more about a dancer's commitment and dedication than about her innate abilities. And that studio instilled me with a phenomenal technical foundation that carried me through high school. As an adult, it was difficult to find opportunities to dance, and it was about 15 years until I discovered Westside School of Ballet. That was two years ago, and it has been an incredible journey to rediscover my love for ballet. The community welcomes dancers of all ages and abilities, with instructors who are beyond generous in sharing their knowledge and talent with us adult dancers. During my time at Westside, I have grown in both my artistry and technical abilities in a way that I didn't think possible at this stage of my life. I never thought I would feel the thrill of performing live on stage again, and I am so grateful that the showcase provides that opportunity. It's an incredible honor to share the stage with dancers of all backgrounds, from former professionals to those who have never performed before, and to know that our choreographers trust us to bring the depth of our varied life experiences to bear on their creations. I truly believe that ballet is for everyone with the heart, soul, and courage to embody music and bring it to life, and I hope that comes across to our audience in a few weeks' time.

Emilie Feyler – Emilie began her dance training at the age of six. While she primarily focused on ballet and modern jazz, she has also explored salsa, hip hop, and flamenco. Six years ago, she relocated to the U.S., initially settling in New York City, where she had the privilege of taking classes with former Alvin Ailey dancers at the Steps on Broadway studio. Last year, she moved to Los Angeles and was delighted to discover a vibrant community of ballet lovers.

Erika Snell – Erika began dancing at 8 years old with a tap class in the little town of Los Olivos. As she got older, she began learning more and more styles of dance including ballet, jazz, hip hop, pointe, and contemporary. After graduating high school, she lost her connection with dance for a bit but thankfully, about two years ago, a dear friend of hers introduced her to Westside and she hasn't looked back since! Dancing again, and performing in this showcase in particular, allows me to feel the freedom and fun of my inner child again. I don't plan on giving that up ever again!

Erica Barry –

Erin Lewis – Erin is a director in corporate finance and is passionate about storytelling, creativity, and using movement as a tool for self-expression and growth. I started dancing almost three years ago as an adult. After my first class, I knew it was something I wanted to dedicate real time and intention to. I love the mix of discipline and fluidity that ballet requires – it's both grounding and expressive. Each year, I feel myself growing and improving in ways that surprise me. Westside has created something really special for adults – it's challenging in the best way and incredibly supportive, and I'm so thankful to be a part of it. As an adult who started ballet later in life, getting the chance to perform feels really special. It's pushed me way outside my comfort zone (in the best way) – and I've grown so much through it, both physically and emotionally. Ballet has become such a grounding part of my life, and I'm just really grateful to have something that brings me joy, helps me express myself, and allows me to connect with others. Being part of the Westside community has truly been the most supportive, inspiring environment – I feel so lucky to be learning and growing here.

Gigi Laurita – Gigi Laurita graduated from Loyola Marymount University this spring with a double major in Film Production and Screenwriting, and plans to pursue a career in the film industry. She grew up dancing ballet from the ages of 3-12. A decade later, she decided to start again and began taking classes at Westside this March. 6 year old Gigi (who wanted to be a professional ballerina when she grew up) would be very proud to know that we are getting to perform like this as an adult. 22 year old Gigi is very grateful to Westside for creating a space for adults to train and dance to a professional standard, because we never stopped wanting to be a ballerina.

Hillary McCarthy – Hillary is a 3D Animator. Hillary trained at Arabesque Dance Studio in Maryland starting at the age of 9. She has spent the past 10+ years involved in various adult programs in New York and Chicago before finding her home in LA and at Westside. I am so grateful for this opportunity to connect with my fellow ballet lovers, learn from the one and only Charlie and to be on stage for the first time in a long time. Rehearsing for the showcase has been a period of accelerated growth both as a dancer and as a human and I am very glad I said "yes" this experience.

Hiromi Levy – Hiromi is a Ballet pianist at WSB, CSUDH, Grace Ballet and Burbank Dance Academy. Started ballet as a complete beginner adult in Tokyo, moved to Boulder, CO in 2001, then to Santa Monica/Los Angeles, CA since 2011. There was a detour to yoga teaching but back to ballet since 2016. I have enjoyed every minute of each of the 3 dances I signed up, meeting the dancers and choreographers in a new circumstances, other than in classes. Finding my strength, as well as adjustments to my body, emotional and spiritual release etc. ALL OF THIS EXPERIENCES ARE SO PRECIOUS. THANK YOU!

Hyunjin Kim — Hyunjin is an employment attorney and works at a firm with offices in downtown Los Angeles. Hyunjin started dance through K-pop, and became engaged in ballet as an adult. She found her home in Westside after moving to LA in 2022. This is her first time performing ballet. Ballet is how I connect with my home, because it is something that I used to do with my mom in Korea. I love that I can jump into a ballet class anywhere in the world and still understand all of the lingo. Rehearsals have been especially special for me because I got to know the dancers and choreographers at Westside. <3

Jessica Nicole Todmann — Jessica does a few different things- mainly across adtech and insurance. She also moonlights as a feature film writer. Jessica started her journey as a child, taking jazz and contemporary dance classes. Then, as a young teen, she became introduced to ballet where she trained at the Bronx Dance Theatre. Three years ago-and over 20 years later-she decided to revisit ballet and has been training consistently ever since. This process means a lot to me. I believe ballet to be a beautiful artform and athletic showcase. As a creative, intuitive, and introspective person, I think dance is one of the best ways to share who you truly are with others. Ballet is also a great (and fun) way to stay in shape!

Jaelyn Lytle — Jaelyn Lytle is an elementary school social worker. Jaelyn's parents have always told her she's been dancing before she could even walk! She was looking for an adult studio that could offer the same sense of community and variety of classes that she experienced growing up. About a year and a half ago, she took her first class at Westside, and instantly knew she had found her new dance home. Jaelyn strongly believes that you can't take care of others unless you take care of yourself—and for her, dance is that outlet.

Katie Layton — Katie is a test engineer in the aerospace industry. Katie started ballet at 5 years old, and continued dancing until high school graduation. After a 6 year hiatus, she joined Westside Ballet last year to begin dancing again. It's so exciting that the Showcase is an opportunity to perform again! Working with the choreographers and other dancers has been a wonderful experience.

Kelsey Bauman — Kelsey is both a cardiothoracic nurse and a fertility procedure nurse. Kelsey's first ballet classes were in high school in Virginia. Her love of the classical ballets inspired her to return to ballet almost 20 years later after discovering the adult ballet community that exists in LA. As a beginner, the Showcase signifies having dreams at any age and stage of life. After struggling with reoccurring miscarriages the past few years, Kelsey will be dancing in the showcase with what she hopes to be her rainbow baby this Fall.

Kimberly Ochoa — Kimberly is a High School AP Biology teacher. She started ballet at Westside School of ballet in adult classes two years ago. She has always loved music and movement and as a child was part of rhythmic cheer and school band. This year Kimberly decided she wanted to step out of her comfort zone and join varied dance pieces. She has been working very hard to push herself to do things she is afraid of and pursue what may appear as impossible for her

Kirstin Poirier-Whitley —

Lauren Van Vleet — Lauren works in outdoor advertising sales. I started dancing ballet at 3 years old at the Burbank School of the Ballet. I took a long break from dancing after minoring in dance in college and have enjoyed attending classes at the Westside School of Ballet this year. The adult program has been incredibly inspiring and I love watching so many different types of people dancing solely for the fun of it. Being a part of the showcase brings me back to the rehearsal-filled weekends of my childhood and teenage years and I am looking forward to performing for the first time in 10 years.

Lacey Strachan —

Laila Madni — Laila is a Clinical Psychologist in private practice and teaches in the Psychology Department at USC. Laila started dancing at age 4, at Westside Ballet. She continued her training at Westside until transitioning to a competitive Rhythmic Gymnastics team before finding her way back to ballet at age 12. She then trained at Westside Ballet and the Los Angeles Ballet School until starting college at USC. Laila participated in the USC Chamber Ballet Company for 4 years, and served as Co-Director one of those years. After graduate school, she was able to return to ballet and has continued in Westside Ballet's adult program. This showcase is such a unique opportunity to work with wonderful choreographers and perform as an adult. Dance brings me tremendous joy and sense of community, for which I am so grateful.

Laura Fuller — Laura is a Somatic Therapist, Hypnotherapist, teacher, and writer. She also ran a large-scale kids embodied arts programs for 30 years (so your kids may know her). Laura always wanted to dance and got to begin studying and performing in community college while in high school. The program, directed by Elizabeth Oberstein at El Camino College, was a place where people of all ages and backgrounds learned, created, and performed. It was truly magical. And Westside's adult showcase gives me glimpses of these roots of how profoundly meaningful it is to be together through art. From there, Laura's main teachers and influences included Loretta Livingston, Joe Goode, various teachers in UCLA's WAC-D, and lots of weird performance art. She also studied Depth Psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute. And now her wonderful Westside teachers, Charlie Hodges and Sadie Black, and also Melissa Schade and other teachers in the adult dance-for-fun community.

Laura's path through dance was not easy. She came from a lot of trauma and adversity, plus diversities and disabilities that there was not help to navigate. These challenges initiated her studies of the connection of body, mind, art, soul, and humanity. Westside's Adult Showcase represents new beginnings after it seemed that all was lost, dreams coming true, and the gratitude of having a place in the human dance.

Leslie Wallis – (see production bios)

Liliana Isella – Liliana started ballet at 28 in Los Angeles under Edouard Kouzmitch when she was still an "illegal immigrant" from Italy. Her knowledge and passion for the art has gradually expanded through the decades: in 2023 she worked for Prima Ballerina Petra Conti to found Hollywood Ballet and she is currently producing a fictional ballet drama movie series she has scripted. "Come Together by Charlie Hodges was my chance to learn from an experienced dancer and teacher through his first choreographic work. He danced with Twyla Tharp and I was curious to see what he took home from the American icon. It's up to me to honor his choreography now and I am not sure I will be able to. Welcome to my world."

Lily Shih – I used to work as a CPA and corporate controller in the field of Property Management for many years. Then I opened up my Chinese School Academy and teaching children and adults Mandarin Chinese before I become a public school teacher. I am now teaching middle school kids Mandarin and English. Teaching is the best job for me as I love to work with children. I took ballet lesson when I was young, but was never have the opportunity to continue dancing until I moved to Venice in 2021 when I discover Westside School of Ballet. I knew deep in my heart, that I have not forgot about dancing. I have been with Westside since then and this is my third years performing in the Adult Show Case. Westside is the place which helped to make dream come true. Westside offers classes for people at all ages. If there is a will and drive. I have learned from many incredible dance teachers and appreciate the opportunity to work and dance with other dancers. Especially for the show, we helped each out and there was no judging and everyone has come to enjoy the process of learning this beautiful sport. I am grateful to be part of Westside dance team.

Linda Pahl –

Louisa Foong – Louisa Foong is a pianist, composer, music producer, and educator based in Los Angeles. She runs a children's music academy dedicated to nurturing creativity and musical growth in young students. Louisa began her ballet journey just three years ago at Westside Ballet, having previously explored dance through hip hop and street styles as a personal passion. That hobby took an unexpected turn, leading to a performance on the Coachella festival stage in 2023. This is her first time performing both ballet and jazz, new and challenging realms that still resonate with the musical foundation she was trained in. Being part of this showcase has felt like living out a childhood dream. It pushed me beyond my limits and showed me I'm capable of more than I imagined. Exploring different genres and learning to express myself more freely through dance has been both fun and deeply meaningful. Growing through this experience, and learning from incredible choreographers alongside a passionate, supportive community, has truly been a gift.

Madeline Duff – Madeline writes feature and television scripts and has worked in Post Production in the entertainment industry in LA. Madeline grew up in Washington, D.C. where she attended The Washington School of Ballet. She danced in the Yale Undergraduate Ballet Company and then back at Washington Ballet as an adult student, before moving to LA and finding the Westside community! Dancing with these choreographers and dancers inspires and challenges me every day and every rehearsal. I've grown not only as a dancer, but as a person.

Maria Pena – Maria handles travel for a large talent agency in LA. I started dancing at 8 years old with Stanley Holden in LA. Studied dance at Walnut Hill High School of performing arts and then went to Cal Arts as a dance Major. This has all been about challenging myself and overcoming my fears. Getting to work with Chasen and Charlie is an honor. And all the women in this group are true warriors who inspire me endlessly!

Marisa Beresford – Marisa is an architectural designer in LA working towards her license. Marisa studied at the San Diego School of Ballet for 7 years, Malashock Dance for 3 years, danced throughout high school and college and participated in the Alvin Ailey Summer Intensive in NY. I'm so glad I found Westside Ballet because I've made great friends and love the opportunity to perform. The teachers are so talented and always push you to grow as a dancer.

Mary Ruble – Mary lived in the Pacific Palisades and now resides in Venice. She works in the medical device industry and has a passion for interior architecture. I discovered dance later in life when I braved my very first ballet class four years ago on a Sunday morning with James Ady @ WSB. I knew then I was hooked! It has been the most wonderful 4 years of my life studying ballet from all of the incredibly talented teachers at WSB. I grew up playing sports and ballet is hands down, the hardest sport I have ever taken on! I am so grateful for WSB and all it has to offer! I continue to pinch myself that I am fortunate to dance for some of the most prominent, talented dancers/ choreographers. Charlie Hodges is one of my incredible mentors and getting to dance in his piece is a life experience and opportunity that I will forever be grateful for.

Mary Jo Frazier – (see production bios)

Maya Zeevi – Maya is an investment analyst. She has danced at Westside Ballet for the past 15 years participating in shows like the Nutcracker and Serenade. She enjoys the Westside Adult Showcase because it lets connect with community, meet new people, and dance!

Megan Rara – Megan works in social media. She grew up dancing ballet, hip hop, jazz, and Polynesian. I'm so glad I found Westside Ballet—it gave me the chance to meet people of all ages who share a love for dance, and I made some really great friends along the way.

Melissa Taw – Melissa works in corporate marketing. Melissa has been dancing at Westside since 2020 after relocating to LA from New York. She started dance as a youth but as a hip-hop free-styler. She first started ballet after graduating from USC, taking a summer class at Santa Monica College. However, she didn't return to ballet until much later in life due to injury, eventually cycling through several studios in NYC for ballet, ballroom and musical theater/jazz, including American Liberty Ballet, Steps on Broadway, Fred Astaire, and Alvin Ailey. The full circle moment was when she first visited Westside and realized her first ever ballet shoe purchase for the SMC class came from the Westside ballet shop across the street. In addition to ballet, Melissa also actively trains in commercial dance (hip-hop, jazz funk, heels) and frequents Movement Lifestyle, TMilly and Eighty Eight.

This is my 3rd Westside Adult Showcase. I always do it with the intention of growing as a dancer by being challenged physically and artistically. I am extremely grateful to be able to move the way I do at my age despite physical limitations and it's important for me to do it while I still can. What I always walk away from the showcase is gratitude for the support of the community. My friends and family have always discouraged my dancing and commitment to dance. I'm so glad to be surrounded by fellow dancers who not only accept me with mutual respect but build me up with mutual admiration. I'm also so grateful for amazing teachers who not only challenge me to reach my potential but believe and invest in me. Thank you all for indulging my dream to have my leg "way up here" and making my mid-life crisis so fun.

Mimi Gu –

Nan Lin – Nan is a cell biologist and works in biotechnology. She has started ballet as an adult at Center of Creative Arts (COCA) in St. Louis, MO. After moving to LA in 2015, she started taking classes at Westside Ballet and Preston Li Academy of Dance. Nan finds herself very fortunate to participate in the excellent training for adult ballet. A book worm who never thought her name would be associated with the words "performing arts" now has danced on stage several times – all thanks to the guidance, support and inspiration from the faculty and fellow dancers. Dance helps her discover herself and gives her strength and joy.

Nicole Busken Shipman – Nicole is a professional photographer and mom of two boys. She has been dancing at Westside ballet since 2018 and was a burlesque performer with The Dollface Dames for 6 years. As a teenager, Nicole performed in musical theatre and drill team. Westside Ballet and the adult ballet community have been an important part of Nicole's journey. It has been a place for self care, devotion and facing challenges. Dancing is where Nicole can get out of her head and be present in her body.

Nnenna Anyiwo – Nnenna works in human resources. She started ballet eight years ago with Align Ballet Method. She joined Westside in 2021. Nnenna loves the kindness and collaboration experienced during the showcase process. She's grateful to the choreographers and production team for going above and beyond each year to make this experience possible, and for the opportunity to share her love for dance with family and friends. She's especially grateful to all the dancers who have helped and encouraged her in classes and rehearsals. Ballet here wonderful but the community found at Westside is unmatched. What started off as a curious whim eight years ago has turned into a gift she never could have imagined.

Perris McCracken – Perris works in property management at a commercial real estate investment firm in Santa Monica. Among others, she danced with: Paul Kennedy's Universal Dance Designs, Westside Ballet, Yuri Grigoriev, Debbie Allen, Graduated from Loyola Marymount, City Ballet of Los Angeles, Lula Washington and various freelance projects from L.A to New York. It's a beautiful full circle experience. I went from a pre-teen training under Rosemary Valerie to performing in the Adult Showcase for the last 3 years. I'm building on cherished memories here at Westside Ballet.

Rachel Oda –

Ray Camacho – Ray works in Investment Management. His dance background includes Ballet Pacifica, LA Classical and State Street Ballet. The Adult Showcase has been a creative journey and a fun collaboration with some great dancers.

Rebecca Rainhart – Rebecca has a degree in electrical engineering, and currently works in the aerospace industry. She started dancing when she was 4, and continued till the end of high school, dancing at the Russell School of Ballet in Virginia for those 4 years. Upon graduating college, she moved to LA for a job opportunity and found Westside in her search for a new dance community. It has been so exciting to go through the process of creating a piece of movement with the choreographers and other dancers in this show. Creating connections with new people is one of the best parts of dancing at Westside, especially being new to this city!

Roseangelica DeGuzman –

Sage Biale –

Samantha Gonzalez – Samantha is an in-home caregiver. She started ballet in January 2024 at Align Ballet Method, under the instruction of Align Founder, Michael Cornell and Westside Alumni, Susan Vishmid. This process has been an extraordinary ride for Samantha. She has found much joy in bringing the choreographer's vision to life and connecting with fellow dancers. She also loves learning all that she can, from more experienced dancers.

Shannon Erdmann – Shannon is an Investment Manager for Insurance, Pension and Institutional money. Shannon started ballet at 3 years old. At 16, she tested out of high school to train in ballet full time with Pennsylvania Ballet and San Francisco Ballet. She danced until the age of 21 and when she went back to college. Meeting Chasen and getting to create new art with him and all of the fantastic ladies in the group has brought a new light to my life. The process has been so fun from start to finish.

Sheila Ahorian – Sheila is a Transportation Engineer. Sheila started taking dance classes in high school including hip-hop, tap, and ballet. She took a hiatus while in college and started again as an adult. She started venturing in other genres including jazz and ballroom while continuing her journey in tap and ballet. Sheila is grateful for the opportunity to perform with Westside. She has been able to meet many wonderful dancers and has learned a lot from the choreographers. Sheila has always been better at expressing herself through movement rather than words; dance is that outlet for her.

Suqin Duan – Suqin is a climate scientist at UCLA, using data, theory, and models to understand extreme events such as heatwaves and floods. She hopes to one day create something that connects dance and science, so that more people can experience the beauty of both worlds. She is currently exploring this theme and welcomes any discussion on it. Suqin began training in dance more seriously in her early twenties while in graduate school. She has been learning Chinese classical dance, and started ballet about three years ago. She hopes to perform some ballet variations in the future. To me, ballet represents idealism, elegance and strength. It is an extreme pursuit of beauty. Really appreciate this opportunity to participate in the showcase; I feel the possibility and a step closer to realize my cherished wish. I'm so glad to connect with this community: choreographers creating magic in a just few hours, and everyone being so attentive, motivated, and inspiring. It's amazing to see what can come together in such a short time.

Tanya Nobal – Tanya is a software engineer. Tanya grew up taking ballet, tap, and jazz lessons at South Bay Dance Center in San Jose, California. In high school, she took part in musical theater and was in a Bollywood dance team. After graduating from college, she started taking ballroom lessons at By Your Side Dance Studio in Culver City and began training in ballet at Westside one year ago. Tanya has enjoyed seeing dances come to life this summer for the Adult Showcase. There is nothing as exciting as performing onstage and showing everyone what she and so many other people have been working on all summer and expressing our love of dance.

Tina Peng – Tina is an artist in Los Angeles. Tina grew up learning Chinese folk dance and started ballet in college. This experience has been so amazing. Grateful for the choreographers, grateful for the community, and grateful for my fellow dancers.

Yael Hartstein – Yael is a real estate and construction attorney practicing in Century City. Yael started ballet at the tender age of 48 at Westside. She is currently in year 7 of a 10 year plan to master a single pirouette. It's going well. She looks forward to her debut on the stage at the Adult Showcase 2025. Yael is a superfan of the Adult Showcase having seen every showcase and Westside recital going back many years. She always dreamed to be a part of it having never performed before. While some may call this yet another midlife crisis, Yael views it as a journey of self exploration and has enjoyed bonding with her fellow dancers.

Yuri Nagahara –

Vanessa Veve Melendrez – Vanessa is a San Francisco native who in her spare time, outside of dance, does civic engagement at a local non profit called PWC in downtown Los Angeles. She also is an AEA and SAG-E actor and in her free time, raps. Before joining Westside ballet in the winter, she also took ballet at Glendale College and San Francisco City College as well as tap, jazz and hip hop. She mostly grew up doing hip hop as a kid but has enjoyed the intro into ballet and can't wait to learn more. She also did cheer and theater all of middle and high school but her favorite forms of art are not ballet as well as tap.