

**Mariterese Altosino Gontarek** is a passionate dance educator, choreographer, and mentor dedicated to empowering the next generation of artists through disciplined training, creativity, and care. A Chicagoland native, she holds a Bachelor of Arts in Dance, as well as Business and Entrepreneurship, from Columbia College Chicago. Mariterese began her professional performance career with the renowned Giordano Dance Chicago, where she spent four years touring and performing works by celebrated choreographers including Ray Leeper, Peter Chu, Marinda Davis, Ray Mercer, Christopher Huggins, Randy Duncan, Jon Lehrer, and Gus Giordano. Her performance credits include appearances at Dance for Life Chicago, Harvest Contemporary Dance Festival, Move Dance Festival, and television features on *Windy City Live* and *ABC 7 News*. Expanding her artistic reach, Mariterese has performed with South Chicago Dance Theatre, Banks Performance Project, and Water Street Dance Milwaukee. She also participated in a choreographic residency with Choomna Dance Company in Seoul, South Korea. A seasoned educator and choreographer, Mariterese spent 12 years as an instructor with Universal Dance Association (UDA), including seven years as a summer curriculum choreographer. Her international teaching, judging, and choreography work has taken her to Ecuador, Germany, Norway, Slovenia, Austria, London, and China. Her choreography has been showcased at premier competitions and events such as the Youth America Grand Prix Finals, Universal Ballet Competition Grand Prix Finals, USASF Dance Worlds, The Dance Summit, and the UDA/NDA College and High School National Championships, as well as the IHSA State Finals. Mariterese is also a sought-after speaker and mentor, having presented coaching seminars at the Aussie Gold Coaches Conference in Australia and the Varsity Coaches Conference in the U.S. Currently, Mariterese serves as the Head Coach of the Downers Grove South Junior Varsity Dance Team and is on faculty at West Suburban Ballet Conservatory. She also coaches the Studio 22 Youth All Stars and holds the position of Assistant Director at Studio 22, where she plays an integral role in program development and management. At the heart of Mariterese's work is her mission as a teacher: to support the growth and development of young artists—helping them build confidence, discipline, creativity, and a lifelong love for dance.