

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



Julie Hebb (*Artistic Director*) brings with her decades of experience performing, teaching, choreographing, and staging original ballet, modern, jazz, and contemporary works in New York City, the greater Boston area, and northern New England. With her deep foundation in various ballet techniques, predominantly the Russian Vaganova style, along with her wide experiences in contemporary training that includes Paul Taylor, Lester Horton, Rebecca Kelly, Jennifer Muller, and others, she brings to The Dance Annex a relevance in training that is essential for today's dancers. Ms. Hebb received her training at Boston Ballet, Hartford Ballet, Ballet Theater of Boston, STEPS, Marjorie Mussman, Madame Gabriela Darvash, City Center Studios, Peridance, and the Paul Taylor School. She moved from Boston to New York City where she taught and performed principal roles with Rebecca Kelly Ballet from 1992-2006, and was ballet mistress for the company and assistant to the director for choreography, workshops, and summer programs. Ms. Hebb performed as guest artist for North Country Ballet Ensemble, Impulse Dance Company and North Atlantic Ballet of Boston, MA; Several Dancers Core of Atlanta, GA; and other ballet, modern, and musical theater companies throughout the Northeast. In New York, Ms. Hebb taught at STEPS NYC, Joffrey Ballet School, Berest Dance Studio, Garden City Community Dance Project, and Rebecca Kelly Ballet. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in a combined major of Psychology and Exercise Science from Brooklyn College. After returning to New England, she began teaching at studios in and around New Hampshire and Maine. Ms. Hebb founded The Dance Annex Studio in Kittery in the Fall of 2012 and Annex Contemporary Dance Company (ACDC), the studio's resident troupe of professionals, in 2016. ACDC has produced multiple evening-length concerts at The Dance Hall in Kittery, Maine, and has collaborated with many local and visiting artists and musicians from the New England area and NYC. The Company has presented original work at The Music Hall in Portsmouth, NH, the Ogunquit Performing Arts Center, Jose Mateo's Dance for World Community Festival in Cambridge, MA, Windhover, and Lila Dance Festival in Rochester, NH.



Naomi Sawyer (*Sugar Plum Fairy*) Naomi received her early dance training under Kay Welch in Vermont, with summer intensives at Broadway Dance Center, the Joffrey ballet in NYC and the Boston Ballet School. As a student in Boston Ballet's training program, she performed in Boston ballet's *Nutcracker* and *Sleeping Beauty*, and went on to perform with the Orchesis Dance troupe while attending her physical therapy studies at the University of Vermont. She has been performing with the Northeastern Ballet Theatre since 2013 under the direction of Edra Toth with soloist roles in *Le Corsaire*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Nutcracker*, and several lead roles including Wilhelmina in *Dracula*, Anna in *The Snow Queen*, Katrina in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, Sugar Plum Fairy, Maria in *The Sound of Music*, Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*, Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Giselle*. She had made guest appearances as Sugar Plum Fairy, performs with the Annex Contemporary Dance Company as well as original works by choreographer Savannah Lee. She is a homeschooling mother of two, and works as a licensed physical therapist providing neuro and vestibular rehab, as well as physical therapy specialized for the needs of dancers.



Assaf Benchetrit (*Cavalier*) began his dance and music studies at the Rubin Academy for Music and Dance in Jerusalem, Israel. Upon graduation, he danced with the Jerusalem Dance Theater, the Panov Ballet, and later with The Israeli National Ballet Company. During his military service, Assaf received the “Remarkable Dancer” prize from the Israeli government which allowed him to continue dancing while serving. After completing his military service, he arrived to United States to dance with companies such as The Joffrey, Metropolitan Classical Ballet, Alabama Ballet, Connecticut Ballet, Portland Ballet and Gelsey Kirkland Ballet. Throughout his career, Assaf toured through England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and numerous other countries. Assaf holds a joint B.S in computer science and B.F.A in dance degrees with academic honors from Montclair State University, and an M.F.A degree in dance from Hollins/ADF/Frankfurt. He is currently an Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance at the University of New Hampshire, and was a faculty member at Yale University, Columbia University (Barnard College), Rutgers University, Montclair State University, and Raritan Valley Community College.



Jonathan Donahue (*Nutcracker Prince*), an improv dancer since he was twelve, began dancing ballet in 2019 during his sophomore year at the University of New Hampshire. That same year, he performed in his first Nutcracker Production with Great Bay Academy of Dance. Jonathan has since performed with Northeastern Ballet Theater, The University of New Hampshire's Ballet Company, and with choreographer Junichi Fukuda at the Lila Dance Festival. This is his third season with The Dance Annex's The Nutcracker.



Jillian Dorazio (*Party Mother*) began her ballet training at the age of 13 with Julie Hebb at the Dance Annex. Here, she found her love not only for ballet and performing but also for working with children. Jillian graduated Summa Cum Laude from Saint Anselm College in the spring of 2024 with a B.A. in History and Communication. She currently works as an elementary special education technician in Kittery, Maine.



Audrey Eastman (*Snow Queen, Ribbon Candy Lead, Flower*) began her dance training when she was young at Holly Jane Dance Center with Holly Jane Johnson. In high school, she pursued more advanced training at Great Bay Academy of Dance with Elisa Gerasin and Kristen Samson in Kittery, ME. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of New Hampshire in 2020 with a BS in Biomedical Science (Medical/Veterinary Sciences) and a BA in Dance. In December of 2023 she graduated as a Doctor of Physical Therapy from Tufts University School of Medicine. Audrey is currently a licensed physical therapist in New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts. While at UNH she trained with Assaf Benchetrit and Susan Endrizzi and performed with the UNH Dance Company. She has attended summer programs with the American Ballet Theatre and the University of Utah. In January of 2019, she traveled to Buenos Aires with DanceAbroad Argentina and trained in ballet and contemporary with various Argentinian teachers. She has had the privilege to perform Sugar Plum Fairy and Snow Queen in GBAD's "An 1836 Portsmouth Nutcracker," Cinderella with the UNH Dance Company, Snow Queen and Peppermint in The Dance Annex's Nutcracker, original choreographed works at Lila Dance Festival, and in City Ballet of Boston's "Urban Nutcracker." She is currently performing with Annex Contemporary Dance Company directed by Julie Hebb.



Kacie Friberg (*Party Mother*) is a faculty member of The Dance Annex Studio with a background in performing, teaching, choreographing, and competing with a variety of dance disciplines. She has trained with faculty from NYU's Dance program as well as such notable names as Joe Lanteri, Gil Stroming, Ashly DelGrosso, Suzi Taylor, Travis Wall, Mia Michaels, and Savion Glover. Throughout her competition career, Kacie received a variety of recognition including scholarships and awards like "Outstanding Talent," "Outstanding Tap Performance," and the "Furious, Fabulous Feet" award. A former competitor in the Miss America Organization, Kacie was recognized for her talent as well as her scholastic achievement, community leadership, eloquence and personability. Kacie is a certified middle and high school teacher. She utilizes her knowledge of teaching and learning strategies in her coaching and class design to help students progress and succeed.



Whitney Genatossio (*Frau Stahlbaum, Mother Ginger*) is a faculty member of The Dance Annex Studio, where she teaches ballet, jazz, and tap to children and adults. She appeared in her first Nutcracker production 32 years ago in the role of a party boy and the Nutcracker doll. Whitney believes there are five seasons; spring, summer, fall, Nutcracker, and winter. She is thrilled to share this experience with her daughter, Aggie.



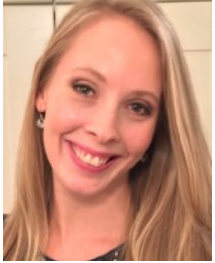
Don Goettler (Herr Drosselmeyer) has been performing his whole life, starting at 7 in a Nutcracker show as a soldier. After high school, he moved to NY and trained at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. He's stayed busy with theater, TV, movies, comedy, and producing. You can often see him on our local stages. He's been calling York home for the last 15 years with his wife Julie and daughter Courtlynn.



Angela Grassie (*Snowflake, Peppermint Lead*) has been dancing since the age of two at Corinne's School of Dance in Rochester, NH. She also studied ballet, pointe, and modern dance at Ballet New England in Portsmouth, NH. Angela trained in many forms of dance at Steps on Broadway and Broadway Dance Center in New York City. She received a full scholarship for the Rockette Summer Intensive and has performed at Radio City Music Hall. Angela was a Rockette Teacher Assistant for the Rockette Experience and the Rockette Summer Intensives for over two years. She has performed leading and guest roles in The Nutcracker productions of Ballet New England, The Dance Annex, Great Bay Academy of Dance, and Sole City Dance, including the Snow Queen, Dew Drop Fairy, Rat Queen, Lead Spanish Soloist, Demi-Soloist Flower, and Peppermint Lead. She performed in Cabaret as a Kit Kat Dancer at the Rochester Opera House. Angela was the choreographer for Pippin, Dog Fight, and Jesus Christ Superstar at the Player's Ring in Portsmouth, NH. She is currently a company member of Annex Contemporary Dance Company and performs all over New England. Angela co-owns Corinne's School of Dance in Rochester, NH with her mother, Corinne Allaire. She has been the Artistic Director of CSD Ballet Company since 2017. Angela recently performed in New York City under the direction of Rhonda Malkin, studying precision dance. She is very excited to dance with Julie Hebb again in The Nutcracker!



Aryanna Major received her foundational training at Corinne's School of Dance under Elyssa Moyer and Angela Grassie, focusing on classical ballet, contemporary, and performance technique. She furthered her development through work with the New England Dance Project, broadening her versatility and stage presence. Dedicated to continual artistic range and growth.



Meghan McCoy Seedner received her early training at the Portsmouth School of Ballet and continued her summer studies with the Joffrey Ballet in New York City and Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre in Cambridge, MA. She earned her BA in Theatre and Dance from the University of New Hampshire. Meghan joined Portland Ballet as an apprentice for the 2010–11 season and was promoted to company dancer the following year. During her time with the company, she performed in a wide range of classical and contemporary works, including *Giselle*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *The Armed Man*, numerous roles in *The Nutcracker*, and several soloist roles in smaller repertory pieces. In 2013, Meghan joined Teatrul de Balet Sibiu in Romania, where she danced featured roles in *Coppélia*, *Le Corsaire*, *The Four Seasons*, *Tarantella*, *Misa Profana*, and *The Nutcracker*. After returning to the United States, she began her teaching career while continuing to perform as a guest artist with Portland Ballet and companies and schools throughout the Seacoast. Her notable roles include Dew Drop and the Sugar Plum Fairy in multiple productions of *The Nutcracker*; both the Big Swan and Little Swan in *Swan Lake*; Odette and Odile in the White and Black Swan pas de deux; the *Diana and Acteon* pas de deux; the Act I *Giselle* variation; Kitri's Wedding variation; and the Gamzatti variation from *La Bayadère*. Now a mother of four, Meghan has expanded her artistic focus to choreography. Her works—*Zephyr*, *La Vie Parisienne*, *In Memory*, *Shootout*, and *The Planets*—have been performed across the Seacoast. Meghan is delighted to once again join the Dance Annex for its annual performance of *The Nutcracker*.



Emily Pleadwell (*Ballerina Doll*, *Snowflake*, *Arabian Lead*, *Flower Demi-Soloist*) began her dance training at the age of 3 at the American Academy of Ballet in Buffalo, NY under direction of Maris Battaglia and Carol Klocke-Murphy. She attended summer intensive programs including Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, and Chautauqua Dance. Emily continued her training at the University of New Hampshire with Assaf Benchetrit and Susan Endrizzi, performing originally choreographed ballet and contemporary works with the UNH Ballet Company. She graduated with degrees in Dance and Dietetics in 2021, and with her master's in Nutritional Sciences in 2022. Since graduating, Emily has had the opportunity to perform diverse works with choreographers from New England and abroad through the Lila Dance Festival. She has enjoyed guest performing roles including Snow Queen, Dew Drop, Arabian, and Spanish in local productions of "The Nutcracker", and the Fairy Godmother in "Cinderella". Emily is excited to be performing as a member of the Annex Contemporary Dance Company, teaching at The Dance Annex, and working as a Clinical Dietitian.



Ian Rodgers (*Snow King, Porteur*) began dancing at the age of 19 when he took his first ballet class at the University of New Hampshire. What began as just a way to fulfill the college art gen-ed requirement quickly changed into a passion for artistic expression through movement. Ian credits his ability to start dancing later in life to the many years spent practicing and teaching gymnastics, which helped to develop instincts for body control and spatial awareness. Over the years his love of dance has grown into a diverse professional career collaborating with many studios and professional dancers across the Seacoast area. Though ballet is the foundation of his dance training, Ian has also studied contemporary ballet, modern, Ballroom, Latin, and traditional folklore dance styles. When he's not dancing, Ian enjoys spending his free time being active outdoors and is a serious nature enthusiast. He graduated UNH with a degree in Zoology and works for a federal land conservation agency helping to protect important farmlands, wetlands, and forests across the country.



Stephanie Salmi-Pepin (*Snowflake, Spanish, Flower Demi-Soloist*) was born in Miami, Florida and began her training with Ballet Master, Orsino del Valle and later at the Miami City Ballet School. At fourteen, she was granted full scholarship to continue her pre-professional training at the HARID Conservatory in Boca Raton, Florida graduating four years later as her class Valedictorian. Summer intensives training included the National Russian Ballet Seminar, the HARID Conservatory, North Carolina School of the Arts, The Hartford Ballet, and The Milwaukee Ballet School.

Stephanie's started her professional dancing career with the Montgomery Ballet, and later with Arts Ballet Theatre of Florida. Before her relocation to Greenville, Maine, she danced as a Principal with Ballet Wichita in Kansas. During her time in Maine, Stephanie helped run Greenville School for the Arts, alongside her Husband, John, where she taught various dance styles to her local community. During this time Stephanie kept up with performing throughout the state of Maine with The Robinson Ballet's, "The Nutcracker" and also at the 2024 LILA Dance Festival with Choreography by Meghan McCoy Seedner in Rochester, NH. Her most recent performances have been with The Ballet Bloom Project, "Essence" in Portland, ME under the direction of Rose Hutchins. This past Spring, she also danced as a soloist in Angela Grassie's production of "Cinderella" in Durham, NH. Stephanie is delighted to have been given the opportunity to dance again with Dance Annex Studio's production of "The Nutcracker" under the Artistic Direction of Julie Hebb.

In addition to her performance experience, Stephanie has been on staff at The Dancexchange in North Miami, FL, The Montgomery Ballet School, Artistree, The Pointe School of Dance, Wichita School of Performing Arts (WSPA), Bethal College Academy of Performing Arts (BCAPA), and close to her current home at the Piscataquis Regional YMCA and also for the Boothbay Regional YMCA and Montessori School. She currently teaches Ballet and Pointe at TNT Dance Studio in Fairfield, ME. *Photo by Rose Hutchins Photography.*



Lorelei Samon (*Snowflake, Chinese Tea Lead, Flower*) began her training at age 7 and soon knew she wanted to keep dance in her life forever. She decided to pursue a career in the arts and graduated from DeSales University in Center Valley, PA with a BA in Dance in 2007. During her time in college, Lorelei was cast in numerous classical ballet productions, both for the college and for Repertory Dance Theatre (Emmaus, PA). Since graduating, she has had the privilege of dancing with several local companies, including Solecity Dance (Rochester, NH), Corinne's School of Dance (Rochester, NH), The Dance Annex (York, ME), and was among a small group of local dancers to perform with Janis Brennar and Dancers (NYC) in "Lost, Found, Lost" at The Dance Hall in Kittery, ME. In 2018, Lorelei was a principal dancer in "Vanity Lane," a production of Harvard University's BlackCAST Productions. Lorelei is also a seamstress and an aerialist, specializing in Aerial Tissu in which she has been training since 2008. She has recently started competing in the Aerial Arts, receiving a Second-Place award in 2019 and a First Place award in 2020, both in the Advanced category of the National Aerialympics Competition. After living in Germany for 2 years with her husband, traveling Europe and experiencing all the wonderful things those cultures have to offer, Lorelei is so happy to be back onstage performing with The Dance Annex and would like to thank Julie Hebb for all her work. She would also like to thank her mother, her grandmother, and her husband Jeff, for all their support over the years. Ich liebe dich!



Nathan Straussberg (Porteur) is currently studying Environmental Engineering at the University of New Hampshire. He danced for 10 years at Kathy Blake Dance Studio, learning styles such as hip hop, jazz, lyrical, and theatre dance. In college, he started taking ballet in the spring of 2023 and became a member of the UNH Ballet Company for the 2023-2024 season. In UNH Ballet Company, he had the opportunity to perform in *Don Quixote* as a Torrador and Basilio. In the 2024 UNH Spring Ballet Showcase, he had the chance to work with guest choreographer Zach Betty-Neagle from Nsquared. He performed as Siegfried in the *Black Swan Pas de Deux* at both the University of New Hampshire and Northeastern Ballet Theatre in March and May of 2024. During the summer of 2024, he studied Argentine tango under guest choreographer Alejandro Figliolo with Lila Productions, as well as performed the *Blue Bird Pas de Deux* from *Sleeping Beauty* at the 2024 Lila Dance Festival.



Hayden Wink (Porteur) grew up dancing at Kathy Blake Dance Studios starting with hip-hop and slowly growing into other styles. At the University of New Hampshire, Hayden joined the Ballet Company as a junior, starting to learn ballet in 2023 with *Don Quixote*. He performed group pieces and solo's in Ballet Showcases featuring excerpts from *Swan Lake*, *Le Corsaire*, and *Raymonda*. He choreographed and taught a group of 5 other dancers a hip-hop piece called *16* that was performed in the Fall 2024 Dance Showcase at UNH. Hayden completed his Bachelors in Neuroscience with a Dance minor in May 2025 and looks to continue dancing. In the 2025 Lila Dance Festival, he performed a section from the *Flames of Paris Pas de Deux* and a house piece called *Running Into Time* by Millie Heckler. He performed the *Bluebird Pas de Deux* in the Fall 2025 Ballet Showcase at UNH and continues to work with the Ballet Company. This is Hayden's first *Nutcracker* and he is thrilled to be working with the Dance Annex!