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## **BalletX Welcomes Seven Talented New Dancers and Dance Fellows Into the Company for its 2022-2023 Season**

*BalletX welcomed three new dancers and four new dance fellows into their 2022-2023 season during opening night at The Philadelphia Orchestra and a family-friendly pop-up performance at the Cherry Street Pier*

**PHILADELPHIA (October 5, 2022)** – [BalletX](#), Philadelphia’s premier contemporary ballet, announces new additions to its highly-anticipated 2022-2023 Season. Last week, the company welcomed three new dance members and four new dance fellows, each with diverse and talented backgrounds in the industry. The dancers and fellows were included in The Philadelphia Orchestra’s Opening Night on Wednesday, September 28, as well as a free pop-up event hosted by BalletX at the Cherry Street Pier on Friday, September 30, 2022 titled, *Dancing on the Pier*.

“These seven dancers bring so much artistic diversity to BalletX with international, national and local experiences that will help make our performances shine,” says **Christine Cox, Artistic & Executive Director of BalletX**. “We are thrilled to introduce them as part of our BalletX team at our first pop-up events of the season and look forward to more performances with them especially when our Fall Series begins in November.”

On Wednesday, September 28 [The Philadelphia Orchestra](#) kicked off their 123rd season with an Opening Night Celebration at Verizon Hall on the Kimmel Cultural Campus where BalletX’s innovative style was on full display. The collaboration included choreography from acclaimed NYC Ballet Principal Dancer Tiler Peck. The night was a breathtaking display of talent for all in attendance.

The local community gathered at Cherry Street Pier on Friday, September 30 for a night of beautiful dancing, live music and a chance to interact with Philadelphia’s great dance companies, including the [Chocolate Ballerina Company](#), [Metropolitan Ballet Company](#), and [Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers](#). Additionally, BalletX’s Dance eXchange Dream Team joined in the event, allowing those in attendance to take part in BalletX’s dance education program. The event was hosted by BalletX and kicked off their upcoming 2022-2023 season.

- Images from The Philadelphia Orchestra event are available for download linked [here](#). Photo credit: Jessica Griffin
- Images from the Cherry Street Pier event are available for download linked [here](#). Photo credit: Ryan Brandenburg

**The new dancers introduced to the BalletX community, included:**

**Jonathan Montepara**

Jonathan Montepara, from Orsogna (Italy), graduated from the Rome Ballet School in 2018. He danced for the Rome Ballet Junior Company where he performed the neoclassical version of Coppélia by the choreographer Milena Zullo. In 2018, Montepara joined ARB 2 and danced in all the company productions such as Coppélia, The Nutcracker, Troisvoix (world premiere by Mary Barton), Beauty and the Beast (world premiere by Kirk Peterson). During his second season with ARB2, Jonathan was originally cast in Beyond the Normal (world premiere by choreographer Riccardo De Nigris). He danced with the main company in Paul Taylor masterpiece *Airs*, *The Nutcracker* and the new production of *Giselle*, staged by Ana Novoa and José Manuel Carreño. In the last triple bill, Jonathan was casted as one of the lead in Trey McIntyre's *Blue Until June*, performed by the company in NYC. In 2020, Montepara was promoted to Artist and was invited by the Princeton Symphony Orchestra to dance the role of the Cavalier in "The Nutcracker Grand Pas de deux", he also performed for the American Repertory Ballet's Digital Program 2021 *Strange Sentience* (a world premiere choreographed by Colby Damon) and the lead role in *Swan Lake* and *Paquita*. During ARB 2021/2022 season, Jonathan performed the main pas de deux in Ethan Stiefel's *Wood Work*, the lead role in Amy Seiwert *World, Interrupted*, *Snow King*, *Chocolate* and *Coffee* lead in *The Nutcracker* and *Sanders and Dimitri* in Stiefel's *World Premiere of Amid Summer Night's dream*. He danced *Bewitched Pas de deux* by Claire Davison for the annual gala and concluded his season with ARB dancing the lead in two World Premieres: *Moving to Bach* by Ja'Malik and *Circadiaby* Caili Quan. He is thrilled to join BalletX for the 2022/2023 season.

**Jerard Palazo**

Jerard Palazo was born in Manila, Philippines and moved to Canada at 8 years old, where he began his formal dance training at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School Professional Division in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 2006. After graduating in 2012, he moved to Toronto to further his dance studies with the Toronto Dance Theatre for a year. Upon receiving a full tuition scholarship from the Alvin Ailey School Jerard moved to New York and trained at Ailey from 2013-2015. Jerard was selected for summer programs on full tuition scholarships at Jacob's Pillow Contemporary Program and Nederlands Dans Theatre. He has worked with Nai Ni Chen Dance Company, Peridance Company and Lavagnino Dance in New York. Jerard made his debut as a choreographer at iHeartDanceNYC in June 2021 with 'New Beginnings'. A duet he specially conceived for New York City Ballet soloist Megan LeCrone, performed by Ms. LeCrone and Jerard on the rooftop of the Empire Hotel near Lincoln Center. It turned out to be the onset of 'So Close' his first full-length ballet that had its world premiere in the spring of 2022 at Peridance Contemporary Dance Company and was received enthusiastically. Jerard Palazo is excited to dance in his first season with BalletX.

### [Annika Kuo](#)

Annika Kuo grew up in central New Jersey and began her extensive dance training at Princeton Ballet School, also known as American Repertory Ballet (ARB). She studied classical ballet, pointe, and pas de deux for 12 years. Annika also had the opportunity to study with renowned teachers such as Maria Youssevitch, Kathleen Moore, and Aydmara Cabrera. During her time at ARB, she danced numerous roles in classical ballets such as the Bluebird in *Sleeping Beauty* and Clara in *The Nutcracker*. She also participated in numerous summer dance intensives with Dutch National Ballet, Chautauqua Institution, Bolshoi Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, and BalletX. In 2018, after graduating from high school, Annika attended The Boston Conservatory at Berklee, where she broadened her knowledge and exposure of various dance techniques, including Graham, Limón, Horton, hip-hop, and improvisation. She has performed works by distinguished choreographers such as Daniel Pezig, Ruka Hatua-Saar White, and William Isaac. Annika is looking forward to continuing her career with BalletX.

### **The new Dance Fellows of BalletX introduced included:**

#### [Eli Alford](#)

Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Eli Alford began dancing when he was twelve years old at Encore Performance Company, a nationally recognized training ground for dance competitions and conventions. While training with Encore, Eli received a full-tuition scholarship to the Alabama Ballet School where he studied under the direction of Roger Van Fleteren and Tracey Alvey. In 2022, Eli received a BFA in dance from the USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance under the direction of Jodie Gates and William Forsythe where he has learned and performed the works of George Balanchine, Ohad Naharin, Jiri Kylian, Justin Peck, Merce Cunningham, and Dwight Rohden to name a few. During his time at USC, Eli also received a minor in the Biology of Human Movement from USC Dornsife while working as a lead operational and administrative assistant for USC Kaufman. Eli is thrilled to be joining BalletX as Dance Fellow this season and to continue nurturing his passion for movement.

#### [Kara Covaleski](#)

Kara Covaleski grew up training in all styles of dance at California Dance Theatre in Westlake Village, CA. Following high school, Kara went on to become a trainee at Cincinnati Ballet where she was able to perform in many full length ballets with the main company such as Victoria Morgan's *The Nutcracker* and Septiem Webre's *Peter Pan*. The next season, Kara was promoted to Cincinnati Ballet Second Company where she would dance in more main company productions such as Kirk Peterson's *Swan Lake* and was cast as Snow White in Pamela Robinson's *Snow White*. During the pandemic, Kara was able to continue training, spent some time at San Diego Ballet as a company member and also pursued teaching the students at her home studio which she also carries a big passion for. Kara is very excited for this season at BalletX and to be here in Philadelphia!

#### [Isabella Nova](#)

Originally from Bergamo, Italy, Isabelle Nova started their dance training in the R.A.D method. Isabelle moved to the United States at age 14 to train with Pacific Northwest Ballet School under the directorship of Peter Boal. After graduating from the school, Isabelle was invited to be part of the Professional Division at PNB, where they danced for two years as a PD and had the opportunity to rehearse and

perform with the company in productions such as George Balanchine's "The Nutcracker" as well as being part of PNB's Next Step performances. Isabelle performed in a featured role as the " Enchantress" in PNB's school production of "Beauty and the Beast". Isabelle has attended summer programs at San Francisco Ballet, Miami City Ballet, School of American Ballet, and The Washington Ballet.

### **Demetrious Reed**

Demetrious started dancing at the tender age of two & began his training at a small dance studio in Southern Philadelphia. He was signed up for just about every class available including: ballet, modern, jazz, tap, hip hop, & acrobatics. After spending his early years there, his mother felt he needed an environment with more structure & discipline. Structure & discipline did indeed serve him well; after changing studios he soon started to enjoy classical ballet & sought to build a strong technical foundation. Demetrious attended his first summer intensive at the age of twelve on full scholarship at the Pennsylvania Ballet. The two summers proceeding, he went to New York to attend the Joffrey Ballet School intensive. Both times were on full scholarship. In 2015, Demetrious officially moved to New York & began as a full-time trainee student at the Joffrey Ballet School in the Jazz & Contemporary program. Although ballet was becoming his favorite genre of dance, he still felt the need to train in every style available. While in the Jazz & Contemporary program he got to study ballet, Horton, jazz, musical theater, & hip hop. After two years at Joffrey, Demetrious felt it was time for him to improve upon his partnering skills, as well as his ballet training overall. He transferred to the ballet program & he found himself working much differently than ever before. In 2019, Demetrious graduated from the Joffrey Ballet School Trainee Program & received his certificate of completion.

### **About BalletX**

Based in Philadelphia, BalletX is one of the nation's premier contemporary ballet companies, known for commissioning choreographers from around the world to create new ballets that are "fresh, inclusive, and connect to what people want" (Philadelphia Citizen). Led by Artistic & Executive Director Christine Cox, BalletX has been recognized by The New Yorker as a "place of choreographic innovation" for producing nearly 100 world premiere ballets and films by more than 60 choreographers in its 17-year history. In addition to virtual works, main-stage performances and international touring, the company offers free community pop ups, dance classes, artist Q&As, open rehearsals and in-school dance education designed to bring audiences closer to dance. To learn more about BalletX's programming and dancers, visit BalletX.org and follow the company on social media.

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