



## KC Ballet Welcomes New Company Members, Artistic Staff Addition

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Kansas City Ballet Artistic Director Devon Carney today announced the appointment of six new members, Kelsey Hellebuyck, Emily Mistretta, Gustavo Ribeiro, Amaya Rodriguez, James Rogers, **Kevin Wilson**, and three new apprentices, Ivan Braatz, Sarah **Joan Smith**, and Katherine Sawicki to the Kansas City Ballet Company. Additionally there are four new members of Kansas City Ballet's **Second Company**: Gavin Abercrombie, Miranda Dafoe, Cameron Thomas and Marisa Whiteman.

Carney stated, "This is an especially significant achievement for Kansas City Ballet this year in that not only are we able to draw increasingly more accomplished dancers to Kansas City but also this is the first time we have been able to advance dancers within each of our ranks from the top level of our school to trainee to KCB II to company which has long been a dream of ours." He continued, "These are such exciting transformative times here at KCB and I am honored to be a part of this moment in the amazing history of this company. We are pleased to welcome these exceptional dancers to Kansas City Ballet and Kansas City. I know our audiences will enjoy the talent and diversity that these new dynamic artists will add to our existing roster of highly professional world class performers that grace our stage throughout the season. This can only bode well for the continuing exceptional artistic evolution of our dancers in both our school and professional company in the years to come."

### New Kansas City Ballet Company members

Kelsey Hellebuyck received her ballet training at the San Francisco Ballet School, where she spent 11 years (five on a full merit scholarship). At age 16, she joined Boston Ballet as a member of the Corps de Ballet. With Boston Ballet, she performed numerous ballets by **George Balanchine**, Marius Petipa, Jorma Elo, and Mikko Nissinen, among others. Some of her featured roles included Arabian in The Nutcracker, Peasant Pas de Deux in Giselle, and Little Red Riding Hood in The Sleeping Beauty.

Ms. Hellebuyck joined **Ed Pennsylvania Ballet** as a member of the Corps de Ballet for the 2012-2013 Season and performed several works with that Company, including **William Forsythe's** Artifact Suite and The Second Detail, Ji?í Kylián's Forgotten Land (Beige Couple), **George Balanchine's** The Nutcracker (Coffee), Serenade, Stravinsky Violin Concerto, The Four Temperaments, and Emeralds and Diamonds from Jewels, Alexei Ratmansky's Jeu de Cartes, **Christopher Wheeldon's** Swan Lake, and **Jerome Robbins' Fancy Free**.

Emily Mistretta began her training at Inland Pacific Ballet Academy in Montclair, CA. In 2005, Ms. Mistretta attended Boston Ballet's Summer Dance Program, where she was asked to join the Boston Ballet School and received a tuition scholarship with generous funding from Jack Rugeheimer. In 2006, Ms. Mistretta joined Boston Ballet II, and she was promoted to Corps de Ballet in 2008.

Ms. Mistretta was featured in several works throughout her career with Boston Ballet, including; The Sleeping Beauty (Pas de Trois, Little Red, Woodland Glade Fairy), Florence Clerc's La Bayadère (Tall Gamzatti's Friend, Small Gamzatti's Friend, Lead D'jambo), **Michel Fokine's** Les Sylphides (Soloist Sylph), **Jerome Robbins' Antique Epigraphs** and The Concert, Balanchine's Jewels, Symphony in C (3rd Movement Soloist), Coppélia, Serenade (Russian Girls), The Four Temperaments, Episodes, Theme and Variations, Divertimento No. 15, and Symphony in Three Movements, Jorma Elo's Elo Experience and Awake Only, Yuri Yanowsky's Smoke and Mirrors, Jeffrey Cirio's Fremd, Ji?í Kylián's Bella Figura, Wings of Wax, Tar and Feathers and Symphony of Psalms, and Alexander Ekman's Cacti.

Gustavo Ribeiro is from Vitória, Brazil. Mr. Ribeiro began classical ballet training at Espressao & Arte Studio de Danca in Caricica, Brazil under the direction of Helen Christine. In 2012, he joined Orlando Ballet **Second Company** under the direction of **Robert Hill** and Deirdre Burger. He joined the Washington Ballet **Second Company** in 2014, where he performed in many productions with the main company such as The Nutcracker, Sleepy Hollow, Swan Lake, Alice in Wonderland and Blue Bird in Sleeping Beauty under the direction of Septime Weber and Luis Torres. In 2015, Ribeiro was the youngest dancer and the first Brazilian to join Alberta Ballet as a full-time company member where he performed in The Nutcracker, Rite of Spring, **Aszure Barton's** new creation and as Paris in **Romeo & Juliet**. Mr. Ribeiro has received many top honors and dance awards in Brazil, the USA, and Canada. In 2014, he was both a Top 12 and a finalist at the Youth America Grand Prix in New York. In 2012, he was offered full scholarships to study at Palucca Hochschule for TanzDresden, Houston Ballet, and Joffrey Academy of Dance among others. He has performed many principal roles in full length productions of The Nutcracker, Don Quixote, La Fille Mal Gardee, La Bayadère and Le Corsaire. Mr. Ribeiro has earned many awards for excellence in choreography both for soloists and ensembles. He is also a certified teacher for the ABT National Training curriculum.

Amaya Rodríguez was born in Havana City, Cuba. She began her ballet training in 1997 at Pro Dance under the general direction of Laura Alonso. At the same time, she received complementary ballet training at the Dance Department of the National Ballet of Cuba. In 2003, she started her formal training at the Cuban National Ballet School under the guidance of Ramona de Saa and Marta Iris Fernandez. She was awarded the Silver Medal in the 8th International Competition of Academies for the Teaching of Ballet, in Havana in 2004. In 2005, she performed as Guest Artist in the International Festival of Dance in Quito, Ecuador, and in 2007 at the 1st International Ballet Festival of Cali, Colombia.

After graduating from the Cuban National Ballet School in 2006, she joined the National Ballet of Cuba under the artistic direction of **Alicia Alonso**. The same year she participated in the Festival Solidarity Dance in Maracaibo, Venezuela. In 2011, she was promoted to Principal Dancer. Because of her technical talent and artistry, she was rapidly promoted to First Dancer in 2013. With the National Ballet of Cuba, she performed in European countries, the Americas, Egypt, and Australia. In 2012, she toured several Spanish cities with the ballet gala *The Virtuosos*. In 2014, she was a guest artist at the International Gala of Augsburg, Germany. She has performed the leading roles of the romantic-classical repertoire such as *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *Don Quixote*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppélia*, *Cinderella*, *Le Corsaire*, and in contemporary works.

**James Kirby** Rogers started his ballet training at the age of 9 at the Academy of Ballet in San Francisco, under the directorship of **Richard Gibson** and Zory Karah. He then continued his training at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) under **Susan Jaffe**, Jared Redick and Mikhail Tchoupakov, followed by more training with Houston Ballet II under Claudio Munoz and Sabrina Lenzi. In 2015, **MR. Rogers** was a finalist at Youth American Grand Prix (YAGP) New York where he danced the Prince Siegfried **BLACK SWAN** Variation from *Swan Lake*. As a student, **MR. Rogers** has danced numerous principal roles including the lead in *Allegro Brillante* by **George Balanchine**, and the Father in John Neumeier's *Yondering*.

**Kevin Wilson** studied at The Harid Conservatory where he was awarded the dance achievement award for two consecutive years. Upon graduating he joined the Colorado Ballet where he had the opportunity to dance a number of roles. Some of his favorites include Quincy in *Dracula*, Puss in Boots in *The Sleeping Beauty* and **Glen Tetley's** *Rite of Spring*.

#### New Company Apprentices

Company Apprentices perform with the company under the tutelage of the artistic leadership as part of their initial professional experience.

Ivan Braatz was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. He began his ballet training at the San Francisco Ballet School, where he trained for six years. He then trained at Houston Ballet Academy for one year. Mr. Braatz has performed corps de ballet roles with both companies. Highlights of his career thus far include performing in **Christopher Wheeldon's** *Cinderella*, **Stanton Welch's** *Romeo and Juliet*, and as Russian in Helgi Tomasson's *The Nutcracker*. Mr. Braatz joined KCB as a member of KCB II in 2015.

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Sarah **Joan Smith**, from Columbia, SC, began her training at the age of 8 in Kiev, Ukraine. She continued her ballet training after returning to the States at Columbia Ballet School with Anita Ashley and Ann Kent. At the Youth America Grand Prix semi-finals in 2010, she received the bronze medal in the senior contemporary category and was top twelve in the senior classical category. Ms. Smith attended summer intensives at The Rock School for Dance Education, **American Ballet Theatre**, Ballet West, San Francisco Ballet, and Boston Ballet. She attended high school at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) from 2010 to 2012 where she trained with **Ethan Stiefel**, Warren Conover, Susan McCullough and Nina Danilova. Following her graduation in 2012, she was a trainee with Boston Ballet where she performed with the professional company and Boston Ballet II. In 2013, Ms. Smith joined Richmond Ballet's **Second Company** under the direction of Stoner Winslett and Igor Antonov. She enjoyed performing in ballets such as **George Balanchine's** Mozartiana, Valse Fantaise, and The Four Temperaments, **John Butler's** Carmina Burana and Salvatore Aiello's The Rite of Spring. She was featured in soloist roles in Don Quixote, The Nutcracker, and works by Stoner Winslett and Val Caniparoli. In 2015, she traveled to China with Richmond Ballet where she performed at the "Meet in Beijing Festival" as well as several other cities in China.

Katherine Sawicki, raised in Louisville, KY, trained primarily at Louisville Academy of Dance before continuing at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School and Houston Ballet Academy. She was a trainee in Cincinnati Ballet's **Second Company** for the 2013-14 season where she toured with the company to Anchorage, AK and Columbus, OH as well as performed in works by James Kudelka, Leonide Massine, and Christopher Stowell. Ms. Sawicki was a member of KCB II for two seasons and performed with the Company in multiple ballets including Septime Webre's Alice (in wonderland), Devon Carney's Giselle and Swan Lake, Yuri Possokhov's Diving into the Lilacs, **George Balanchine's** The Four Temperaments, and Adam Hougland's Rite of Spring. She also had the opportunity to perform two pieces by Anthony Krutzkamp for a TEDx Youth event with the **Second Company**.

#### New KCB II dancers

KCB II, a program connected with Kansas City Ballet School and a part of the **Second Company** of Kansas City Ballet, is Kansas City Ballet's emerging professionals program, giving talented young dancers a professional company experience. Dancers in the KCB II program are selected from auditions around the country. These dancers receive professional experience, performing corps de ballet roles in Kansas City Ballet full-length productions.

KCB II is committed to arts education, community outreach and the development of aspiring young artists preparing them for professional dance careers. KCB II provides a platform for emerging performers, teachers and choreographers to hone their technical skills and showcase their artistic talent. KCB II performs throughout the region through public performances, lecture demonstrations, residencies and workshops, enabling the community to experience live dance in a public setting. Dancers in KCB II act as ambassadors for Kansas City Ballet.

The new members of KCB II are:

Gavin Abercrombie was born in Acton, CA, and began his ballet training at the age of 8 with the Antelope Valley Ballet. At the age of 14 he attended Ed Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's summer intensive, where he was invited to stay year round on full scholarship. In Pittsburgh, Gavin trained under the leadership of Marjorie Grundvig and Dennis Marshall, and was given the opportunity to perform roles such as "Romantic Boy" in David Lichine's Graduation Ball, and "Golden Idol" from Petipa's La Bayadere. After two years in Pittsburgh he attended San Francisco Ballet's summer intensive where he trained under Patrick Armand and Parrish Maynard. Upon completion of the summer course he was invited to stay on full scholarship. During the two years he spent in San Francisco, he was given many chances to perform in ballets such as the North American premiere of Kenneth MacMillan's Soiree Musicale, John Neumier's Yondering, Helgi Tomasson's Handel-a Celebration, "Russian" in Helgi Tomasson's The Nutcracker, and debuted the male principal role in the world premiere of Parrish Maynard's Symphonic.

Miranda Dafoe grew up in Sunnyvale, CA and started dancing at the age of 3. At age 9 she began her studies at San Francisco Ballet School under Yoira Esquivel Brito, Pascale Leroy and Tina LeBlanc. She also trained privately with Cuban ballet legends Jorge Esquivel and Amparo Brito. After studying at San Francisco Ballet School for eight years, Ms. Dafoe moved to Houston, Texas to train at Houston Ballet Academy on full scholarship. There she performed solo roles in Academy productions of Stanton Welch's The Ladies and A Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra.

Ms. Dafoe has attended summer programs at San Francisco Ballet and on scholarship at Pacific Northwest Ballet and Houston Ballet. In 2015 she was a trainee with the Kansas City Ballet Second Company. Her repertoire with the company includes the premiere of Devon Carney's The Nutcracker (Snow and Flowers), Devon Carney's Swan Lake (Swan Corps and Czardas) and Adam Hougland's Rite of Spring.

Cameron Thomas began his dance training in 2008 at the Draper Center for Dance Education in his hometown of Rochester, NY. In 2013, he became a trainee with the Rochester City Ballet under Artistic Director Jamey Leverett. While dancing with Rochester City Ballet, Mr. Thomas performed soloist roles in Jamey Leverett's The Nutcracker, Cinderella, and George Balanchine's Serenade. In January 2015, Mr. Thomas received a full scholarship to attend the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (JKO) School at American Ballet Theatre under the direction of Franco de Vita and Raymond Lukens. At JKO, he performed in Raymond Lukens' Four Hungarian Dances and Danse Baroque, Antony Tudor's Soiree Musicale, Zhong-Jing Fang's The Idea of Becoming, and performed featured roles in Petipa's Raymonda Pas de Dix, George Balanchine's Theme and Variations, and Ethan Stiefel's premiere of Knightlife. In 2015, he was selected to perform at the open house of the American Ballet Theatre's William J. Gillespie School at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, CA. Mr. Thomas has received scholarships to attend summer intensives at Boston Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Next Generation Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet, and the Kirov Academy of Ballet in Washington, D.C.

Marisa Whiteman, who was born on Long Island, NY, began classical training at Seiskaya Ballet, until joining Next Generation Ballet in 2011, where she also danced with Opera Tampa and at the Youth American Grand Prix (YAGP) Gala at Lincoln Center. Subsequently, while at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School she performed with the company in many corps de ballet roles in ballets such as Terrance Orr's *The Nutcracker* and Septime Webre's *Cinderella*, as well as with the Pittsburgh Symphony. Marisa spent one year training with Ekaterina Shchelkanova of Open World Dance Foundation before joining the Kansas City Ballet **Second Company** as a Trainee in 2014.

Since joining Kansas City Ballet, she has had the privilege of performing roles in **George Balanchine's** *The Four Temperaments*, **Todd Bolender's** *The Nutcracker*, Devon Carney's *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, Vesna a world premier by Viktor Plotnikov, André Prokofsky's *The Three Musketeers*, Septime Webre's *Alice (in wonderland)*, Adam Houglan's *Rite of Spring*, and Anthony Krutzkamp's *Carmina Burana* in conjunction with the K-State Choir, as well as with *Pink Martini* in concert. This past summer she performed at the Hermitage Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia, and attended The School at Jacob's Pillow, where she was featured in Yury Yanowsky's World Premiere at the opening Gala Performance.

#### New Trainee Dancers

The Trainee Program, which is a tuition based program of Kansas City Ballet School, aims to nurture and develop young aspiring post-secondary dancers' technical skills and artistry, ultimately preparing them for a professional dance career by bridging the gap between the student and KCB II. In addition to their dance studies, trainees participate in some company classes, have the opportunity to be considered for performances with Kansas City Ballet Company during the season and also perform in tandem with KCB II in their own educational and community outreach performances throughout the year.

The new members include Kathryn Anderson, Victoria Brickert, Samantha Huebner, Scout Inghilterra, Meghan Long, Micaela Maxwell, Lukas Pringle, and Allison Rainford. **MS. Anderson**, Ms. Long and Mr. Pringle were promoted from Kansas City Ballet School.

#### New Artistic Staff

Carney also announced the appointment of Ballet Master Parrish Maynard. Artistic Director, Devon Carney, states, "I am very encouraged by the addition of Mr. Maynard to our artistic staff. He brings with him a wealth of artistic knowledge and experience from his extensive performing and coaching career. I see the addition of Mr. Maynard to our existing highly qualified artistic staff to be a completion of a dream of mine to have a well-rounded group of coaches from a broad spectrum of backgrounds that will surely impact in a positive manner our highly talented artists."

Parrish Maynard danced with **American Ballet Theatre**, where he was invited to join by **Mikhail Baryshnikov**, and as a principal dancer at The Joffrey Ballet and San Francisco Ballet. In addition to being a recipient of the Princess Grace Award and the Presidential Scholar Award, he was a silver medalist in the International Ballet Competition.

Mr. Maynard has performed in Dance in America, **American Ballet Theatre's** 'Now', danced Nacho Duato's Romanso, and Lar Lubovich's Othello, in the role of Iago which was created on him. In 2005 Mr. Maynard joined the faculty of San Francisco Ballet School. In his 10 years at San Francisco Ballet, Mr. Maynard choreographed more than 20 ballets for the San Francisco Ballet School, some of which have been danced around the world at companies including Royal Ballet School, Royal New Zealand Ballet and National Ballet of Canada.

Founded in 1957, Kansas City Ballet is a 29-member professional ballet company under the leadership of Artistic Director Devon Carney and Executive Director Jeffrey J. Bentley. The company's mission is to establish Kansas City Ballet as an indispensable asset in its community through exceptional performances, excellence in dance training and quality community education programs for all ages.

Kansas City Ballet is home to Kansas City Ballet School with an enrollment of 1800+ children and adults offering professional training for the career-minded student as well as for those simply seeking a healthy lifestyle.

Through our professional company, our **Second Company** (KCB II) and our many community educational and outreach programs, such as Reach Out and Dance (ROAD) we seek to nurture and develop our artists, audiences and students in the values inherent in the creativity, diversity and joy of dance.

Our home, the **Todd Bolender** Center for Dance & Creativity, in conjunction with our Resident Company status at the world-class Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, truly has positioned Kansas City as a destination for dance.