

# GRAND PRIX Dance Open AMERICA

## Grand Prix Finals Dance Open America - Judges



### Susan Jaffe

**Artistic Director of American Ballet Theatre**

*Lifetime Achievement 2026 – Grand Prix Dance Open America*

Declared by The New York Times as “America’s Quintessential American Ballerina,” Susan Jaffe enjoyed a career as a Principal Dancer at American Ballet Theatre for 22 years. She performed on the international stage with the Royal Ballet, the Kirov Ballet, the Stuttgart Ballet, La Scala Ballet, Vienna State Opera Ballet,

Royal Danish Ballet, Royal Swedish Ballet, and the English National Ballet. Her versatility as a dancer brought acclaimed interpretations to ballet classics, such as Swan Lake and The Sleeping Beauty, and dramatic works by Agnes de Mille, Antony Tudor, John Cranko, Ronald Hynd, and Kenneth MacMillan. She also worked with many prominent contemporary choreographers of her time, such as Twyla Tharp, Jerome Robbins, Merce Cunningham, Nacho Duato, Mark Morris, Ulysses Dove, and Jiří Kylián.

After retiring from the stage in 2002, Jaffe taught in the ABT Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School and served as an advisor to the chairman of the board of ABT until 2007. In 2010 she became a Director of Repertoire at ABT. Two years later, she was appointed Dean of Dance at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) in Winston-Salem, NC, a position she held for eight years. During her tenure at UNCSA, Jaffe and her faculty implemented a syllabus based on the ABT National Training Curriculum and established the Choreographic Institute of UNCSA. Additionally, she raised \$3.5 million in endowed scholarships and other scholarships.

In 2020 Jaffe was appointed the Artistic Director of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. She helped to lead the company through the pandemic with digital programs, outdoor performances, and

performances in museums. As audiences began returning to theaters, Jaffe curated programs that included classic ballets and diverse, innovative voices of today.

## **Anlin Li**

**Assistant Artistic Director**

**Texas Ballet Theater**



Mr. Li was born in Nanjing, China. At the age of 13, he went to Beijing to study at the Beijing Dance Academy and graduated to the Young Dancers Company. He first met and worked with Ben Stevenson while he was a student at the Academy. In 1982, he joined the National Ballet of China as a soloist and danced in many cities in China, Thailand and Hong Kong. In 1985, Mr. Li was invited by Ivan Nagy to join Ballet de Santiago in Chile as a soloist and was soon promoted to principal dancer. In 1989, Mr. Stevenson invited Mr. Li to join Houston Ballet as a soloist.

During his 21-year career as a dancer, Mr. Li was featured in many of Mr. Stevenson's ballets including *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppélia*, *Cinderella*, *The Nutcracker*, *Dracula*, *Three Preludes*, *Four Last Songs*, "L," *Swan Lake*, *Peer Gynt*, *Cleopatra*, and *Don Quixote* among others. He also danced in ballets by many other choreographers including Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Elite Syncopations*, *Manon*, and *Gloria*; Ronald Hynd's *Papillon*, *The Merry Widow*, and *Rosalinda*, John Cranko's *Romeo & Juliet*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*; George Balanchine's *Serenade*, *Agon*, *Theme & Variations*, and *The Four Temperaments*; Vicente Nebrada's *Coppelia* and *Doble Corchea*, André Prokofsky's *Anna*.

*Karenina* and *The Three Musketeers*, Jiri Kylian's *Sinfonietta*; and Christopher Bruce's *Cruel Garden* and *Journey* among others. In 2000, Mr. Li was named Ballet Master for Houston Ballet, and helped set and rehearse many of Mr. Stevenson's ballets. In 2003, Mr. Stevenson invited Mr. Li to be the Assistant Artistic Director of Texas Ballet Theater. He now stages and rehearses Mr. Stevenson's ballets on Texas Ballet Theater and many other ballet companies around the world including Ballet West, Tulsa Ballet, Ballet de Santiago, Kansas City Ballet, Alberta Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet and National Ballet of China.



## **Lauren Anderson**

**Education & Community Engagement**

**Associate Director – Houston Ballet**

Native Houstonian Lauren Anderson danced with Houston Ballet from 1983 to 2006, performing leading roles in all the great classical ballets, appearing across the world to critical acclaim, and in the process, becoming one of Houston Ballet's most beloved stars.

She trained exclusively at Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy from the age of seven. She joined Houston Ballet in 1983 as a Corps de Ballet, 1987 was promoted to Soloist and in 1990 became the first African-American to be promoted to principal dancer at Houston Ballet – and one of the few African-American ballerinas at the head of a major ballet company anywhere in the world.

She has performed across the globe as a guest artist. She created the title role in Ben Stevenson's *Cleopatra*, and her performance as Cleopatra received accolades from international critics. Anna Kisselgoff, dance critic for *The New York Times* compared her to the great Italian actress Eleanora Duse, and Christine Temin of *The Boston Globe* pronounced her "a powerhouse in interpreting the role that Stevenson created on her."

In January 2007, Ms. Anderson transitioned into Houston Ballet's education department where she conducts master classes, and lectures to students on dance and her historic career. In the spring of 2016, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture awarded her with a permanent exhibit. In fall of 2021 was inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame. Most recently, a production chronicling her life, *Plumshuga: The Rise of Lauren Anderson* premiered at Stages Theater.

## Adam Sklute

### Artistic Director of Ballet West

Since 2007, Adam Sklute has expanded Ballet West's outlook, repertoire, and visibility with exciting Company and world premieres, increased touring, heightened public exposure, and greater focus on the Ballet West Academy. He began his career

with The Joffrey Ballet, rising through the ranks from dancer to Associate Director. His stewardship of Ballet West has been marked by both financial growth and elevated artistry and was the subject of The CW Network's docudrama, *Breaking Pointe*, which aired for two seasons. From September 2016 to October 2017, Sklute took on the dual position of CEO and Artistic Director overseeing both administrative and artistic operations of Ballet West. An internationally sought after teacher and adjudicator, Sklute has received numerous awards, including Utah's Enlightened 50 (2014), The Bronze Minuteman Award

for Outstanding Service to Utah and The Nation (2015), and Utah Diversity Connection's Business Award for outstanding commitment to diversity initiatives. Most recently, Sklute was included in *Deseret Magazine's* 25 Changemakers of the West for his efforts to build greater equity and inclusion in classical ballet.





## **Zoica Tovar**

**School Director of NW and SE Campuses**

**Washington Ballet**

Zoica Tovar began her training at the age of nine at the Cuban Ballet School of Havana. Upon graduation she was accepted at Classical Ballet of Havana under the direction of Laura Alonso. Ms. Tovar's talent and dedication allowed her to become a principal ballerina shortly thereafter. She received a silver medal in the Alicia Alonso Ballet Competition in Cuba as well as in the Brasilia International Ballet Competition in Brazil. Ms. Tovar has performed several principal roles including Kitri, Odette, Odile, Juliet, Swanilda, and many others from the classical repertoire.

Ms. Tovar danced as a principal dancer in Orlando Ballet from 1998 to 2009 under the direction of Vasile Petrutiu, Fernando Bujones, Bruce Mark and Robert Hill. At Orlando Ballet, she had the opportunity to perform works by Balanchine, Twyla Tharp, David Parson, and other famous choreographers. During her time in Orlando, Ms. Tovar received The Sun of Florida award from the city for her artistic achievements. In 2009, Ms. Tovar began at BalletMet. During her time with BalletMet, she continued to increase her experience with roles such as Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*. In addition, she worked with amazing choreographers like James Kudelka, Dwight Rhoden, Edwaard Liang and many others, increasing her contemporary dance experience. Ms. Tovar retired in 2014 from BalletMet.

Ms. Tovar has been teaching since 1995. She began her teaching career in Brazil with the Royal Ballet Academy and Palacio de las Artes, the professional company in Belo Horizonte. From 2000 to 2009, Ms. Tovar was part of the teaching faculty at Orlando Ballet, where she was in charge of the summer program auditions. She has also trained students for the Youth America Grand Prix competition. In 2012, Ms. Tovar began teaching at NorthPointe Dance Academy where she started a YAGP program. The program had excellent results including first place performances in ensemble groups for three years in Pittsburgh and Indianapolis. Most recently, from 2020 to 2022, Ms. Tovar was Co-Academy Director of the United Ballet Theatre Academy in Orlando, Florida. During this time, she successfully created a Spring and Summer Intensive with students from all over the United States and the world. Ms.

Tovar returned to BalletMet in 2022 where she was part of the faculty of the academy and the trainee program, also she participated in YAGP 2023 coaching BalletMet students and her Odalisque ensemble was awarded with gold medal. In November of this year, she was promoted to Academy Rehearsal Director position. Ms. Tovar is looking forward to sharing her passion and dedication for teaching with Washington School of Ballet in the upcoming season.

## **Daryl Gray**

**International Acclaimed Choreographer**

**DOA Board of Directors**



Daryl Gray studied acting and music as a child and was also trained in a full dance curriculum at the Harkness, ABT, and SAB schools in New York City. He was a protégé of Ballet Master David Howard a soloist with the Brussels-based Bejart Company and a principal guest artist with dance companies in Classical and contemporary roles in the US, UK, and abroad. In addition, he made his professional debut as an actor at age 14 and went on to perform as a Broadway cast member in Bob Fosse's *Dancin'* and appeared in *On Your Toes* and in other shows, touring internationally.

He began choreographing for the concert stage at a young age and has choreographed over 70 works on 5 continents for such companies as Joffrey, Bejart, Les Ballet Jazz de Montreal, Batsheva Dance Company of Israel, Royal Ballet of Belgium, Northern Ballet Theater UK, Atlanta Ballet, North Carolina Dance Theater, Ballet San Jose and Australia's Queensland Ballet. His many musical stagings have been seen at such theaters as; The Koch Theater and Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center, Coconut Grove Playhouse, California Musical Theatre, Playhouse 91 in Manhattan, Santa Fe Festival Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Brooklyn Academy of Music, St. Louis Muny Opera, Chicago Civic Theater, the Palladium as well as on CBS and PBS television. In addition, Mr. Gray has directed and staged works for the New York G & S Players, "Carmen" at the New York City Opera, ice dancing, video, high fashion, a Disney

extravaganza featuring the music of Alan Menken, industrial shows and television, including A Celebration of the American Musical, which was televised "Live from Lincoln Center". He was chosen for the prestigious Dancebreak, creating concert work at the Ailey Theater which led to the creation of two original Off-Broadway musicals "Andy Warhol Was Right" and "All About

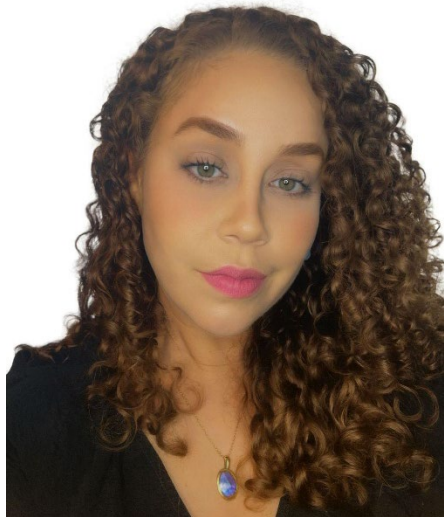
Harry" (Best Choreography Award) for the New York Musical Theater Festival. His unique theatrical Australian QB ballet production "Pirates of Penzance!" was voted "Best of the Bay" (San Francisco) and was subsequently presented internationally in 26 cities by Columbia Artists. Gray recreated two new updated productions in Orlando and for Ballet San Jose.

Recent credits: choreography and musical staging for The Merry Widow, The Tales of Hoffman and Jekyll & Hyde for the St. Petersburg Opera, Director/choreographer Kiss Me Kate at the Palladium theater. Pre-COVID: Pirates! the New Dance Musical directed and choreographed by Gray was slated for London's West End 2020, produced by Tony Award-winning producers Bruce Robert Harris and Jack W Batman. Upcoming: Handel's Semele for The St. Petersburg Opera and Rudra Bejart. His many teaching credits include; ABT Intensive, The Metropolitan Opera, The United Nations, Harvard University, Washington University, University of Missouri at St. Louis, Vassar, University of South Florida, and numerous Dance organizations and schools. He is a member of The Council of the Dance (Paris), a Fulbright Fellow, and a popular teacher worldwide.

Teaching Credits Include:

Ballet and or Theater Dance and Choreography: ABT Summer Intensive, Joffrey School in New York, School of American Ballet, Steps NYC, Ballet Academy East, Randolph College Of The Arts in Toronto, Goh Academy in Vancouver, Patel Conservatory of Tampa, Broadway Dance NYC, Studio Dancin' of Japan, Dance Educators Of America – 12 US cities coast to, coast/ 4 National Conventions, Dance Masters Of America – 17 cities in the USA, and Canada/ 2 National Conventions, Anne Reinking's Broadway Theater Project, Harvard University, Vassar University, Washington University, Webster University @ St. Louis, Tampa University, Princeton School of Dance, University of South Florida, University of Missouri @ St. Louis University of Queensland, Brisbane Australia University of Norway, Nutmeg Conservatory of Dance, Ballet San Jose, Atlanta Ballet, St. Louis Ballet, Batsheva Dance Co. of Israel, National

Ballet of Colombia, National Ballet of Norway, National Ballet of Yugoslavia, Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal, Universal Ballet of Seoul, Australia' Queensland Ballet, Jeune Ballet de France, Centre de Danse Classique, Cannes, France Chicago Dance Teachers Association Tampa Ballet, Hartford Ballet, Ballet Hawaii, The Metropolitan Opera in New York The United Nations, Numerous private schools and much more.



## **Julianette N. Rosado Collazo**

### **Contemporary Choreographer**

Julianette N. Rosado Collazo began her dance training at the age of six, initially studying Ballet, Jazz, and Hip Hop. She later expanded her studies in Lyrical and Contemporary Dance at various academies, developing a versatile technical foundation and a deep appreciation for different movement languages. At the age of sixteen, she began her professional journey as an assistant modern dance teacher at the Escuela de las Artes de Trujillo Alto. During that time, she also taught Baby Ballet and Pre-Ballet classes while continuing her own training in Jazz, Ballet, and Contemporary Dance. For more than 21 years, she has dedicated her career to dance education, teaching Jazz, Contemporary, and Hip Hop at various institutions. As part of her artistic development, she participated in intensive dance programs in New York City for four years, an experience that broadened her artistic perspective and strengthened her choreographic voice. As a choreographer, Julianette has created numerous solo and group works presented in various performance venues and competitions, consistently receiving first-place awards both locally and internationally. Her choreographic work is distinguished by its emotional depth and its exploration of social and human themes. Through movement, she seeks to create spaces for reflection, memory, and connection.

She currently teaches at Ballet Concierto de Puerto Rico, the Escuela de las Artes de Trujillo Alto, and Centro Danza, where she continues to inspire and guide new generations of artists, fostering dancers who develop not only strong technical skills but also expressive artistry and artistic sensitivity.