Grand Prix Dance Open America – Chicago Regionals



Kathy Warakomsky-Li

Associate Director - Texas Ballet Theater

Originally from Boston, Massachusetts, Kathryn Warakomsky-Li began studying ballet at the age of 14 in Springfield, Virginia with Oleg Tupine. She graduated from the State University of New York at Purchase with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance. She was invited to join the Ballet de Santiago under the direction of Ivan Nagy where she rose to the status of principal dancer. In 1989 Ms. Warakomsky-Li joined Houston Ballet and became the Principal dancer. With over 20 years of performance experience, Warakomsky-Li has held lead roles in nearly all the major classical ballets including Swan Lake, Nutcracker, Sleeping Beauty, Giselle, Romeo and Juliet, Cinderella, Cleopatra, Etudes and Coppelia.

She also danced in numerous works by famed contemporary choreographers like Ben Stevenson, George Balanchine, Jiří Kylián, Kenneth MacMillan, John Cranko, Ronald Hynd, James Kudelka and Christopher Bruce among others. Ms. Warakomsky-Li has toured extensively around the world dancing throughout North and South America, Asia and Europe. Upon retiring from the stage in 2001, Ms. Warakomsky-Li was invited to teach at the Houston Ballet Ben Stevenson Academy where she staged and rehearsed many pieces for the upper school.

Ms. Warakomsky-Li has been teaching for Texas Ballet Theater School in Fort Worth since 2003 where she has taught all levels of the school. She is an American Ballet Theatre (ABT) Certified Teacher who has successfully completed the ABT Teacher Training in Primary through Level 7 of the ABT National Training Curriculum®. She has also traveled to Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia to view the Bolshoi and the Vaganova Schools and to participate in their training programs. Ms. Warakomsky-Li was named Principal of Texas Ballet Theater School– Fort Worth in January 2007 and in 2016 was promoted to Associate Director. She also heads the Studio Training Company and has managed the Summer Intensive since its inception in 2007.



Lidice Nuñez Lopez

International Choreographer & Dance Professor

Lidice Nuñez was born in Havana, Cuba, and graduated with Honors from the National School of Art and the Superior Institute of Art of Cuba. She became a First Dancer and Principal Choreographer with the Cuban National Contemporary Dance Company and later served as a professor of Choreographic Composition at the Superior Institute of Art and the National School of Dance in Cuba.

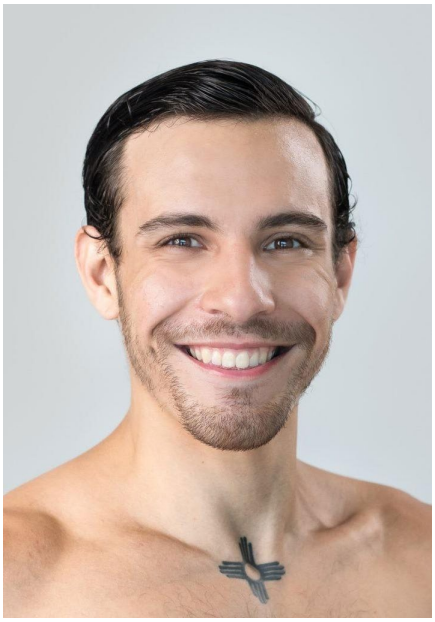
She has enjoyed an extensive international career as a dancer, choreographer, and educator, performing and creating works for major festivals and companies throughout Europe, North America, and Latin America. Her international experience includes festivals in Portugal, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Canada, and the United States. She has also been a guest choreographer for companies including Mexico City Ballet and Bay Area Houston Ballet & Theatre Company.

Ms. Nuñez is the Founder, Director, and Choreographer of Alas Dance Company and has created choreography for numerous professional dancers and companies internationally. Her choreography has been performed by artists from Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Rambert Dance Company, National Ballet of Cuba, Cincinnati Ballet, Ballet Preljocaj, Boston Ballet, Dutch National Opera & Ballet, and other internationally recognized organizations.

She has received numerous distinctions, including the Cuban Ministry of Culture's Distinction for National Culture and awards for choreography and interpretation. Her choreographic work is also registered in the Book of Honor of the Great Theater of Havana, following recognition by a jury chaired by Alicia Alonso.

Ms. Nuñez has been recognized as an Outstanding Choreographer at the International Ballet Competition Dance Open America and has participated as a master teacher and choreographer for Dance Open America events in Puerto Rico and Miami from 2022 through 2024.

She also holds a Master's Degree in Biodecoding and Clinical Hypnosis, incorporating emotional awareness, mind-body connection, and somatic approaches into her movement and dance education.



Taylor Carrasco

Freelance Artist, Choreographer and Educator

Taylor Carrasco is an American ballet artist, choreographer, and educator whose career encompasses professional performance, contemporary choreography, and dance education. He began his dance training at the age of three with the New Mexico Ballet Company and later continued his studies at the prestigious School of American Ballet at Lincoln Center in New York City.

Carrasco pursued his professional performing career with Cincinnati Ballet, where he developed as both a dancer and choreographer. His experience with the company and its affiliated academy provided a strong foundation for his artistic development and his commitment to nurturing emerging talent.

As a choreographer, Carrasco explores movement, musicality, and individual expression through contemporary works that encourage dancers to expand their artistic perspectives. In 2022, he was selected as one of four choreographers for the Joffrey Academy of Dance's *Winning Works* program, where his work *Not Now, But Now* premiered in Chicago, highlighting his distinctive creative voice.

Alongside his choreographic practice, Carrasco has established himself as a dedicated educator and coach, working with dancers at various stages of their development. His professional experience includes collaborations with Cincinnati Ballet, the Otto M. Budig Academy, Northern Kentucky University, and Grainger Academy of The Joffrey Ballet. Through his teaching, he emphasizes technical precision, artistic individuality, musical sensitivity, and the importance of developing confident, expressive performers.

As a freelance artist, choreographer, and educator, Carrasco continues to contribute to the dance community through performance, creative exploration, and mentorship, inspiring the next generation of dancers to pursue artistic excellence and develop their own voices.



Deborah Marquez

Founder & Artistic Director
Grand Prix Dance Open America

Deborah Marquez is the Founder and Artistic Director of Grand Prix Dance Open America and the Founding Director of Ballet Arts Dance Company, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization established in 2011.

Born in Havana, Cuba, Deborah began her ballet training at the Provincial Ballet School Alejo Carpentier and continued her studies at the National Ballet School in Havana under the direction of the renowned teacher Ramona de Saá. In 1994 Deborah joined Centro Pro-Danza as a Principal Dancer, led by the distinguished maître Laura Alonso. During this period, she performed numerous leading roles, including the Sugar Plum Fairy in The Nutcracker, La Sylphide, Swanilda in Coppélia, Kitri and Mercedes in Don Quixote, Teresita in Napoli, Lucy in Dracula, Constanza in The Three Musketeers, and Gamsatti in La Bayadère, among others. In 2000, she joined the National Ballet of Cuba, under the artistic direction of Alicia Alonso, where she performed the major classical repertoire as well as contemporary works, including Rara Avis by Alberto Méndez. She toured extensively throughout Europe and South America, working under the guidance of celebrated ballet masters and artists including Alicia Alonso, Joaquín Banegas, Lázaro Araujo, Josefina Méndez, Fernando Alonso, and others.

In 2002, Deborah moved to the United States and joined Ballet Florida, under the direction of Marie Hale, beginning a new chapter in her professional career. During her years with the company, she had the opportunity to work with some of the most distinguished choreographers in the world, including Ben Stevenson, Mauricio Wainrot, Twyla Tharp, Vicente Nebrada, Trey McIntyre, Val Caniparoli, Norbert Vesak, Thierry Malandain, David Parsons, and Marie Hale. Her repertoire included works such as Dracula, Cleopatra, Esmeralda, Five Poems, Bartók Concerto, Four Last Songs, Three Preludes, Libertango, The Rite of Spring, From Far Away, Anne Frank, Baker's Dozen, Our Waltzes, Romeo and Juliet, Cinderella, Second Before the Ground, Lambarena, Lady of the Camellias, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Stone Flower, and The Envelope, among many others.

While performing with Ballet Florida, Deborah also danced works by George Balanchine, including Allegro Brillante, Classical Symphony, and Il Ballo Della Regina. Her professional career in the U.S. continued for more than two decades, encompassing performance, teaching, choreography, artistic direction, and the development of young dancers.

Her achievements as a dancer include the First Prize for Best Choreography – Song to the Movement at the National Arts School Festival in Havana in 1989; the First Prize for Best Performance and Technique at the National Art Schools Festival in Havana in 1990; a Bronze Medal at the Second International Ballet Competition "Alicia Alonso" in Havana in 1997; and

a Silver Medal at the International Ballet Competition of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in 1998. In 1999, she was invited to perform The Nutcracker with the Ontario Ballet Theatre in Toronto.

In 2010, Deborah founded the School of Ballet Arts in Palm Beach County, Florida. Since then, she has trained and coached thousands of young dancers, many of whom have continued their education at prestigious university dance programs and pursued professional careers with leading dance companies. Each year, Ballet Arts alumni continue to join major American dance companies, reflecting Deborah's long-standing commitment to developing and preparing the next generation of professional dancers.

In 2011, she founded Ballet Arts Dance Company, for which she has choreographed, directed, and staged numerous full-length classical ballet productions. These productions have included the annual The Nutcracker, as well as Dracula, Coppélia, Don Quixote, The Sleeping Beauty, and Paquita, among others.

In 2016, Deborah brought CUBALLET USA, the International Ballet Summer Intensive founded by Laura Alonso, to the United States, creating an important opportunity for American students to experience and study the Cuban ballet methodology directly with leading Cuban ballet teachers and artists. That same year, she received the Palm Beach County Randolph A. Frank Award for Outstanding Arts Educator, recognizing her significant contribution to arts education and her dedication to providing young dancers with exceptional training and opportunities to pursue professional careers.

Also in 2020, Deborah co-founded Dance Open America, an international ballet competition initially developed through a digital platform. Over the years, Grand Prix Dance Open America has experienced remarkable international growth, expanding its presence through regional competitions and events across the United States, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sri Lanka, Japan, and Taiwan, while welcoming dancers and studios from countries around the world.

Grand Prix Dance Open America has evolved into a growing international platform that provides dancers with opportunities to compete, receive professional feedback, train with internationally recognized teachers, and connect with prestigious institutions and artists. Throughout its development, the organization has awarded more than $1 million in scholarship certificates, further strengthening its commitment to supporting the next generation of dancers and their continued artistic education. Each season has brought new opportunities to connect with dancers, teachers, studios, and leading figures in the international dance community.

Today, Deborah Marquez combines her experience as a former professional dancer with more than two decades of teaching, coaching, choreography, artistic direction, and arts leadership. Through Grand Prix Dance Open America, Ballet Arts Dance Company, and the School of Ballet Arts, she remains dedicated to creating opportunities for young dancers; helping them develop the technical, artistic, and professional skills to pursue careers in dance.