

Gainesville Ballet
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GAINESVILLE BALLET BUILDS ACCESS TO THE ARTS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS COMMUNITY



Gainesville Ballet at the Hylton Performing Arts Center – June 2014
Photo by B. Payden Photography from *Le Corsaire, Act III* and a Spring Recital
International guest star, Melissa Zoebisch, with Gainesville Ballet dancers

GAINESVILLE, Va. – Gainesville Ballet is an international arts organization based in Northern Virginia, with music and dance programs designed to instruct and develop artists at varying levels and abilities. Many students travel from disparate locations to study in the arts program; the school has drawn students from zip codes that span ten counties in Virginia and Maryland for instruction: Clarke, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Frederick, Loudoun, Manassas City, Montgomery, Prince William, and Warren. In 2013,

class registrations for the Fall semester reached across two state boundaries to 14 cities: Bealeton, Bethesda, Bristow, Broad Run, Burke, Catharpin, Haymarket, Gainesville, Jeffersonson, Linden, Manassas, Nokesville, Paris, and Warrenton. Theatergoers from the performance of a traditional *Nutcracker* story at the Hylton Performing Arts Center in November 2013 represented eight states and 47 cities. The strength and character of an international audience can also be seen through diversity, scope and geography. People in a social media network for Gainesville Ballet on June 28, 2014 spanned 42 countries: United States of America, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Mexico, United Kingdom, Russia, Brazil, Greece, Canada, South Korea, France, Austria, Argentina, Spain, Denmark, Peru, Serbia, Switzerland, Japan, Taiwan, Australia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Croatia, Norway, Israel, Ukraine, Colombia, Nicaragua, Algeria, Finland, Armenia, Iran, Puerto Rico, Chile, Portugal, United Arab Emirates, Luxembourg, Turkey, and Belgium. This global population covers 19 languages and 45 cities from New York to Vienna, Washington, D.C. to Paris, Seattle to Seoul, San Francisco to Athens, Winston-Salem to Buenos Aires, and Cincinnati to Cairo.

Yet community engagement can also be defined by diversity of ability, depth of expression, degree of access, and the individuality of the experience for those lives touched through the arts. This Fall, the award-winning arts organization will launch a program for children with special needs to build access to the arts as a rich medium for communication and expression. The first dedicated course of instruction will be held as a six-week session on Wednesdays at 11 AM beginning September 10, 2014. Through the art of dance, children will be gifted with gross motor movements, grace, stamina, flexibility, sensory input, as well as the beauty of ballet. No prior dance training is required, and the facility is wheelchair accessible. The class will be hosted in the Gainesville Ballet studios at 7528 Old Linton Hall Road in the heart of Gainesville, Virginia.

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Historically, Gainesville Ballet has offered adaptive dance programs that bring access to the arts for children of all abilities in the mixed-ability classroom. The established arts organization has successfully integrated students with special needs into existing programs through the educational classroom, and on the performance stage. The program to launch will provide a focused environment with low faculty-to-student ratios to help even more children reach recreational, developmental, educational and personal goals. An experienced instructor in dance was recently trained by Gainesville-based consulting firm, [Casper Minds](#). President Angela Kralik specializes in the field of special education and advocacy, and provided insights on how to best teach students with diagnoses of autism, ADHD, and other areas that may impact learning and development in the classroom. The lead instructor for the class is Gainesville Ballet dancer and teacher, Onica Patalive Hobbs, supported by an assistant teacher, Mallory Miller. The number of registrants will fall within a minimum of six and a maximum of ten, creating a child-to-teacher ratio from 3:1 to 5:1. This classroom design will provide an educational backdrop that fosters many opportunities to connect, engage and thrive in a small group setting.

Hobbs first studied in New Jersey at Allegro Dance Arts Academy under Nancy Volpe. She was a member and choreographer for the Dance Company of Virginia Tech. She spent four years teaching at Dance.tech Performing Arts Studio in Blacksburg, Virginia. In this role, Hobbs taught ballet, pointe, lyrical and jazz from beginner to advanced, and choreographed for the studio's performing arts company. She has also performed with the



The studios of Gainesville Ballet

Gainesville, Virginia

Gainesville Ballet dancer and teacher, Onica Patalive Hobbs, with young student



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Photo by B. Payden Photography from Le Corsaire, Act III and a Spring Recital

Onica Patalive Hobbs (back center) with Gabrielle Reilly, Phoebe Judkins, Caroline Beard, Emma Dryden, Rebecca Morneau, Tansy Huang, and Gabrielle Jeong

Blacksburg Ballet as Clara, the Snow Queen and the Arabian Princess in their *Nutcracker* performances, and assisted with choreography. She has served as a judge and master class teacher with Elite Dance Challenge. Most recently, she performed for two seasons with the modern company, Mayzsoul, and has served on the professional faculty of Gainesville Ballet since September 2011. She is pictured teaching and performing during the 2013-14 season with Gainesville Ballet.

Originally from Boonville, New York, Miller began her dancing career studying tap, clog, contemporary, and jazz at Center Stage Studio of Dance under Rachael Remeckzy. At the age of 11, she trained within the Royal Academy of Dance curriculum of Delia Foley and Melissa Larish at Ballet Arts by Delia, later known as Ballet Arts of Central New York, where she danced on scholarship and participated in Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) regionals in 2011.

Miller was a Company member of the Mohawk Valley Ballet where she performed as a soloist in *The Nutcracker* as well as in the William Starrett productions of *Cinderella*, *Don Quixote*, and *The Little Mermaid*. She also spent a year of intense coaching under Sandra Stanton, within which she danced in the debut of Jeremy Raia's original work "Impelling Gray" in association with the Hamilton College Department of Dance. She has attended summer intensives on scholarship at Indiana University, Joffrey Ballet School, and Atlanta Ballet. She has worked as a guest teacher and choreographer at studios in the Central New York area, and has focused study upon disabilities in [DanceAbility](#) through a university course. In 2014, she graduated with honors from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania obtaining a two-year Certificate in Dance.

In addition to annual *Nutcracker* performances, Gainesville Ballet brought an inaugural spring production to the performing arts community with *Coppélia* in 2012; *Swan Lake, Act II* in 2013; and *Le Corsaire, Act III* in 2014. The ballet company and school recently presented *Le Corsaire, Act III* for the first time, as the organization builds a repertory of four classical ballets: *Nutcracker*, *Coppélia*, *Swan Lake* and *Le Corsaire*. Even though *Le Corsaire* is new to the formal body of artistic works at Gainesville Ballet, the faculty and students already bring a wide range of role experiences to the stage. Two youth dancers performed in *Le Corsaire* with American Ballet Theatre (ABT) at the Kennedy Center in April 2013 – Abigail Mumma and Sara Massei. This is the second time for each ballerina to perform on-stage at the Kennedy Center. Sara Massei and Isabella Reilly were selected for the 2014 summer intensives at American Ballet Theater and the Kirov Academy of Ballet. Abigail



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Melissa Zoebisch and Onica Patalive Hobbs with Level 4 and Level 5 youth dancers

Mumma and Caroline Beard participated in the RUBY International Summer Intensive at Radford University in the College of Visual and Performing Arts.

With the founding of Gainesville Ballet in 2005, the upcoming 2014-15 season marks the 10th anniversary of the arts institution in Northern Virginia. This important milestone reflects many major achievements in its first decade. It also sets the stage for the future. The professional ballet company was formed in April of 2013, and is in-process for federal non-profit status. With the new

season, the company will have grown to eight dancers. Professional performers Shady Aly Mohamed, Stephanie Parkinson, Onica Patalive Hobbs, Tiffani Thomas, and Mallory Miller will come together with local youth in Gainesville, Virginia under the leadership of Artistic Director and Principal Dancer, Rafik Hegab, and Managing Director, Elysabeth Muscat. These members will form the core upon which the new season is built with three mainstage productions, outreach performances, adaptive dance, in-house demonstrations, and possible collaborations with other choreographers and live musicians. Professional guest artists will enrich the strong foundation of talent, with a growing circle of dancers to include Carolina Boscan, Nour Eldesouki, Alexandru Glusacov, Evgenia Singur, Melissa Zoebisch, Aly Mahmoud, Valeriia Ivlieva, and New York City Ballet principal dancers, Teresa Reichlen and Ask la Cour. Gainesville Ballet was recognized by the Prince William County Arts Council as *Outstanding Arts Organization* during the 2012 Seefeldt Awards for Arts Excellence. To learn more about Gainesville Ballet, upcoming performances and programs, visit www.gainesvilleballetcompany.org.