

# PENNSYLVANIA BALLET

ANGEL CORELLA, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR 2016–2017 SEASON

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## Pennsylvania Ballet Extends Artistic Director's Contract, Welcomes 17 New Dancers, and Promotes Seven Dancers

*Artistic Director Angel Corella's contract extended while dancers from the U.S., Russia, Cuba, Japan, South Korea, and Two of the "25 Dancers to Watch" Join Pennsylvania Ballet*

Philadelphia, PA (August 3, 2016) – [Pennsylvania Ballet](#) has announced the extension of Artistic Director [Angel Corella's](#) contract through the 2021-2022 season.

In addition, the company and Corella are pleased to announce that 17 dancers from around the world will join the Company, three of whom are coming from Pennsylvania Ballet II, and seven dancers have been promoted.

"Over the past two seasons Angel has worked to raise the level and broaden the scope of programming for Pennsylvania Ballet, efforts that have proven to be a success with Philadelphia audiences," said David Hoffman, Chair of Pennsylvania Ballet's Board of Trustees. "Angel's artistic vision for Pennsylvania Ballet has revitalized the Company, engaged new audiences as well as long time patrons, and demonstrated why everyone should love Pennsylvania Ballet."

## New Dancers:

This Season, highly acclaimed dancers will join Pennsylvania Ballet to work with Corella. Sterling Baca and Sara Michelle Murawski will join the Company as Principal Dancers; Dayesi Torriente joins as a Soloist; Aleksey Babayev, Adrianna de Svastich, Dominic Ballard, Albert Gordon, Yuka Iseda, Nayara Lopes, So Jung Shin, and Jack Thomas will become members of the Corps de Ballet; and Nardia Boodoo, Therese Davis, and Alexandra Heier join former Pennsylvania Ballet II dancers Jacqueline Callahan, Emily Davis, and Siobhan Howley as Apprentices.

"I am very excited to introduce our new dancers, who are all technically and stylistically diverse and extremely talented," said Corella. "They have been drawn to Pennsylvania Ballet from across the nation and around the world because of their desire to work with the extraordinary dancers of this Company and our world-renowned artistic team."

## Promotions

Seven Pennsylvania Ballet dancers are also being promoted. The dancers are: [Lillian DiPiazza](#), [Oksana Maslova](#), and [Mayara Pineiro](#) to Principal Dancer; [Aaron Anker](#), [Marjorie Feiring](#), [Kathryn Manger](#), and [Peter Weil](#) to Corps de Ballet.

## More Details on the New Dancers

### Principal Dancers

[Sterling Baca](#) grew up in Larkspur, CO. He began his ballet training at the Academy of Colorado Ballet at age 11 and then studied with German Zamuel. He attended five American Ballet Theatre summer intensives as a National Training Scholar and Bender Foundation Scholar and enrolled in the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at American Ballet Theatre in 2009 on a full-scholarship under the direction of Franco De Vita and Raymond Lukens. He was also an inaugural recipient of the Dizzy Feet Foundation Scholarship.

Mr. Baca joined American Ballet Theatre II (ABTII) in September 2010, was promoted to Apprentice in May 2011, and Corps de Ballet in December 2011.

Mr. Baca was chosen for and featured on the cover of *Dance Magazine's* January 2016 "[25 to Watch](#)" issue. He was featured on *Dance 212* Season 4, and *On a Grass Field*, Winner of Best Short Film at the Golden Door Film Festival 2014 in New Jersey.

Born in Norfolk, VA, [Sara Michelle Murawski](#) gained her foundation in ballet from numerous schools with teachers from around the world including Old Dominion University; Eastern Virginia School for the Performing Arts; Southeastern Virginia Dance Academy; and in Carlisle, PA, at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet. She continued her education at the Rock School for Dance Education, in Philadelphia, PA, before being invited on full scholarship to the Kirov Academy of Ballet in Washington, D.C.

Ms. Murawski was awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the 2006 USA Russian Pointe National Youth Ballet competition, and won first place in the Youth American Grand Prix (YAGP) in both classical solos and pas de deux the same year. In 2007, she was one of the "Top 12" and received the Sarah C. Langham award at YAGP. In 2008 and 2009, she also placed in the YAGP finals "Top 12."

Ms. Murawski joined the Semperoper Ballet in Germany in 2009 as a member of the Corps de Ballet, under the leadership of Aaron Watkin and was promoted to Second-Soloist in 2013. In 2014, she joined the Slovak National Ballet as a Soloist where she performed in both soloist and principal roles.

### Soloist

[Dayesi Torriente](#) was born in Cuba and began studying ballet in 1999 at the Pro-Dance Center, directed by the Maitre Laura Alonso, and in 2000 continued in the Provincial School of Ballet "Alejo Carpentier". Upon completion, Ms. Torriente joined the National Ballet School under the guidance of Esther Garcia, Mirta Hermida, Ana Julia Bermudez, Ramona de Saa, and Fernando Alonso. Upon graduating in 2009, she joined the National Ballet of Cuba, under the artistic and technical direction of Alicia Alonso.

In 2011, she was promoted to Soloist with the National Ballet of Cuba. She has performed in Mexico, South Africa, Italy, Canada, Brazil, China, and Colombia. In 2015, she was promoted to the rank of Principal Dancer.

## **Corps de Ballet**

[Aleksey Babayeva](#) was born in Moscow, Russia, and began his training at the Academy of International Ballet under the direction of Anastasia Babayeva and Denis Gronostayskiy. In 2009, he joined the Kirov Academy of Ballet on a full scholarship. He also received training at the Bolshoi summer intensive on scholarship. Mr. Babayev joined Pennsylvania Ballet II for one year before he moved back to Russia to join Stanislavsky Theatre Ballet.

Mr. Babayev was awarded 1<sup>st</sup> place at Bolshoi Summer Intensive in 2012, and 2<sup>nd</sup> place in both the Contemporary Division and Classical Division at the YAGP Philadelphia in 2008.

[Dominic Ballard](#) was born in Albury, Australia, and began his formal ballet training at age 11 at the Regional Academy of Performing Arts and continued his training at the Australian Ballet School. Upon completing his training, Mr. Ballard performed in Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Denmark, London, and Italy. He joined the Slovak National Theatre in 2012.

Originally from Tuxedo Park, NY, [Adrianna de Svastich](#) began her ballet training under Leonid Kozlov in Ramsey, NJ, and continued her training at The School of American Ballet in New York City. She also attended summer programs with American Ballet Theatre, Miami City Ballet, and The Royal Ballet School in London.

Ms. de Svastich joined Pennsylvania Ballet II in 2005, and was hired as an Apprentice in August 2007. She was promoted to the Corps de Ballet in 2009, and remained with the company through the 2010/2011 season. Between 2011 and 2016 Ms. de Svastich performed with a variety of companies including Ballet Fleming and Nora Gibson Contemporary Ballet in Philadelphia, Barak Ballet in Los Angeles, New Orleans Ballet Theatre, Kathryn Posin Dance Company, and MorDance in New York City. She rejoined Pennsylvania Ballet as a member of the Corps de Ballet in May of 2016.

[Albert Gordon](#) began dancing at the Washington School of Ballet at the age of 11, studying exclusively with Director Kee Juan Han. Mr. Gordon joined Boston Ballet II in 2013 and was promoted to the Corps de Ballet in 2015.

He is the recipient of a multitude of recognitions and awards including: finalist in the YAGP in 2012 and 2013; Gold Medal, junior category, at The Boston International Ballet Competition; and third place, senior category, at the Seoul International Dance Competition. Mr. Gordon is also a recipient of the prestigious 2012 Princess Grace Scholarship Award.

[Yuka Iseda](#) of Japan began studying dance at age 5 and received ballet training at Ecole de Ballet "PUCK" and Paluccschule Dresden, during which time she was awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> place at the Saitama All Japan Ballet Competition.

Ms. Iseda's professional career started at Dresden Semperoper Ballet (Ballet Sachsische Staatsoper Dresden), followed by the Dutch National Ballet, Norwegian National Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, Barcelona Ballet, and Ballet Carmen Roche (Madrid).

[Nayara Lopes](#) was born in Curitiba, Brazil, she started dancing at the age of 6, and trained at the School of Theatre Dance Guaira in Brazil and American Ballet Theatre's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School in New York City.

Following her early training, she joined Orlando Ballet II in 2010, The National Ballet of Canada as an Apprentice in 2011, and the Dance Theatre of Harlem in 2015.

Ms. Lopes also competed in ballet competitions such as the YAGP finals New York City, where she received the Mary Day Special Award and the YAGP regionals Columbia, SC, where she was the Grand Prix Winner 2011.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, [So Jung Shin](#) began studying dance at 8 years of age. She received ballet training at Sunhwa Arts High School and pursued a bachelor's degree in ballet from Sejong University on a full scholarship.

Ms. Shin has competed in a multitude of competitions. In 2016, she was awarded 1<sup>st</sup> place for junior women at Helsinki International Ballet Competition, was a senior finalist at the Perm Ekaterina Maximova Ballet Competition Arabesque, and was awarded a silver medal in the Korea International Ballet Competition. In 2013, she was awarded the top prize at the Sejong Dance Competition. In 2014, Ms. Shin participated in the East Asia Youth Ballet Week and was awarded a gold medal at the Dong-A Dance Competition.

Originally from Colorado, [Jack Thomas](#) began studying ballet at age 5 as a form of rehabilitation after breaking his leg in a skiing accident. He received his dance training at several studios throughout Colorado, supplementing his training with summer intensives at Jacob's Pillow, Houston Ballet Academy, Carreno Dance Festival, and Pacific Northwest Ballet.

In 2012, he joined the year-round training program at Houston Ballet Academy under full scholarship, and at age 16, joined Houston Ballet's 2<sup>nd</sup> Company. In 2015, Mr. Thomas competed as a finalist at the Prix de Lausanne.

### **Apprentice**

[Nardia Boodoo](#) was born in Baltimore, MD, and attended the Baltimore School for The Arts from 2005-2009, the North Carolina School for The Arts 2009-2010, and was a Professional Training Program dancer at Dance Theatre of Harlem from 2010-2011, and Jacob's Pillow. Ms. Boodoo was asked to attend the Joffrey Academy of Dance as a trainee.

In 2014 she was invited into The Washington Ballet's Studio Company, where she performed many full length ballets.

[Jacqueline Callahan](#) was born in Abington, PA, and started her classical ballet training at age 6 at The Rock School for Dance Education. In 2010, she continued her training at The School of American Ballet. She supplemented her training with summer intensives at Boston Ballet Summer Dance Program and The School of American Ballet, both on full scholarships. In 2012, Ms. Callahan graduated from the Professional Performing Arts School in New York.

In 2014, she joined Pennsylvania Ballet II and has performed with the Company in Angel Corella's *Don Quixote*, George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, *Concerto Barocco*, *Serenade*, and *The Four Temperaments*, and Christopher Wheeldon's *Swan Lake*.

[Emily Davis](#) of Gainesville, FL, started dancing at age 12 and received the majority of her training from the Pofahls Dance Studio. In 2013, she went on to train at the Boston Ballet School's Pre-Professional Program. She also attended summer programs at Exploring Ballet with Suzanne Farrell, Boston Ballet School, and Chautauqua School of Dance.

In 2015, Ms. Davis joined Pennsylvania Ballet II. She performed with the Company in Angel Corella's *Don Quixote*, George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, and Christopher Wheeldon's *Danse à Grande Vitesse*.

[Therese Davis](#) was born in Naperville, IL, where she received her early training at Faubourg School of Ballet and privately with Elise Flagg. She also studied in Pacific Northwest Ballet's Professional Division where she performed with the Company. She also attended the School of American Ballet's summer course. In 2013, she joined the Dutch National Ballet's Junior Company before she joined the Grand Rapids Ballet for two seasons where she performed soloist and principal roles.

Ms. Davis was a semi-finalist in the 2011 Prix de Lausanne and the 2015 recipient of the Lorna Strassler Award from Jacob's Pillow.

[Alexandra Heier](#) was born in Boston, MA, and started her training at Boston Ballet School at the age of 6. She participated in the Boston Ballet Trainee Program and attended summer programs at the School of American Ballet and Chautauqua, where she was an Apprentice on full scholarship for three years and received the Artistic Director's Award for Overall Excellence. In 2014, Ms. Heier attended the Royal Danish Ballet summer program in Copenhagen, Denmark, as a Boston Ballet School exchange student. She continued as a Boston Ballet Trainee before being promoted to Boston Ballet II.

[Siobhan Howley](#), from East Greenbush, NY, began her ballet training at the Princeton Ballet School at the age of 10 and trained with such teachers as Kyra Nichols and Maria Youskevitch. Ms. Howley also received year-round ballet training at Ballet Academy East under Darla Hoover, and The School of Pennsylvania Ballet. She attended summer programs at Pacific Northwest Ballet School, Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, Saratoga Summer Dance Intensive, and Kaatsbaan Extreme Ballet.

In November 2015, Ms. Howley joined Pennsylvania Ballet II. Her performances with the Company include George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, *The Four Temperaments*, and *Serenade*, and Angel Corella's *Don Quixote*.

### **About Pennsylvania Ballet**

Founded in 1963 by Balanchine student and protégée Barbara Weisberger, Pennsylvania Ballet is one of the nation's leading ballet companies. Headquartered in Philadelphia, the Company's

annual local season features six programs of classic favorites and new works, including the Philadelphia holiday tradition, *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*®. For more information visit [www.paballet.org](http://www.paballet.org), call 215.551.7000 or connect with us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#) to go behind the scenes at any time.

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