

PENNSYLVANIA | BALLET

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Pennsylvania Ballet Promotes Ten Dancers

Six Corps de Ballet Members, three Apprentices, and one dancer from Pennsylvania Ballet II promoted for the 2018-19 season

Philadelphia, PA (May 8, 2018) – [Pennsylvania Ballet](#) has announced the promotion of 10 dancers for the 2018-2019 season. Corps de Ballet members Aleksey Babayev, Albert Gordon, Yuka Iseda, Zecheng Liang, Nayara Lopes, and Jack Thomas have been promoted to Soloists. Apprentices Sydney Dolan, Federico D'Ortenzi, and Erin O'Dea have been promoted to Corps de Ballet. From Pennsylvania Ballet II, Flavia Morante joins the Company as an Apprentice.

“The talent within Pennsylvania Ballet and Pennsylvania Ballet II has helped to position the company as one of the best in the nation. I’m happy to be able to promote from within,” said Angel Corella, Pennsylvania Ballet Artistic Director. “I am pleased to be able to challenge our current dancers by offering them more difficult positions and responsibilities.”

More Details About the Promoted Dancers**Soloists**

[Aleksey Babayev](#) was born in Moscow, Russia, and began his training at the Academy of International Ballet under the direction of Anastasia Babayeva and Denis Gronostayskiy. He also received training at Bolshoi Ballet Academy’s summer intensive, as well as the Kirov Academy of Ballet on a full scholarship. He was awarded second place in both the Contemporary Division and Classical Division at the Youth America Grand Prix Philadelphia in 2008 and first place at Bolshoi Summer Intensive in 2012.

Aleksey joined Pennsylvania Ballet II for one year in 2008 before he moved back to Russia to join Stanislavsky Theatre Ballet. He returned to Pennsylvania Ballet as a member of the Corps de Ballet for the 2016/2017 season and has danced leading and feature roles in Angel Corella’s *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Le Corsaire*, Nacho Duato’s *Remansos*, and Christopher Wheeldon’s *For Four*.

McLean, Virginia’s [Albert Gordon](#) began dancing at age 11 with the Washington School of Ballet, studying exclusively with Director Kee Juan Han. He has received numerous recognitions and awards, including finalist in the Youth America Grand Prix in 2012 and 2013, a gold medal (junior category) at the Boston International Ballet Competition, and third place (senior category) at the Seoul International Dance Competition. Albert was also a 2012 recipient of the prestigious Princess Grace Scholarship Award.

PENNSYLVANIA | BALLET

Albert joined Boston Ballet II in 2013 and was promoted to their main company in 2015. He joined Pennsylvania Ballet's Corps de Ballet for the 2016/2017 season and has danced leading and featured roles in Ben Stevenson's *Cinderella*, Angel Corella's *Le Corsaire* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, Nacho Duato's *Remansos*, George Balanchine's *Tarantella*, and Christopher Wheeldon's *Rush*. Albert originated roles in Nicolo Fonte's *Ghost Stories* and Matthew Neenan's *It goes that way*.

[Yuka Iseda](#) of Tokyo, Japan, began ballet studies at age five, training at Ecole de Ballet "PUCK" and Paluccschule Dresden. She was awarded third place at the Saitama All Japan Ballet Competition in 1995.

Yuka danced at Dresden Semperoper Ballet (Ballett Sächsische Staatsoper), followed by the Dutch National Ballet, Norwegian National Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, Angel Corella's Barcelona Ballet, and Ballet Carmen Roche in Madrid.

She joined Pennsylvania Ballet for the 2016/2017 season as a member of the Corps de Ballet and has danced leading and featured roles in Angel Corella's *Swan Lake*, *Le Corsaire* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, Christopher Wheeldon's *Rush*, David Dawson's *The Third Light*, and originated roles in Helen Pickett's *TILT* and Matthew Neenan's *It goes that way*.

Originally from Jimo, China, [Zecheng Liang](#) received his ballet training at the Guangzhou Art School from 2004 to 2010. He continued his instruction with Houston Ballet II from June 2010 to June 2012, participating in summer intensives in 2010 and 2011.

Throughout his training, Zecheng competed in several competitions, including the 3rd Beijing International Ballet and Choreography Competition, where he won a gold medal in 2015. He was also a 2010 finalist in the Prix de Lausanne and placed second and third (classical) in the 2008 Beijing International and 2009 Tao Li Bei competitions respectively.

Zecheng joined Houston Ballet's Corps de Ballet in 2012, before joining Pennsylvania Ballet as a member of the Corps de Ballet for the 2017/2018 season and has danced leading and featured roles in George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*®, Angel Corella's *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, Christopher Wheeldon's *For Four*, George Balanchine's *Theme and Variations*, and originated a role in Helen Pickett's *TILT*.

Born in Curitiba, Brazil, [Nayara Lopes](#) began dancing at age six at the School of Theatre Dance Guaira in Brazil and later at the American Ballet Theatre Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School in New York. Nayara also competed in ballet competitions such as the Youth American Grand Prix (YAGP) finals in New York, where she received the Mary Day Special Award, as well as the YAGP regionals in Columbia, SC, where she was the 2011 Grand Prix winner.

PENNSYLVANIA | BALLET

Nayara joined Orlando Ballet II in 2010, before moving to the National Ballet of Canada as an apprentice in 2011 and the Dance Theater of Harlem in 2015. Nayara joined Pennsylvania Ballet for the 2016/2017 season as a member of the Corps de Ballet and has danced leading and featured roles in Ben Stevenson's *Cinderella*, David Dawson's *The Third Light*, Angel Corella's *Le Corsaire* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, Nacho Duato's *Remansos*, and originated a role in Helen Pickett's *TILT*.

[Jack Thomas](#), born in Denver, Colorado, began ballet studies at age five as a form of rehabilitation after breaking his leg in a skiing accident. He received 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 on a full scholarship, and, in 2015, competed as a finalist at the Prix de Lausanne.

Prior to Pennsylvania Ballet, Jack danced with Houston Ballet II. He joined Pennsylvania Ballet as a member of the Corps de Ballet for the 2016/2017 season and has danced leading and featured roles in Ben Stevenson's *Cinderella*, Angel Corella's *Swan Lake*, George Balanchine's *Theme and Variations*, Christopher Wheeldon's *For Four*, and originated a role in Helen Pickett's *TILT*.

Corps de Ballet

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania born [Sydney Dolan](#) began studying ballet at the age of three in Cary, North Carolina. She was a finalist in the World Ballet Competition from 2012 to 2016 and the Youth America Grand Prix from 2014 to 2016. In 2016, Sydney also received bronze medals from the World Ballet Competition as well as the Youth America Grand Prix – Tampa.

Sydney joined Pennsylvania Ballet II for the 2016/2017 season and was promoted to apprentice for the 2017/2018 season.

Born in Rome, Italy, [Federico D'Ortenzi](#) began studying dance at age six. He joined the School of Opera Di Roma in 2005 and was awarded the Scala Di Milano scholarship in 2009. In 2013 and 2014, Federico was invited by Artistic Director Franco De Vita to attend the American Ballet Theatre (ABT) Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School summer intensive on full scholarship and continued as a student until 2014.

Prior to Pennsylvania Ballet, Federico danced with the Washington Ballet Studio Company. He joined Pennsylvania Ballet as an apprentice for the 2017/2018 season.

[Erin O'Dea](#), born in San Clemente, California, began her ballet training at age 10 with several schools throughout her hometown region. In 2009, she attended Pacific Northwest Ballet's summer course, followed by Boston Ballet School's Summer Dance Program from 2010 to 2012. She joined Boston Ballet School in 2011, becoming a trainee and recipient of the Pao

PENNSYLVANIA | BALLET

Scholarship (2013 to 2015), and in 2013, represented the company as an exchange student at Canada's National Ballet School.

Erin joined Boston Ballet II in 2015, before joining Pennsylvania Ballet as an apprentice for the 2017/2018 season.

Apprentice

Las Vegas, Nevada's [Flavia Morante](#) began her dance training at the Nevada School of Dance before attending San Francisco Ballet School and Houston Ballet Academy. She attended summer intensives at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy, American Ballet Theater, and IB Stage Barcelona.

Flavia joined Pennsylvania Ballet II for the 2017/2018 season.

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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. For more information, visit 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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