

Lagniappe

BRBT GUEST ARTISTS, GUEST CHOREOGRAPHERS, PERFORMERS, DIRECTORS BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Guest Artists

Adrienne Simmons Adrienne Simmons is a New Orleans-based dancer, singer, and actor, who began their formal ballet training at Dancer's Workshop. She has trained at intensives nationwide including DanceWorks Chicago, University of the Arts, Broadway Dance Center, Steps on Broadway, Peridance Center, Brenau University, Dallas Ballet Company, The Washington Ballet, and Nashville Ballet. She is a proud member of Mélange Dance Company and a dance instructor at the Louisiana Academy of Performing Arts. Adrienne holds bachelor's degrees in business management and theatre and is pursuing her master's in business administration at UNO. Adrienne focuses on work with inclusive representation for diverse audiences in hopes of widening perspectives.

Guest Choreographers

Shannon J. Grayson is a native of Baton Rouge, LA and current Assistant Professor of Practice at the USC Gloria Kaufman of Dance. She graduated from Howard University with a BFA in Dance Arts and received summer intensive scholarships to Debbie Allen Dance Academy, Ronald K. Brown/Evidence and Dallas Black Dance Theatre. She continued her training with scholarships to Jacob's Pillow Jazz/Musical Theatre Program, Jacob's Pillow Choreographers Lab and Nathan Trice Summer Dance Intensive. She relocated to Chicago as a Lou Conte Dance Studio (LCDS) scholarship student under the direction of Claire Bataille, and performed with Muntu Dance Theatre and Winifred Haun & Dancers and was a featured dancer in the Bollywood movie Dhoom 3. Her Chicago training experiences furthered her development artistically as a dancer, dance educator, teacher, choreographer and eventually led to a full time teaching position for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (HSDC) with the LCDS, HSDC Youth Dance Program, HSDC Education & Community Programs and HSCD Professional Pilot Program. She has been an adjunct faculty member at Columbia College Chicago and Dominican University, River Forest, IL and has taught for Joffrey Chicago Professional Summer Dance Intensive. Grayson is a certified Horton Technique instructor through the Ailey School, NASM Certified Personal Trainer and Nutrition Coach. She has choreographed for USC Dramatic School of Arts, Chicago Freelance Dance Project, Columbia College Chicago and DanceWorks Chicago DanceChance. She continues to train and teach extensively in various techniques including Hip Hop, Jazz, Tap, Modern, Contemporary, Ballet, African, Afro Cuban and Dunham Technique.

Joan Rodriguez is a Cuban-born dancer, choreographer, and educator known for his dynamic versatility, seamlessly blending Afro-Latin, contemporary, and multimedia styles. He graduated from the prestigious Escuela Nacional de Arte, earning the "Best Graduate of the Year" award, and began his career with DanzAbierta and Malpaso Dance Company. In 2016, after relocating to the United States as a political refugee, Joan moved to Arizona, where he focused on creating,

teaching, and producing multimedia projects in collaboration with museums and as Guest Faculty for Arizona State University. His journey continued in New York with Parsons Dance, where he choreographed an original work for the 2018 GenerationNow fellowship. He later created an original work for Connecticut Ballet, while serving as Guest Artist in Residence at various universities and arts centers across the U.S. Joan plays a pivotal role at BODYTRAFFIC as the master teacher in education and outreach, Social Media Manager, and lead content creator. His acclaimed commissioned work, *Bloquea'o*, has toured the U.S., and he is now preparing for a second commission. Joan's passion lies in building community through dance, sharing movement across diverse settings, and pioneering innovative intersections between performance and media. This is Joan's fourth season dancing with BODYTRAFFIC, and his first season as Rehearsal Director.

BRBT Performers

Elizabeth Acosta is a junior at University High School where she maintains a 4.6 GPA, and is a member of the dance team, National Honor Society, Beta Club, Key Club, Student Council executive board, Cooking Club President and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Lizzie has attended the Nashville Ballet summer program, Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet 5-week summer program, and Regional Dance America Choreography intensive on scholarship. She appeared in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Rapunzel*, as the Fairy of Love in BRBT's *Cinderella*, *Arabian*, *Chinese*, *Flower*, *Snow*, and *Clara* in *The Nutcracker*.

Kaila Anthony is a senior honor student at Baton Rouge Magnet High School. She has been dancing for 14 years. She danced at En Pointe Dance Studio prior to transferring to Dancers' Workshop. Kaila has participated in *The Nutcracker* for the last 3 years and toured with the Youth Ballet. Kaila is a member of Top Teens of America and a Debutante for Delta Sigma Theta.

Gabrielle Bautista has danced with Dancers' Workshop for 8 years and toured with Youth Ballet for 3 years. Gabriela is a sophomore honor student at University High School with a 4.0 GPA. A member of Student Council, First Tuesday, Club Med and FCA, she speaks fluent Spanish and placed in the top three in physical science for the 2024 District Rally. Gabriela's dance training includes her attendance at Sarasota Ballet's 2024 Summer Intensive.

Eliza Bodin has studied at the Dancer's Workshop for 13 years and toured for 5 years with BRBT's Youth Ballet. Eliza has performed all children's roles, Clara, Snow, Flower, and Chinese in *The Nutcracker*. An honor student at St. Joseph's Academy, she maintains a 4.4 GPA and is involved in the French Club, Beta Club and Women's Empowerment Club. Eliza has attended Summer Intensives at the Nashville Ballet, the Philadelphia Ballet, the Miami City Ballet, and most recently, Ballet West in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Sara Booty (Trainee) is in 8th grade at Prairieville Middle school where she is a member of Beta club and a PVM cheerleader. She is in the Youth Legislature Hall of Fame, and she received the Youth Legislature Ripple award. Sara has been dancing for 10 years at Dancers' Workshop, and she was a member of BRBT Youth ballet for 4 years.

Ty'Juan Bovie currently studies dance at the Dancers' Workshop after previous studies at River Ridge Dance School, LSU Dance Department and Legacy Dance. He is a Theatre student at LSU with a concentration in performance and film. He has danced several roles in BRBT's *Nutcracker*, and is now performing in Ballet for Every Body. He performed in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Coppelia*, and *Cinderella*.

Elliana Chaney has studied dance for 12 years at Dance Center, DeFrances Academy of Dance and Dancers' Workshop. She has toured with BRBT's outreach programs Youth Ballet and Ballet for Every Body. This year, she is performing the role of The Bird with BFEB's *Peter and the Wolf*. She has attended the Vaganova Ballet intensive in Boston, Massachusetts. She is a Senior in high school and attends Berean Co-op. Elliana has also attended and performed at RDA Southwest Festivals. Previous roles in the *Nutcracker* include Clara, Flowers, Chinese, Marzipan, and Spanish.

Kelley Comeaux (Apprentice) began his training at Powell Moise before transferring to Dancers' Workshop. A Freshman at Baton Rouge Magnet High School, Kelley is a member of the Dance Club and maintains a 3.88 GPA. He has performed in the last 7 *Nutcrackers* and for 3 consecutive years with BRBT's Youth Ballet. Kelley performed in *Coppelia*, *Rapunzel*, *Cinderella*, and most recently in *Alice in Wonderland*.

Claire England has trained for 14 years with Dancers' Workshop. A Senior at Baton Rouge Magnet High, she is a Distinct AP Scholar student with a GPA of 4.5. She is an AP Capstone Diploma Recipient, cofounder and president of Baton Rouge High's Children's Care Club, President of Dance Club, member of Interact Club and Key Club. She attended the National Choreography Intensive on full scholarship and the Cosmopolitan Ballet Theatre in Boston. In April Claire's piece *Reverie* was chosen and performed at Regional Dance America Southwest Festival. Claire has appeared in many BRBT productions, most remarkably Fairy of Hope in *Cinderella*, The Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*, Marzipan, Doll, Clara, and Chinese in *Nutcracker*.

Aisleigh Dufrene (Apprentice) is a sophomore at St. Joseph's Academy. She has trained at Dancers' Workshop for 5 years and performed with BRBT's Youth Ballet. Aisleigh performed in *The Nutcracker* for 4 years, and most recently in *Alice in Wonderland*.

Abigail Foret (Apprentice) has been a student at Dancers' Workshop for 9 years and has participated in Youth Ballet for 4 years. She is currently a freshman honors student at Baton Rouge Magnet High School. Abigail attended the Next Generation Dance Summer program and Regional Dance America Festival.

Asher France is a senior at Baton Rouge Magnet High School and has studied for 8 years at Dancers' Workshop. Nashville Ballet for the past 2 summers. He has toured with the Youth Ballet and has participated in Ballet for Every Body. At school, he is an officer for the Cloud-Watching Club, Japanese Student Association, ASL Club and a member of Dance Club.

London Griffin is a passionate dancer with 6 years of experience in ballet at Dancers' Workshop. She has toured with Youth Ballet and attended Nashville Ballet, Joffrey Ballet and Atlanta Ballet summer intensive programs. London is an honor student at St. Joseph's Academy and was awarded the Theology Christian Award.

Megan Guo has trained for 14 years and is a senior at Baton Rouge Magnet High School. She is a Distinct AP Scholar student with a GPA of 4.6. She is a co-founder of Children's Care Club and Vice President of Dance Club. She is also a member of BETA Club, STEM Club, and HOSA Club. She placed Top 12 at YAGP in the classical category and is also a YAGP solo Finalist. Megan has attended the Houston Ballet and Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet 5-week summer programs and has been accepted with scholarships to Next Generation, Cary Ballet, and The Rock School for Dance. She choreographed for BRMHS and appeared as Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*, the Winter fairy in BRBT's *Cinderella*, Azalea Fairy, Lead Snow, Lead Marzipan in *The Nutcracker*.

Irelynn Harris is a freshman at Parkview Baptist and she is a member of the Dance team, Beta Club, Student Council, St Jude's Club, Art Club, and Drama Club. She is on the Principal's list and received the Mercy/Compassion award. Irelynn has studied at the Dancers' Workshop for 12 years, toured with BRBT's Youth Ballet for 5 years, performed in 9 Nutcrackers, Rapunzel, Cinderella, and Alice in Wonderland.

Mary Harper Hart (Trainee) has studied dance for 12 years, beginning her training at Powell Moise and then at Dancers' Workshop. She is an 8th grader at U-High where she is a member of the middle school Dance team and student council. Mary Harper is Parliamentarian of the National Charity League, and a volunteer at First United Methodist Church.

Merci Higdon (Trainee) studies dance at Dancers' Workshop after previous studies at Defrances and Jeffie Jean Dance Studio. She has performed with BRBT Youth Ballet, *Nutcracker*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Cinderella*. Merci is a home schooled student with Classical Conversations. She volunteers for Vacation Bible school and for Buddy in training for Joni and Friends

Lucy Khemmanyong (Apprentice) is a Freshman at Central High School, and she began her training at Dance Center School of Performing Arts before transferring to Dancers' Workshop. She performed in the Russian *Nutcracker* for three years as a snowflake, a little Chinese and a little French. Lucy toured with BRBT's youth ballet, performed in *Alice in Wonderland* and in *The Nutcracker* 'A Tale from the Bayou' as an Angel and Soldier

Rachel Magee is a Sophomore at Baton Rouge Magnet High School where she has a 4.0 GPA. She is a member of Dance Club, Spanish Club, and Children's Care Club. Rachel has trained at Dancers' Workshop for 4 years, and has toured with the Youth Ballet program. She performed in *Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Nutcracker*. Previous roles in the *Nutcracker* include Clara, Snow, Angel, and Soldier. She is also part of the Ballet for Every Body dance education program and performs the role of The Duck in *Peter and the Wolf*.

Juliana Martin is a Junior at University High School where she has a GPA of 4.2. She is a member of the dance team, National Honor Society, Key Club, Student Council, Service Club,

Cooking Club, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. She has danced with Dancers' Workshop for 13 years and has performed all children's roles, Clara, Snow, Flower, Chinese, and Marzipan in *The Nutcracker*. She has also appeared in *Rapunzel*, *Coppelia*, *Cinderella*, *Paquita*, and *Alice in Wonderland*.

Sophia Robison is a student at Baton Rouge Magnet High School, and is a member of the ASL Club, Dance Club, and Key Club. She has been training at The Dancers' Workshop since 2019 and is a member of the Youth Ballet. This summer, she attended the Sarasota Ballet Summer Intensive. She has also attended the RDA Festival in Midland and performed the role of Clara in *The Nutcracker* in 2023.

Elizabeth Talbot has a chemical engineering degree from Louisiana Tech University and is now working as a production engineer with BASF. She began dancing at the age of three and continued with BRBT through high school and with Twin City Ballet in Monroe during college. She appeared as the Spring Fairy in *Cinderella*, in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Rapunzel* and has performed in many *Nutcrackers*. Elizabeth also volunteers at her church.

Allison Welch has trained for 11 years with Dancers' Workshop. She has toured with Ballet for Every Body and Youth Ballet and appeared in numerous season productions. She is a senior at Sequitur Classical Academy. Alli attended the Vaganova Ballet Intensive at Cosmopolitan Dance Theatre in Boston, Massachusetts.

Directors and Production Staff

Rebecca Mathews Acosta (Artistic Director) is director of dance at Baton Rouge Magnet High School where she also choreographs for the theater department and orchestra productions. She is the director of the BRBT Youth Ballet and teaches intermediate and advanced ballet at The Dancers' Workshop. An LSU graduate, she also earned a nursing degree from our Lady of the Lake College. She has appeared in numerous principal roles with BRBT including Azalea Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, the Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella*, the Lilac Fairy in *Sleeping Beauty*, Myrtha in *Giselle*, the Mother in "Family Secrets" and Mother in "Women of Acts". Rebecca studied on full scholarship at the Joffrey Ballet, New York, and on scholarship with the Eglegvsky Ballet, where she appeared as a demi-soloist in *Swan Lake* and a soloist in *Paquita*. She also appeared in several LSU opera and theater productions and in *West Side Story* with Theatre Baton Rouge. As an ABT Certified Teacher, she successfully completed the ABT Teacher Training Institute in Primary through Level 7 and Partnering of the ABT National Training Curriculum with ABT New York. Rebecca is certified in Progressing Ballet Technique, and she attended the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet Teacher training for 2 summers. She is the 2017 LAAHPERD Dance Teacher of the Year and southern district Dance Teacher of the Year.

Jonna Cox (Artistic Director) began her ballet training in her hometown of Corpus Christi, Texas, under Larry and Bettye Roquemore and later with Christina Munro. She holds a BFA in Ballet from Texas Christian University where she was a Nordan Fine Arts Scholarship recipient. She also spent summers as a student at Summer Dance Intensives with Houston Ballet, Boston Ballet (on scholarship), and NYU. She danced professionally with the Dayton Ballet under the

direction of James Clouser and enjoyed performing lead roles in *Pas de Quatre*, *Swan Lake*, and Clouser's *Carmina Burana* and *Surprise Symphony*. After moving to Baton Rouge in 1996, she joined BRBT and proved herself a gifted dancer in both the classical and contemporary styles of dance. She has performed various works by Molly Buchmann, Susan Perlis, and Edgar Anido. She has danced the roles of Spanish and Azalea Fairy in BRBT's *Nutcracker*, and the Sylph Queen in Winthrop Corrie's *Snow White*. A teacher at the Dancers' Workshop, Jonna was awarded a scholarship to attend the Regional Dance America Craft of Choreography Conference as an Emerging Choreographer for her piece *Butterflies*. Since then, she has choreographed works for BRBT that include *Obrigado Brasil*, *Solstice*, and *Red Hill*. Jonna choreographs for BR's Christian Youth Theatre (CYT) where she choreographed *The Legend of Pocahontas*, *Rapunzel*, *Mary Poppins*, and was both director and choreographer for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

Christine Perkins (Associate Artistic Director) began her dance career in New Orleans, studying with Joseph Giacobbe, Ceyhun Ozsoy, and Mary Munro; later moving to the stage with Delta Festival Ballet. While receiving her master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology, she taught and performed in Shreveport with Louisiana Dance Theatre, performing lead roles in pieces by Dianne Maroney and others. After moving to Baton Rouge, Christine soon joined BRBT where she performed numerous roles in *The Nutcracker* and pas de deux roles in both *Les Sylphides* and *Sleeping Beauty's* Bluebird. She is now an Associate Director creating and directing its newest community engagement, Ballet for Every Body.