

# PLAYBILL

## Romeo & Juliet

March 27-28



diablo  
ballet

Lauren Jonas, Artistic Director

# diablo ballet

Lauren Jonas, Artistic Director

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## Diablo Ballet School

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Krissy Gray: Co-Founder & Director of  
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Mia Hanflig: School Administrators  
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## Faculty

Nicole Ciapponi	Luis Gonzalez
Lizzie Devanney	Mia Hanflig
Amanda Farris	Dawn Perrin
Evelyn Febuary	Olivia Powell
Andrea Gaudet	Alison Ramoran
Alina Gonzalez	

Dear Friends of Diablo Ballet,

It is with deep gratitude and excitement that I share this special occasion with you. For more than three decades, Diablo Ballet has been dedicated to bringing world-class dance to our community while nurturing creativity, education, and connection through the transformative power of the arts.

Over the past 32 years, our company has grown in remarkable ways. From presenting beloved classical works to premiering new choreography by contemporary artists, Diablo Ballet continues to celebrate the rich tradition of ballet while embracing its future.

Because of your belief in our mission, Diablo Ballet now has something we have dreamed about for decades: a home of our very own. For the first time in our history, our dancers, staff, and school are united under one roof!

Through our PEEK Outreach Program, we bring dance education to hundreds of underserved students in Title-1 schools and youth in the juvenile justice system. Your generosity and belief in our mission allow us to present exceptional performances, nurture talented artists, and bring the benefits of dance to people throughout our community.

Thank you for being an essential part of the Diablo Ballet family. Your support keeps the arts vibrant and ensures that dance continues to inspire generations to come.

With gratitude,



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauren Jonas". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and elegant.

Lauren Jonas  
Artistic Director, Diablo Ballet

# **BIRTHDAY VARIATIONS**

**3/27/26: Pas de Deux with no intermission**

Choreography: Gerald Arpino

Music: Giuseppe Verdi\*

Staging: Dawn Perrin

Lighting Reconstruction: Cassie Barnes

Costumes: Amanda Farris

## **Opening**

*Ensemble*

## **Variation No. 1**

*DIEGO CRUZ ALVAREZ*

## **Variation No. 2**

*KYLA MARCUS*

## **Variation No. 3**

*OLIVIA POWELL*

## **Pas de Deux**

*NICOLE CIAPPONI DIEGO CRUZ ALVAREZ*

## **Variation No. 4**

*NATALIE ALLENTON*

## **Variation No. 5**

*NICOLE CIAPPONI*

## **Variation No. 6**

*ALISON RAMORAN 3/28 2:00 pm/LIZZIE DEVANNEY 3/28 7:30 pm*

## **Coda Finale**

*ENSEMBLE*

\*This performance of *Birthday Variations* is presented with the permission from The Gerald Arpino Foundation and is produced in accordance with the standards established by the Foundation. [www.arpinofoundation.org](http://www.arpinofoundation.org)

Score adapted by Jonathan McPhee from Giuseppe Verdi's ballet music for his operas, *I Lombardi* and *I Vespri Siciliani*. *Birthday Variations* was commissioned in 1986 through a generous gift from Becky D'Angelo of Chicago commemorating the birthday of her husband, Dino D'Angelo, founder of the Chicago Civic Center for the Performing Arts.

World Premiere March 6, 1986: Joffrey Ballet, Civic Opera House (now the Lyric Opera House), Chicago Illinois  
Diablo Ballet Premiere: March 28, 2026, Leshner Center for the Arts, Walnut Creek, California

## **Intermission**

# **ROMEO & JULIET**

Choreography, Scenic & Sound Design: Penny Saunders

Narration: Elias Piantino (Penny's son)

Rehearsal Director: Michael Wells

Music: Sergei Prokofiev

Costume Design: Patricia Barker

Lighting Design: Cassie Barnes

Sound Engineer: Daniel Clifton

Fencing Coaching & Foils: Nicolas Rousset, ORO Fencing

Prop Assistance: Amanda Farris & Nicole Ciapponi

<b>Narrator</b>	Phoenix Breese
<b>Romeo</b>	Luis Gonzalez/Elijah Hartley (Sat. 2pm)
<b>Juliet</b>	Alison Ramoran/Lizzie Devanney (Sat. 2pm)
<b>Nurse</b>	Olivia Powell
<b>Mercutio</b>	Marco Clemente
<b>Benvolio</b>	Diego Cruz Alvarez
<b>Tybalt</b>	Elijah Hartley/Micheal Bushman (Sat. 2pm)
<b>Paris</b>	Micheal Bushman/Bina Anvari (Sat. 2pm)
<b>Rosaline</b>	Nicole Ciapponi
<b>Friar</b>	Astrid Arvelo
<b>Princess</b>	Angela Blosen
<b>Lady Capulet</b>	Amanda Farris
<b>Lord Capulet</b>	Michael Wells
<b>Lady Montague</b>	Grace Thompson
<b>Lord Montague</b>	Bina Anvari/Luis Gonzales (Sat. 2 pm)
<b>Chorus</b>	Lizzie Devanney/Alison Ramoran (Sat. 2pm)
<b>Chorus</b>	Natalie Allenton
<b>Chorus</b>	Alina Gonzalez
<b>Chorus</b>	Genevieve Boyle
<b>Chorus</b>	Evelyn Febuary
<b>Chorus</b>	Mia Hanflig
<b>Chorus</b>	Kyla Marcus
<b>Chorus</b>	Grace Thompson

World Premiere: March 28, 2026, Leshner Center for the Arts, Walnut Creek, California

## Choreographer



**Gerald Arpino** (1923-2008) co-founded The Joffrey Ballet with Robert Joffrey and became artistic director after the passing of Mr. Joffrey in 1988. Born in Staten Island, NY, he met Robert Joffrey while stationed in Seattle with the Coast Guard. He studied with Mary Ann Wells, danced with Graham dancers May O'Donnell and Gertrude Schurr, and was a principal dancer with the original Joffrey company. Arpino's style is most notably dynamic and passionate. As resident choreographer for the Joffrey Ballet, he contributed to over one-third of the company's repertory which included a range of works from the sublime *Sea Shadow* to virtuosic *Suite Saint Saens* to crowd pleasing *Light Rain*. Arpino's ballets have been performed at the White House on several occasions, as well as around the world to both acclaim and controversial review. As one of the recipients of the 1974 Dance Magazine Award, his citation read: "To Gerald Arpino

– more than any other choreographer, he has recognized the spirit of the times. His work speaks clearly of the anguish and the joy of being young in America today." In 1995, Arpino moved the Joffrey Ballet to Chicago, where he established the Joffrey as a world-class company in the heart of the American Midwest, which continues to thrive today. In the Fall of 2023, The Gerald Arpino Foundation commemorated Arpino's 100th birthday with a special offering of Arpino ballets to dance organizations culminating with a celebration of participating dance companies from around the country. [www.arpinofoundation.org](http://www.arpinofoundation.org)

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**Penny Saunders**, originally from West Palm Beach, Florida, graduated from the Harid Conservatory in 1995, and began her professional career with The American Repertory Ballet under the direction of Septime Webre. She went on to dance with Ballet Arizona, MOMIX Dance Theater, Cedar Lake Ensemble and in 2004 she joined Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. In 2011, Saunders won the International Commissioning Project which launched her choreographic career, creating pieces for Hubbard Street's main and second company, Cincinnati Ballet, Whim W'Him, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Oklahoma City Ballet, BalletX, Sacramento Ballet, The Royal New Zealand Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, Diablo Ballet and Dayton Ballet, among others. Saunders is honored to be the Resident Choreographer at The Grand Rapids Ballet, to have received support from The New York City Ballet Choreographic Commissions Initiative, to have participated in The Guggenheim Works & Process, and The National

Choreographers Initiative, and to be the recipient of the 2016 Princess Grace Choreographic Fellowship. In 2020, Saunders created a range of new dance films with Whim W'Him, BalletX, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Dance Collective, Grand Rapids Ballet, Ballet Idaho and ArtEmotion. She is looking forward to upcoming residencies with USC Kaufman School of Dance, Point Park University and Western Michigan University, as well as collaborations with ArtEmotion/Ballet West, Nashville Ballet, Diablo Ballet, Eugene Ballet, Dayton Ballet, Grand Rapids Ballet, Dance Aspen and Ballet Idaho. Saunders is also currently an Adjunct Assistant Professor at The University of Utah School of Dance.

# Artists of the Company



**Diego Cruz Alvarez**

Born: Zaragoza, Spain  
Companies performed with:  
San Francisco Ballet



**Astrid Arvelo**

Born: Caracas, Venezuela  
Companies performed with:  
Teresa Carreño Ballet de  
Caracas & Ballet Clásico  
Cubano de Miami



**Micheal Bushman**

Born: Los Angeles, CA  
Companies performed with:  
Pacific Northwest Ballet,  
Ballet West



**Nicola Ciapponi**

Born: Vancouver, BC  
Companies performed with:  
San Francisco Ballet and  
Joffrey Ballet



**Marco Clemente**

Born: Chicago, IL  
Companies performed with:  
Dayton Ballet, Minnesota  
Ballet and Ballet Nebraska



**Lizzie Devanney**

Born: Bel Air, MD  
Companies performed with:  
Pittsburgh Ballet,  
Pacific Northwest Ballet



**Amanda Farris**

Born: Modesto, CA  
Companies performed with:  
The Georgia Ballet



**Alina Gonzalez**

Born: Pittsburg, CA  
Companies performed with:  
Diablo Ballet



**Luis Gonzalez**

Born: Bogota, Colombia  
Companies performed with:  
Houston Ballet II, Orlando  
Ballet, Joffrey Ballet,  
Sarasota Ballet



**Elijah Hartley**

Born: Montesano, WA  
Companies performed with:  
Ballet West



**Olivia Powell**

Born: Boston, MA  
Companies performed with:  
The Alabama Ballet,  
Ballet Memphis



**Alison Ramoran**

Born: Torrance, CA  
Companies performed with:  
Oklahoma City Ballet,  
Smuin Contemporary Ballet



**Bina Anvari**

Apprentice  
Born: Castro Valley, CA



**Genevieve Boyle**

Apprentice  
Born: Salt Lake City, UT



**Evelyn Febuary**

Apprentice  
Born: Lafayette, LA



**Mia Hanflig**

JR Apprentice  
Born: Cape Cod, MA



**Grace Thompson**

JR Apprentice  
Born: Berkeley, CA



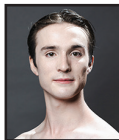
**Natalie Allenton**

Trainee



**Kyla Marcus**

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## Special Thanks

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## Our New Home!

We are thrilled to have moved into our new home—an exciting new chapter in our 32-year history. **Diablo Ballet's permanent home in the Shadelands area of Walnut Creek** is a state-of-the-art facility that houses our professional dancers and **Diablo Ballet School**, while providing expanded studio space to train the next generation of dancers. It will also serve as a welcoming gathering place for youth and families and a strong foundation for the Ballet's future.

Thanks to the generosity of our community, we are **only \$25,000 away from reaching our \$500,000 matching contribution goal.**

Every contribution is critical as we work to reach this goal by **March 31, 2026.**

**Scan the QR code to make a contribution to our new home**

Thank you for your wonderful support!



# Friends of Diablo Ballet

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Diablo Ballet acknowledges the generosity of the following individuals and organizations whose support makes our performances possible. This list reflects donations and contributions made to Diablo Ballet between January 1, 2025 - March 10, 2026. We thank you for your continued support and apologize for any omission or errors in the listing.

## Distinguished Gifts

*\$25K and above*

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Make a donation in honor of our 32<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary!

You can play an important part in keeping Diablo Ballet and the power of dance thriving. Your donation keeps the art of dance moving forward in our community both on stage and in the classroom. Every donation counts.



# diablo ballet

Lauren Jonas, Artistic Director

## Join us for the remainder of our 2025-26 Season

### *Coppélia*

May 15 - 16, 2026

Leshner Center for the Arts

The beloved comic ballet, *Coppélia*, features a brash young protagonist, a doll that comes to life, and a dash of magic. With lively characters, a case of mistaken identity, and a bright orchestral score, this enchanting ballet will charm and delight the young and young at heart.

### *Choreography Showcase*

Featuring Dancemakers of the Future

May 22, 2026

Del Valle Theatre

This special one-night only performance features new works by Diablo Ballet Company dancers. Witness an extraordinary blend of creativity and technical skill as the company presents these original ballets in one stunning performance.

For ticket information visit [diabloballet.org](http://diabloballet.org)

# diablo ballet school

## Enrich. Inspire. Educate.

### Join us for our Summer Programs

June 1 - August 16



The first ballet school in the history of Contra Costa County run by a professional ballet company offering classes available for ages 3 through adult, including Dance for Parkinson's classes.

For more information and a listing of classes, visit: [diabloballet.org](http://diabloballet.org).