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## WHO IS WEST MICHIGAN YOUTH BALLET

West Michigan Youth Ballet (WMYB), founded in 2007 in Ada, Michigan, is committed to developing young people in their pursuit and passion for artistic expression through dance.

Company members, ranging in age from 8 to 18, with varied backgrounds and experience across the full spectrum of dance, come together for weekly rehearsals. Their common goal is the desire to be part of a performing company built on a solid foundation of classical ballet.

Our winter seasonal offering is *The Nutcracker*, with traditional choreography set to Tchaikovsky's original score. The spring production ranges in time-honored masterpieces like *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella* and *Coppélia*. Our young artists shine in their performances, gaining athletic and artistic skills, as well as collaborative and memorable experiences. Personal growth, both as individuals and as part of a whole, is evident in every dancer.

## OUR MISSION

West Michigan Youth Ballet provides our community opportunities for lifelong confidence, discipline, and belonging that result from participating in the physical and social art of ballet.

## OUR VISION

We are committed to providing access to the art of ballet, transcending age and socioeconomic boundaries, to cultivate enduring connections to performing arts and inspiring future careers.

## WMYB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marlene Kenneway, *Chairperson/Co-Founder*    Brigitte Nelson, *Co-Founder*

Stephen Sanford, *Artistic Director*

Patricia Diaz-Lawton, *President*

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Carli Mais

Josephine Sulka

## ADVISORY BOARD

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Laura Berman

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

West Michigan Youth Ballet would like to extend heartfelt appreciation for the continued generosity and support of Doug and Maria DeVos. We also acknowledge and thank the Michigan Arts & Culture Council and the National Endowment for the Arts for their support of our organization.



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### *Help Us Continue To Make A Difference!*

Your donation will directly support the professional level experience for our young artists in our community. All and any donations are greatly appreciated!

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West Michigan Youth Ballet is a 501 (c) (3) Michigan non-profit corporation. PO Box 725 Ada, MI 49301

## SPECIAL THANKS

This brand-new original production of *The Wizard of Oz* would not have been possible without the technology assistance of the following companies.

We are so grateful and appreciative of their time and expertise!

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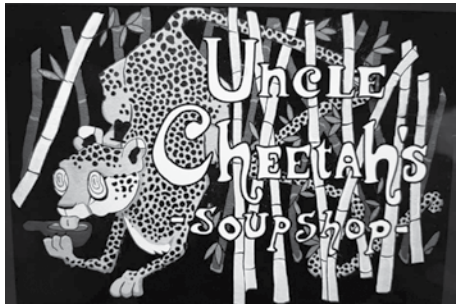
TECHNOLOGIES

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*Thank you to the following businesses for their donations and support!*



*top this*



*Dear Patrons & Families,*

*I am honored to have been given the opportunity to lead these talented dancers through this production of "The Wizard of Oz." Upon assuming the role of Artistic Director at WMYB, I have harbored a longstanding aspiration to conceive a ballet from its inception. Collaborating with Laura Berman, whose artistic insights have been invaluable in previous WMYB and Grand Rapids Ballet productions, was essential to realizing this vision. Laura's talent and dedication fueled the project's momentum upon her involvement.*

*We were privileged to collaborate with Jay Batzner, a professor of composition and technology at Central Michigan University, who expertly arranged the music selections in partnership with Laura and myself. The music is integral to our production, infusing it with profound depth and emotion, setting the tone of each scene.*

*"The Wizard of Oz" has captivated audiences across generations, making it an ideal canvas for our current company of dancers. Our costume designer, Heather Cassidy, one of WMYB's most devoted Oz enthusiasts, contributed boundless creativity, shaping our visual concepts with rich colors and textures for the Oz characters.*

*Carola Gulick, having spearheaded backstage elements for WMYB productions of "Coppélia," "Cinderella," and "Sleeping Beauty," played a pivotal role in securing essential resources for our Oz endeavor. With Carola's extensive network and organizational skills, she facilitated the acquisition of our amazing set. She was also part of the team that secured additional funding for this production.*

*Under Carrie Everhart's leadership, WMYB's planning strategy saw significant progress, culminating in the formation of a comprehensive budget and production timeline. Carrie's meticulous approach ensured timeliness and efficiency throughout the creative process.*

*Together, our creative team has crafted every aspect of "The Wizard of Oz," making countless decisions to bring this enchanting ballet to life. As we focus on our mission to "Enrich, Inspire, Grow," we are immensely proud to present West Michigan Youth Ballet's rendition of "The Wizard of Oz."*

*"Toi toi toi" to all of the amazing dancers! I wish to personally thank all the families that provide amazing support to the program and the gift of their time, talents, and treasure each season to make this performance great.*

*Your Director,  
Stephen Sanford*



## **STEPHEN SANFORD - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, CHOREOGRAPHER**

Stephen began his professional performing career with the Grand Rapids Ballet Company in 2001. As a principal dancer, he has collaborated with renowned choreographers and ballet masters from around the globe, including Francia Russell, Daniel Duell, Paul Boos, Mario Radacovsky, Kirk Peterson, Wes Chapman, Gordon Peirce Schmidt, Charthel Arthur Estner, and Olivier Wevers, among others. His repertoire spans classical and neo-classical works, with notable lead performances in George

Balanchine's iconic ballets such as *Apollo*, *Who Cares*, *Four Temperaments*, *Serenade*, *The Nutcracker*, *Valse Fantaisie*, *Rubies*, *Stars and Stripes*, and *Concerto Barocco* and Gerald Arpino's *Light Rain*. Stephen's talent has also graced numerous ballet companies as a guest artist, including New York Theater Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, St. Louis Ballet, Ballet Chicago, Geiger Ballet, Southold Dance Theater, and Ohio Theatre Ballet. In addition to his performing career, Stephen has dedicated over 25 years to teaching ballet. He has taught advanced and master classes at institutions like Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Ballet School, and currently for Ada Dance Academy, Ballet Chicago, and Deos Contemporary Company. Since 2015, Stephen has served as the Artistic Director of West Michigan Youth Ballet, guiding hundreds of young dancers and nurturing their passion for dance through productions like *Coppelia*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and most recently, *The Wizard of Oz*. Beyond his artistic endeavors, Stephen cherishes his role as a family man. He and his wife, Jennifer, along with their five children—Julia, Andrew, Elaina, Nathan, and Lucy—are the heart of his life and inspiration.

*My thanks to all the participating schools and teachers who provide love and care for these dancers and cultivate them to be passionate and educated about their craft. The caliber of WMYB productions are interconnected with our partnering schools who have honed the skills of their students and instilled a respect for the art-form. We would not be able to lead these students through their choreography each week without your exemplary instruction.*

*My thanks to the entire WMYB Staff and Board of Directors. You are one of the hardest working groups with whom I have had the pleasure of working. Thank you for your diligence and organization to be sure that we have some of the best choreography, costumes, sets, props, tea parties, boutiques, playbills, community outreach, and connections to name a few. The sacrifice of your time and talents are felt throughout the entire organization. I am always humbled by your willingness to say yes for the betterment of WMYB and the dancers that cross our threshold.*

*My thanks to all the volunteers who step up each week to lend a hand while the students are dancing in the studios. Thank you for understanding the importance of participation with the children's interests at heart and being willing to give of your time, talents, and treasure. Our productions would not be possible without all of your hours of giving back to these dancers and the West Michigan Youth Ballet.*

## WMYB BIOGRAPHIES



### **LAURA SCHWENK-BERMAN - CHOREOGRAPHER**

Laura Schwenk-Berman has been performing, teaching, choreographing, and staging works for over 45 years. She began her professional career dancing principal roles for the Garden State Ballet and subsequently danced with Chicago Ballet, Boston Ballet, and for seven years with the Pacific Northwest Ballet. There she performed as a soloist with Gelsey Kirkland and Mikhail Baryshnikov and danced in *Nutcracker: The Motion Picture*. She has toured as a guest artist throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. Laura served as the Ballet

Mistress, Interim Artistic Director, Associate Artistic Director, and Director of the School of the Grand Rapids Ballet Company from 1992-2010. She conducted two capital campaigns, one to renovate the old North Star Bus Terminal into four beautiful studios and administrative offices; the second, to build the company's Peter Martin Wege Theatre and costume shop. At that time, GRB received the Governor's Arts Award for excellence and toured the Midwest and Canada, reaching an audience of over 500,000. As Director of the School of the Grand Rapids Ballet Company, she established the school's curriculum, syllabus, faculty, and performances, while placing students in ballet companies around the world. Laura has a Masters degree in Theatre from Northwestern University where she graduated with honors. Currently she works as a freelance artist, choreographing original works and staging full-length ballets, and as a guest master instructor and private coach. She also serves on the Advisory Board of the WMYB.

Laura choreographed the following *Wizard of Oz* scenes: Miss Pitt, Cyclone, Scarecrow, all Poppy and Emerald City scenes, Witch's Castle fight, and the Wizard/Dorothy departure scene on the amazingly talented dancers of the WMYB. They were her inspiration, along with the production's vastly creative artistic team.



### **HEATHER CASSADY - COSTUME DESIGNER, COSTUMER**

Heather graduated from Michigan State University with a BA in Clothing and Textile Design with an emphasis in Fashion Design. She then began an 11-year career as a Costumer with the Walt Disney Company. She was the Costumer for a variety of parades and stage shows in all four of the Walt Disney World Parks and many of their resort properties. Some of her shows included the *Remember the Magic Parade*, *SpectroMagic*, *Around the World with Mickey and Minnie*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Jungle Book*, and several U.S. tours

and conventions. Heather was an integral member of the *Wizard of Oz* creative team. In addition to designing all of the production's costumes, she is a skilled dramaturge who contributed many creative story ideas. Heather would like to thank her children John, Katie, Joshua, Brandon, Katrina, and Nellie, and her first class husband, John.

## GUEST CONTRIBUTORS



### **YUKA OBA-MUSCHIANA - CHOREOGRAPHER, *SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW***

Yuka was born in Japan where she received her training from Hitomi Takeuchi Ballet School. In 2006, she attended English National Ballet School in the UK, graduating early in 2008. Mario Radacovsky invited her to join the Slovak National Ballet where she danced a variety of roles such as *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux* by George Balanchine and Spring lead lady in *Four Seasons* by James Kudelka. Yuka joined Grand Rapids Ballet in 2011 where she has since danced many principal roles. In 2013, Yuka had the honor of performing Olivier Wever's *The Sofa* at the Joyce Theatre in New York and reprised her role in Seattle. Yuka performed *Le Corsaire Pas de Deux* in the gala at The National Theatre in Tokyo and the *Pas de Deux* from *Le Carnaval de Venise* in Fukushima. In 2014, Val Caniparoli choreographed Clara on Yuka for the world premiere of *The Nutcracker*. She also choreographed for Grand Rapids Ballet since 2015 such as *Wave, Eriha, Death and Maiden, Tomorrow Never Comes* and *Chansons de Bilitis*. For the 2021 virtual season, Yuka had the opportunity to choreograph, direct and film her piece *sol and luna*.



### **JAY BATZNER - MUSIC ARRANGEMENT**

Jay C. Batzner is currently on the faculty of Central Michigan University. He reads too many comic books and tries to find time for sewing and other various hobbies. Jay likes playing chess but loses a LOT of games. Jay's frequent interdisciplinary collaborations with choreographer Heather Trommer-Beardslee has led to several dance works based on student veterans, ecological succession, the Larry Craig scandal, and hyena behaviors. The hyena piece even includes puppets! As you might expect, there are scores and recordings available at his website: [www.jaybatzner.com](http://www.jaybatzner.com).



### **SHELLEY FUNK - MAKEUP ARTIST**

Shelley Funk graduated from Western Michigan University majoring in communications and theater, with an emphasis in stage makeup, with a Secondary Education degree. Some of the shows she has designed for are *Frozen, Shrek, Beauty and the Beast, Wizard of Oz, Matilda, Little Mermaid, All the Way, Night of the Living Dead, Christmas Carol*, and several others. She has worked and taught at Grand Rapids Civic Theater and donated her time to community functions and fundraisers. Shelley has also taught Readers Theater both in the classroom and Community Education for elementary students. In the winter, Shelley coaches a local high school ski team. She also serves on the board of the Greater Grand Rapids Ski Conference. This is her first time with West Michigan Youth Ballet and she is extremely excited to be a part of our production.

## GUEST CONTRIBUTORS



### **CAROLA GULICK - SETS & PROPS MISTRESS**

Carola has been active with WMYB since 2020 and part of the board of directors since 2022. She is currently the Development Director and the Sets and Props Mistress. Carola has a long history of coaching and choreographing figure skating and was the director of Suburban East Lansing Ice Rink for several years. During *The Wizard of Oz*, she has been responsible for all of the shows props and sets as well as the introduction of projection backdrops to WMYB. In addition to all of her backstage contributions, she was instrumental in securing the funding to create this production. She's married to a stud and is immensely proud of her two amazing children, Maya and Stella.

---

## THE STORY OF THE WIZARD OF OZ

### ***Kansas***

Young Dorothy lives on a small farm with her Uncle Henry, Auntie Em, and her dog Toto. Bored, Dorothy plays with her excitable dog. Miss Pitt, who owns Uncle Henry and Auntie Em's farm, stops by to collect the mortgage payment. When they are unable to pay, Miss Pitt threatens to take Toto.

### ***Cyclone***

The sky turns gray and Uncle Henry warns everyone that a cyclone is coming. Auntie Em motions for Dorothy to get inside the cellar for safety. As Dorothy reaches the open cellar door, Toto leaps out of Dorothy's arms and runs away. Dorothy chases after him, but it is too late. The whole house starts to spin as it becomes engulfed in the cyclone.

### ***Munchkin Land***

Dorothy opens her eyes to see the sun beaming through the windows. With Toto under her arm, she opens the door and is greeted by a group of curious people – the Munchkins. Glinda explains that Dorothy's house has landed on the Wicked Witch of the East. Dorothy tells Glinda that she just wants to go home, so Glinda tells Dorothy to go see the Wizard in Emerald City for help. Dorothy is given the Wicked Witch of the East's shoes (which fit perfectly) and she is sent down the yellow brick road to Emerald City.

### ***Yellow Brick Road***

Dorothy and Toto come upon a field where a lone scarecrow hangs on a perch. She isn't very good at scaring away crows because she does not have a brain to think. The Scarecrow shares that all she wants is a brain to be able to think for herself. Dorothy invites the Scarecrow to come with her to see if the powerful Wizard can help her too! Later on, they hear something that sounds like a cry. They come upon a rusted tin statue that asks to be oiled. The Tin Person shares that long ago she had

fallen in love with a Munchkin, but their young love was forbidden and her heart was taken away. She wishes to have a heart again, so Dorothy invites her to join the group to see the powerful Wizard. As they travel through a magical forest, they hear a noise and a Lion jumps out! Dorothy thumps the lion's nose, and she cowers in fright. She admits that all she wants is to be a fierce, roaring Lion. Dorothy invites her to join them on their journey to Emerald City as well.

### ***Poppies***

The travelers come upon a field of poppies. The Wicked Witch of the West has cast a spell on the poppies, making them emit a poisonous aroma that will cause everyone to fall asleep. The Poppy Flowers dance around them emitting the poison. But Glinda casts a different spell that makes snow appear, clearing the poppy poison from the air. The travelers awake and continue on their journey.

### ***Emerald City***

Dorothy and her traveling friends enter the surreal green city. Inside the Emerald Palace, each traveler makes their requests of the Wizard, who says he will grant them, but only if they defeat the Wicked Witch of the West first. With no choice, they decide that they must go and try to defeat the witch.

### ***Witch's Forest***

As the travelers pass through a dark forest, the Wicked Witch of the West sends wicked ravens, but the Scarecrow fights them off. Then she sends a swarm of bees, which are defeated by the Tin Person. In desperation, the witch grabs the winged monkeys' golden staff and orders them to pick up the travelers and bring them to her castle. Unable to fight off all the winged monkeys, Dorothy and the Lion are transported to the witch's castle.

### ***Witch's Castle***

The Wicked Witch and Dorothy fight over Dorothy's shoes, and just as the witch claims one of them, Dorothy throws a pail of water over her. The witch melts into a puddle on the floor. Dorothy collects the shoes, broom, and golden staff. As she grabs the staff, the winged monkeys appear and grant her three wishes, so Dorothy asks them to return her group to Emerald City.

### ***Emerald City***

Back in the Emerald Palace, Toto opens a cylinder to reveal an elderly man, who has been pretending to be the Wizard. He quickly explains that he arrived in Oz by balloon many years ago and became the ruler of the land of Oz. He confesses that he has no special powers, but gives each friend a symbolic item to show they already had the quality they desired. As the Wizard and Dorothy are about to lift off in the balloon to return home, Toto jumps out, and Dorothy chases after him. As the balloon and Wizard sail away without them, Glinda tells the crying Dorothy to click her heels three times, spin around, and make a wish to go home, which Dorothy does.

### ***Kansas***

Upon returning to the farm in Kansas, Dorothy is so excited to see Uncle Henry and Auntie Em again that she throws herself into their arms, vowing to never complain about her simple life or boring farm, ever again.

## CAST

### **Act 1**

Dorothy.....	Emma Diaz-Lawton
Toto .....	Allisun Lancaster
Aunt Em .....	Hadley Breit
Uncle Henry .....	Darrell Haggard
Farmhand 1 .....	Mars Maiden
Farmhand 2 .....	Carter Endres
Farmhand 3 .....	Cooper Strait
Miss Pitt.....	Emma Strait
Wicked Witch of the West.....	Sophia Erbenbraut
Wicked Witch of the East.....	Mikena Ismail
Glinda .....	Josephine Sulka
Cyclone Cape Dancers.....	Sophia Bergsma, Mileah Ismail, Carli Mais, Ella Yenchar
Cyclone Silk Dancers .....	Lynnlee Ashton, Sydney Byrne, Dallas Everett, Abigail Holland, Aubrey Doyle, Stella Gulick
Munchkin Mayor .....	Lydia Boucher
Munchkin Coroner .....	Caylee Miller
Munchkins .....	Norah Anderson, Zella Boone, Abigail Carlisle, Emilyn Conn, Charlotte DeYoung, Shay Duffy, Autumn Everett, Ellery Gaver, Allison Greer, Lauren Hendricks, Cayleigh McCollum, Ella Rottman, Nathan Sanford, Clara Schultz, Madeleine Stauffer, Molly Tate, Lexie White, Lydia Wilson
Scarecrow .....	Sara Primeau
Tin Person .....	Berkleigh Carol
Lion .....	Elaina Sanford
Crows.....	Claire Herpolsheimer, Charley Sanial, Ava Stauffer, Charlotte Watson
Trees .....	Sa’Niya Becton, Jahziah Camp, Carter Endres, Mars Maiden, Rainer Qiao, Ray Qiao, Mila Selden, Cooper Strait, Alexa Wilson
Young Woodcutter .....	Lexie White
Young Munchkin .....	Nathan Sanford
Fireflies.....	Livia Burnson, Emily Faulkner, Emily McGlinchey, Scarlett Noriega
Poison Poppy Lead .....	Sophia Bergsma/Darrell Haggard
Poison Poppy Couples.....	Ella Yenchar/Damion Powers Hadley Breit/Wolfgang Goluska
Orange Poppies .....	Meagan Conn, Mileah Ismail, Carli Mais
Poppy Blossoms .....	Aubrey Doyle, Stella Gulick
Red Poppies .....	Cate Afman, Sydney Byrne, Abigail Holland, Mikayla Ismail, Mikena Ismail, Leah Selleck, Samantha Weaver, Katherine Wisser, Madison Worvey

## CAST

### **Act 2**

Wizard .....	Darrell Haggard
Gate Keeper .....	Mars Maiden
Attendants .....	Aubrey Doyle, Stella Gulick
Emeralds .....	Sophia Bergsma/Damion Powers, Ella Yenchar/Wolfgang Goluska
Socialites .....	Hadley Breit, Mileah Ismail, Carli Mais
Florists .....	Cate Afman, Meagan Conn, Mikena Ismail, Leah Selleck, Katherine Wisser
Greeters .....	Mikayla Ismail, Claire Herpolsheimer
Young Ozians .....	Livia Burnson, Emily McGlinchey, Charley Sanial, Charlotte Watson, Lexie White
Oz Sentries .....	Carter Endres, Cooper Strait
Winkie Guards .....	Damion Powers, Wolfgang Goluska
Queen Bee .....	Emily Faulkner
Bees .....	Norah Anderson, Zella Boone, Ellery Gaver, Allison Greer, Lauren Hendricks, Scarlett Noriega, Ella Rottman, Clara Schultz, Madeleine Stauffer, Lydia Wilson
Monkey Lieutenant .....	Charlotte DeYoung
Monkeys .....	Lynnlee Ashton, Lydia Boucher, Abigail Carlisle, Emilyn Conn, Shay Duffy, Autumn Everett, Cayleigh McCollum, Caylee Miller, Nathan Sanford, Ava Stauffer, Molly Tate
Ravens .....	Sydney Byrne, Dallas Everett, Abigail Holland, Emma Strait, Samantha Weaver, Madison Worvey

### ***Understudies***

*WMYB deeply appreciates these dancers for giving 40-80 extra hours towards learning the following parts to be ready to step in if needed. Your dedication does not go unnoticed. Thank you!*

***Dorothy:*** Josephine Sulka, Sophia Bergsma

***Toto:*** Scarlett Noriega

***Aunt Em:*** Sara Primeau

***Miss Pitt:*** Mikena Ismail

***Wicked Witch of the West:*** Ella Yenchar

***Glinda:*** Emma Diaz-Lawton, Hadley Breit

***Scarecrow:*** Mileah Ismail

***Tin Person:*** Carli Mais

***Lion:*** Hadley Breit

## GUEST PERFORMERS

*Our productions are greatly enhanced by the participation of these professional dancers who so willingly give their time and talent. Thank You!*



**DARRELL HAGGARD** is originally from Oakhurst, California, where he found his love for dance at Velocity Dance Studio at the age of 9. At age 17, he began training on scholarship at the Los Angeles Ballet Academy with Ms. Andrea Paris. Darrell performed lead roles in *Coppélia*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *A Season's Suite*; as a guest Cavalier in *The Nutcracker*; and with the Alvin Ailey American Dancer Theater performing *Memoria*. Darrell has also trained with Kee Juan Han at Washington Ballet School and performed in LABA's award winning ensembles at

the YAGP ballet competition in New York. As a company member with the Grand Rapids Ballet, Darrell performed in Gerald Arpinos' *light Rain* and George Balanchine's *Who Care's and Rubies*. He has also had original works choreographed on him, including Olivier Weavers' *The Sofa* and Annabelle Lopez-Ocha's *Dangerous Liaisons*, as well as many more. Currently freelancing in Grand Rapids, Darrell looks forward to continuing his career and is excited for new works.



**WOLFGANG GOLUSKA** started his dance journey at Elizabeth Williams School of Dance at age 8, where he focused on ballet while also studying tap and jazz. Wolfgang was eventually invited to guest dance with Children's Ballet Theater, which led to him to join their company for their 2018-2019 season. He has also attended summer intensives at Grand Rapids Ballet, Northeast Academy of Dance, Cincinnati Ballet, and New York Dance Project. At Grand Valley State University, Wolfgang studied ballet and modern dance technique along with dance

history, dance costuming, dance on camera, choreography, urban dance, and dance pedagogy. While at GVSU, Wolfgang continued to perform as a guest dancer with various companies, including HIS Dance, Greater Lansing Ballet Company, and WMYB. In 2023, he graduated with a B.A. in Dance. Currently, Wolfgang is dancing with CPR Dance: Inhale Movement for their sophomore season, as well as guest dancing with various groups around Michigan.



**DAMION POWERS** graduated from the Greenville High School in 2020. His dance training started in his adolescence with Flat River Dance Company. Mr. Powers is now an instructor and professional guest artist for the school. Some of his most recent featured roles include Snow King and Cavalier in *The Nutcracker* and the Prince in *Snow White*. He is very skilled in partnering work and is thrilled to be a back at his home dance school.

## THE WIZARD OF OZ POSTER ART

WMYB is pleased to partner with local artist, Mary-Catheryn Baker of Copper Corners Art, to showcase her original work "No Place Like Home" on all the advertising material for our brand-new production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Mary-Catheryn currently creates her artwork and wallpapers out of her art studio in Grand Rapids. Visit [coppercornersart.com](http://coppercornersart.com) to see all her amazing work!



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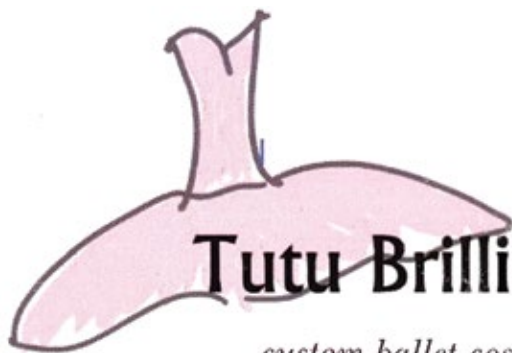


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## WMYB IN THE COMMUNITY

*WMYB is working hard to open the world of ballet to our community. We believe that everyone, young or old, should have the opportunity to enjoy this art form in one way or the other. These are some of the things that we have most recently been doing in our community. If you are interested in offering your support of these programs, please email us at [outreach@wmyb.org](mailto:outreach@wmyb.org).*



WMYB is partnering with True North for the first time this season as part of their Project Focus. Project FOCUS (For Our Children's Ultimate Success) provides individualized academic support to students while engaging participants in enrichment activities and field trips. True North partners with local West Michigan school districts serving youth Kindergarten through 8th grade. The programs enhance resiliency and strengthen young people through creative, community-based, and diverse educational experiences during non-school hours, building life-shaping character, fostering healthy relationships, and nurturing socially responsible civic behavior.



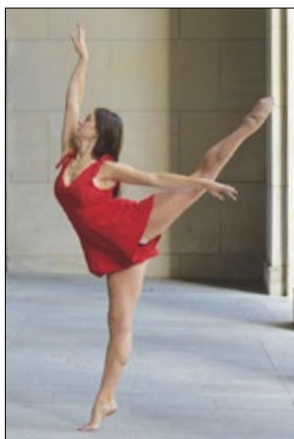
WMYB is partnering with Grand Rapids Public Schools' Coit Arts Academy to introduce ballet to students in Kindergarten through 5th grade. Scholars had the opportunity to visit WMYB's studios, learn about backstage production, and attend a dress rehearsal.



WMYB continues to offer in person and live stream options to local Senior Living Facilities.



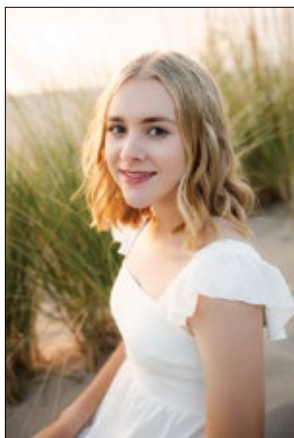
## CONGRATS TO OUR WMYB SENIORS!



### SOPHIE ERBENTRAUT

I've been in every WMYB production since the age of eight. I've learned and grown so much through this company, it makes me sad thinking about taking my last bow on stage. This is my third year of being the Student Representative of WMYB, and working on the active board. This is my fourth year on the FHC varsity dance team. I also dance at Ada Dance Academy, where I started dancing when I was three years old and then started on the competition team at the age of seven. Currently, I compete on the Imprint Dance Company's competition team. I'm so grateful for all the studios and teachers I have danced with for getting

me to where I am now. Dance has been the biggest part of my life. I plan to go to college at MSU, where I'm going to study Pre-Veterinary. I hope in college I can find a way to further my dance career. I'm so sad to leave my family at WMYB, but incredibly excited to bring what I've learned from them into my life after high school.



### ABIGAIL HOLLAND

I started dancing at four years old and have loved it ever since. I have also previously enjoyed soccer and Taekwondo. I became fully committed to dance my sophomore year of high school and have remained consistent. By finding new opportunities, I have accomplished great things through dance. This includes being in Michigan Youth Ballet Theater's production of *The Nutcracker* for nearly five years. I have played the solo roles of the Dewdrop Fairy, Snow Queen, and as Mother in the party scene. In addition, I have played the lead soloist role of Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. With my home studio,

Michigan Youth Ballet Theater, I have been able to attend workshops through Regional Dance America and Hope College. I love many styles of dance including hip-hop, jazz, tap, contemporary, and classical ballet. Dancing for 14 years will allow me to always keep a passion for dance, even if this is my last performance. I am so thankful for the opportunity to be in *The Wizard of Oz* and for all the instructors and volunteers at WMYB. Most of all, I thank God for His abundant blessings, and my teachers Sean France and Jennifer Green for their instruction and belief in me. The memories of dance will stay with me forever.

## WMYB DANCERS



**CATE AFMAN** is 13 years old and in 8th grade at Forest Hills Central Middle. She has danced since age 3. When not taking classes at Ada Dance Academy, she loves exploring nature, researching animals and their habitats, and relaxing at Lake Michigan with her three brothers in the summer. She is grateful to be in another WMYB performance!



**NORAH ANDERSON** has been dancing since she age two. From twirling in her living room to recreational dance to competitive dance to the stage, Norah loves performing. She especially loves ballet, jazz, and contemporary. She also loves spending time with her family, dogs, swimming, and reading. This is her first production with WMYB.



**LYNNLEE ASHTON** is 12 years old and in the 6th grade. This is her fourth performance with WMYB. She currently dances and is part of the competition team at Academy of Dance Arts. She is very excited to perform in the spring show. Lynnlee would like to thank her family for always supporting her.



**SA'NIYA BECTON** is in the 5th grade at Coit Creative Arts Academy. She has been dancing for the past six months and really enjoys it!! She would love the thank her parents Sonya and Danny for all of their support.



**SOPHIA BERGSMA** is 14 years old and a freshman at Lowell. She has danced at Ada Dance Academy for the past 11 years and this is her seventh year with WMYB. Sophia attended the School of American Ballet's summer program last summer. She thanks her family, friends, and dance teachers for their guidance and support.

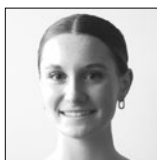


**ZELLA BOONE** is in the 4th grade at Meadowbrook Elementary. She has been dancing for seven years, currently with Ada Dance Academy. This is her first performance with WMYB. Zella loves being able to dance and would like to thank her family for their love and support.

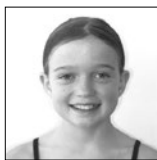


**LYDIA BOUCHER** is 14 years old and an 8th grader at Lakewood Middle School. She has been dancing at Center Stage Dance Academy since she was 4. This is her second season with the West Michigan Youth Ballet. She would like to thank her dance teachers and family for supporting her passion for dance.

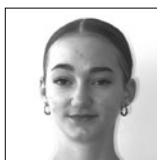
## WMYB DANCERS



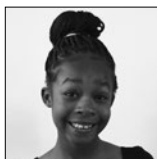
**HADLEY BREIT** is 15 years old and in 10th grade at Byron Center High School. She has been dancing for eight years at Ada Dance Academy and six years with WMYB. She is super excited for this year's production and would like to thank her teachers, family, friends, and God for helping her get to where she is today.



**LIVIA BURNSON** is a 6th grader at Forest Hills Central Woodlands. This is her fourth year being a part of the West Michigan Youth Ballet and she has been dancing at Ada Dance Academy since she was 4 years old. When Livia is not in the studio, she is either on the basketball court or hanging out with family and friends.



**SYDNEY BYRNE** is in 8th grade at Northern Hills Middle. She has been dancing for seven years, the majority with Ada Dance. She also enjoys spending time with her family and friends, painting, and reading. She would like to give a special thanks to all of her family and friends that have supported her throughout her years of dancing.



**JAHZIAH CAMP** is a 10-year-old beginner, but she's been dancing at home for years. This is her first performance, and she hopes to continue dancing and growing her skills. Modern dance is a favorite, but this year found a new love in ballet. She's excited to see where her dance career takes her and what she will learn as she continues this journey.



**ABIGAIL CARLISLE** is 10 years old and in 5th grade. When she's not on a dance floor, she can be found reading, in the kitchen baking, or camping with her grandparents. She thanks her Heavenly Father for her gift of ballet, Ms. Kristi, Ms. Margie, and Ms. Erica for their patience and wisdom, and her family for their love and support!

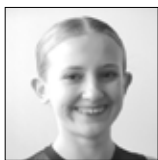


**BERKLEIGH CAROL** is a freshman at St. Mary School in Lake Leelanau. Dancing since age 3, she is currently with Ballet Etc. and Embodied Arts Collective in Traverse City. This is her third year with WMYB. Berkleigh thanks God for her talents, her parents for support, her dance teachers for guidance, and WMYB for this opportunity to perform.



**EMILYN CONN** is a 7th grader at Forest Hills Eastern Middle. She's been dancing for 11 years and on Imprint Dance Company's competition team since age 6. When not dancing, she enjoys spending time with friends and her church youth group. She thanks her family, friends, and teachers for their support.

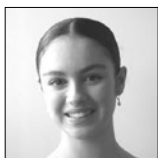
## WMYB DANCERS



**MEAGAN CONN** is a sophomore at Forest Hills Eastern. She has been dancing for 14 years. She dances at Imprint Dance Company is on the FHNE Varsity dance team. She enjoys dance modeling and meeting other dancers from around the state, as well as reading and crocheting.



**CHARLOTTE DeYOUNG** is in 6th grade at Zeeland Quest. This is her seventh year at Avalon School of the Arts and fourth WMYB spring show. Charlotte enjoys ballet, contemporary, hip hop, and acrobatics. She likes to play with her cat Simon, sing in choir, and hang out with friends. Special thanks to Miss Laura, Mr. Stephen, and Miss Marie!



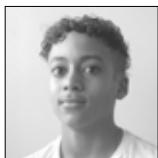
**EMMA DIAZ-LAWTON** is 15 years old and a freshman at FHN. She has been with Ada Dance Academy for the past 12 years and WMYB for seven. Emma has attended summer programs with Boston Ballet and Houston Ballet, and is excited to spend her upcoming summer at PNB. She thanks her family and teachers for all their love and support.



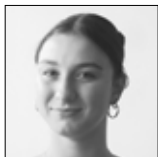
**AUBREY DOYLE** is in 6th grade at Eastern Middle School. She has been dancing since she was 3. This is her seventh performance with WMYB. She is on the Ada Dance Academy competition team. She thanks her teachers, family, and friends for their love and support.



**SHAY DUFFY** is an 8th grader at Forest Hills Middle. A long-time dancer at Ada Dance, she is thankful that her parents had her start lessons at the age of 4! She thanks God, her family, and her teachers for the amazing opportunity to be in *The Wizard of Oz*. Shay really enjoys performing and is thankful for all the memories she's made.



**CARTER ENDRES** is an 8th grader at Lowell Middle School. He is in his fourth year of dance. When not in the studio, you can find Carter always being his unique self, bringing light to any room, and hanging with his friends.



**SOPHIA ERBENTRAUT** is a senior at Forest Hills Central High School. She's been dancing with West Michigan Youth Ballet for 10 years. Sophia also dances on her school's varsity dance team, Imprint competition team, and at Ada Dance Academy. She has two cats, a dog, and a chinchilla, and also loves to ride horses.

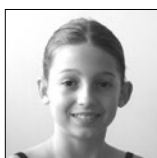
## WMYB DANCERS



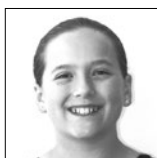
**AUTUMN EVERETT** is 10 years old and a 5th grader at Lakewood Middle. She has been dancing at Center Stage Dance Academy for eight years. This is her first year with WMYB. When not dancing, she enjoys camping and hanging out with her friends. A big thanks to her family, dance teachers, and friends for their love and support.



**DALLAS EVERETT** is 13 years old and a 7th grader at Lakewood Middle. She has been dancing at Center Stage Dance Academy for the eight years. This is her second year with WMYB. She enjoys hanging out with friends and family. She thanks her family for love and support and dance teachers for helping her grow as a dancer!



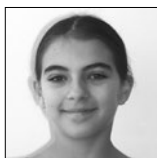
**EMILY FAULKNER** is in 6th grade at Central Woodlands. She started dancing at Imprint Dance Company when she was 2 years old. She has been on the competition team for the last seven years.



**ELLERY GAVER** is 5th grader at Ross Park. Dancing for nine years, she wants to be a music teacher or a musical director. She enjoys dancing, singing, acting, playing video games, and hanging out with friends. She thanks Mrs. Kristi and Mrs. Anna for inspiring and helping her, her parents for supporting her passions.



**ALLISON GREER** is 8 years old and has been dancing for five years at Ada Dance Academy. This is her second time performing with the West Michigan Youth Ballet. Allie is in 3rd grade at Pine Ridge Elementary in Forest Hills. She dedicates her performance to her family and her dog, Flynn.



**STELLA GULICK** is a 6th grader at Northern Trails 5/6 school. This is her seventh show. She has also competed with the YAGP and UBC teams for the last three seasons. Her favorite part of performing is dancing with her best friends. She thanks her parents, sister Maya, and dedicated coaches for always supporting her dance career.



**LAUREN HENDRICKS** is 10 years old and in 5th grade at Alto Elementary. Her home studio is Fine Arts School of Dance and Ada Dance Academy. When she's not dancing (which is rare) you can find her with her dogs and crafting. A special thanks to the family making the trip to support her and her love for dance.

## WMYB DANCERS



**CLAIRE HERPOLSHEIMER** is a 7th grader at Forest Hills Middle. Claire has been dancing and performing since she was little. She is a wonderful and hardworking student. When not dancing, she enjoys playing tennis, going shopping, and being with friends and family. She is so grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this performance!



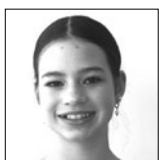
**ABIGAIL HOLLAND** is a homeschooled senior. She has been dancing since age four and currently dances with Michigan Youth Ballet Theater School in Montague. She also enjoys photography, road trips with friends, and the beach. She thanks all her dance instructors and God for the opportunity for her first performance with WMYB.



**MIKAYLA ISMAIL** is 12 years old and in 7th grade at Lowell Middle School. She dances at Ada Dance Academy. Mikayla enjoys studying social studies at school, dancing multiple styles of dance, and listening to music. She would like to thank God, her dance instructors, family, and friends for supporting her dream of dance.



**MIKENA ISMAIL** is 14 years old and a freshman at Lowell High School. She dances at Ada Dance Academy. She enjoys dancing, running cross country, and painting. She would like to thank God, her dance instructors, family, and friends for supporting her dream of dance.



**MILEAH ISMAIL** is 15 years old and a sophomore at Lowell High School. She enjoys dancing with Ada Dance Academy, and spending time with her friends, caring for her family's 12 pets, and dancing multiple styles of dance. Mileah thanks God, her dance instructors, family, and friends for supporting her passion of dancing.



**ALLISUN LANCASTER** is a 5th grader at Murray Lake Elementary. She loves dancing, singing, performing, spending time with her friends at SkyZone and the mall, playing Minecraft and Roblox, and hanging out with her kittens. Her family is very proud of her hard work and are grateful to her teachers and the Youth Ballet.



**MARS MAIDEN** is 13 and an 8th grader at Great Lakes Learning Academy. This is his third year performing with WMYB. Mars's home studio is Imprint Dance Company, where he is on the competition team. When not on stage, Mars enjoys hanging out with friends and online gaming. He thanks his family, instructors, and fellow dancers.

## WMYB DANCERS



**CARLI MAIS** is 15 years old, and a sophomore at Forest Hills Eastern High School. She has been dancing for 11 years, and is a student at Ada Dance Academy. Carli is also on the FHNE Varsity dance team, and this is her seventh year with WMYB. Carli would like to thank her teachers, family, and friends for their love and support.



**CAYLEIGH MCCOLLUM** is in 5th grade at Northern Trails. She has been dancing for eight years at Hearts in Motion, including two years of poms and two years of competitive dance team. She also enjoys competitive gymnastics and cheer.



**EMILY McGLINCHEY** is in 6th grade at Forest Hills Northern Trails. She started dance at age 9 and has been dancing for three years. This is her second season with WMYB. She also enjoys hanging out with friends and family, and camping. She would like to thank her Ada Dance Academy instructors for helping her grow as a dancer.



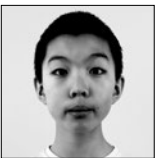
**CAYLEE MILLER** is a 7th grader at Ionia Middle. She has been dancing at Center Stage Dance Academy in Lake Odessa since age 3. This is her second year with WMYB. She enjoys camping, hanging out with friends, family time, and Starbucks. She would like to thank everyone for their support and helping her to pursue her dreams.



**SCARLETT NORIEGA** is a 4th grader at Thornapple Elementary and weighing future careers of becoming the President or opening a dance studio. Along with dance, Scarlett enjoys playing with her baby sister, art, and traveling. She gives a very special thanks to Ms. Margie for support and guidance.



**SARA PRIMEAU** is a junior at Traverse City Saint Francis. A dancer for 15 years, this is her third year with WMYB. Sara thanks Ms. Laura, Mr. Stephen, and Ms. Heather for their commitment to this wonderful company, and all the parents who work tirelessly to put on a great production. Love to her family for support and encouragement.



**RAINER QIAO**, 7th grade, has recently stepped into the dance scene, currently performing in *The Wizard of Oz*. His seven years of figure skating lend him a grace that makes his move to the stage appear seamless. Offstage, his love for the piano and diving, alongside other sports, showcases the breadth of his interests and abilities.

## WMYB DANCERS



**RAY QIAO**, 7th grade, is a lover of arts and sports. He has figure skated for seven years and danced for two years. His artistic journey is complemented by his skills in piano, violin, and trumpet. He loves soccer, diving, and tennis. Recently, he's found a welcoming community at Ada Dance Academy, where he continues to explore his passions.



**ELLA ROTTMAN** is in 3rd grade at Collins Elementary. She has danced since age two at Hearts in Motion. Ella enjoys spending time with friends and family, gymnastics, skiing, swimming, and playing with her dog Teddy. Thanks to WMYB, HMD, friends, and family for continued love and support.



**ELAINA SANFORD** is an 8th grader at Holy Spirit Catholic School. She started dancing at age 2 and enjoys dancing with her friends and family. She thanks Mr. Stephen (her dad), her Ada Dance instructors, friends, and family for encouraging her throughout her dance education. This is her sixth season with WMYB.



**NATE SANFORD** is a 3rd grader at Holy Spirit Catholic School. He has three sisters, one brother, and a dog, Roxie. He has enjoyed being with all his dance friends at WMYB. He thanks Mr. Stephen, Ms. Margie, and Ms. Erica from Ada Dance Academy for their instruction and preparing him to be ready to perform his roles on stage.



**CHARLEY SANIAL** is 11 and a 6th grader at GRCMS. She has danced several styles at Ada Dance Academy for many years. This is her third season with WMYB. In addition, she reads books, builds LEGOs, plays violin, and is part of a VEX robotics team. She would like to thank the volunteers, including her mom, and her dance teachers.



**CLARA SCHULTZ** is a 3rd grader at Lowell. This is her first year with WMYB, and second year dancing. Her home studio is LoMI Studios, in Lowell, where she dances for their Company, and is very excited for her first solo in the spring. Her favorite things to do are dance, create art, and be with her family and animals.



**MILA SELDEN** is a 5th grader at Coit Creative Arts Academy. She has studied hip hop and now tap. Mila enjoys exploring nature, cooking, and spending time with her family cat Kodak. Math and science are Mila's favorite subjects in school. Mila would like to thank her mom, Mr. Patrick Johnson, and WMYB for this opportunity.

## WMYB DANCERS



**LEAH SELLECK** is in 6th grade at Forest Hills Northern. This is her eighth year dancing and seventh WMYB show. Leah attends Ada Dance where her favorite class is jazz. She thanks her friends for making it fun, the parent volunteers, Ms. Laura, and Mr. Stephen for their hard work.



**AVA STAUFFER** is 11 and in 6th grade at Northern Trails 5/6. She is in her eighth year at Hearts in Motion Dance and fourth season with WMYB. Ava enjoys reading, drawing, playing trombone, and spending time with her family, friends, and dog Finn. Special thanks to her HMD teachers for encouraging her love of dance.



**MADELEINE STAUFFER** is 9 and in 4th grade at Meadow Brook. She is in her eighth year at Hearts in Motion Dance and second season with WMYB. She enjoys reading, cheerleading, playing violin, and spending time with family, friends, and dog Finn. Special thanks to her HMD teachers for their support and encouragement.



**COOPER STRAIT** is a 14-year old 9th grader, who is currently being unschooled. He takes tap, jazz, and ballet. He has been dancing for four years, and his favorite style is tap. He would like to thank his big sister for always having his back, and his dog, for always being there.



**EMMA STRAIT** is a 17-year old junior, who is currently being unschooled. She takes tap, jazz, musical theater, ballet, and contemporary. She has been dancing for 14 years, and her favorite style is musical theatre. She would like to thank her mom for driving her all the time, and her dog for always giving the best hugs.



**JOSIE SULK**a is a 10th grader at Forest Hills Northern. She dances at Ada Dance Academy. This is her seventh year with WMYB. She has done intensives at Philadelphia Ballet, Boston Ballet, Nashville Ballet, and Utah's Ballet West, and is competing at YAGP and UBC. She thanks her dance teachers, friends, and family for love and support.



**MOLLY TATE** is a 4th grade homeschooler and dances at Ada Dance Academy. In her second WMYB show, she's thrilled to be back on stage with her friends! She likes to play piano, bake with her mom, and spend time with her family and cats. She thanks God for the gift of dance, and family and teachers for encouragement and support.

## WMYB DANCERS



**CHARLOTTE WATSON** is a 5th grader at Central Woodlands. She has danced since age three and is honored to be part of WMYB. She enjoys playing with her friends and family, reading, and drawing. She thanks all of her amazing dance teachers at Ada Dance, her wonderful dance friends, and her family for all their support.



**SAMANTHA WEAVER** is in 6th grade at White Pines Intermediate. She has been dancing at Dance Revolutions for nine years and one year en pointe. Outside of dance, she enjoys to read, bike, and hang out with friends. She is thankful for God, dance teachers, friends, and family for supporting her throughout the season.



**LEXIE WHITE** is in 5th grade at Northpointe Christian and attends Ada Dance Academy. She is excited to be in her sixth WMYB show. She loves swimming, gardening, and traveling with her family. She thanks God for her talent, her wonderful dance teachers for diligent instruction, and family for supporting her dreams of classical ballet.



**ALEXA WILSON** is a 5th grader at Coit Creative Arts Academy, where she has been dancing since Kindergarten. Lexi also enjoys art, gymnastics, and spending time in nature. She would like to thank her dance instructors, teachers, and her family for their support and encouragement.



**LYDIA WILSON**, dancing since age four, showcases a lifelong commitment to artistry on and off the stage. She finds joy in dancing at Ada Dance Academy, coding, drawing, and horseback riding. With her second WMYB performance, Lydia continues to weave a tapestry of passion, creativity, and connection in every facet of life.



**KATHERINE WISSER** is a freshman at City High Middle School. She dances at Ada Dance Academy and this is her seventh year with WMYB. She has been dancing since she was six. She would like to thank her dance teachers for their guidance and her parents for their love and support.



**MADISON WORVEY** is 12 years old and enjoys being outside, camping, basketball, art and crocheting when not dancing. She would like to give a special thanks to Miss Noel Jefferies at 3:4 Classical Arts for her support.

## WMYB DANCERS



**ELLA YENCHAR** is 15 years old, and a freshman at Ionia High School. She has been dancing at Ada Dance Academy for nine years, and at WMYB for seven years. She enjoys competing at YAGP and UBC. She would like to thank her teachers and family for their constant support.

*We are grateful to the following studios for sharing their talented students with us!*

Academy of Dance Arts  
Ada Dance Academy  
Avalon School of the Arts  
Ballet Etc.  
Center Stage Dance Academy  
Coit Elementary

Dance Revolutions  
Embodied Arts Collective  
Fine Arts School of Dance  
Grand Rapids Ballet  
Hearts in Motion  
Imprint Dance Company

Letha Fulton School of Dance  
LoMI Studio  
Michigan Youth Ballet Theater School  
Over the Top  
Rockford Dance Company  
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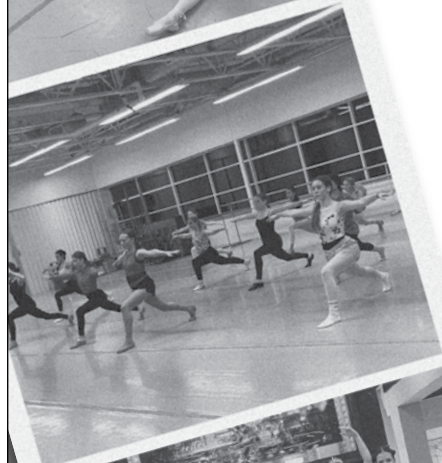
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## IN REMEMBRANCE

*Kari Erbentraut will forever remain in our hearts as an inspiration to answer the call for volunteering. She gave wholeheartedly of her time, talent, and support to the families of WMYB. We will always be grateful.*



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