

# HUNTERDON HILLS BALLET

ELAINE MATTHEWS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## Faculty:

**Elaine Matthews, Director:** Elaine Matthews, Director: Elaine Matthews was an original member of The Pennsylvania Ballet II and after six months was asked to join The Pennsylvania Ballet, under the direction of Roy Kaiser, where she performed roles both in the corps and as a soloist. During her time there she was featured in the world premier of Christopher Wheeldon's Swan Lake, performed as a soloist in the world premier of Matthew Neenan's Le Travail, for which she was recognized by The New York Times, and was featured in Peter Martins' Fearful Symmetries, Paul Taylor's Company B, Ben Stevenson's Cinderella, and several works by George Balanchine, amongst others. She then went on to join The Phantom of the Opera Broadway National Tour where she performed in every major city in the U.S. In addition to several other regional credits, she appeared as Marilyn Monroe for the 2012 Broadway Easter Bonnet, performed at the Minskoff Theater on Broadway. She began her training at the Academy of Dance Arts in Red Bank, NJ, and went on to study at The School of American Ballet, American Ballet Theater Summer Intensive, Chautauqua, Exploring Ballet with Suzanne Farrell, The Rock School, The Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, The Atlantic Theater School, and NYU's Tisch School of the Arts Dance Program. After the birth of her first son in 2013, Elaine traded in her performing career and has come full circle to teaching dance. She is a faculty member at Princeton University and was previously a member of the judges panel for Starbound National Talent Competition. She has taught master classes through The Broadway Connection in over ten major cities in the United States, including Los Angeles and New York City. Her students have gone on to train on scholarship at The School of American Ballet, ABT's JKO School, Ellison Ballet, Chautauqua, Boston Ballet and The Rock School. Students have also received scholarships to Indiana University, Pace University Commercial Dance Program, The Boston Conservatory, University of Pennsylvania, Marymount College, University of Richmond and DeSales University. Her students have also received awards and attended Finals at The Youth America Grand Prix.

**Christen Tassin** booked her first Broadway role at the age of ten, as the original Baby June in *Gypsy*, starring Tyne Daly, and is featured on the original Broadway cast recording. She played Young Cosette (and Gavroche) in *Les Miserables* and originated the role of Laura in the off-Broadway play *Trophies*. She was featured as Clara in the Nutcracker in Radio City Music Hall's *Christmas Spectacular* (New York) for two seasons. She has done numerous commercials and voice overs on both television and radio, and has sung live on national television, at the Grand Olde Opry, and for President George Bush. She holds a BFA in Acting and an MFA in Writing, and has taught dance, voice, acting, and creative writing in schools and studios around New Jersey to students of all ages.

**Michelle Quiner** is a member of The American Repertory Ballet. She has been featured in Dance Spirit magazine as a Cover Model Search Finalist and as the You Should Know Dancer. She has danced as Clara for the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. She is a YAGP New York finalist, a final round participant at the World Ballet Competition and a bronze medalist at the Valentina Kozlova IBC Contemporary Competition. She has won 5 National Titles and top scholarships at various dance workshops. She has received full scholarships to Washington Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Orlando Ballet, Joffrey New York, and Valentina Kozlova's summer programs.

**Kavita Gupta**-Kavita began her formal dance education at age 10, and came to train with Elaine Matthews at age 13. Throughout her training she had the opportunity to attend schools such as Orlando Ballet School, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School and Ellison Ballet Professional Training Program on merit scholarship. Kavita completed the final two years of her dance education in Ellison Ballet's rigorous Russian-style training program and declined to pursue a career in ballet. She now enjoys the chance to share her knowledge with the next generation at Hunterdon Hills Ballet.

**Stephanie Urbina** grew up in Manasquan, NJ where she studied ballet under Diane Fay and modern dance with Lauren Blake. She furthered her studies in high school at the Joffrey Ballet School, Alvin Ailey School and being selected one out of 12 dancers in the state of NJ to attend The Governor's School of the Arts. In 2007, she received her BFA in Modern Dance Performance from the University of the Arts. Throughout her career, Stephanie has had the privilege to work with and perform works by Milton Myers, Momix(Sputnik), Lynn Barr, Elisa Monte and Roni Koresh. Stephanie has also been a Barre Instructor for over 12 years and holds a Women's Fitness Specialist and Nutrition Coach certificate. She is thrilled to be a part of the Hunterdon Hills Ballet Family!

**Jessica Sims** is so excited to be teaching again this year at HHB! Prior to becoming a mom of two girls, Jessica performed professionally in many shows including the National tour of Trevor Nunn's Broadway Revival of *Oklahoma!* as Laurey, choreographed by Susan Stroman, Atlanta Theatre of the Stars (*Oklahoma!*), Walnut Street Theater (*Carousel*), Fulton Theater (*Belle, A Christmas Carol*), (*Oliver!*), Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival (*Antonia, Man of La Mancha*), (*Ella, Charley's Aunt*), PA Shakespeare WillPower tour (*Bianca, Taming of the Shrew*), Circa '21 Playhouse. She studied acting at Boston University School of the Arts, DeSales University (Irene Ryan Nominations for roles in *Steel Magnolias* and *Diary of Anne Frank*), Art of Acting, Peoples Improv Theatre, and NJ's Governor's School of the Arts for Acting. She is also a member of Actor's Equity. Jessica studied dance at Broadway Dance Center, Rock School of Dance, and New Jersey Ballet where she performed several years in the *Nutcracker* at Paper Mill Playhouse and performed in excerpts on NBC's morning show. Jessica also currently teaches music at Acorn Montessori School and drama at Madison Montessori School.

**Emily Becker** is an alumni of HHB! She has been dancing since she was 5 years old and has trained in ballet, pointe, jazz, musical theater, tap, modern and contemporary. She attended the Rock School summer intensive in 2017, ABT summer intensive in 2018, the Rockette summer intensive in both 2018 and 2019, HHB summer intensive in 2019 and Colorado Ballet summer intensive in 2020. She has performed in the *Nutcracker* for 10 years, including 3 years at HHB. She has danced the roles of Marzipan, Snow, Flowers, Arabian, Dew Drop and Sugarplum. She graduated from Warren Hills High School in 2021, then attended DeSales University as a full time Dance Major from 2021-2024. She performed in *Cinderella* in 2023 at PYB. She attended ACDA at the University of Texas, at Austin in 2024, and was featured in a piece choreographed by Antonio Brown. Currently, she is in the process of transferring to Rider University to complete her Dance B.A., while working as a full-time caretaker for babies. Emily has always loved working with kids and has a passion for teaching young aspiring dancers...She looks forward to working with the students at HHB!

**Rachel Quiner** was born and raised in Northern New Jersey and began her formal ballet training at the North Jersey School of Dance Arts under the direction of Christine Taylor and Luba Gulyaeva. She attended HHB from 2017-2020. From 2015-2018, she danced the role of Clara for the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. She is a ballet dancer in the movie *The Greatest Showman* Starring Hugh Jackman. In 2017, she placed second in classical and contemporary at the Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) Semifinals in Philadelphia and was a scholarship recipient at the YAGP Finals. She joined American Ballet Theatre's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School in 2020. Highlights from her time there included performances in Complexions Contemporary Ballet's Gala at the Joyce Theater in 2022, the International Rescue Committee Gala at Gotham Hall and ABT's Fall Gala at Lincoln Center in 2023. She has guested as the

Sugar Plum Fairy for Hunterdon Hills Ballet, Strictly Ballet, and Washington Rock Dance. She has also danced the role of Clara for New Jersey Ballet's *Nutcracker* in 2023. This is her first full season with ARB as an Apprentice.