

Hope Garden Children's Ballet Theatre,
Essence Studios and Riverworks Art Center present

An Original Adaptation
of Raymond Briggs'
"The Snowman"

A Winter's Evening

"Land of the Sweets"
From Tchaikovsky's
"The Nutcracker"



December 16, 2023

Kreeger Auditorium at the Bender JCC, Rockville, MD

Essence Studios
Dance & Performing Arts



Riverworks
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This production is supported in part by funding from the Montgomery County Government and the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County.

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Welcome!

Dear families and patrons of the arts, it is with great excitement that Essence Studios and Hope Garden Children's Ballet Theatre present "A Winter's Eve," their 4th performance together. It is also HGCBT's 16th year of incredible productions, supporting dance and the performing arts in the Poolesville community and beyond.

"A Winter's Eve" is very special, as it is truly the first of its kind. Not only are we bringing you the classic story and music of Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker,"—a staple in the dance world's holiday tradition—but we are also presenting you with a lesser known story that enables us to showcase other celebrations and traditions of this season from a variety of cultures around the globe. We are so fortunate to live in such a vibrant and diverse community here in Montgomery County! And so, as Artistic Director of HGCBT, my goal was to bring this diversity to the forefront, increasing awareness by sharing just a sample of all the holidays that are celebrated by your neighbors, colleagues, friends, and fellow community members every Winter season. While there are few tales as ingrained in the dancer and outside community's sphere of holiday tradition as "The Nutcracker," there are many other stories that deserve to be told, highlighted and illuminated.

This project was long in the making, beginning a year ago as an idea proposed by a friend. Because "The Snowman" is less familiar, it meant there was freedom in the vision and more room for creativity. It gave wheels to the perfect vehicle for our exploration of other holidays and traditions. The road to the premiere of "The Snowman" has been complex, with tremendous help coming from many. But the real success will be marked by how it touches each of you in the audience this evening.

Thank you to my overworked and faithful HGCBT Board of Directors, my dear friends who have rallied to my side and contributed their time (onstage and off) to this fabulous production, to my incredible Essence teachers and staff, and finally to my parents. Without your efforts and time, as well as your support and trust in my vision, "A Winter's Eve" would not be this beautiful gem we have all made together. So, thank you.

Now sit back, relax, open your hearts and minds and enjoy while our dedicated and passionate dancers take you around the world in our unique story-telling for the Winter season.

— Miss Claire

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A Winter's Eve

ACT I:

The Snowman

*Staged by Claire Jones,
Adapted from Raymond Briggs' Original Story*

Synopsis

A young boy wakes on a snowy winter morning and ventures outside to build a snowman. The falling snow aids in this endeavor as he creates his masterpiece. After a long day of playing outside, he has a restless sleep as he senses the change occurring outside; his creation is coming to life. In the middle of the night, he goes back outside and discovers the Snowman, who gives a friendly greeting. A beautiful cardinal joins in the fun as they dance and play together before the boy invites the Snowman inside his home. Once inside, the Snowman meets the family house cat, discovers fire and the effect it has on him, and even gets to admire and play with some of the family's Christmas tree ornaments.

Upon returning the ornaments to the tree, the boy takes the Snowman up to his room where they are greeted by two beautiful ballerinas from the boy's music box. Entranced by their grace and beauty, all four dance together, while other objects in the boy's room stir and come to life. The Snowman meets the boy's collection of tin soldiers and teddy bears, and gets to play with some bright balloons left over from a party.

Once the balloons have settled, the Snowman decides it's time to show the boy HIS world outside. Back in the yard, a magical wind blows and takes the boy and Snowman to a forest clearing where they enjoy a jazzy Christmas party with new snowmen friends who are celebrating through different forms of dance.

After the party, the wind takes them to different countries around the world where other seasonal celebrations are taking place. The first destination is that of India, where they observe a community partaking in Diwali, the Festival of Lights. The Snowman and boy learn that Diwali celebrates the triumph of light over dark, and good over evil with blessings of victory, freedom, and enlightenment.

Next, they come upon a family in Israel dancing the Hava Nagila, a popular

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**Bravo to HGCBT,
Essence Studios and the cast
and crew of "A Winter's Eve"
for making the art of dance
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variation of the Jewish Hora dance, often performed during festivities for major celebrations and holidays like Hanukkah. And finally, they visit West Africa, where they observe traditional dance forms that are a part of the culture that inspired the creation of Kwanzaa, meant to honor the ancestors and traditions of African Americans.

Upon leaving West Africa, the wind helps the Snowman take the boy home. Once back, the boy goes inside and finally gets a restful night's sleep, dreaming of all the other winter celebrations and of the new friends he made along the way.

In the morning, the boy is excited to continue the previous night's fun with his Snowman. However, upon going outside, all he finds is his cardinal friend from the previous evening. They dance together, enjoying each other's company before the boy goes back inside with his family.

The Snowman

SCENE 1: Winter Morning, Building the Snowman

Choreographed/Staged by Claire Jones

Music: "The Wedding of Officer Torres, The Terminal" by John Williams

BOY: Richard Bucciantini

SNOW: Arya Cruz-Perez, Yuna Lee, Lydia Machiela,
Penelope McKone, Lauren McNally, Lily Petrella

SCENE 2: Magic in the Night

Choreographed/Staged by Claire Jones

Music: "Refusing to Escape, The Terminal" by John Williams

SNOWMAN: Julia Junghans

CARDINAL: Leah Santizo

SCENE 3: Inside World

Choreographed/Staged by Claire Jones

Music: "Dinner with Amelia, The Terminal (excerpt)" by John Williams

HOUSE CAT: Julia Druzgala

Music: "Viktor and His Friends, The Terminal (excerpt)" by John Williams

FIRE: Ellen Breed, Gabriella Stradley

Music: "A Legend is Born, The Terminal" by John Williams

ORNAMENTS: Aila Arellano, Mohini Ghirime, Antonella Guevara,
Ellie Rogers, Olivia Thompson

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SCENE 4: Venturing Upstairs

Choreographed by Claire Jones

Music: "The Fountain Scene, The Terminal (excerpt)" by John Williams

MUSIC BOX DANCERS: Stella Boehm, Ellen Breed

Choreographed by Claire Jones

Music: "The Tale of Viktor Navorski, The Terminal" by John Williams

YOUNG TIN SOLDIERS: Melissa Akar, Violet Boren, Aria Capelutti,
Blair Melvin, Layla Singh

Choreographed by Diane Robinson

Music: "The Tale of Viktor Navorski, The Terminal" by John Williams

OLDER TIN SOLDIERS: Cecilia Leichliter, Lauren McNally, Cora Soderberg

Choreographed by Tara DelPrete

Music: "Looking For Work, The Terminal (excerpt)" by John Williams

TEDDY BEARS: Alice Carlesso-Tores, Anna Hill,
Melody Jaramillo, Maddie VanderVort

Choreographed by Claire Jones

*Music: "Finding Coins and Learning to Read, The Terminal (excerpt)"
by John Williams*

BALLOONS: Selma Arellano, Sophia Brodrick, Norah Davidoff,
Cecilia Liechliter, Callie Litzenberger, Kayla Nyugen, Claire Rogers

SCENE 5: Magical Night Wind

Choreography by Micah McKee

Music: "Flying Theme, from E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial (excerpt)" by John Williams

WIND: Gauri Bhadriraju, Kate Borman, Sava Brizhik, Alarica DeLongchamp,
Elizabeth Tchorni, Cecilia Zeranski, Kendall Zimmerman

BOY: Richard Bucciantini

SNOWMAN: Julia Junghans

SCENE 6: Snowman's World

Choreographed by Ashley Kelch

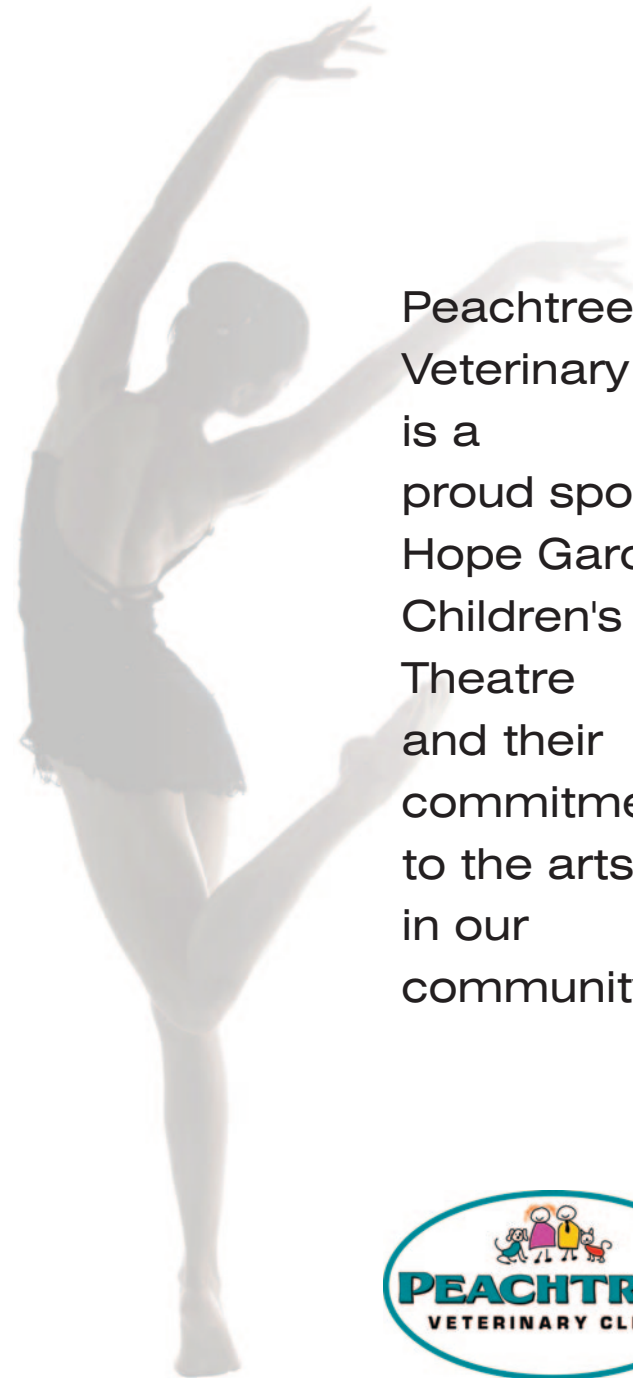
Music: "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (Suedojazz Mix)" with Lena Horne

SNOWMEN CHILDREN HIP HOPPERS: Naomi Hoffner, Lauren McNally,
Amelia Rubiera, Kaylee Singh, Maya Singh, Nainika Thallapalli

Choreographed by Claire Jones

*Music: "Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town (Q-Burns Abstract Message Remix)"
with Johnny Mercer & the Pied Pipers*

SNOWMEN CHILDREN TAPPERS: Wes Bucciantini, Lily Petrella,
Nora Tamashasky, Nainika Thallapalli



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SCENE 7: Winter Celebrations-India

Choreographed by Sefali Raja and Payal Jain

Music: "Mor bani thanghat kare" by hemu gadhvi, performed by Osman Mir, Aditi Paul and "Deepawali Aye re Song (beams)" performed by Arpita Mukherjee, Meenal Jain, Sandeep Batra, Vishal kothari, Kavita Soni

DIWALI CELEBRANTS: Gauri Bhadriraju, Ellen Breed, Sava Brizhik, Yana Brizhik, Alarica DeLongchamp, Christabel Lekan-Abioye, Leah Santizo, Gabriella Stradley, Elizabeth Tchori, Kendall Zimmerman
BOY: Richard Bucciantini
SNOWMAN: Julia Junghans

SCENE 8: Winter Celebrations-Israel

Choreographed by Michal Otrada

Music: Compilation by the Gloria Dance Club based on the original music by Kordon from the album Afn Boydm

HAVA NAGILA CELEBRANTS: Gauri Bhadriraju, Kate Borman, Ellen Breed, Alarica DeLongchamp, Leah Santizo, Gabriella Stradley, Elizabeth Tchori
BOY: Richard Bucciantini
SNOWMAN: Julia Junghans

SCENE 9: Winter Celebrations-West Africa

Choreographed by Heinz Adjakwah

Music: "Luxury" by Jonathan Szer (excerpt)

KWANZAA CELEBRANTS: Gauri Bhadriraju, Sava Brizhik, Yana Brizhik, Christabel Lekan-Abioye, Kendall Zimmerman
BOY: Richard Bucciantini
SNOWMAN: Julia Junghans

SCENE 10: Next Morning

Choreographed by Claire Jones

Music: "Gupta's Deliverance, The Terminal" by John Williams

BOY: Richard Bucciantini
CARDINAL: Leah Santizo

BOWS

Music: "Flying Theme, from E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" by John Williams
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Intermission

ACT II:

The Nutcracker, Land of the Sweets

Music by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Opus 71, Act II

Synopsis

For the second half of our evening, we enter The Nutcracker story mid-way through, joining Clara in an extravagant and colorful dream. Before we arrived, Clara had been enjoying a fabulous party hosted by her parents on Christmas Eve for friends and family. During the party, Clara's mysterious and magical Uncle Drosselmeyer gifted her with a majestic Nutcracker doll, which became the inspiration for Clara's dream. At the party's conclusion, Clara drifted off to sleep in the main parlor, holding her Nutcracker doll. Clara's dream began with her Nutcracker coming to life and battling a 7-headed Rat King. The entire room seemed to grow around her, and she watched in wonder as the other toys and dolls awakened to battle the Rat King's subjects. Clara aided her Nutcracker by throwing her shoe at the Rat King's head, distracting him and helping the Nutcracker vanquish his foe. The Nutcracker transformed into a handsome Cavalier and accompanied Clara through a sparkling snowy landscape before reaching his home, the Land of the Sweets.

This is where we have entered, joining Clara, the Nutcracker Cavalier, the Sugar Plum Fairy, the Flower Queen, and the rest of the subjects as they welcome Clara to their land. The Nutcracker tells everyone the story of how he battled the Rat King and came to life with Clara's help, and of their journey there. After the Nutcracker and Clara have been awarded for their bravery, Clara and the Sugar Plum Fairy take a seat on the throne and watch the subjects perform for them. During the performances, Clara decides to join in the fun and dance with the energetic Trepak and alongside the magical Flowers.

At the end of the night, all subjects come together for one final dance, during which Clara returns home before she awakes, safe and sound with her remarkable Nutcracker doll.

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SCENE 1: Welcoming Clara, Kingdom of the Sweets

Choreographed by Justin Rustle

Music: No. 10, The Kingdom of Sweets & No. 11, Clara and the Prince

FLOWER CORPS: Gauri Bhadriraju, Stella Boehm, Ellen Breed,
Yana Brizhik, Leah Santizo, Gabriella Stradley

FLOWER SOLOISTS: Kate Borman, Kendall Zimmerman

FLOWER QUEEN: Elizabeth Tchorni

CAVALIER: Sava Brizhik

CLARA: Alarica DeLongchamp

SUGAR PLUM: Cecilia Zeranski

SCENE 2: Mirlitons (Dance of the Reed Pipes)

Choreographed by Micah McKee

Music: No. 12e, Divertissement. Dance of the Reed Pipes (excerpt)

MIRLITONS: Aria Benesh, Morgan McNally, Kara Rivera, Kinley Rogers

SCENE 3: Coffee (Arabian Dance)

Choreographed by Cecila Zeranski

Music: No. 12a, Divertissement. Coffee (Arabian Dance)

ARABIANS: Sava Brizhik, Kendall Zimmerman

SCENE 4: Trepak (Russian Dance)

Choreographed by Julia Junghans, Staged by Justin Rustle

Music: "No. 12d, Divertissement. Trepak" by Pyotr Tchaikovsky

RUSSIAN DEMI SOLOISTS: Kate Borman, Gabriella Stradley

CLARA: Alarica DeLongchamp

SCENE 5: Chocolate (Spanish Dance)

Choreographed by Claire Jones

Music: No. 12a, Divertissement. Chocolate (Spanish Dance)

SPANISH DEMI SOLOIST: Kendall Zimmerman

SPANISH CORPS: Gauri Bhadriraju, Stella Boehm, Ellen Breed,
Yana Brizhik, Leah Santizo

SCENE 6: Polichinelles (Mother Gigogne)

Choreographed by Lynn Schaeber

Music: No. 12f, Divertissement. Mother Gigogne

POLICHINELLES: Samantha Daniels, Leeza Kolomiietz-Hor,
Morgan McNally, Nora Tamshasky

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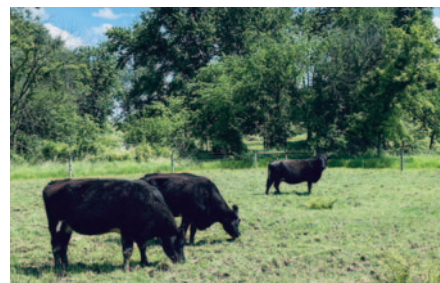


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SCENE 7: Waltz of the Flowers

Choreographed by Julia Junghans

Music: No. 13, Divertissement. Waltz of the Flowers

FLOWER QUEEN: Elizabeth Tchori

FLOWER DEMI SOLOIST: Kate Borman

CLARA: Alarica DeLongchamp

FLOWER CORPS: Gauri Bhadriraju, Stella Boehm, Ellen Breed,
Yana Brizhik, Leah Santizo, Gabriella Stradley

SCENE 8: Tarantella

Choreographed by Marius Petipa, Staged by Justin Rustle

Music: Op. 71, Variation I. Tarantella

CAVALIER: Sava Brizhik

SCENE 9: Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy

Choreographed by Marius Petipa, Staged by Justin Rustle

Music: Variation II, Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy

SUGAR PLUM: Cecilia Zeranski

SCENE 10: Finale

Choreographed by Justin Rustle

Music: No. 15, Final Waltz and Apotheosis

CAVALIER: Sava Brizhik

CLARA: Alarica DeLongchamp

FLOWER QUEEN: Elizabeth Tchori

SUGAR PLUM: Cecilia Zeranski

COFFEE: Kendall Zimmerman

TREPAK: Kate Borman

FLOWER CORPS: Gauri Bhadriraju, Stella Boehm, Ellen Breed,
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MIRLITONS: Aria Benesh, Morgan McNally, Kara Rivera, Kinley Rogers



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A Winter's Eve

Production Staff

as of 11/12/2023

Artistic Director, Staging & Choreography: Claire Jones

Special Assistance and Selected Choreography: Justin Rustle

Rehearsal Assistance: Tara DelPrete, Julia Junghans, Ashley Kelch, Micah McKee, Justin Rustle, Diane Robinson

Technical Direction and Production Assistance: Jeff Jones and Beth Fayard-Jones

Stage Management: Justin Rustle, assisted by Micah McKee

Lighting Design: Beth Fayard-Jones and Justin Rustle

Costume Design and Execution: Kari Auel, Beth Fayard-Jones, Caryn McNally, Claire Jones, Amy Rogers, Sue Sokoll

Headpiece Design and Execution: Amy Rogers

Technical Crew: Matt Breed, Beth Fayard-Jones, Claire Jones, Gracie Jones, Jeff Jones, Brian McNally, Michael Opiekun, George Phelps, Tom Porch, Diane Robinson

Backstage Coordination: Sue Sokoll, assisted by Emma Pioli and Christie Zimmerman

Lobby Coordination: Joanna Borman

Concessions & Ushering: Joanna Borman, Erika Bucciantini, Cindy Tchori, Patricia van Bergen, Kim Yourick

and

Artistic Director Emeritus: Fran Ichijo



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Artistic Director and Principal Instructor

Claire Jones

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Tara DelPrete, Audra Johnson, Ashley Kelch, Micah McKee,
Joyce Melamed-Berger, Emma Pioli, Diane Robinson,
Justin Rustle, Lynn Schaeber, Austin St. John

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What is HGCBT?

Hope Garden Children's Ballet Theatre (HGCBT) upholds the traditions and history of classical ballet while venturing into the world of contemporary ballet and other dance disciplines—educating youth on the value of the performing arts and the lifelong benefits of dance. The youth involved explore and learn elements of anatomy, musicality, teamwork, theatrics, and the technical aspects of production, coming to understand and appreciate its value in society. HGCBT hopes to build upon its solid foundation in the community by continuing to spread awareness of the beauty and culture that is deeply rooted in Classical Ballet. These young dancers seek to educate and inspire audiences throughout the Maryland and D.C. region by performing in various venues throughout the year, beyond the semi-annual performances. The goal is to grow this outreach to include hospitals, senior homes, schools, and other community events like arts festivals and celebrations.

HGCBT, a registered 501(c)(3), strives to present performances that are exciting and inspiring for both the dancers and audience. Fulfilling these goals becomes easier as our dancers build confidence while becoming more accomplished.



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- Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced **Contemporary**, ages 8 & up
- **Tap**, ages 7-9 & 10-12
- **Hip-Hop**, ages 8-12
- **Jazz**, ages 8-12



Adult Program:

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- Morning **Senior Barre**
- Morning **Senior Yoga**
- Mixed-level **Ballet**
- Mixed-level **Tap**

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Go to [EssenceStudiosDance.com](https://www.EssenceStudiosDance.com) for more information, or to register!

Your Support is Needed to Make HGCBT Events a Success

Your contribution to Hope Garden Children's Ballet Theatre will provide young dancers with opportunities to perform in a setting designed to maximize their growth as dancers and lovers of art. Said opportunities will also nurture their character, confidence, discipline, and self-esteem. Your tax-deductible donations will help facilitate the growth of a flourishing center of art and culture in our community: a source of beauty, commitment, effort, and wellbeing for our youth. **HGCBT is staffed and managed entirely by volunteers. All donations go directly to producing our two annual performances.** Please consider the multiple, tax-deductible options we offer to support HGCBT.

Help Secure a Grant: HGCBT is actively pursuing grants that support the arts and communities. If you are associated with an entity that might consider a grant application from HGCBT we ask that you provide us with contact information so that we can pursue that opportunity.

Be an Angel: A donation of any amount is always greatly appreciated. We list our angels, when they prefer to be recognized, in the program for the performance following the donation, and on a sign in the lobby during the performances.

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Send a Family Message: Family Messages are run in the winter and spring concert programs. Family messages do not mention any business and typically congratulate or send messages to dancers or staff.

For information please speak to any member of the board of directors listed in this program, visit the website at www.HopeGardenCBT.org or email us at HopeGardenCBT@gmail.com.



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About the Artistic Director

Lillian StClaire Jones is a graduate of Hope Garden Ballet Academy, with several additional years of study at Maryland Youth Ballet. She has performed multiple roles in HGCBT's annual "A Christmas Carol", as well as several spring performances. She has performed with American Ballet Theater and the Joffrey Ballet at the Kennedy Center, and danced for two years with Bowen McCauley Dance at multiple venues in the DMV.

Regionally, Miss Claire has also performed with Deep Vision Dance in Baltimore, ClancyWorks Dance Company in Washington, DC, Other Voices Theatre in Frederick, and at Olney Theatre Center. She has assistant directed, choreographed, and taught for Red Branch Theatre, Round House Theatre Education, and with Poolesville High School's Drama Department.

Whilst deeply versed in classical ballet, Miss Claire has studied tap, contemporary, modern, stage management, and lighting, earning a degree in dance with a minor in theater from the University of MD, Baltimore County. She has been teaching all age groups for 15 years at multiple studios in Columbia, Germantown, Silver Spring, and Frederick. She taught for HGBA from the time she was 15, including summer ballet camps.

Energetic, fun, and disciplined, Miss Claire loves kids and dance, and will use that passion to take Essence Studios into the future for years to come!

Choreographers

Justin Rustle

Originally from Maryland, Mr. Justin began dancing in a creative movement class at the Liz Lerman Movement Exchange with Gesel Mason, and went on to receive his formative training at Maryland Youth Ballet. Mr. Justin holds a BFA in Dance Performance from Butler University, and an MA in Performance Studies from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. He has previously danced with companies including Ballet Arkansas and Bowen-McCauley Dance Company, as well as appearing as a guest artist and teacher across the United States. Mr. Justin has performed work by choreographers including Nacho Duato, Paul Taylor, George Balanchine, Gerald Arpino, Harrison McEldowney, Darelle Grand Moultrie, Kiyon Gaines Ross, Lucy Bowen-McCauley, and Ilana Goldman, as well as roles across the classical repertoire. He has also been a contributing writer to the DC Dance Journalism Project. Mr. Justin currently dances with Dana Tai Soon Burgess Dance Company.

Micah McKee

Micah McKee is a recent graduate of the B.F.A. program at George Mason School of Dance where she studied ballet and contemporary dance with world-renown teachers such as Roger Jeffrey, Christina Robson, Susan Shields, and Christopher D'Ambois. Originally from Knoxville, Tennessee, Micah studied classical ballet, pointe, variations and contemporary dance as well as jazz, hip-hop,

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tap and Horton Technique. Micah has attended professional dance programs such as Hubbard Street Intensive in Chicago, Orsolina28 Nunes/Flock Intensive in Italy, Rubberband Dance Winter Intensive in Montreal, San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, and Bates Dance Festival. She has also attended professional workshops including Countertechnique with Joy Davis and New Dialect in Nashville, TN. Micah has recently been chosen to participate in a selective residency learning Robert Battle's Awakening with Elisa Clark. With five years of teaching experience, Micah brings an expansive contemporary approach to teaching classical forms of dance.

Julia Junghans

Miss Julia joined Hope Garden Ballet as a freshman at Poolesville High School. After high school she trained at Montgomery College and UMBC. She graduated with a BA in technical theatre and now works at Arena Stage in DC. Miss Julia was thrilled to join Miss Claire for the opening of Essence Studios and taught Intermediate and Ballet 7/8 classes. Although she is no longer teaching, she is so excited to continue to be a part of HGCBT's productions!

Lynn Schaeber

Lynn Schaeber has been developing young hearts and minds for over 20 years. Lynn has created several Early childhood Education programs in the US and Europe for children of many nationalities and abilities, integrating academic excellence and the arts. Inspiring her students to love, learn and excel through a creative arts education is her passion. In addition to teaching preschool, Lynn is a Kindergarten teacher. She holds an MFA from Temple University in Dance. She has taught, choreographed and danced professionally throughout the US and Europe. As a Specialist Professor for 15 years, Lynn focused on developing and training teachers in the arts education field. She is the mother of 4.

Tara DelPrete

Tara DelPrete grew up locally in Gaithersburg, MD, where she began training at the age of 5 in a wide range of dance styles including ballet, tap, jazz, hip hop and contemporary. Growing up, she participated in musical theater productions, local youth-run contemporary dance companies, and her high school poms team. Tara has continued her dance studies persistently throughout her adulthood, finding her creative voice through choreography and deepening her relationship with movement as a personal means of self expression, and a practice for holistic well-being. She has a deep affinity for youth education, having provided a variety of lessons in schools, camps and after school programs over the last 10 years across the DMV area and beyond, in addition to leading yoga and movement classes for children and adults. She currently teaches contemporary, ballet and creative movement classes at local dance studios, works the front desk and provides yoga classes at the new SportRock in Rio, and works as a stage-hand at venues around the region (she has a passion for music as well, having graduated with a BA in vocal performance at UNCA!). She is thrilled to join the Essence team, and looks forward to growing with her students!

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Diane Robinson

Ms. Diane Robinson has been a dance teacher and choreographer for several years, with ages kindergarten through adult. Through those years she has won awards in dance and choreography. She is a graduate of the Montgomery College Dance Program and participant in their Dance Company for four seasons in both concert shows and traveling shows. Ms. Diane has also competed as an amateur ballroom dancer and has been recognized with honors across many styles. Every year brings new excitement to work with the students of Essence Dance Studios to help them realize their dance goals.

Ashley Kelch

Ashley joined our Essence family in October 2023. She is currently certified in LaBlast® & TRX® and was a multi-sport collegiate athlete with a strong background in Tap & Jazz. Ashley teaches a wide variety of dance from Ballroom to Line Dancing and anything in between. Dancing has always been a big part of her life and she is so excited to spread the joy & passion through movement to all. She loves spending time with her family, pets, garden, and of course dancing!

Guest Choreographers



Heinz Adjakwah

Kwanzaa: African/Modern

Heinz Adjakwah has loved dance and the impacts of its benefits on individuals and society as a whole. By his account, dance teaches discipline, fortitude and spreads joy. He began his path in dance upon joining an African dance troupe in middle school while in Ghana. His love for the art form grew when he moved to the United States and began his studies in Ballet, Modern, Jazz, Contemporary and Tap in addition to his training in African dance. Along the way he came to love the art of teaching dance to young minds as well as adults, and he hasn't looked back since. He teaches Afro beats, Ballet, Contemporary and Jazz in the metro DC area. Through dance, Mr. Adjakwah has gotten the opportunity to perform around the US and abroad. He has performed with The Marvin Gaye Project, Baltimore Dance Project, Howard County Ballet, ArtsCentric, Rebolgar Dance, and Dakshina, and has collaborated and choreographed on numerous projects. He holds a dual degree in Dance and Health Administration and Public Policy.



Sefali Raja

Diwali: Traditional Indian

Sefali is a multi-talented individual with a deep passion for dance, mainly folk dances. She has an eclectic background in various dance forms, including some training in the Indian classical dance form of Kathak.

One of her notable achievements is founding the "Sahiyar Garba group," a dance troupe dedicated to per-



forming different folk dances at various events. In this group, Sefali was the choreographer and project coordinator, ensuring the performances were well-executed and organized.

Under Sefali's guidance, the Sahiyar Garba group has performed at various prestigious venues, including the Black Rock Art Center for Diwali Celebrations. Their performances received recognition and praise, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of folk dances. She has lent her expertise as a choreographer for community Diwali and Holi functions and international nights at her local school and other Indian cultural events. In addition to her passion for dance, Sefali has pursued a successful career in Information Technology (IT) for the past 20 years. This demonstrates her ability to balance her artistic pursuits with a demanding professional life. Sefali resides in Montgomery County with her family, where she continues to contribute to her community as a dancer, choreographer, and judge for Garba events. Her multifaceted talents and dedication to the arts and IT exemplify her commitment to personal growth and community engagement.



Payal Jain

Diwali: Traditional Indian

Payal Jain is a trained classical dancer in Bharatanatyam. She lives in Boyds, MD, with her husband and son. She has a masters in wireless communication and is working as an IT professional. Since 2012, she has volunteered as a choreographer during many community Diwali and Holi functions, international night in school and other Indian functions. She has taught at Dancilla Fusion Dance and

Fitness Studio. She is passionate about dance and believes it is a beautiful form of art to express oneself at any age and at any stage of life. She adapts the choreography according to the age group that she is teaching.



Michal Rotberg

Traditional Israeli

Michal Rotberg is a designer and an educator. As a graphic design instructor, she works with college students from diverse international communities. In her professional practice, she explores the relationship between cognitive bias and culture within design. She holds an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA).

Kendall-

You continue to amaze us with your hard work and dedication to ballet.

We can't wait to see you shine on that stage, especially in your first partnering piece! Congratulations on a beautiful show!

We love you, Mommy, Daddy & Parker



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Thank you for your support!



Arya,

Congratulations on your performance, we are very proud of all your accomplishments. We are your biggest fans.

Love you!
Mamá y Papá





Morgan and Lauren
McNally

We are so proud of our beautiful dancers!

Love Mom and Dad

Way to go Sophia, our beautiful ballerina!!



We love you!

Love, Mom, Dad, Claire, Eleanor and Inge

Ellen,

We are so proud of your progress through the years dancing with Hope Garden Children's Ballet Theatre.



You have become a dedicated and beautiful dancer.
Lots of love,
Mom and Dad



**Break
a leg,
Cecilia!**

**Love,
Mom &
Dad**



**OLIVIA
LEE
THOMPSON
2023**

*Congratulations on your first dance performance, Olivia!
We are so proud of you!
Love you! xoxo - mom & dad*

Gabriella,

*And when you
get the choice
to sit out or dance...
I hope you dance...*

*We love you,
Mom, Dad
and Chad!*



Our dearest Bear,
Congratulations
on such a
meaningful and
groundbreaking
production!
Your love,
passion and
commitment
show in
everything
you do.

We love you!

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CONGRATULATIONS!

**To all the Dancers and many
Volunteers at Hope Garden Children's
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embraces Artist Director Claire Jones
for her passion and creativity!**

BRAVO to ALL!

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