

## **SUMMER PROGRAM TEACHER BIOS**

### **Peter Sabasino - Hip Hop, Tap**

Peter Sabasino, a native of Philadelphia, PA, began his dance training at the age of four at a local dance studio. It was there that he started out learning Ballet, Jazz, Hip-Hop and Tap but found that Tap and Hip-Hop were his home. At the age of fourteen, he was accepted into the High-school for Creative And Performing Arts as a dance major. It was there he expanded his repertoire by adding Modern, African, Ballroom, and Broadway to his belt. It was here in high-school that he discovered his third love....Broadway Jazz. At the start of his senior year, Peter graduated his dance school and began traveling back and forth between Philadelphia and New York to study at studios such as Broadway Dance Center and Steps On Broadway, where he had the opportunity to train under such greats as Gregory Hines, Savion Glover, Barbara Duffy, Tyce Diorio, Rhapsody James, and Brian Green; just to name a few.

After graduating high-school, Peter continued his training at Indiana University of PA where he studied with Joan Van Dyke, the head of the Ballet program at the Governor's School of the Arts. After college Peter was blessed with what he considers his biggest achievement and landed a spot as a Top 16 Finalist on Fox Television's hit reality show, "So You Think You Can Dance" season 6 being the last of three Tap dancers to be eliminated. It was there that Peter believes his views and philosophies of dance were molded by the many amazing choreographers and dancers he was blessed to work with.

Peter recently landed a spot as a principal dancer in a commercial for Walt Disney World. He was also the choreographer on a television show called The Right Stuff, produced by Leonardo DiCaprio. Peter is also the Founder/Director of the Orlando Tap Company, and has his own dancers' clothing line with his wife called Hashtag DanceSwag.

Peter is currently a host/judge/instructor for a few very well-known dance competitions. He travels with them year round, and all throughout the world. He also now works with various studios and dancers in the New England area full time, since moving to Boston in 2023.

Peter continues to travel the world with various competitions and conventions; adjudicating, choreographing, and performing... but finds his TRUE LOVE is in teaching, inspiring, and instilling the knowledge that he has gained throughout his career with the up and coming dancers of tomorrow.

### **Todd Shanks - Tap, Jazz**

Todd Shanks is a dance educator, choreographer, and academic leader whose work bridges the worlds of professional dance and higher education. With more than two decades of experience in the field, his career spans concert and commercial performance, choreography, teaching, and the development of educational programs that prepare dancers for sustainable professional careers.

Shanks currently serves as Assistant Professor of Dance and Program Coordinator for the Palladino School of Dance at Dean College in Franklin, Massachusetts, where he develops curriculum focused on career readiness, entrepreneurship, and professional practice in the dance industry. His teaching and mentorship emphasize the transition from student to professional artist, helping dancers cultivate the technical, creative, and professional skills required for success.

Before entering higher education, Shanks built a multifaceted career as a performer and choreographer working across television, commercial media, and live performance. His performance credits include appearances on The Electric Company, The View, and Good Day NY, as well as national campaigns and industrial projects for companies including Ford Motors, Volvo, Wrigley's, Kimberly Clark, and Paramount Pictures. His choreographic work has been featured in commercial media, including a BIC Soleil Razors campaign and the opening number for Stars, Stripes and

Skates starring three-time U.S. national champion Johnny Weir. His work has also appeared on major broadcast outlets including ABC Nightly News, MSG Network, NY1, and CW11.

Shanks spent more than a decade on faculty at Steps on Broadway in New York City and has taught master classes and residencies at universities and institutions including the University of Florida, SUNY Brockport, Boston University, Skidmore College, the Ailey Extension, Ballet Hispanico, and UMass Lowell. Through this work he has become a nationally recognized educator in jazz and tap pedagogy, mentoring dancers and teachers across the United States.

In addition to his academic work, Shanks plays an active role in shaping dance education nationally. He serves as Education Director and for Dance Educators of America and as Jazz faculty for Dance Teachers Club of Boston's Dance Education Training Course, where he develops teacher training initiatives and educational programming that supports dance educators and studio communities across the country. His scholarly and professional engagement includes presenting research at the International Association for Dance Medicine and Science annual conference and serving as an adjudicator for the American College Dance Association.

Across his work as an artist, educator, and administrator, Shanks is committed to building meaningful connections between academic training and the professional dance field. His teaching, choreography, and leadership focus on preparing the next generation of dancers, educators, and creative leaders.

### **Stephen Gunter - Ballet, Ballet Repertoire**

Stephen Gunter is a company dancer with Ballet RI. He loves telling stories more than anything else, and dance is a wonderful medium to use. His favorite performances include dancing the roles of Marcutio in Romeo and Juliet, Solor in la Bayadere, and Espada in Don Quixote. In addition to these classic story ballets pieces such as Trey McIntyre's a Day in the Life,

and Ilya kozadayev's Dream(s)pace are also high points in Stephen's performance career.

### **Kayla Jensen - Dance Team Prep/Pom**

Kayla Jensen is the current head coach of the URI dance team where she spent 2 years on the team as well. Kayla spent 6 years as a New England Patriots cheerleader. 2 spent as captain and 1 as an alumni all star.

Growing up she danced competitively and trained in all styles of dance.

Now, Kayla is a 6th grade math teacher full time but still likes to find time to keep up with her own dancing and teaching!

### **Morgan Sanborn - Ballet**

Morgan Brown Sanborn is originally from Standish, Maine. She is currently a member of City Ballet of Boston, a freelance artist, as well as the Director of Dirigo Conservatory of Movement in Biddeford, ME. She has previously danced with The Florida Ballet, North Atlantic Dance Theatre, Teatrul Balet de Sibiu of Romania, Nevada Ballet Theater, and Portland Ballet Company of Maine. Sanborn is a magna cum laude BFA dance graduate of Point Park University and a graduate of the Portland Ballet of Maine CORPS program under the direction of Eugenia O'brien and Daielma Santos-Decker. Her training includes summer intensives at American Ballet Theatre, Festival Ballet of Providence, Point Park University, and Boston Conservatory. Sanborn's recent featured roles include Lilac Fairy in Gianni DiMarco's Sleeping Beauty. Snow Queen, Vine, and Spanish Soloist in Anthony William's Urban Nutcracker. Soloist in Gianni DiMarco's The Gathering and Danse Macabre. Arabian Soloist in Linda MacArthur Miele's Nutcracker, Persian Princess in Miele's Cinderella. Carmen's Alter Ego in Roberto Forleo's Carmen, Christoph Garcia's Death of the Maiden, Nikiya in La Bayadere, Mercedes in Don Quixote, Hermia in Forleo's A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Glove Seller in Forleo's Gaîté Parisienne. Soloist in Linda MacArthur Miele's Souvenir, Fairy Godmother in Roger VanFleteren's Cinderella, Dew Drop and Sugarplum in FLB's Nutcracker. Fokine's Le Spectre de la Rose, Dying Swan, and Prelude in Les Sylphide, as well as Joseph Morrissey's Suite for Strings. Her choreography has been presented by City Ballet of Boston, Florida Ballet, Portland Ballet,

Penta Project, Dean College, Franklin Performing Arts Company, Florida Ballet School, South Shore Ballet Theatre and many more. Morgan has over 20 years of teaching experience and is currently an ABT® Fellowship teacher, who has successfully presented students for ABTNTC examinations for three consecutive years. Sanborn has completed the ABT® Teacher Training Intensive in Primary through Level 5 of the ABT® National Training Curriculum. She is also certified in Pilates Mat & Apparatus through The Kane School and certified in levels 1 & 2 of Progressing Ballet Technique.

### **Mia Nolte - Ballet, Contemporary**

Mia Nolte (she/her) began dancing in her hometown of Iowa City, Iowa. Her first fourteen years of training occurred under the direction of Leslie Nolte, at the Nolte Academy of Dance. Later on she spent two years as a professional division student at the Pacific Northwest Ballet, where she had the privilege of training under Peter Boal. She performed various works by George Balanchine and Kent Stowell, along with choreographic works by the company dancers. She received a Bachelors of Fine Arts degree in Contemporary Dance Performance from The Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Her artistic journey has benefitted from various teachers including Kurt Douglas, Adriana Suarez, Marissa Parmenter, Brian McGinnis, Marjorie Thompson, Susan Bryant, Kiyon Gaines Ross, and more. Mia also recently performed at the Joyce Theater with Complexions Contemporary Ballet in New York City. She is now in her first season as a dancer with Newport Contemporary Ballet in Rhode Island.

### **Brandon Contreras - Salsa**

Hi, I'm Brandon Contreras—dance instructor, cultural ambassador, and proud director of Cultura Dance Arts in Pawtucket, RI. Under the umbrella of Rhode Island Latino Arts, I've spent over Five years teaching Salsa, Bachata, & more to students from age five to adults of every walk of life. I've been an instructor for over 15 years in total.

For me, dance is more than movement—it's storytelling, history, and a celebration of identity. I've seen shy beginners blossom into confident performers and strangers become family through the shared joy of dance.

Whether teaching in schools, leading workshops at cultural festivals, or hosting classes at my studio, I strive to make every lesson a doorway into the richness of Latino heritage.

From energizing corporate team-building sessions to educational community workshops, I tailor each experience to leave participants inspired, connected, and moving with confidence.

So, whether you want to learn, perform, or simply expose your students to the magic of Latin dance, let's create something unforgettable—together.