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# MILWAUKEE BALLET

MICHAEL PINK, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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## MILWAUKEE BALLET ANNOUNCES 2025/26 DANCER ROSTER

*- Company welcomes School Alumna, Second Company Graduate, and two new dancers -*

**Milwaukee, WI – August 12, 2025** – Milwaukee Ballet Artistic Director Michael Pink has announced the Company roster for the upcoming 2025/26 Season. Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy (MBSA) alumna Jennifer Hackbarth joins as a Leading Artist while three new dancers join the ranks as Company Artists, including a Milwaukee Ballet II (MBII) Second Company graduate.

Hackbarth trained at MBSA from 2002-2013 before going on to dance professionally for New York City Ballet, Germany's Dresden Semperoper Ballet, and Florida's Sarasota Ballet. Notable principal roles have included Odile in *Swan Lake*, the titular role in *Giselle*, Marie in *The Nutcracker*, and, most recently, Aurora in Michael Pink's *Sleeping Beauty*, which brought her back to Milwaukee Ballet as a Guest Artist this past spring.

"Jennifer is a brilliant artist, both technically and emotionally, and I know Aurora was just a glimpse into her potential as she steps into her new position," says Pink. "We are thrilled to have her talent with us now full-time."

"She is a gifted dancer whose skill and artistry exemplifies the best of MBSA's education and training," continues Kristin Dimmer, MBSA School Director. "Her path is one that many of our current students hope to take, so I'm certain she will be an inspiration to them all."

One of the three new Artists joins Milwaukee Ballet from the organization's Second Company. Jackson Mitchell spent the 2024/25 Season in MBII after training with City Ballet School San Francisco and The Joffrey Ballet. His promotion highlights Milwaukee Ballet's commitment to cultivating world-class ballet talent in its home city.

"Milwaukee Ballet II continues to develop the next generation of Company talent, with seven of our Artists having come up through the program in the last three years alone," says Pink. "I'm delighted to promote Jackson, who demonstrated great potential in his year as an MBII dancer."

Two fresh faces will also join the Company this fall. Ivan Spitale and Mihai Costache both come to Milwaukee from Sarasota Ballet, where Spitale has danced since 2018 and Costache since 2019. The two hail from Italy and Romania, respectively, and have each found success in international ballet competitions while training around the globe. Milwaukee Ballet welcomes their distinct backgrounds to a company full of diverse talent.

The Company will return to the studio on September 8<sup>th</sup> in preparation for the season's first production, Michael Pink's *Giselle*, presented by We Energies Foundation, which runs from October 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> at Marcus Performing Arts Center. This production marks 10 years since *Giselle* was previously in Milwaukee and features five Milwaukee Ballet musicians on stage in addition to the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra in the pit. In partnership with the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra and Violins of Hope (VOH), the onstage violinist will play an instrument from the VOH private collection of instruments owned and played during the Holocaust.

The remainder of the season includes the third year of Michael Pink's *The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium*, presented by BMO December 6<sup>th</sup> through 26<sup>th</sup>, the mixed repertory performance *Encore* January 30<sup>th</sup> through February 8<sup>th</sup>, the biennial choreographic competition *Genesis* March 13<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup>, and the family-friendly *ALICE (in wonderland)* May 1<sup>st</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup>. Individual tickets are on sale now for each production.

### **2025/26 Season Roster**

Leading Artists: Parker Brasser Vos, Randy Crespo, Marize Fumero, Alana Griffith, Jennifer Hackbarth, Marie Harrison Collins, Lizzie Tripp-Molina, Lahna Vanderbush

Artists: Josiah Cook, Mihai Costache, Eric Figueredo, Garrett Glassman, Amanda Lewis, Raven Loan, Kristen Marshall, Emery Meroni, Marko Micov, Jackson Mitchell, Nanaho Nakajima, Flynn Stelfox, Ivan Spitale, Jacqueline Sugianto, Ben Zusi

### **New Leading Artist**

**Jennifer Hackbarth** trained at Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy from 2002-2013, then continuing her education through John Cranko Schule and the School of American Ballet. Her professional career began at New York City Ballet, followed by Dresden Semperoper Ballet and The Sarasota Ballet, where she was a Principal Dancer. She has danced leading roles such as Odile in *Swan Lake*, the titular role in *Giselle*, Marie in *The Nutcracker*, along with Balanchine's *Rubies*, *Emeralds*, *Theme and Variations*, *The Four Temperaments*, *Who Cares?*, and various works from choreographers such as Sir Frederick Ashton, William Forsythe, Christopher Wheeldon, and more. Most recently, Hackbarth performed the role of Aurora as a Guest Artist for Milwaukee Ballet in Michael Pink's *Sleeping Beauty*.

### **New Company Artists**

**Mihai Costache** hails from Romania and first started to study ballet professionally at the age of ten. After being awarded second prize at Tanzolymp, an international ballet competition held in Germany, Costache pursued professional training in Basel, Switzerland, on full scholarship. Professionally, he has danced with American Ballet Theatre Studio Company, Los Angeles Ballet, and Sarasota Ballet, performing repertoire from renowned choreographers such as George Balanchine, Twyla Tharp, Sir Frederick Ashton, Kenneth MacMillan, and more.

**Jackson Mitchell** began his ballet training at City Ballet School San Francisco before becoming a trainee at The Joffrey Ballet. Mitchell's repertoire includes *Basilio* and *Espada* in excerpts of Yuri Possokhov's *Don Quixote* along with performances in *Romeo and Juliet*, John Neumeier's *The Little Mermaid*, Liam Scarlett's *Frankenstein*, *Anna Karenina*, and more. Mitchell joined Milwaukee Ballet II for their 2024/25 season before being promoted to the Company.

**Ivan Spitale** was born in Torino, Italy, and began his training at EkoDanceSchool. After successful participation in the international competition Prix de Lausanne, Spitale studied at the Balletschule Theatre Basel in Switzerland. Spitale then danced with EkoDance Project and Sarasota Ballet, where he was promoted to Soloist in 2022. Spitale's repertoire includes two roles created for him by Sir David Bintley, *A Comedy of Errors*, and *Spider's Feast*, along with works by George Balanchine, Sir Frederick Ashton, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, Twyla Tharp, and more.

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### **About Milwaukee Ballet**

Milwaukee Ballet was founded in 1970. Led by Artistic Director Michael Pink, Milwaukee Ballet creates a rich and diverse community through its inspiring dance performance, education, and outreach. Milwaukee Ballet hosts an international Company of dancers and maintains its own orchestra. Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy is the only professional dance school in the Midwest accredited by the National Association of Schools of Dance, teaching beginner through pre-professional levels in three locations: Third Ward, Fox Point, and Brookfield. Milwaukee Ballet's award-winning Community Engagement department serves nearly 30,000 people in Southeastern Wisconsin each year through original, interactive programs. Milwaukee Ballet is a proud cornerstone member of United Performing Arts Fund and holds a four-star rating from Charity Navigator.

*Note to Editors: Interviews with Milwaukee Ballet Artistic Director Michael Pink and high-resolution images are available upon request.*