

Dear Patrons, Sponsors, Friends, Volunteers, and Alumni of Peninsula Dance Theatre (PDT),

The year 2023 marks an amazing 50-year milestone of the vision that Lawan Morrison put into place in 1973. That vision is carried on by her granddaughter, current Artistic Director Mallory Morrison, along with Assistant Artistic Director Nicole Cisler.

Hello, I am Chris Williams, and I was a performing member of PDT for over 35 years, and still lend my abilities to their performances when I can. I am so honored for this opportunity to share my thoughts on the incredible artistic resource that PDT represents, for its past, present, and future members, for the cultural community of Kitsap County, and beyond.

I walked into PDT on 10/31/1980 to ask about taking dance classes to restart and improve on my previous skills. I started taking classes on 11/1/1980. I have since then danced many more hours at USC/PDT than the hours that I spent at Georgia Tech attaining my two degrees in mechanical and structural engineering before I started working at PSNS in 1980.

Those engineering degrees from Georgia Tech did come in handy during my dance career while I worked with, and mentored, my ballerina dance partners in tights and tutus for lifts (I am a smaller person, but I was the PDT Nutcracker Cavalier for 23 years during the period from 1982 until 2006). Over the decades I also helped the younger men of PDT to become able partners, including how to do pull-ups on the chin-up bar I welded together and then installed above the back door of the Studio 1 of BDC in 1982. It's still there. Give it a try.

Moving on now to what this message is about:

**PDT has had a significant impact in the world of dance.**

PDT has been recognized nationally for its performances presented at Regional Dance America (RDA) and The Ballet Alliance (TBA) festivals. There have been several National Choreography Plan Accolades awarded to PDT. The choreographic repertoire of PDT is quite extensive because it has been built up over decades and some of those pieces will be performed again soon for all to see.

Many times, when PDT would show up at the dance festivals, people would come up to the company members and say, "What are you going to perform this year?!" They would say that because there was a long stretch of innovative and unique choreographies PDT performed which imprinted in the memories of the other festival participants. PDT was not a company that only performed ballet, we were a dance company.

PDT has harbored, grown, and trained, many incredibly talented world class dancers and choreographers. PDT has been able to give flight to its performers from Bremerton, Washington, to many places around the world:

- Kazan, Tatarstan, Russia at the 1994 Rudolf Nureyev International Ballet Festival (Chris Williams)
- Dance Theater of Harlem (Sam Wilson; 10-year professional career including a performance in the White House, in Washington, DC).
- Los Angeles Ballet and Pacific NW Ballet, (Jacob Soltero)
- Louisville Ballet and Oakland City Ballet (Scott Stevens)
- Philadelphia Ballet, (Cory Ogdahl)
- Ballet Idaho and Ballet Pensacola (Broderick (Brody) Todd)
- Oakland Ballet, Ballet West (Logan Martin)
- City Ballet of San Diego (Sophie Robertson)
- Oregon Ballet Theater (Sydney Scott)

PDT has also engendered choreographers who honed their skills working with the performers at PDT before pursuing national and international careers in choreography and dance instruction:

- Deanna Carter was noted by Dance Magazine in 1972 as an upcoming choreographer and then continued her training with Robert Joffrey Ballet. She came back to Seattle with First Chamber Dance

Company, followed by moving back to her hometown area of Bremerton and PDT. She then instructed and set many pieces over several years for PDT. (She was awarded the RDA National Choreography Plan in 1993 for "Same Old Song", which is a favorite of the PDT repertoire and has been performed internationally during PDT tours to Canada, Europe, and Australia). She branched out and then instructed and set pieces on other national and international dance companies in Mexico and Italy as part of an extended career. This included a long-term residency starting in 2004 at the University of Iowa. She is now recently back in the Bremerton area.

- Laura Curry was awarded the RDA National Choreography Plan recognition in 1989 for PDT's Gala presentation of "Benches" at the RDA festival hosted by PDT. The first section of this piece was shown on TV on the local Seattle PBS station for many years in the early 1990's.

The first section of "Benches" will be shown at the 2023 PDT Season Opener and will be restaged by myself (Chris Williams) who was one of the original performers when the piece was created. The vocalization that will accompany the piece will be provided by myself based on the notes of the music of the live saxophonist that was on-stage during presentation of the original choreography.

- Lara Littlefield has had an extensive performing and choreographic career with PDT, and other dance companies. Her artistic journey has since led her to many other places. She anchored PDT's presentation of *The Nutcracker* as Sugar Plum over three different years in addition to many other roles for PDT performances under the direction of others.

Lara assimilated the knowledge from the Masters of Choreography that Lawan Morrison brought into PDT to instruct and share wisdom with the performers of PDT. Lara synthesized that learning and then started on her artistic journey which has since led to her travelling to many other places. She was awarded 3 National Choreographic awards from the RDA, has instructed at RDA festival, and started and instructed at PDT's Choreography Workshop intensives.

The footprints of the dancers of PDT inspired by these choreographers will leave their marks on local and national stages, and in the minds of those that have seen them perform.

Additionally, PDT as a company has performed and shared its artistry internationally in the following locations:

Vancouver, BC (1986 World's Fair), Austria (Pottsching, Salzburg, 1995), Czech Republic (1995), Germany (Nuremberg, 1995), Australia (Cairns, Sydney, Brisbane, 1999), France (Disneyland Paris, Sarlot, Toulouse, Avignon, 2001), Disney Cruise Lines (2006)

The performances that PDT has provided in local, national, and international venues leads to an important larger perspective that involves PDT:

**Art is what brings civilization to humanity.**

The combination of the athleticism and musicality of the dancers of PDT and all the dancers in the diaspora of all dance organizations is an important part of those brushstrokes on the canvas of civilization.

The partnership of PDT with the Peninsula Ballet Orchestra over the years has provided first-class presentations of many world-recognized classical ballets like *The Nutcracker*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *Giselle*, and *Coppélia*. Many young people that have attended the matinee of *The Nutcracker* or one of the other classical ballets performed by PDT and the Orchestra have likely been inspired to participate in an artistic journey towards making their positive mark on the canvas of civilization.

The version of *The Nutcracker* presented by PDT is at a high level of ballet technical skill and incorporates many other elements that appeal to the audiences for their enjoyment. In the spirit of Lawan Morrison's vision, she developed the version presented by PDT to be accessible to many audiences. The PDT version of *The Nutcracker* has been, and is, a steppingstone for people to increase their involvement and support in the world of dance and the arts.

I have observed during my association with PDT that dance is generational. Most recently in *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*, the lead ballerina was the granddaughter of the engineer that was my mentor when I started working at PSNS as an engineer in 1980. I am proud to have been present on stage to see and be part of this artistic lineage.

The vibrancy that PDT provides to the cultural community of the Puget Sound region is immense. PDT has been gracious to reach out and provide performances to all levels of audiences, from elementary school assemblies to *The Nutcracker* matinees for younger students, and to the more formal performances of full-length classical ballets.

PDT routinely shares its stage with other regional dance companies during presentation of its Choreography Showcase performances, which helps the development of other dancers and companies in the Puget Sound area and helps to build a stronger artistic community.

**PDT is an enduring dance company, built by the efforts of many people over five decades, consisting of dancers in the spotlights, and the people that have been backstage, offstage, and others providing support throughout PDT's existence. The people behind the scenes that make PDT productions possible deserve recognition.**

- PDT does depend on and gives a deep gracious bent knee of acknowledgement (otherwise known as a genuflect) to the financial generosity of patrons, sponsors, friends, volunteers, and alumni of PDT that have helped maintain PDT's momentum forward as an artistic beacon in this area.
- PDT also gives that same deepest thanks to the efforts of the volunteers that donate their time and talent to the never-ending task of adjusting/repairing old costumes or creating new costumes.
- And again, PDT gives the same deepest thanks to the efforts of the people that accomplish the logistics of preparing the sets and venues for PDT wherever a performance might be presented.

Finally, I hope that you will join with me to ensure that the journey of PDT will continue its upward climb and that you will find a way to either start, continue, or increase your support of its artistic vision, whether that support is financial, volunteering, or logistical.

Very Humbly,

Chris Williams

PDT member from 11/1/1980 to over 35 years (I now join PDT onstage when invited. I still enjoy it.)