

Meet Our Faculty

Canan Jackson



Canan was born in Ankara, Turkey where she began her dance training at age three. At seven years of age, she auditioned for the prestigious Ankara National Conservatory for the Performing Arts and was accepted first out of hundreds of candidates. Her course of study at the Ankara National Conservatory lasted for ten years.

Mrs. Jackson graduated from the conservatory with honors and obtained her teaching certification.

During her course of study while at the conservatory Mrs. Jackson's early training was with noted teachers Dame Ninette de Valois, Beatrice Fenmen, Molly Lake and Travis Kemp from the Royal Ballet in London. Changes in the National Conservatory led to a long association with teachers and choreographers from the Bolshoi Ballet in Russia. Further training for Mrs. Jackson was in the Vaganova Method.

Mrs. Jackson was accepted at age seventeen into the Ankara National Ballet of Turkey as a soloist. Madame Sulamith Messerer, Alexander Prokofiev, Yuri Papko, and Nikolai Horotonova were some of the fine teachers she studied with. She danced for eight years with the company in Ankara under the direction of Turkish Ballerina Evinc Sunal and her husband Principal Dancer Husnu Sunal.

Mrs. Jackson continued to train under the tutelage of noted Turkish teachers Sait Sokmen, Oytun Turfanda, Meric Sumen and Duygu Aykal. Mrs. Jackson performed most of the Classical Repertoire including Juliet, in Romeo and Juliet, the Sugar Plum Fairy in the Nutcracker, Giselle, Swan Lake, Les Sylphides, Don Quixote, La Bayadere, Le Corsaire, La Fille Mal Gardee, Coppelia, Paquita and others. Mrs. Jackson also performed in numerous ballets from Yuri Grigorovich director of the Bolshoi Ballet and Yuri Papko noted Russian Choreographer.

In 1980, Mrs. Jackson performed at the prestigious Varna Ballet Competition in Bulgaria. Also, in 1980, she was invited to dance in West Germany as guest artist. Mrs. Jackson remained in Europe, primarily in West Germany for seven years as a principal dancer with the National Theatre of Mannheim. Mrs. Jackson continued to dance the classical repertoire as well as working with many noted international choreographers. Mrs. Jackson has performed as guest artist throughout Europe, and has taught extensively in Europe and Asia.

While dancing at the National Theatre of Mannheim, she met her husband Stephen Jackson, where they danced together for two years. In 1987, they came to Rome, NY. In 1988 they re-established John Hayes O'Neill Studio of Dance, where they have been teaching, choreographing, producing and directing for over 30 years.

Meet Our Faculty

Leyla Hojnacki



Leyla was born in Rome, New York and began her dance training age the of three at the John Hayes O'Neill Studio of Dance under the direction of her parents, Stephen and Canan Jackson. She attended American Ballet Theatre's Summer Intensive in New York City from 2006 through 2010. Hojnacki studied at the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at American Ballet Theatre from 2008 to 2010 under the tutelage of Franco DeVita and Raymond Lukens. As a student, she had the opportunity to perform at the Company's annual Spring Gala at the Metropolitan Opera House.

In 2011, she furthered her training at the Joffrey Ballet School and began working with renowned faculty members Davis Robertson, Francesca Corkle and Era Jouralev. Leyla has also studied with Ceyhun Ozsoy, Stacy Caddell, Lupe Serrano, Maria Kowroski, Dwight Rhoden, Desmond Richardson, Misty Copeland and Ann-Marie Holmes. Her repertory includes Odette in Swan Lake Act II, the Sugar Plum Fairy in The Nutcracker, Cinderella in Cinderella and Malificent in The Sleeping Beauty, Solstice by Davis Robertson, Here and Beyond by Africa Guzman, Viva Vivaldi by Gerald Arpino.

In September 2012, she received a full merit scholarship from the Joffrey Ballet School of New York. Leyla also became a member of the Joffrey Ballet Concert Group in New York City. In December of 2014, Leyla became a member of the Istanbul State Ballet in Istanbul Turkey for the 2015-2016 season. Her repertory included roles in the full-length ballets Sylvania, Giselle and a new work by Christopher d'Amboise titled Just One of Those Things.

For the past 5 years, Leyla has instructed and provided choreography for the ballet repertoire at various dance studios in central New York. In Fall 2021, Leyla was named the Associate Director at John Hayes O'Neill Studio of Dance. As the Associate Director, Leyla hopes to bring new classical ballet repertoire to the studio while staying true to the traditions created by Stephen and Canan Jackson. Outside of the studio, Leyla provides instruction for ballet, yoga, and pilates. All these practices have provided her a sound background to work on patients as a newly Licensed Massage Therapist.

Meet Our Faculty

Elizabeth Libertella



Elizabeth Libertella was born and raised in Rome, New York. Elizabeth began her dance education at the age of seven at the John Hayes O'Neill Studio of Dance, under the direction and guidance of Stephen and Canan Jackson, Nicole Cotton, Leyla Hojnacki, Sean Jackson, and Brittany DeStefano. During her 10 years of study at the studio, she studied ballet, pointe, tap, acro, modern, and jazz. Throughout her dance career at the studio, Elizabeth has performed in many roles. Her repertory includes Clara and Dream Fairy in *The Nutcracker* and Merryweather and Maleficent in *Sleeping Beauty*. She has performed in the *Nutcracker* ballet for the last 15 years. During the summer of 2014, Elizabeth trained at the Joffrey Ballet School in New York City at the age of 13. Elizabeth is a 1st grade teacher. Elizabeth has been the director of Artletics, an 8 week summer camp located at the Rome Art and Community Center here in Rome, for the last 4 years. She has planned and designed a curriculum/lessons for around 60 campers. These campers are between 5 and 12 years old. She believes that the social and emotional development of all children is an extremely important part of both their cognitive and physical development. "From the moment a child is born, their social and emotional development begins. Teaching children how to emotionally support both themselves and others, will help them to navigate the world around them. It also allows them to develop many necessary life skills, such as building sustainable relationships, making decisions, and even being emotionally and socially aware. These are the skills that I teach to all of my students, in the studio, in the classroom, and in the world. Children need our support to emotionally self-regulate and learn about themselves as people."

Since the Fall of 2018, Elizabeth has been the Ballet Mistress at the studio "Being able to assist and help teach in the place that I call my second home is something I am very honored to be doing. In the studio, one is not only taught how to be a dancer, they are taught life skills. These life skills include teamwork, dedication, ambition, and self-confidence. The skills of dance carry on outside of the studio doors. All dancers are strong individuals with a drive and dedication that cannot be matched. Watching the dedication and love that they have for all of their students is indescribable. Each dancer is treated as if he/she is their own child. This is the type of dedication and love that the world needs so much more of. I have learned so much from being a part of the studio and I am honored to be a part of the community that helps to enhance the love and knowledge for the Arts."