



# NSAL National Newsletter

Fall 2017



## President's Message



At the end of every National Society of Arts and Letters national meeting, there is a stage full of happy faces, and the awards banquet for the 2017 En Pointe: Classical Ballet Competition was no exception. After the awards were announced, all of our dancers were joined by judges Christopher Wheeldon, Steven Caras and Maurice Brandon Curry, director, producer and choreographer Jonathan Cerullo, Category Chair Diana Freeman, Career Awards Chair, Annual Meeting Chair and Florida East Coast President Shari Upbin and your president.

We are indeed grateful to the Florida East Coast Chapter and all of its dedicated members who gave tirelessly of their time to make this year's meeting a great success. Multiple thanks must go to chapter president Shari Upbin, who served not only as chair of the annual meeting but also as the career awards chair of the ballet competition. Kudos to Alyce Erickson and Brian Edwards for their attention to all the details of the awards banquet. Have you ever seen so many red roses? And what a thoughtful gesture to gift our young dancers with the ballerina statues. I especially want to thank Melany Whitney for hosting the National Board reception in her beautiful home and Alyce Erickson for arranging for music during the evening.

Many attendees enjoyed the optional events at the Wick Theater and Costume Museum and The Breakers; but, as always, the highlights of every national meeting—what keeps many of us returning year after year—are the annual competitions, where we get to watch the young artists ply their craft, and the master classes, where, along with the contestants, we partake of the wisdom of the judges and witness them help some of the contestants dramatically transform their performances.

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When I left Boca, I went to the University of Kentucky in Lexington. National Historian Sarah Moore and I sorted through the NSAL materials that were being stored in their Special Collections Research Center and decided what to gift to them and what to eliminate. I am happy to report that they have finished cataloging everything and it can now be accessed on line when we need it.

Shortly after I arrived home, I received a message from Fran Goldstein stating that, due to her health, she would not be able to produce the 2016 annual report. I gathered the materials anew and put the report together. It is on the NSAL website.

Plans are moving forward for next year's Woodwinds competition in Chautauqua and for the 75th anniversary celebration in Washington, D.C., where the category will be Drama. The applications for the Woodwinds competition, the Winston Voice and Art scholarships and the Dorothy Lincoln-Smith Voice Competition are all on line. The SAIC Art scholarship application will be updated very soon.

Many of our former winners and scholarship recipients come through Chicago to work, perform or attend classes. During the summer I was privileged to attend performances given by 2015 Winston scholarship recipient Mary Catherine Wright and 2008 2nd place Classical Voice awardee Nadine Sierra. I also attended a class at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, in which our first Kathy Morgan Lee scholarship recipient, Elmi Ventura Mata was participating. On Sunday, October 29, I attended the performance of a play directed by Ian Martin, 2015 4th place Drama winner. Ian has been an intern at the Goodman Theater in Chicago this year and has been doing some acting and directing. Recently he was offered a full-time job with the Goodman Theater for the coming year. So, I expect to see more of him.

On October 17th I attended a Pittsburgh Chapter cocktail reception sponsored by Janet and David Campbell. Former Pittsburgh Chapter presidents were the honorees and the chapter has recently gained four new members. I will be visiting the Greater Arizona Chapter in December and the New Jersey Chapter in February. As I have mentioned before, I would be happy to visit all of the chapters to see how you are furthering the mission of NSAL. If I have not yet visited your chapter, please send me your meeting schedule for the coming year. I will make every effort to attend a meeting or special event that your chapter has scheduled.

We hope to begin work soon on a documentary that will be suitable for National and all chapters to use as a promotional tool to gain visibility for NSAL and garner new members, donors and contestants. Second VP Margaret Johnson and Washington D.C. chapter president Deidre Casey will be working on this and we may call on you to contact some of your former winners, whose help we will need to complete the project.

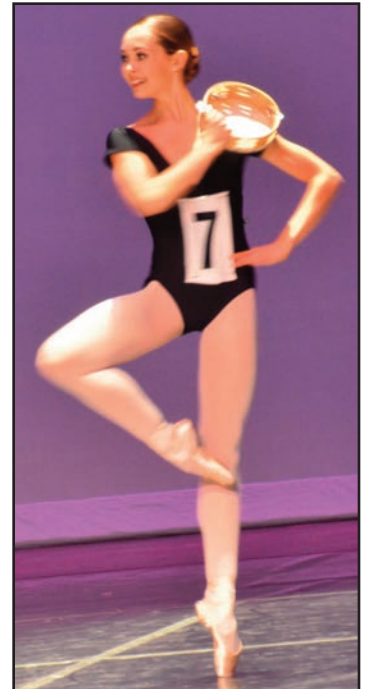
As Thanksgiving approaches, may each of you have an abundance of things for which to be thankful. I thank you all for your continued support of NSAL. May we collectively find the wisdom necessary to keep NSAL flourishing for many years to come.

With deepest appreciation,  
Judy Park

# 2017 En Pointe: Classical Ballet Competition



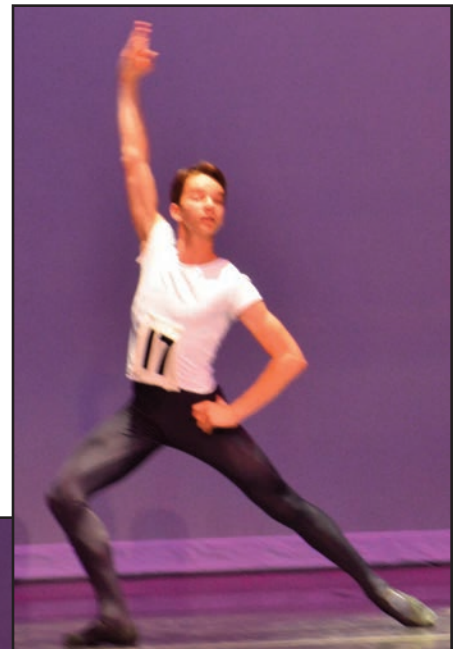
1st Place (\$12,000)  
**Gillian Fitz**  
Greater New York Chapter  
Variation from *Paquita*



2nd Place (8,000)  
**Juliet Doherty**  
Greater Arizona Chapter  
*La Esmeralda* Variation



3rd Place (\$6,000)  
**Sophie Miklosovic**  
Florida East Coast Chapter  
*Giselle* Variation, Act I



4th Place (\$4,000)  
**Roland Jones**  
Washington, D.C. Chapter  
Male Variation from *Paquita*

Honorable Mention (\$1,000)  
**Masanori Takiguchi**,  
Pittsburgh Chapter,  
*Flames of Paris*



## THE MASTER CLASS

Saturday's Master Class began on stage in the auditorium of Florida Atlantic University with Maurice Curry, executive artistic director of New York's Eglevsky Ballet Company, leading the 16 dancers in warm-up exercises on the barre, then moving to groups of eight in routines without the barre.

Curry helped individual dancers work out problems with humor—"Don't mix it up—it's not a buffet." And told another dancer to stretch her neck—"You've got to show all this beautiful long neck." He directed more difficult routines with the dancers in groups of eight, four and two (for the two male dancers).

After the warm-ups, the dancers sat on the stage and asked questions of judges—acclaimed dance photographer **Steven Caras**, **Maurice Curry** and Tony Award-winning international choreographer **Christopher Wheeldon**.

**Caras** was asked how he dealt with issues he had with his father (who didn't approve of him being gay). "I had my mother as my heroine," Caras said. (My father) "stopped talking to me." "My mother empowered me by just being around."

"I had faith," he said, "and surrounded myself with positive people." He said his father finally accepted him.

**Wheeldon** was asked about the choreography process. He said the process depends on whether he has free reign to work on a project or if a commission has restrictions. "It's tough"—"finding the right story and finding the right composer"

Another dancer asked Wheeldon, "Do you ever find yourself getting stuck (on a project)?" "I learned my craft by being a dancer—with the New York City Ballet," he said. Ballanchine was his inspiration "and I still have a feeling of his great spirit—this sense of do—make a ballet, make another one and another one—keep trying" "But you have a certain amount of time—you have to keep working, keep going."

Dancers asked one question for all three judges—How do you deal with the mental challenges?

**Curry** said he loves to read things that have nothing to do with his career. For relaxation, he listens to music, may watch National Geographic programs on TV, "little things that work for me." And, he added, "I love to cook."

**Caras** said, "I don't cook, I'm not a reader. I like movies. I surround myself with people who are supportive, positive people who make me feel good about myself."

**Wheeldon** said, "You guys should really enjoy this moment—it's the excitement of the unknown. Life does start to get more complicated—there will be disappointments. Find good friends, people you can lean on. Find people you can celebrate with."





“We live in an exciting world of ups and downs. Be as grounded as you possibly can.”

The three were then asked how they can move successfully from the realm of pre-professional to professional dancing.

**Caras** said nutrition is very important. “Dancers were typed with eating disorders,” he said, “when they were just trying to maintain their physiques.”

**Curry** said having a successful transition is being prepared. “You have to know what you need physically and mentally,” he said. “You should always be working and striving toward professionalism. Complacency is not acceptable. Always do your homework.”

**Wheeldon** said, “Always do your daily warm-up, use that hour to improve and refine your technique.”

*Thanks to Chris Cosdon for this recap of the Master Class!*

*Steven Caras, Christopher Wheeldon and Maurice Brandon Curry accept the applause of the audience at the end of the Master Class.*



*En Pointe: Classical Ballet competitors and judges take a bow after the Master Class.*

## THE JUDGES AND THE GOLD MEDALLION WINNER

We could not have asked for a more spectacular panel of judges for the EN POINTE: Classical Ballet Competition. Kudos to Shari Upbin and her team for tapping the best that the dance world has to offer. And many thanks to the judges for going beyond the call of duty to help our young dancers on their way to fulfilling careers.



**Christopher Wheeldon**, one of the most celebrated choreographers in the world today, won a Tony for Best Choreography for *An American in Paris*. Other notable recent productions include *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Winter's Tale* (Royal Ballet, 2011 and 2014 respectively).

Born in England, Mr. Wheeldon trained at the Royal Ballet School and joined the company in 1991. He joined the New York City Ballet in 1993 and was promoted to Soloist in 1998. He served as their first-ever Artist in Residence in 2000-01 and was named its first Resident Choreographer in July 2001.

In 2007, Mr. Wheeldon founded Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company and was appointed an Associate Artist for Sadler Wells Theatre in London. For the Metropolitan opera, he choreographed *Dance of the Hours* for *La Gioconda* (2006) and Richard Eyre's production of *Carmen* (2012) as well as ballet sequences for the feature film *Center Stage* (2000) and *Sweet Smell of Success* on Broadway (2002).

Mr. Wheeldon has created more than 90 works for many of the world's major ballet companies, including New York City Ballet, The Royal Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, Royal Swedish Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet and National Ballet of Canada.

At the Awards Banquet on Saturday evening, Christopher Wheeldon was awarded NSAL's highest honor—the gold medallion for lifetime achievement. In his acceptance speech, he had words of praise for the work of NSAL and for the accomplishments of the young competitors.

At the age of 18, **Steven Caras** was invited to join the New York City Ballet by its founder, George Balanchine. For the next 14 years, he danced worldwide in numerous works choreographed by Balanchine and Jerome Robbins.



A longtime interest in photography led Mr. Caras to a second career as one of the most revered image makers of dance history. The Steven Caras Dance Photography Collection is considered to be one of the most valuable, historically significant dance photography collections of all time.

The PBS Documentary, *Steven Caras: See Them Dance*, places a special emphasis on the artistry and relevance of his photographic work. The film received several

prestigious honors including an Emmy Award. Annual Meeting attendees were fortunate to view the documentary on Friday evening at Florida Atlantic University and have the opportunity to interact with Mr. Caras afterwards. A copy of the video was a gift for everyone from FEC president Shari Upbin.

Mr. Caras works in many creative fields from dancer/photographer, author, ballet master, répétiteur and development director, to keynote speaker, producer and most recently, a mentor for Rosie's Theater Kids in Manhattan. In 2014, Mr. Caras was honored with the Career Transition for dancers *Heart & Soul Award*, presented to him at the organization's annual gala by Broadway legend Chita Rivera.

**Maurice Brandon Curry** has directed, choreographed and produced events as diverse as The Michael Awards for the Fashion Industry, tours and videos for Diana Ross, Prince and Al B. Sure, the kick-off of the Tour de France and the Queen's Trust Benefit in 2006 for the charities of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. He has choreographed ballets and theatre works of numerous dance companies and universities around the world including Les Ballet Jazz de Montreal, Lexington Repertory Dance Theatre, Adelphi University, Carolina Ballet, Ballet du Nord and others. Mr. Curry has worked with and produced extensively in the fashion industry for Tommy Hilfiger, Francis Hendy, Kenneth Cole and Giorgio Armani.



Mr. Curry directed and/or choreographed three critically acclaimed Off-Broadway shows and many shows in the United States and abroad in-

**Cynthia Harvey** is one of ballets most versatile and valued artists. She danced virtually every ballerina role with American Ballet Theatre. She has the distinction of being the first American dancer invited to be a principal ballerina for the Royal Ballet. Ms. Harvey also performed as a guest artist for Baryshnikov and Company, Nureyev and Friends and numerous, internationally renowned ballet companies before retiring in 1996.



Photo Credit Ian Whalen

Ms. Harvey is a renowned international dance teacher and author. In 2010, the premiere of her full-length production of *The Sleeping Beauty* for The Hong Kong Ballet was met with acclaim. In 2014, she staged the celebrated *Kingdom of Shades* scene from *La Bayadere* for The Royal Ballet of Flanders.

cluding *West Side Story*, *Nunsense*, *Sweet Charity*, *Oliver!*, and *42nd Street*. He conceived directed and choreographed *From Ballet to Broadway*, a benefit for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. He also produced and directed the 50th Anniversary Gala for The Joffrey Ballet School, which

starred Patrick Swayze, Ann Reinking and Cady Huffman as well as dancers from American Ballet Theatre, The Joffrey Ballet and Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Mr. Curry has served on the board of directors for dre.dance, Mark Stuart Dance Theater and Bangor Ballet. He is on the advisory board for Repertory Dance Theatre and the Young Choreographer's Festival. Mr Curry also serves as chairperson of the dance program at Usdan Center for the Creative and Performing Arts. Currently, he is the executive artistic director of Eglevsky Ballet.

For Singapore Dance Theatre, she also staged a full length *Don Quixote* that was named by Dance Europe as one of the year's best productions.

Ms. Harvey is in demand as a guest teacher and ballet mistress. She has taught for the American Ballet Theatre, The Australian Ballet, Teatro

alla Scala in Milano and is a regular guest ballet mistress at the Semperoper Ballet, Dresden and the Zürich Ballet. She has taught regularly at The Royal Ballet School in London as well as the School for the Basel Ballet, and was principal guest teacher for the English National Ballet School. In 2016, Ms. Harvey was appointed Artistic Director of American Ballet Theatre's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School.

## SOME OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE NSAL HAS HELPED

Nothing reminds us more of why we support NSAL than hearing from former winners or having the chance to see them in action. In my President's Message, I mentioned having seen several of them this summer. I would like to share more information about two of them and also share a letter that we received on the NSAL email address we have posted on our website.

### First Kathy Morgan Lee Scholarship Winner at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago

This summer marked the inauguration of NSAL's partnership with the renowned School of the Art Institute of Chicago. We awarded two scholarships—two weeks in the name of former Hawaii Chapter member, Kathy Morgan Lee, and one week in the name of former Washington, D.C. Chapter member and 25th national president, Audrey Peery. The first winner of the Morgan scholarship is no stranger to NSAL. In 2015, **Elmi Ventura Mata** received a Winston scholarship. (Elmi will tell you about that himself in a letter that he wrote to me after his time in Chicago.) When the SAIC scholarships became a reality, Chris Cosdon let former Winston recipients know. Elmi took advantage of the opportunity to apply and was chosen as the first recipient of the Kathy Morgan Lee two-week scholarship.

I was fortunate to meet Elmi while he was here in Chicago. We spent one Sunday afternoon at the National Museum of Mexican Art in the Pilsen area of the city. I visited his class on the next-to-the-last day, so I was able to observe quite a lot of what had been accomplished. I had the opportunity to speak with his professor, who was so impressed with the way Elmi begins a painting, that he made a video of the process and was very excited to be able to show it to me.

During the time that Elmi and I spent together, he shared with me what a difference painting has made in his life and how much it has broadened his possibilities for a fuller, richer life. Growing up in El Salvador, he never imagined what life-changing experiences were waiting for him.

#### Elmi L. Ventura Mata (NSAL-SAIC Kathy Morgan Lee Scholarship Application)

When painting, I draw upon my immigrant narrative. Born in El Salvador, I was raised by my grandmother. At age eight, I emigrated, alone, to the United States to join my parents, who soon separated. Cut off from my primary care giver, I had to fend for myself, carry the baggage of abandonment and struggle to survive.

Living in the U.S., I have often felt as if I had been thrown into a meat grinder. During this puzzling journey in pursuit of the "American Dream," I've learned that one either prevails as a new person or becomes hamburger. Resiliency is necessary for survival, particularly when one seeks entry into the tradition of painting.

My paintings are nuanced representations of Latin-American people in and outside the United States. Figurative painting allows me to weave narratives that spell out the concerns and ideas of my brown brothers and sisters. By using a limited palette, I invite viewers to really meet the people on the canvas. I enlarge hands to symbolize hard work and to visually emphasize the manual labor performed by immigrants. Capturing socially conscious images on canvas provides public release for my private voice and painter's eye.

Painting is the one and true passion I have committed my life to pursuing. Two weeks of intensive summer study at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago will propel my continued growth in a nurturing and potentially eye-opening space. Since graduating from the Cleveland Institute of Art and undertaking MFA studies at the Tyler School of Art as a Future Faculty Fellow, I've come to relish the opportunity to be a lifelong learner.





**I asked Elmi to tell us a little about his two experiences with NSAL. Below is the response he sent me from Rome.**

While studying at the Cleveland Institute of Art, I became aware of the Naomi Winston Art Scholarships. Across four years in Cleveland, I focused on developing my paintings and fulfilling academic requirements. As a rising senior, the summer between junior and senior year proved to be particularly significant. Reality had set in—I felt more keenly the impractical nature of my career path as a painter. So, while my peers in applied arts disciplines were pursuing internships, I knew that I needed to apply to every professional opportunity that came my way.

It was during the summer that I applied to the Naomi Winston Scholarship for 2-D visual arts. When chosen to represent the Ohio River Valley Chapter, I was much surprised. My proposal consisted of a budget for funds to be used towards private classes with my drawing instructor Christian Wulffen. Professor Wulffen was just as surprised at the award, since I had not informed him of my application. (The odds of an award seemed rather low, because no one at my school had been a past recipient.)

Surprises continued when Professor Wulffen then invited me to attend a one week studio intensive in Los Angeles. During that one week residency, I produced a series of drawings and was given first hand guidance and instruction in museums such as the Getty Art Center, the Hammer and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

The California opportunity, made possible by the Naomi Winston Scholarship, allowed me, with emerging confidence, to imagine a future as a painter. (My summer alternative in 2015 was to work with my father delivering wine in Manhattan from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.) Excused by my father from working “on the truck,” I was deeply grateful for the funds that freed me to expand further not only my creative mind but also my view of the world. Receiving positive feedback on the art I was producing outside of Cleveland gave me the drive to believe in my work and my vision as a painter. The award also allowed me to make a strong case for admission to competitive graduate programs across the country.

After graduating from the Cleveland Institute of Art in 2016 with a painting and drawing major, I was awarded a Future Faculty Fellowship at Temple University’s Tyler School of Art. My experience in Philadelphia has been unimaginably rewarding. And, after completing my first year, good fortune has continued to accompany me.

In May, I was working on paintings for an exhibition that will open this September in Cleveland. As I contemplated returning to work with my father over the summer to earn extra money, I received from Chris Cosdon an email regarding a summer opportunity offered by NSAL to study at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. I had heard many tales of Chicago, but I never imagined I would ever have the chance to spend two weeks in the Windy City.

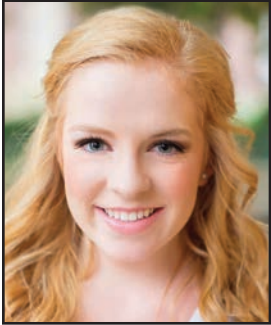
My time in Chicago in early August 2017 will forever be held dear to my heart. From absorbing the Institute’s collection and visiting the Mexican neighborhood of Pilsen to producing over 15 paintings and in-depth drawings and meeting NSAL’s national president Judy Park, I have had much to process. I’ll need time for my Chicago experience fully to settle into my being as an individual and, most importantly, as a painter.

For this fall semester, I am currently living and working in Rome at Temple University’s campus here. Experiencing two different cities, eternal right after windy, has allowed me to see the different rhythms of daily lives and different cultures. I hope that this broader perspective of the world will continue to shape and develop my art work, cross-cultural understanding and global citizenship.



## Additional Help for a Former Winston Winner

In the Spring 2017 Newsletter, I included a letter from **Mary Catherine Wright**, former Winston Voice recipient, asking for help to attend the Chicago Summer Opera Training Program. As a result of that request, NSAL decided to create a Career Opportunities fund, similar to the one we have for our competition winners. Mary Catherine was the first Winston scholarship recipient to benefit from that decision. I went to see her perform the role of the Second Woman in *Dido and Aeneas*, at the end of the workshop.



Speaking to her afterwards, I learned that, as a result of the summer program she attended in Prague with the Winston scholarship she received in 2015, she was invited by program director Sherrill Milnes and his wife, Maria Zouves, to participate in their summer program in Savannah, where

she would be part of a production of Carlisle Floyd's opera *Susannah*. When Mary Catherine wrote to ask about the audition process, they responded that she would not have to audition. Based on her performance in Prague, they had already chosen her for the role of Susannah. After Mary Catherine returned from Savannah, I received the following note.

Dear Judy,

Savannah was a blast! I learned so much. Susanna was such a fun character to play and she's on stage almost the whole opera! We had coachings and one or two lessons, and a number of workshops on different topics including branding ourselves, which was one of the most useful topics in my opinion. We got a great review and I've made a lot of useful connections!

Thank you, NSAL members, for all you do! I was able to pay for the Savannah program because of your help with Chicago Summer Opera and I wouldn't even have had this opportunity if it weren't for the program in Prague. I went to that program with the funds I got from the original Winston scholarship. There, I worked with Sherrill Milnes and Maria Zouves for the first time. They run the Savannah program!

Thank you so much!

Mary Catherine Wright

## Pittsburgh Winner Expresses Gratitude

Shortly before I went to visit the Pittsburgh Chapter, the following communication arrived. As you can imagine, it was very prominently displayed at the reception that we attended. This is one more example of why we must make sure NSAL continues to grow and flourish.

Dear Mr. Altman,

I am reaching out to say thank you to the National Society of Arts and Letters, Pittsburgh Chapter, and share a little story that has come full circle. I am honored to have been a recipient of a first place award in 1986 for dance. As I am currently working on writing and developing the libretto for a new *Hansel and Gretel* for the Croatian National Theatre in Rijeka, I find myself wandering down memory lane. My award in 1986 was significant to my life's path. Because of it, I was invited by the Pittsburgh Opera to audition for their tour of *Hansel and Gretel*. I was chosen to travel with them as a singer and dancer to Germany and Switzerland over the course of one month, mid-November to mid-December. This experience, touring with the incredible opera singers singing on the bus as we traveled from snow-covered town to snow-covered town, paved the way for what has become the rest of my life thus far. The magic of Zurich glowing with Christmas lights, the energy of the theaters, the serene steeples in the midst of layered hills, the laughter and intensity of the artistic experience, gave me a taste of what I really wanted. I was fortunate enough to dance for 23 years as a professional (principal) ballet dancer as well as discover the world of choreography along the way. Next year will be 20 years that I have been choreographing and now, 32 years after this award, I am traveling mid-November once again to create my own *Hansel and Gretel* in Europe that will premiere January 26, 2018.

I feel that without the encouragement and support of so many, I would not be where I am today. The recognition from the Society started a chain of events and made the slight possibility of becoming a dancer and artist a reality.

Thank you for your continued support of artists. We never know what a little encouragement can do. It changed my life, allowing me to have a rich and meaningful career, touching and inspiring people's lives.

With much gratitude,

Gina Patterson, Choreographer  
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