

# Judges

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Abby Griffin has been dancing since the age of 4 and since then has trained in ballet, pointe, jazz, lyrical, contemporary and hiphop. She grew up training with Elizabeth Williams School of Dance, the Nashville ballet, and at Debbie Reynolds during the summers.

From 2014-2019 she was a part of the Tremaine performance company and traveled to multiple cities assisting classes with Tremaines faculty teachers. In 2018, Abby was on So You Think You Can Dance Season 14 and was top 3 on Allison Holkers team. She currently lives in Nashville working full time as a studio director/choreographer and working with multiple country artists.

Abby has spent 15+ years as a choreographer, artistic director and dance educator. For over a decade she has been working professionally in the entertainment industry while simultaneously managing the esteemed dance studio in Los Angeles, Movement Lifestyle. Abby has spent a large portion of her career touring the world educating artists, and her greatest joy has been her work in building sustainable programs that promote arts education for youth throughout the country. In 2020 she co-founded a company called Æ Creative to continue cultivating experiences to inspire artists. These days, Abby spends a majority of her time traveling to studios, schools and universities sharing her love of dance. Credits include: Nike, Mini Cooper, Herbalife, Walk The Moon, Aerial Experience, Aerial Conexions, Believe Performing Arts, Æ Creative Arts, The Young Americans

Aislinn Feathers is originally from Pennsylvania and has over 20 years of extensive dance experience. Aislinn attended The American College of Greece and majored in Theatre and Dance. Throughout her tenure she was a member of the collegiate dance team and took part in many productions that expanded her understanding of diverse artistic styles. She is actively teaching at Blair Dance Academy where she teaches various forms of dance. She is currently the director of the Railroad City Revue Musical Theatre Troupe, working with children of different ages to cultivate

the abilities of her students in multiple art forms. Aislinn is very excited to be a part of the NexStar National Talent Competition judging staff and looks forward to watching many talented artists!

ALIDA MICHAL is thrilled to be back as a judge with Nexstar, helping to support and foster the next generation of dancers. She has been fortunate to have performed in shows such as Wicked, Chicago, American In Paris, Wonderful Town, Oklahoma, Anastasia, West Side Story, Victor/Victoria, Guys and Dolls, White Christmas, and TV's Heart of Dixie. B.A. UCLA-TFT. [www.alidamichal.com](http://www.alidamichal.com). @bulletproofbette.

Beginning her teaching career at just 14 years old, Alyssa has built a lifelong dedication to dance education and artistic excellence. She owned and operated a successful dance studio in Central Ohio, leading students to regional, national, and world championship titles. Her choreographic work includes productions for high schools such as Cinderella and Footloose, blending technical precision with storytelling on stage.

Beyond the arts, Alyssa holds degrees in Business and Graphic & Media Design and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Healthcare Administration. Her diverse background reflects a unique combination of creativity, leadership, and strategic expertise.

Ariel is an artist with a passion for movement, self-expression, and advocating for the arts in her community. Ariel began dancing in Shreveport, LA from age 3-12 studying ballet, jazz, modern, hip-hop and tap. She continued her dance training in the Houston area during her teen years, adding experience in breaking and aerial arts. Ariel has trained at the NYC Joffrey summer intensive, toured as a VIP assistant with Dance Olympus/Dance America convention, and received an Associates of Fine Arts in Dance from San Jacinto College in Houston, TX. This is Ariel's eleventh year teaching dance. She founded Two Sister's Traveling Dance Classes in October 2022 for Shreveport and surrounding areas. In 2023, Ariel began judging national dance competitions. In her free time, Ariel enjoys running, painting, and reading.

Ashley Claybrook has been a dancer for over 25 years training in various styles of dance. She began her training at Columbia Performing Arts Centre. She began her choreography journey at a very young age. Ashley danced professionally in St. Louis, MO with the AshleyLiane Dance Company for 10 years and served as the Assistant Director/Contributing Choreographer for the Junior Training Program for

many years while with the company.

Ashley has worn many hats in the dance industry as many artists do. She is a dance instructor, an award-winning choreographer for several studios and dance teams in the St. Louis, Columbia and Illinois areas, has taught a plethora of master classes and travels as an adjudicator for Nexstar National Dance Competition to share her love of dance with many.

Ashley has adored her seven years as the Owner/Artistic Director in her long time home, DPU Dance. Ashley has taught and choreographed for DPU for over 15 years. Ashley opened her second location in August of 2022. She is unbelievably honored to teach so many wonderful students and she has gained so much on this adventure as the Artistic Director of DPU Dance and FDC Dance. She is very humbled by the overwhelming support of the dance community along this journey. Ashley has beautiful plans in store for the progression of both her studios and her dance community.

Brialle Menefee has been in the dance world for 24 years starting as a young competitive dancer at the age of 12 to being a dance teacher in the Dance Competition Industry for over 12 years. Born and raised in Columbus Ohio, Brialle studied Dance Education and Business Administration at Kent State University. During her dance career with the University, Brialle worked with groundbreaking choreographer of Broadway's The Lion King, Mr. Garth Fagan. She also choreographed pieces and performed over ten pieces in four years as a dancer and was a member of the Kent Dance Ensemble Preprofessional Dance Company. As a college dancer, Brialle has been invited to perform at multiple dance festivals and intensives located in Chicago, Ohio University and Cleveland Ohio. After graduating from Kent State, Brialle has choreographed for local studios within Columbus Ohio and is now a teacher and choreographer for the competition team for the award-winning Studio C School of Dance located in Canal Winchester Ohio. Brialle keeps her dance skills current with the latest techniques by attending dance conventions and workshops through various dance companies. As Brialle continues to give back her dance experience and knowledge in the studio, she finds it is very important to nurture and mentor the talents of her colleagues and students.

Owner and Director of Oui dance- Carly is a graduate from Dean College with a Bachelor's Degree in Dance and a minor in Psychology. She has been teaching since 2003, and her choreography has been recognized on a regional and national level competitively. Trained at Diane Kelley's Dance Studio in West Boylston MA, she has been dancing since the age of two and hasn't stopped. Besides being an experienced dance adjudicator, Carly also has judged many pageants locally and was on the panel for Miss Worcester/Shrewsbury- a preliminary for Miss Massachusetts. Her credit includes Footloose, Guys and

Dolls, Fame, Grease, Giselle the Ballet, and has also performed for The Dance Extravaganza as a featured dancer under Maurice Hines, and was a featured dancer under Tony Williams in the Urban Nutcracker. Carly was the recipient of the Arthur Pierce Prize in 2007, and was awarded the Joan Phelps Scholarship for Dance. She enjoys the true art of creation through movement and working with aspiring dancers.

Catherine Donadee was the Recreational Director at Studio 32 Dance Company, in Canfield, Ohio, where she also taught for 13 years. Before that, she began her teaching career at Center Stage Dance Studio. Catie began her dance training at an early age and has over 25 years of experience in the industry. Trained in Ballet, Tap, Jazz, and Lyrical, Catie was a part of award-winning competition groups on the Regional, State, and National levels. Catie has attended Dance Masters of America Teacher's Training School where she had the privilege of studying under some of the industry's greatest. Ambitious to maintain a strong foundation, Catie continues to educate herself any chance she can. For over 15 years she choreographed routines on the competitive level and received numerous special judges' awards along with being awarded for her choreography. Her routines have been awarded on the Overall level both Regionally and Nationally, also qualifying and attending the World Dance Championship. Sharing her love for dance and technique with her students is her passion, but watching them develop, explore, and express their own love for the art is an added bonus! Catie has recently branched out her love for dance and is in her second season as the head coach of the Austintown Fitch High School Danceline. She has choreographed multiple routines that the team performs during halftime of the Varsity home basketball games. When she is not coaching, Catie can be found at home with her family in Ohio. Catie is very excited to be back judging for her eleventh season and wishes all the performers the best of luck this weekend.

Originally from Illinois, Christy began her dance training at the age of three, training and competing with Excel Dance Productions. She later attended the University of Iowa, where she studied dance and earned a degree in Dance and Athletic Training, along with a certificate in Business.

While at Iowa, Christy launched her teaching career—now in her 16th year—and spent two years coaching and choreographing for the nationally ranked Iowa City West Dance Team. During this time, she also competed in Miss America pageants and choreographed for the Distinguished Young Woman program. She was a longtime guest choreographer at River City All Stars, where her routines earned numerous choreography and first-place awards.

Christy later moved to Tampa, Florida, where she danced and cheered for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. She is currently in her 8th year of teaching and

choreographing in the Tampa Bay area at BSDA. She loves teaching dance while enjoying Florida with her husband and two daughters.

Dawn Branch is a native New Yorker and graduate of the world-renowned LaGuardia High School of the Performing Arts. Dawn holds a BA in Media & Communications from State University at Old Westbury and is DEA Certified Level II. Ms. Branch was a soloist with the Bernice Johnson Dance Company and a scholarship student with the Alvin Ailey American Dance School. She studied under the guidance of Madame Darvarsh, Penny Frank, Denise Jefferson, Kevin Austin Hunt, as well as Kevin Iega Jeff.

Ms. Branch's career has included co-choreographing with Michael Peters (choreographer for Michael Jackson) for "On Stage America," performed with Ben Vereen at Avery Fisher Hall in New York and performed with Diana Ross at Central Park, also in New York. She was the rehearsal director for The Chocolate Nutcracker (Orlando, FL). She is Founder and President of Dawn Branch Master Dance Series & Performances, a workshop series which brought master teachers from the NYC area into Central Florida. 2009-2012. Master Artists included Desmond Richardson, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Obediah Wright, Troy Powell of Alvin Ailey II, and Jamel Gaines of Creative Outlet.

Dawn Branch Works Contemporary Ballet Company was formed after The Center for Contemporary dance brought choreographer, Dawn Branch, together with local professional dancers for a project for the 2012 Olympics. Her vision for this Professional Company, "...to establish a strong set of technical dancers who can perform my works — works that have meaning, soul, and what I like to call, "The Give Back"...and help continue the legacy of the dance repertoire that originated with the Bernice Johnson Dance Company ". As a dancer you age out of the system as many athletes do, but you still have a lot to say. I wanted an opportunity to continue a dance career and give back all

that was given to me...” – Dawn Branch featured in Black Enterprise Online Magazine in 2013.

Emily Jeffries, an Ohio native, is a professional dancer, teacher, choreographer, and adjudicator residing in New York City. Emily graduated from Point Park University’s Conservatory of Performing Arts with a bachelor of fine arts in jazz dance. Most recently, Emily was seen performing in Tokyo, Japan at the Tokyo Orb Theatre in “Broadway Christmas Wonderland”, and in Times Square for New Year’s Eve as a dancer with Pzazz Productions for 2024, 2025, and 2026. Emily was also recently seen performing in the Lucille Lortel Awards in New York City as a swing for a section of “Contact” choreographed by Susan Stroman and set by Tome’ Cousin. Other career highlights include performing at the Jarvis Estate in Napa Valley, CA, as a Can-Can Dancer in the “Cabaret Cabernet”, dancing for Dublin Worldwide Production’s “Christmas on Ice” at the Fallsview Resort in Niagara Falls, Ontario, and at the Eldorado Showroom in Reno, NV, dance captain for “Cinderella” at the Pittsburgh Playhouse, and performing as a swing for a reconstruction of “Rich Man’s Frug” with the Fosse Verdon Legacy. She is currently earning her Master’s in Dance Education from Point Park University. Emily is represented artistically by Nick Baldasare with YOU Talent Agency.

Gabriella Ricolt is an accomplished dance educator, choreographer, and studio owner with over 11 years of leadership in the competitive dance industry.

She began dancing at the age of 3 and was a competitive dancer from age 7, developing a strong foundation in performance, technique, and artistry. She was part of the Miami Arts Charter dance program, as well as Doral Academy Preparatory Schools performing arts division where she trained under industry leaders in varied styles gaining knowledge of dance in all its forms. Additionally she trained with the Joffrey Ballet’s Summer Dance programs as well as participated in and successfully completed several Florida Dance Educators workshops.

Gabriella is highly versatile in her instruction and teaches all styles of dance, working with dancers across a wide range of ages and skill levels. Her choreography has been widely recognized in competition, earning 15 Choreography Awards and 10 Entertainment Awards.

In addition to her studio work, Gabriella founded an elementary school dance team, further expanding opportunities for young dancers to train, perform, and grow in confidence.

She is honored to serve as a judge and is committed to providing thoughtful, constructive feedback that supports each dancer’s growth and success.

Gail Cannaday is a Professional Dancer, Teacher, Choreographer, and Adjudicator from Chesapeake, Virginia that now resides in Morehead City, North Carolina. Gail started training, competing, and setting choreography at an early age. Her training under Arnora Hummell, Melissa Moore, and Andre Yemelianov includes: Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Lyrical, Hip Hop, Character, Modern, and Contemporary. In 2010 she joined the Dance Program at East Carolina University where she continued her dance training under Tommi Galaska, Dirk Lumbard, Galina Panova, Clarine Powell, Teal Darkenwald, and John Dixon. While at ECU she performed in various works and toured such pieces in concerts throughout North Carolina, Virginia, and Chicago, IL. She was also selected to have her own choreography performed alongside faculty pieces as well as teach alongside her faculty mentors at ECU during the Day of Dance, the Roots Festivals, in Musical Theatre Tap Classes, and for the East Carolina Tap Ensemble. Gail graduated from ECU in 2014 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Dance Performance. Gail's further training includes the North Carolina Rhythm Tap Festival, Rhythm World Chicago, the Chicago Human Rhythm Project, Denise Wall's Dance Energy, Millennium Dance Complex in Chicago, IL, #Taplife NY, and Broadway Dance Center in Manhattan, NY. In 2013, Gail was an apprentice with the Chicago Human Rhythm Project where she furthered her training and teaching career. She also had the opportunity to study closely under Tap Dance Masters Derick K. Grant and Charles Renato at that time. Since then, she has been teaching master classes and setting choreography at various studios along the East Coast in North Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts. Gail currently teaches Tap, Jazz, Ballet, Lyrical, Contemporary, and Hip Hop at Justice Elite Dance Company in Morehead City, North Carolina.

Hailing from the Washington, DC area, Geralyn Ward has dedicated over four decades to teaching dance. Her exceptional talent and commitment have earned her numerous awards for choreography, overall achievement, and high scores at regional, national, and world competitions.

Originally from Pittsburgh, PA, Geralyn's passion for dance began as a competitive dance student. She pursued her love for the art by majoring in dance at the University of Georgia and George Mason University, where she also performed with their prestigious dance companies.

Geralyn's students have gone on to achieve remarkable success—performing on Broadway, on cruise ships, in music videos, and as teachers, judges, and directors of esteemed dance competitions. She teaches all ages, from toddlers to adults, in a variety of dance styles.

In addition to teaching, Geralyn has served as a judge on the regional and national competition circuit for over 25 years. Recently, her students and choreography have been showcased in iconic venues like New York City and Walt Disney World.

Geralyn's passion and dedication have not gone unnoticed; she was named Favorite Dance Instructor in Loudoun County, Virginia, by Loudoun Now for seven consecutive years (2018–2024). Her enduring love for dance and her students continues to inspire her work every day.

Gloria Castillo is a versatile and sought-after dance educator, coach, and choreographer with extensive experience at the high school, collegiate, and all-star levels. Skilled in pom, jazz, contemporary, and hip-hop, she is known for blending clean, dynamic choreography with expressive performance artistry. She currently serves as Assistant Spirit Squad Coach and Pom Specialist at Independence Community College in Kansas, where she collaborates on halftime and competition choreography while mentoring athletes in technique and performance quality. Her choreography has been featured by programs across the country, contributing to top finishes at NDA Nationals, DTU Regionals, and OSDTDA State. Gloria continues to travel nationwide creating innovative routines and teaching guest classes for dance teams and studios. In addition to coaching, she has judged competitions across the U.S. and served as a cultural dance observationalist for the film *Killers of the Flower Moon*, directed by Martin Scorsese. In 2025, she was featured as a campaign model for Milani Cosmetics. Gloria is a proud member of the National Dance Coaches Association and is passionate about empowering dancers, building confidence, and creating meaningful experiences through movement.

Haley Nachlas is a professional dancer/teaching artist who earned her BFA from Pace University in NYC with a concentration in performance, choreography and pedagogy. She has performed in NYC, regional theaters and Norwegian cruise lines. She has a passion for storytelling and giving dancers the tools to pursue their dreams.

Jada is an accomplished dancer, choreographer, and leader who has made a lasting impact within her community and across her state. She is a NAACP Silver Medalist and has earned numerous awards and recognitions through competitive dance throughout her career. Growing up immersed in dance, Jada trained and competed across multiple styles, building a strong technical foundation and a powerful performance presence.

Her experience includes traveling and competing as part of a hip-hop group, earning awards and scholarships through competition. In addition to performing, Jada is an experienced choreographer and has served as the leader of a professional dance team in her home city, where she has mentored dancers and helped cultivate confidence, discipline, and artistry.

As a dance judge, Jada is known to value clean technique, intentional movement, musicality, versatility, and authentic performance, and is so excited to be a part of this season.

Jarin began dancing at the age of three. She danced competitively through various genres around the Midwest. While earning her Education Degree, she danced with a collegiate company, as well as the Fever Inferno hip hop squad for the WNBA for five seasons.

Continuing on with sports entertainment, she danced another five seasons with the Indiana Pacemates NBA dance team. Not only did the opportunity allow her to dance with individuals from around the world, it gave her the chance to represent the team at Pro Camps and across the globe in China.

Jarin is grateful and honored to be back in studios teaching jazz, ballet, tap, hip hop and technique. She enjoys working with competitive teams and looks forward to another season of judging to share her education with those that hit the stage.

Jenny is a choreographer, entrepreneur, and educator based in Indiana, with over 40 years of dance experience. She began dancing at the age of three and has studied under renowned master teachers such as Ray Leeper, Mia Michaels, Stacey Tookey, and Anthony Morigerato, continuously advancing her craft through classes at the Joffrey Ballet in Chicago. Jenny holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Indiana University. Her professional dance career includes performing in the Best of Disney show at Walt Disney World, appearing on MTV's Rock N' Jock, starring in the music video for Michael Quatro's "Strut", and featuring in commercials for Centennial Wireless, the CBA Basketball League, and NBC. In addition to her performance work, Jenny has choreographed for show choirs and pageants and co-choreographed iconic musicals like Fiddler on the Roof, 42nd Street, and Grease. Since 2009, she has served as the owner and Artistic Director of TDS - The Dance Studio, Inc., where her students have won numerous regional and national titles.

Katie is a native of Columbus Ohio and began training in ballet, jazz and contemporary at a young age. She attended Akron University as a dance and education major, later transferring to Ohio State University where she graduated with a degree in early childhood development and a dance minor. Katie has trained under Missy Lay Zimmer, Andrew Hubbard and Jennifer Rutherford since 2008. Katie has served as a tribe member, rehearsal director and now resident choreographer for Exhale Dance Tribe in Cincinnati, a contemporary jazz company. Katie has performed alongside Bootsy Collins, Over The Rhine and assisted Zimmer and Hubbard in Cincinnati Ballet's 2013 performance with Frampton Live! Katie is

currently a Master Teacher Trainer and Choreographer for Xponential Fitness and manages a Club Pilates studio. When Katie is not teaching barre or pilates, she choreographs groups, solos and local musicals around the Tri-State area.

Growing up in Rhode Island, Kayla began her journey as a competitive dancer at age six, traveling across the country competing, taking conventions and master classes. She committed to the University of the Arts in 2011 under the direction of Donna Faye Burchfield and immersed her training in Vaganova, Balanchine, Horton, Graham and Jazz. She had the privilege of working with a diverse range of renowned artists and choreographers such as Michael Sheridan, Kim Bears Bailey, and Sidra Bell. After graduating and exploring audition opportunities, she transitioned passions for movement into a fulfilling career in Pilates.

Kaylie Bee grew up in southern Louisiana and began training at age 3 in various styles including tap, contemporary, and pom. She earned numerous scholarships and titles, including Miss Starquest 2017 and Miss Dance Mania 2018, which led to a scholarship at Broadway Dance Center in NYC. She became a full time choreographer at age 17 for multiple studios across the country winning numerous choreography, entertainment, and overall awards. Kaylie is also a licensed pediatric Physical Therapist Assistant and is dedicated to bringing her medical education to the dance world to further help dancers.

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Kiana is a Dance educator, adjudicator and coach Kiana Renae is from a small town in Southern New Hampshire, where she began dancing and making music young. At 18, Kiana joined Saving Grace Dance Ensemble, training in Ballet and Modern, then later joined Boston Community Dance Project for commercial dance. She performed in NYC Carnival: Choreographers Ball, Brickhouse, Times Square, Alvin Ailey Studios and Boston Ballet Studios, NYC Dance Parade, and RAW Artists. After touring and teaching at dance studios and workshops all across the Northeast, Kiana managed

events for Step Up 2 Dance competitions also teaching at their conventions as well as teaching at Sheer Elite conventions and currently adjudicates for KAR, Nexstar, and Sheer Elite. She relocated to Nashville in 2022 and joined Fresh Talent Group. She is currently Artistic Director of Elite Dance Nolensville. Kiana is also a certified ICF life coach/youth mentor, performing musician/singer songwriter and board member of non-profit music school, Satellite School of The Arts. Her utmost passion is to educate and inspire through music, dance and storytelling.

Kim Barnard hails from Bloomington, IL. Having over 38 years of dance experience behind her, Kim received her training from two incredible studios in Bloomington/Normal and in the Dance/Musical Theatre department of Illinois State University with focus on ballet, jazz, lyrical and contemporary extensively. She has also trained with such notable choreographers as Spencer Liff, Dorianna Sanchez, Harrison McEldowney, Jeremy Plummer and Laura Dunlop. Her professional credits include: Dancing on the 66th Annual Tony Awards, dancing for the Chicago Bulls basketball team, dancing at Six Flags St. Louis and many other incredible experiences! Kim was also a dancer for Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines for many years, dance captain for Broadway style shows and has been teaching dance for the past 10 years. Kim has been a judge for NexStar for 14 years and LOVES being the owner of her studio in Bloomington! Have FUN. Be YOUNG. DANCE Forever!

Konner is a seasoned entertainment professional with over 15 years of experience in the industry. Starting his dance journey at the age of 12, Konner immersed himself in various styles, including jazz, ballet, lyrical, tap, modern, musical theatre, contemporary, and hip-hop. His passion for performance led him to the world's biggest stages including various theme parks, theaters, and cruise lines where he was a Dancer, Aerialist, Dance Captain, and Company Manager. In his dance career, Konner also taught at numerous studios and dance teams across the Midwest, sharing his expertise and love for dance with the next generation of performers. Now based in Atlanta, he combines his flair for storytelling and entertainment as an Unscripted Casting Producer, contributing to hit shows including American Idol, MasterChef, and LEGO Masters. Thrilled to be part of the NexStar family, Konner aims to empower and uplift dancers, helping them reach their highest potential in artistry, performance, and technique. Konner's extensive background and passion make him a fun and engaging judge who brings both warmth and wisdom to every competition!

Kyle Kershner is a professional dancer, instructor, and choreographer based in Central New York. He grew up dancing at CMC Dance Company in Cicero, New York. Following his high school years, he attended the University at Buffalo with a double

major in Dance and Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. While at UB he participated in several performances as both a dancer and choreographer. He was also a part of the prestigious pre-professional Zodiaque Dance Company, which is going on its 50th anniversary this year. Following graduation, he received a contract to perform on a cruise ship with Norwegian Cruise Lines. Over the last two years, he has completed three contracts with the company working with world-renowned choreographers and directors. Cruising has fostered his love of traveling taking him to all seven continents and over 50 different countries. Kyle is thrilled to be back on land spreading his love of dance to the next generation of dancers.

Kym began her dance training at the age of three and has trained extensively in ballet, jazz, musical theatre, lyric, and contemporary. She has been a dance educator for more than 35 years studying in Boston, New York, and California and has a wealth of experience in varied dance genres. She has proven herself in the competition industry through her award winning choreography and competitive success of her students. They have won many prestigious awards, nationally and internationally, and have obtained professional careers as dancers with Royal Caribbean, Disney Cruise ships, So You Think You Can Dance, New England Patriots Cheerleading, and on Broadway. Growing up she was involved in the pageant circuit and has coached many students participating in the Miss America and Miss Teen USA Pageant program. Kym's greatest joy is teaching and instilling her love of dance into students of all levels and ages and as a judge seeing each performer come alive on stage!

Lauren Gerrish, a native of Massachusetts, had the aspiration to become a professional dancer since the age of five. She received her training from esteemed instructors, including Joan Sheary, Terri Gordon, and Jo Ann Warren, and was a member of the Burncoat Fine Arts Magnet Program throughout her middle and high school years. Lauren majored in Dance at Dean College and attended the Summer Stages Dance Summer intensive, directed by Amy Spencer and Richard Colton. With extensive experience in performing on cruise ships, national and international dance tours, theme parks, TV and film, and conventions, Lauren has worked alongside notable artists such as the Goo Goo Dolls and the Barenaked Ladies. She has also been featured in Liongate's Be Fit Dance Series alongside Billy Blanks Jr. In the summer of 2018, Lauren opened her own dance studio on the West Coast and her choreography has since received various awards at conventions and competitions. She is thrilled to join the SDA family for another outstanding season!

Lily Flanders, an Orlando native, is a versatile dancer and performer with a broad

range of experience. She began her professional career at 18 in “Jungle Book: Alive with Magic” at Walt Disney World. After living in Japan for a year performing at Tokyo Disney Resort in “One Man’s Dream II”, she moved to New York City, studied at Steps on Broadway, and danced at Lincoln Center in the 2018 “Table of Silence Project”. Lily’s love for travel led her to perform as both a dancer and aerialist with Celebrity Cruises for three contracts, and later return to Tokyo for “Broadway Christmas Wonderland” in 2022. Her U.S. credits include performing in “Extravaganza: The Vegas Spectacular” at Bally’s Las Vegas and “The All New Piano Men” at the Palace Theatre in New Hampshire. She is excited to be a part of the Nexstar panel of judges and wishes all dancers the best of luck!

Mx. Lingo Kelleher (they/them/theirs) is an autistic and nonbinary dancer, choreographer, and visual artist. They are Acrobatic Arts certified and hold a BFA in Dance with a concentration in Choreography from Dean College.

A self-proclaimed “swarm of excited bees”, Lingo loves to spread their joy for dance, accessibility, and the arts wherever they go! They have been dancing for over fifteen years and have a robust background in acrobatics, ballet, tap, jazz, modern, improvisations, and contemporary dance styles. Lingo has self-produced several dance films and has had their work presented at dance festivals, film festivals, and multiple dance productions/performances. Some of the most notable works Lingo has choreographed include Ruminant, Hypnopompia, and Paranoia. As their thesis in their final year of their BFA program, Lingo was given the opportunity to create a choreographed work entitled Ever Yours, Vincent. Mentoring under Kristina Berger (Erick Hawkins Dance Company Principal Member) and Stephen Tracy-Ursprung MFA (Dean to the School of the Arts at Dean College; Little Women, 2019, Principal Dancer), they conducted extensive research on the life and art of Vincent van Gogh; their choreography and writings combined primary sources with historical documents into an immersive exploration of how movement in one artistic medium could be transferred into others.

Currently, Lingo is a faculty member and choreographer at multiple dance studios in the greater- Boston area, teaching classes in acrobatics, contemporary, and improvisations.

With a lifelong passion for movement and a deep dedication to the art of dance—particularly ballet—Lynette has been inspiring and educating students for

over 37 years. As an accomplished dance instructor and choreographer, she has worked with dancers of all levels, from beginners to advanced performers, across multiple genres while emphasizing personal expression, discipline, and strong technical foundations.

Throughout her career, Lynette has earned numerous regional and national awards recognizing her excellence in choreography, entertainment, and costuming, along with multiple national championships and Victory Cup honors.

For the past 20 years, Lynette has served as a judge with Nexstar National Dance Competition, including roles as a head judge at both regional and national events. She has also judged pageants and talent competitions throughout the Midwest.

Lynette holds a dance minor degree and is certified through the Cecchetti Council of America as well as Acrobatic Arts. She is also a certified pointe shoe fitter and currently serves as a manager at Standing Ovation Performance Apparel in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

An active and dedicated member of the dance community, Lynette regularly participates in workshops and conferences and continues to further her own training through ongoing study, including classes at the Joffrey Ballet in Chicago, Illinois.

Lynn Gillinger began her dance training at the age of 3 in Fort Worth, TX. Through the years she trained in tap, ballet, jazz, lyrical/contemporary, modern, clogging, hip hop, and acro. She has performed in Las Vegas at the MGM Grand, Disney World, Nashville, TN, Dallas Cowboys Halftime Shows, Carnival Cruise Lines, and New York City to name a few. She was a member of Mosaic Dance Project, Collective Force Dance Company, and Slightly Off Tap Company for several years performing locally and nationally. She has been a dance educator for over 20 years and that is where her true passion is. Her dances have received many choreography awards, special judges awards, and high point awards at regional and national competitions. She has continued learning and training throughout the years and studied with many master educators across the U.S. and is constantly staying up to date with the current dance styles. She recently received her acro certification through Acrobatic Arts and has recently found a new love and understanding for Acro. This past

season Lynn was named Choreographer of the year at her studio home, Frances Lea Dance Center. Lynn enjoys passing on her passion for dance to the next generation of dancers.

Makayla Wade from Panama City, FL began dancing at the age of two and has been performing since! Makayla danced competitively and was awarded many regional and national awards. Following high school, Makayla decided to further her education by attending Troy University where she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance and graduated Cum Laude in 2021. She was awarded Troy University's Theatre and Dance "Outstanding Freshman" Award, studied abroad in Pietrasanta, Italy with world renowned faculty at The DAP Festival of Pietrasanta! In 2019, Makayla performed with Rosie Simas Danse Company in the piece "Weave" at the Alabama Dance Festival. She began to find a love for choreography and in the fall of 2019 she choreographed in Troy University's Fall Dance Concert "The Fallen" and in 2021 "BLOOD". Following graduation she performed with Cedar Point Live Entertainment in "Pep Rally", "150th Night Show Celebration and Parade" and "The Shrieks" where she worked with Marilyn Magness, Alexis Robberts, Josh Assor and Phillip Vitug. In January of 2021 she worked with Virgin Voyages where she performed and dance captained many shows onboard including "Untitled Dance Party Show Thing", "Ships in the Night" and inaugural cast of "Its a Ship Show". She performed works created by Ani Taj, Sam Pinkleton, House of Yes, Jenny Gersten, 7Fingers and more! Between contracts, Makayla teaches master classes and choreographs across the south region. Her choreography has won many regional and national awards including "Best Choreography" in open and contemporary category. Makayla hopes to continue perform and inspire the next generation of dancers.

Mandy Arroyo, is a dedicated dance educator with over 25 years of teaching experience, began her dance training in the Tampa Bay Area and continued her studies at Howard W. Blake School of the Arts and the University of South Florida. Her passion for the arts and commitment to cultivating confidence and artistry in young dancers has led many of her students and apprentices to successful careers in various genres of dance and the performing arts worldwide. Currently serving as the Dance Department Director at a performing arts school, Mandy has received numerous accolades, including Outstanding Choreographer by Youth America Grand Prix and Dance Teacher of the Year for Hillsborough County Public Schools. She also served as Head Coach of the Plant High School Dancers Dance Team. She is known for her ability to instill technical excellence, artistry, and performance skills in her students.

She graduated from George Mason University with a degree in dance. She has worked as a teacher and director for over 30 years for one of the top competition studios in Northern Virginia. Currently she resides in Washington state and has continued to teach at a studio in Western Washington. She specializes in Jazz, Lyrical, Ballet, Acro and contemporary for all ages. She has been a judge with Nexstar since 2018. She has also taught and competed ballroom for Arthur Murray. She received her certificate as a Certified Personal Training through NASM and is currently certified by Acrobatic Arts. She has two beautiful daughters that grew up in the studio dancing and competing through their senior year in high school. The oldest graduated from Towson University majoring in Dance and Psychology and has since received her doctorate in physical therapy at Shenandoah University . The youngest received her associates degree from Everett College in Washington State. Margaret is a proud Mimi to her 4 beautiful grandchildren.

Missy is excited to be judging with Nexstar for the 2026 Season! She grew up dancing in her hometown of Denver, Colorado at the age of two. Starting her professional career during her high school. Her credits include performing for the Rockies and the Broncos as a back-up dancer for Kenny Loggins and performing for the Olympic Committee in her dance group, "The Silhouettes' '. Once she graduated high school she attended The Boston Conservatory for dance. While in school she worked with choreographers such as Stacy Tookey, Tammy Dyke-Compton, and Antonio Brown. She is lucky enough to have booked her first Professional Dance Contract with Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines while auditioning on a whim during spring break. Dancing for Royal Caribbean from 2016 to 2018 traveling around the Caribbean. After Royal Caribbean she moved to New York and was hired by Step One Dance Company as a Dance Captain. While working with Step One Dance Company she has performed and worked with choreographers such as, Melanie Lewis, Brittney Cherry, Benji Shwimmer, Talia Flavia and Ronnie Todowski. During her time in New York, Missy has also trained with The Radio City Rockettes during her summers back on land. While not dancing, Missy is a NASM Certified Personal Trainer, Nutrition Coach, and Marathon Runner. She has been coaching people all over the USA for the last 4 years. Her passion is teaching dancers how to be strong in their dancing and to show them what they are truly capable of by giving them the foundation of technique and strength to drive them to their goals.

Raven grew up the daughter of a successful dance studio owner in Michigan and was at her first recital at one day old. She trained in the subjects of ballet, jazz, tap, lyrical/contemporary, musical theater, hip hop, acrobatics/gymnastics, and Hawaiian/Tahitian for many years as a student, and was a member of the regional and national award winning team at Encore Dance Academy for 14 years. As a student, she had the privilege of performing in Dracula and The Nutcracker with various ballet companies, including the Moscow Ballet Company. She also had the pleasure of performing in numerous festivals, benefits, and at Walt Disney World. Raven has spent the last 17 years teaching and choreographing for many dance studios across the country (ages 18 months- adults), and has received numerous regional and national choreography awards in the subjects of contemporary, lyrical, jazz, hip hop, and tap. Her students have won countless scholarships, titles, and overalls, and many can be seen assisting on the convention circuit as well as working professionally. Raven is certified through the Youth Protection Association for Dance (YPAD), and dedicates herself to building the confidence of each young dancer she works with. She strives to set students up with the skills to thrive whether in dance or any other goals they pursue. While teaching dance, Raven has received a B.S. in Biology and a B.S. in Nursing. However, as much as she loves science and working in the ER, dance will always be her greatest passion

Rebecca Erwin has been dancing since the age of seven and trained at Vicki Jo Dance Studio, competing in jazz, tap, ballet, contemporary, heels, folkloric, and hip hop.

She earned her Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Public Relations from Bowling Green State University and was a four-year member of the BGSU Dance Team and BGSU Nationals Dance Team, competing at the Universal Dance Association (UDA) College National Championship and earning a Top 20 national ranking.

Rebecca currently teaches tap, ballet, jazz, acrobatics, and hip hop at Marjorie Jones School of Dance in Columbus, Ohio. A certified dance competition judge for over five years, she has judged across the country with UDA, Stageone, and Ohio Dance Masters (ODM). Rebecca is thrilled to be joining the Nexstar family for the first time this season and looks forward to celebrating dancers and their hard work throughout the weekend.

Rebecca Reese – For the past 26 years, Becky has been shaping the lives of children and adults through her love and passion for dance. A native of Altoona, Pennsylvania, she trained at Allegheny Ballet Company, the Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, and Point Park College in her youth. She decided to further her education at Slippery Rock University where she earned a BA in Dance with a concentration in teaching. While in college, she had the opportunity to dance with the Dance Alloy of Pittsburgh under the direction of Mark Taylor. She is a member of Dance Educators of America, Dance Masters of America, the Pennsylvania Association of Dance Teachers, and the National Dance Education Organization. She received the 2012 Slippery Rock University Young Alumni Award for her contribution to her art and community. Becky owns and operates her dance school in Central Pennsylvania celebrating over 20 years in business. Through her school, she has molded many students into professional careers and collegiate dance programs. In her spare time, Becky enjoys cooking, traveling, and spending time with her family Charlie (husband), Landon (12 years old), & Ava (10 years old). Becky has been judging for NexStar for 21 years and is proud to be a part of this amazing family and organization.

Samiyah Lynnice holds a BFA in Dance Performance from The Hartt School and is a graduate of New World School of the Arts Dance Program in Miami. She spent seven years with the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble in Colorado, where she was nominated for the Princess Grace Award. Her notable performances include premiering Micaela Taylor’s “Resist” at the 2019 American Dance Festival, premiering Cleo Parker Robinson’s “Standing on the Shoulders” at Vail International Dance Festival in 2021, and performing as Firebird. She is the Repertoire holder to Winifred R. Harris’s work, Associate Artistic Director of Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble. She has also performed with Anita Baker on “The Songstress Tour” and has appeared in television and film. Additional training includes: the Academy of Ballet Arts, Dance Theater of Harlem, Alvin Ailey, Martha Graham, and DunDu Dole Urban African Ballet. Ms. Lynnice is excited to begin her first season with Evidence, A Dance Company.

Sara hails from the outskirts of Atlanta, Georgia, where she was born and raised. From the tender age of two, she immersed herself in the world of dance, stepping onto the competition stage at just four years old. Blessed with the opportunity to train at esteemed institutions across the industry, Sara honed her skills at renowned centers such as Broadway Dance Center, EDGE Performing Arts Center, Giordano Dance Chicago, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, River North Dance Company and Dance 101.

Her journey in dance has taken her both nationally and internationally, gracing stages for prestigious brands and events including Bloomingdales, The Coca-Cola Company, Delta Airlines, JLL, Music Midtown, National Auto Sales, Peloton, SEC Championship Game, Siemens, and Walt Disney World. Beyond the spotlight, Sara has shared her passion for dance as a teacher and choreographer in numerous studios, while also captivating audiences as a performer with various entertainment companies. Seasonally, she imparts her knowledge and expertise as she guides and mentors aspiring contestants for upcoming pageants. Currently calling Stamford, CT home, Sara proudly celebrates her sixteenth season as an adjudicator.

Sarah Pohlman has dedicated more than 25 years to dance as a performer, educator, choreographer, and adjudicator. A Cleveland-area native, Sarah grew up training on a competitive dance team and competing across the country, later continuing her professional development through workshops, conventions, and training opportunities while living in New York City. Her background includes jazz, contemporary, lyrical, ballet, tap, hip hop, and acrobatics.

Sarah danced professionally for the AFL as a member of Cleveland's Gladiator Goddess Dance Team, and later for the NBA as a member of the Cleveland Cavaliers Dance Team, where she performed nationally alongside recognized artists and choreographers.

Sarah is the Owner and Artistic Director of Absolute Dance Company, where she is committed to developing confident, technically strong dancers through disciplined fundamentals, high expectations, and a supportive training environment. Sarah believes in building not only exceptional performers, but also well-rounded individuals who represent their teams and studios with pride both on and off the stage.

An internationally certified adjudicator since 2015, Sarah has had the privilege of judging across the United States and internationally for brands including OASSA, NexStar, KAR, Rainbow, The Dance Summit, JAMfest Japan, The USASF Dance Worlds, and Dance MAJORS. She is passionate about delivering feedback that is educational, motivating, and specific- helping dancers and educators leave each event feeling inspired and equipped with tools for continued growth.

Taylor Gordon is an international dancer, creator, and educator based in NYC for 20 years. Performance credits include: Metropolitan Opera Ballet (Lincoln Center), Radio City Christmas Spectacular (4 seasons), Angelina Ballerina (off-Broadway/US

tour), Kennedy Center, & Carnegie Hall, NY City Center Encores! pre pro, Exit12 Dance Company, Black Iris Project, Dublin Worldwide Productions, TUI Cruises. Choreography credits include: Princeton University, STEPS Beyond Foundation, Dixon Place, "Juliette's Miracle" film, Jazz Choreography Enterprises, Uptown Rising, Asian-American Film Awards, Women in Motion, Queens Outdoor Dance Festival, DanceAction Garden Series, Nacre Dance Group, T2 Dance Company, LILA Dance Festival. Teaching: NY Film Academy, United Nations Ballet Club, BDC, India, Japan, China, Indonesia, Peridance, Gibney Dance. Featured in NYTimes, CNN, ABC, CBS, FOX5, The Times of India, Dance Magazine, Dance Spirit, Dance Teacher Magazine, United Airlines Magazine. Taylor has been a Resident Director for Dublin Worldwide Productions since 2019. She recently attended Dance Lab NY's Broadway Choreography Intensive and has assisted several Broadway choreographers as a Show Supervisor for RWS Global. She has danced across 50 countries and counting.

Taylor Moneagle is from Rison, Arkansas where she fell in love with dance at a young age and grew up dancing competitively all over the U.S. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance Performance and a minor in Health and Exercise Science from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She graduated college with honors from the National Honor Society of Dance Arts and was heavily involved in all the schools' dance performances throughout her college days.

Taylor has trained at various schools across the United States including the Ballet, Joy of Motion Dance Center in Washington DC, Ballet Austin, and the Gus Giordano summer intensive in Chicago. She is the former adjunct dance instructor at Southern Arkansas University. She is well versed in many styles of dance.

Taylor is currently the co-owner and instructor of Natural State Dance Company located in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Taylor has over a decade of teaching and choreography experience.

She has choreographed award winning competitive studio dance routines, college concert dance pieces, pageant talent routines, and cheer team dances. Taylor enjoys traveling to teach masterclasses and set choreography for studios around the country. Taylor is a proud member of the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO). Taylor truly believes that dance can change a person's life, and she is enthusiastic to share her passion with others!

Teresa Paleveda Oscher is an accomplished dance educator, studio owner, and choreographer with over 40 years in the dance industry. She is the founder and artistic director of the award-winning studio BSDA in the Tampa Bay Area. A graduate of the University of South Florida with a degree in Dance Performance, she has also served as an adjunct professor and former Miss Tampa. Her students have gone on to appear on Broadway, in movies and television, and as performers at

Walt Disney World, Sea World, and Universal studios. She has judged in many regional and national competitions for many years and is excited to judging for Nexstar 2026.

Tonya Ferrucci began her dance training at the age of three and has studied under the late Bette-Ann Monti Rossi for the past 30 years. Her dance training is both extensive and impressive and she was well known in the competition world winning many prestigious regional and national awards. She has trained in Boston, New York, and spent a brief time in California pursuing her dancing career. She was the owner and director of APAC Dance, Inc., one of the most successful studios in the New England area. Her students have won many prestigious regional and national awards including Petite Miss Dance of New England; Petite Miss American Dance Awards, Junior Miss Candance North America, dance-off champions and many national dance scholarships. Her students were gold medal World Dance Champions for the United States in Reisa, Germany. Her unique choreography has been the recipient of many regional and national awards as well. Tonya loves sharing her passion of the artform dance to the next generation of artists.

Valeria Cañas was born and raised in Miami, FL. She began training competitively at the age of 4 with Dance Unlimited. Valeria has trained in contemporary, lyrical, jazz, hip-hop, tap, acro, and ballet. During her 4 years of high school she was part of the National winning dance team known as “Coral Reef High School”. Also better known as “Cudettes”.

Once Valeria graduated high school she began to grow her love & passion for choreography. She immediately began to teach and choreograph at Dance Unlimited and local dance programs/ companies in Miami. Valeria has choreographed for the national winning Junior Varsity Cudettes for the last five years where they won 1st place with her pieces at NDTC. As well as other National Championship Titles at DTU nationals, GHSA, and other studio competitions. During her 5 years as a choreographer she has won multiple “Best Choreography Awards”, National & state championship titles. She has also assisted “So You Think You Can Dance Winner”, Ricky Ubeda with his choreography. And in 2021, she expanded her dancing career by assisting and traveling with Chad Mccall. Since then she has been creating dances for dance studios, and dance teams throughout the United States and is now going on year two signed with Tribe 99. She has taught on tours and assisted as well. She is currently based in Houston, Texas, where she has successfully expanded her influence as a choreographer, earning more recognition and opportunities across the country. Valeria’s passion for dance and choreography continues to grow as she works with many dancers across the United States. She is thrilled to share her work with others and make her visions come to life. She is ready to challenge dancers in a new way and push them to their fullest potential.

Victoria Crone is a native from Cincinnati, Ohio. She studied dance academically at SCPA in Cincinnati and AMDA in Los Angeles. She spent a season as a member of Exhale Dance Tribe - a Cincinnati based contemporary company.

Victoria was a dancer, dance captain, and company manager on Holland America Cruise Line for several years. She was part of one of the original casts for Step One Dance Company. In-between ship contracts she taught and choreographed for multiple studios in the US as well as in Belgium.

Choreographing and sharing her knowledge and passion is one of her favorite things about the dance industry. You can find her work on several competitive studios around the United States as well as in New York's Black Box Movers Choreographer Showcase. Victoria adjudicates for a few SDA competitions as well as Driven Talent.

Victoria took part in many workshops, pre-pros, and the creation process under the direction of John Charron, Jesse Robb, Maria Torres, and Ronnie Todorowski while living in New York. She was an American Rhythm Pro Ballroom competitor, instructor and champion. She wore the title of Assistant Director and Show Supervisor for Oceana Cruises with Norwegian Cruise Line.

She believes by expanding the knowledge and compassion of the next generation we will generate more creativity, love, respect, and unity amongst our artistic community.