

April 13, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Fort Wayne Ballet Cancels Remainder of 2019-2020 Season
Postpones Beer, BarreBQ, and Bourbon and Peter Rabbit Until Next Season
Senior Staff and Executive Committee Decides to Continue Dancer and Staff Pay
Through The End of 2019-2020 Season**

FORT WAYNE, IN — April 13, 2020: Fort Wayne Ballet announced today that the remainder of its 2019-2020 Season is now canceled, including all performances and events through May 24. Fort Wayne Ballet is committed to the health and safety of its patrons, staff, dancers, students and their families. The Executive Staff will continue to monitor the global situation, and is receiving updates from government agencies in order to protect fellow Hoosiers. This includes the current quarantine and recommendations to curtail all nonessential gatherings and practice social distancing. Fort Wayne Ballet will communicate further plans as more is learned from governmental health officials and directives are issued by the Governor's Office.

Said Artistic Director Karen Gibbons Brown: "The decision has been heart-wrenching and difficult. As scenarios keep changing, we felt we were not left with other good options. As disappointed as we all are, it is a requirement of the times to keep you, the dancers, and our community as safe as we can."

DANCER AND STAFF SALARIES ARE ENSURED

While many businesses across the country are furloughing employees, Fort Wayne Ballet has boldly committed to supporting the financial wellbeing of its dancers, arts administrators, and their families through the end of the 2019-2020 Season.

Said Executive Director Jim Sparrow: "We have been working diligently with senior staff and have consulted with the Executive Committee regarding the remainder of this season, our academy and our Summer Intensive." Said Artistic Director Karen Gibbons Brown: "With many administrative conversations in between, we have determined it is best for the dancers to remain paid per their contract. As they will be 'working' but not in the studio, they will have in-home projects to be used to help promote dance and specifically Fort Wayne Ballet."

CONTINUED SUPPORT

We are sorry to disappoint you, our loyal audiences. The power of dance is healing for us all, and because of that, we are currently attempting to create ways to reach you with the beauty of the arts as we work through this challenging period.

If you have purchased tickets for any upcoming performances, we kindly ask you to consider donating the cost of your purchase. We are all headed into a period that no arts organization could ever possibly plan for – canceled performances and empty houses. Your small gesture of generosity will have a profound effect on the future of Fort Wayne Ballet. We thank you for your consideration.

Said Executive Director Jim Sparrow: “An even more important goal with the current changes and challenges is finishing the fiscal year [which ends in the summer] strongly. If you would like to help, season subscriptions for the 2020-2021 season are an excellent way to support the Ballet. We also encourage you to consider a donation to this year’s Annual Fund Campaign. Every contribution is very impactful in not only reaching this season’s goal but also in launching next season.”

The following events are now canceled or postponed:

4/25 *Peter Rabbit*- Youth Company Performance
5/8 Beer, BarreBQ and Bourbon- Annual Fundraiser
5/15 and 16 *Progressions*- Company Performance
5/21 Auer Academy *End of the Year Showcase*
5/22 *Fort Wayne Ballet, TOO*- Company Performance

Ticket Options:

- Donate the value of your tickets.
- Request a refund by contacting ArtsTix Community Box Office at 260.422.4226 or emailing ralbaugh@artsunited.org

It is asked that all ticket holders make their requests by the end of the day on Friday, May 1, 2020. All tickets remaining after that date will be considered donations to the Ballet. Patrons are asked to email cbrinker@fortwayneballet.org with any additional questions.

BEER, BARREBQ AND BOURBON POSTPONED. SLATED FOR AUGUST 2020.

Fort Wayne Ballet’s successful and popular fundraiser was originally scheduled for May 8, but now is planned to be the launch of Season 64 in August 2020. In recent years Beer, BarreBQ and Bourbon has been known as a deliciously casual evening filled with craft beers and bourbon tastings, delectable BBQ tastings and sweet treats, music, dancing, and competitive silent and live auctions.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE CONTENT BEING DEVELOPED- #FWBTogether

Performance cancellations have not stopped Fort Wayne Ballet from fulfilling its mission to uplift and awaken the human spirit during this time.

Said Marketing and Communications Manager Marcia Hetrick: “We just completed week 3 of our virtual Zoom classes and continue to run 27 classes, including 4 free community classes weekly. Stay tuned for more ways to engage and stay connected with FWB virtually as we will be releasing new segments and content. These opportunities will include revisiting parts of the 2019-2020 Season including video footage from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, never seen due to our cancellation of the public performances. Other fun segments to view and participate in from your home will include video and photo content from our professional company dancers, world-renowned faculty, and Auer Academy students. This can all be found on our social media platforms or by searching #FWBTogether.” For additional information please contact Marcia Hetrick at socialmedia@fortwayneballet.org.

2020-2021 SEASON SLATED TO LAUNCH IN AUGUST- SEASON SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS AVAILABLE NOW

Season 64 is slated to begin in August with the professional company's first Main Stage production in early October. Said Board Chair Amanda Kinneman: "Fort Wayne Ballet remains strong as we move through this challenging time. We have to make these tough decisions now to cancel the rest of the season, but we are moving forward and are so excited for next season, featuring *Dracula* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, as well as the holiday classic, *The Nutcracker*. We appreciate all of the great support from the Board and our community as we gear up for the other side of this crisis. The leadership of Jim Sparrow, Executive Director, and Karen Gibbons-Brown, Artistic Director, through this has been unbelievable. We look forward to seeing everyone at the Ballet this Fall!"

Season Subscriptions are the most impactful way to support Fort Wayne Ballet. Subscribers receive numerous benefits including:

- 20% savings on all 3 Main Stage performances
- Best seats reserved in each price level
- Free ticket exchanges
- Invitation to "Champagne and Strawberries" receptions before each opening night Main Stage performance
- Complimentary drink at Fort Wayne Ballet's Club Impresario during intermissions

To subscribe, please visit <https://fortwayneballet.org/performances/season-subscriptions/>

SUMMER INTENSIVE

Finally, Fort Wayne Ballet plans to host its Summer Intensive in June and July. The original start date is still a possibility, pending decisions from the Governor and other authorities. Said Annie Reynolds, Parent of Auer Academy of FWB student: "The administration's concern for both the professional company and Auer Academy students is evident, and we look forward to all that is to come in the months and years ahead. I know that our daughter has enjoyed taking daily Zoom classes with the faculty, and is anxiously anticipating the start of another Summer Intensive. As a resident student last summer, she grew into her own not only in dance but as a young adult - becoming self-reliant and confident." All Summer Intensive details will be posted on our website at <https://fortwayneballet.org/academy/summer-intensive/>



KAREN GIBBONS-BROWN
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

About Fort Wayne Ballet:

Fort Wayne Ballet is a nationally-recognized and critically-acclaimed professional ballet company, dance academy and performing arts organization that originated in 1956 through the empowerment of community vision. As a **501 (c) 3 non-profit organization**, the Ballet's mission is to *"feed the spirit and spark the imagination through the highest caliber professional and academy performances, dance training, and community engagement."* Fort Wayne Ballet's season includes three Main Stage performances, three Contemporary repertoire performances, and an innovative summer performance staged at nontraditional sites within the community. The Auer Academy of Fort Wayne Ballet provides dance education to students of all ages. Community engagement and service is a significant part of the Ballet's mission and therefore the organization performs a variety of dance offerings in venues throughout the northeast Indiana community and internationally. Fort Wayne Ballet is a funded member of Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne and is funded in part by the Indiana Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. More information is available at www.fortwayneballet.org

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