

From New York's Lincoln Center to Cleveland's PlayhouseSquare, Ballets with a Twist is reinventing the glamour and excitement of classic entertainment. With its original mix of charismatic choreography by Marilyn Klaus, intoxicating music by Stephen Gaboury and exquisite costume design by Catherine Zehr, the company stirs new life into every venue it visits, inviting a wide range of audiences to enjoy the performing arts in an innovative and electrifying way.

Ballets with a Twist's acclaimed signature production, Cocktail Hour: The Show, harks back to a time when entertainment was an engaging, vibrant social experience. Inspired by the likes of Busby Berkeley and Lucille Ball and infused with the exotic flavor of legendary Hollywood haunts Trader Vic's and Coconut Grove, this pop-infused production brings timeless American spirits to life, launching the Mai Tai, Martini, Manhattan and more off the menu and onto the stage. You've never seen cocktails like these!

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Klaus began working with composer Stephen Gaboury, presenting dances set to original music in New York City, around the United States, and in Europe, receiving high critical praise. Dance Magazine called her work "wonderfully convoluted madcap pieces... operating on a dozen different levels at once." The New York Times said, "Arms slither one moment and jab at the air the next... feet bouncing like popping corn," while Mainzer Rhein-Zeitung raved, "Auch die Ballerina tanzt Rock'n'Roll!" Premieres during this period included Return to Normalcy, Klaus's signature ballroom dance suite for eight women; Silver Thaw, a quintet about longing tempered by hope; and The Johnny Show, a blend of honky-tonk, circus, and comic revue.

In 1996, Klaus formed Ballets with a Twist and began working with costume designer Catherine Zehr. In its inaugural year, the company appeared at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts' Clark Studio Theater, Dance at Holy Trinity, and other venues. Premieres included Seven-Minute Musical, in which an aging beauty reports from the frontlines of memory, and a short musical film, Temple of Swing, in which a glamorous "she" and her charismatic mentor meet in a world of fast cars, packed nightclubs, and mysterious fortune tellers.

From 1996 to 2008, the company appeared at a variety of venues and events throughout New York City, including the Tribeca Film Festival, the Kumble Center for the Performing Arts, the Taste of Dance Festival, To the Pointe programs, and

**"Eye-catching imagery abounded in Ballets with a Twist...witty and fantastic."**

—THE NEW YORK TIMES

•Wisconsin welcomed Ballets with a Twist for the first time with a performance at The Grand Oshkosh. At an exclusive pre-show Producers Circle event, donors enjoyed cocktail tastings and a meet-and-greet with the costumed artists.

•Closing its doors for a private after-hours event, Saks Fifth Avenue Chicago provided a chic backdrop for a new staging of one of the company's classic pieces, "Champagne."

•As part of its 25th-anniversary season, Moraine Valley Community College presented the company at the Dorothy Menker Theater.

•Ballets with a Twist made its Virginia debut with two showings at the new Zeiders American Dream Theater, in Virginia Beach.

•During its first year of programming, New Jersey's Avenel Performing Arts Center welcomed the company for four performances featuring two world premieres: "Cin Cin" and "Hot Toddy."

•The New York Department of Transportation's first annual Summer Streets Dance Festival brought the company — with guest artists from the Brooklyn-based L Train Brass Band — to an open-air stage at Astor Place.

•The Doudna Fine Arts Center, at Eastern Illinois University, launched its season with a two-night engagement by Ballets with a Twist, also providing community dance workshops led by company soloists.

•Young local dancers rehearsed and performed with the company for its first Wyoming appearance, at the Cheyenne Civic Center. The Historic Plains Hotel partnered with the venue to serve custom cocktails and mocktails during the show, also hosting an after party in its own lobby.

It doesn't feel like they do it to fulfill a foundation, or government, 'outreach' grant — although they certainly deserve one. They seem to do it by instinct, by coupling brains, creativity and talent with a genuine desire to connect and entertain. That's why I applaud boutique ballet company 'Ballets With a Twist' for its successful strategy

From New York's Lincoln Center to Cleveland's PlayhouseSquare, Ballets with a Twist is reinventing the glamour and excitement of classic entertainment. With its original mix of charismatic choreography by Marilyn Klaus, intoxicating music by Stephen Gaboury and exquisite costume design by Catherine Zehr, the company stirs new life into every venue it visits, inviting a wide range of audiences to enjoy the performing arts in an innovative and electrifying way.

Ballets with a Twist's acclaimed signature

# BALLETS WITH A TWIST®

**"...sexy, brainy and elegant."**

—DANCEINFORMA

of adding extra value to a general audience's experience. The company's swirling cocktail-themed repertoire is putting new eyes on dance, and that's something the dance world desperately needs

**'Ballets With a Twist' leads the way in reaching new audiences**

—ARTSMEME

given the recent shutterings of Jessica Lang Dance Company, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and Trey McIntyre Project. At BWAT, cabaret is not a dirty word. It's an opportunity. "Cocktail Hour: The Show" starts by ceding dance's hegemony over fellow art forms. Company artistic director Marilyn Klaus puts her dancers in front of an audience with old-fashioned values. The witty and wonderful costumes are finessed by designer Catherine Zehr (she is a modern tutu master). Whenever possible, the troupe dances to live accompaniment by the B-Twist Orchestra led by Grammy-nominated keyboardist/composer Stephen Gaboury (for more than a decade a band member and musical arranger for Cyndi Lauper). And they travel to the audience, last evening presenting "Cocktail Hour: The Show" at Jersey City's White Eagle Hall — a

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# About

From New York to California and everywhere in between, Ballets with a Twist is turning heads and setting trends with its sparkling signature style. The company's glamorous original production, *Cocktail Hour: The Show*, reinvents the cinematic excitement of classic entertainment through an original mix of choreography, music, and costume design. Combining the timeless American spirit with a 21st-century flair, this electrifying floorshow-to-stage experience brings the Mai Tai, Martini, Manhattan, and more to life in a series of sparkling vignettes.





## CHOREOGRAPHY BY MARILYN KLAUS

“Eye-catching imagery abounded in Ballets with a Twist... witty and fantastic.”

—*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

“One of the more inventive upcoming acts is ‘*Cocktail Hour*,’ created by choreographer Marilyn Klaus. Ms. Klaus’ company, Ballets with a Twist is all about trying new things.”

—*THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

“The troupe is known for *Cocktail Hour: The Show*, a series of ballets based on classic drinks: Gimlet, Boilermaker, Martini, and more. It’s a clever take on the intoxicating effects of live performance, especially in the medium of classical dance.”

—*AIR MAIL*

“Klaus blasts the boundaries between high art and entertainment. We have seen the future of dance, and it is fun!”

—*HUFFPOST*

“Klaus’ *Return to Normalcy* was over in a flash it seemed; I could easily have watched it for twice or three times as long.... Like Twyla Tharp’s wonderfully convoluted madcap pieces for the Joffrey and ABT... it seems to be operating on a dozen levels at once.... It was wonderful.”

—*DANCE MAGAZINE*

“Dance is literally intoxicating at Ballets with a Twist. The New York City-based dance troupe is known for bringing cocktails to life onstage... It’s a concept that’s sure to draw a younger crowd to the theater.”

—*POINTE MAGAZINE*

“*Cocktail Hour* was pure pleasure.”

—*BROADWAYWORLD.COM*

“Ballets with a Twist sparkles... sexy, brainy and elegant.”

—*DANCE INFORMA*

“Klaus has a distinctive notion of the expressive possibilities of ballet... she makes a succession of steps into a succession of emotions.”

—*NEW DANCE, Britain*

“Auch! Die Ballerina tanzt Rock-n-Roll. Marilyn Klaus has composed an effective mixture of different styles... a real feast for the eyes.”

—*MAINZER RHEIN-ZEITUNG, Germany*

# Ballets with a Twist Creative Team



Artistic Director and choreographer **Marilyn Klaus** formed Ballets with a Twist in association with composer Stephen Gaboury and costume designer Catherine Zehr. The company has performed Klaus' signature floorshow-to-stage production, *Cocktail Hour: The Show*, in a wide range of venues, from Lincoln Center and Playhouse Square to SoHo House and under the bright lights of New York City nightclubs.



**Stephen Gaboury's** compositions have been performed by celebrated musicians nationwide. As a pianist, he has collaborated and toured the world with pop/rock icon Cyndi Lauper for more than a decade, most recently joining her alongside the New York pops at Carnegie Hall and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra at its historic home venue. He has also accompanied such artists as Patti LaBelle, Norah Jones, and Sarah McLachlan, and has performed at internationally televised events such as the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony and the New Year's Eve Times Square Ball Drop. Gaboury's music has been heard in concert, on television, and in films (including *Boyhood* and *American Beauty*).



**Catherine Zehr** is the artistic force behind the company's costume design. Her creations evoke the origins and essence of each dance with dazzling colors and ornamentation. Zehr honed her skills while working at major American fashion houses, then by designing and manufacturing attire for her own label. She received her BA in Art History from the University of Missouri and studied Fashion Design at Washington University before earning a degree from New York City's Fashion Institute of Technology. As part of The Museum at FIT's Fashion Culture series, Zehr and the company delivered the presentation "Designing Costumes for Ballets with a Twist."

# Appearances

## Theaters and Performing Arts Centers

- Avenel Performing Arts Center (Avenel, NJ)
- Bickford Theatre at the Morris Museum (Morristown, NJ)
- Bucks County Playhouse (New Hope, PA)
- Burlington Memorial Auditorium (Burlington, IA)
- Cheyenne Civic Center (Cheyenne, WY)
- Colorado Chautauqua (Boulder, CO)
- Craterian Theater (Medford, OR)
- Crest Theatre at Old School Square (Delray Beach, FL)
- David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center (New York, NY)
- Dorothy Menker Theater (Moraine Valley Community College; Palos Hills, IL)
- Doudna Fine Arts Center (Eastern Illinois University; Charleston, IL)
- Eisemann Center (Richardson, TX)
- Florence Events Center (Florence, OR)
- Freed Center for the Performing Arts (Ohio Northern University; Ada, OH)
- Hamilton Stage for the Performing Arts (Rahway, NJ)
- Imperial Theatre (Augusta, GA)
- Madison Theatre at Molloy College (Rockville Centre, NY)
- Martin W. Kappel Theater (Norwich, NY)
- Ohio Theatre at Playhouse Square (Cleveland, OH)
- Plaza Theatre (El Paso, TX)
- Raue Center for the Arts (Crystal Lake, IL)
- St. George Theatre (Staten Island, NY)
- Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center (The Villages, FL)
- Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center (Stowe, VT)
- The Grand Oshkosh (Oshkosh, WI)
- Westchester Community College (Valhalla, NY)
- Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center (Westhampton Beach, NY)
- White Plains Performing Arts Center (White Plains, NY)
- Zeiders American Dream Theatre (Virginia Beach, VA)
- Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center (West Chester, PA)

## Nightclubs, Cabarets, and Dinner Theaters

- Hudson Terrace (New York, NY)
- SoHo House (West Hollywood, CA)
- Stage 48 (New York, NY)
- White Eagle Hall (Jersey City, NJ)
- XL Cabaret (New York, NY)

## Events and Festivals

- ACANSA Arts Festival of the South (Little Rock, AR)
- HBO Stage at Bryant Park (New York, NY)
- Holidelic at the Highline Ballroom (New York, NY)
- Home for the Holidays at the Beacon Theatre (New York, NY)
- Hot Rods and Harleys (Rahway, NJ)
- Lincoln Center Local Live (New York, NY)
- Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (New York, NY)
- Saks Fifth Avenue (Beverly Hills, CA; New York, NY; Chicago, IL)
- Summer Streets Dance Festival (New York, NY)
- Tribeca Film Festival (New York, NY)
- True Colors United Cabaret Benefit (New York, NY)



WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE WORLD

STAGE

# Cocktail Hour: The Show



"Champagne," from *Cocktail Hour: The Show*.

**WHEN**

SEPTEMBER 23, 2023

**WHERE**3300 West Scenic Drive, North  
Little Rock, AR, 72118

The effervescent Ballets with a Twist was founded in 1996 by Marilyn Klaus. The troupe is known for *Cocktail Hour: The Show*, a series of ballets based on classic drinks: Gimlet, Boilermaker, Martini, and more. It's a clever take on the intoxicating effects of live performance, especially in the medium of classical dance. Now on tour with the show, the company's first stop is at the ACANSA Arts Festival. Then it's on to the Imperial Theatre, in Augusta, GA, on October 28, and the Knauer Performing Arts Center, in West Chester, PA, on December 29.

Check the company Web site for more information. —*Laura Jacobs*





A MONTHLY  
**CULTURE MATRIX**  
FOR THE COSMOPOLITAN TRAVELER



"Smooth Criminal," from the suite "Mirage" by Ballets with a Twist. Photo: Nico Malvaldi.

## Mirage

UNTIL JANUARY 22 **CLOSING SOON**  
BALLET WITH A TWIST / NEW YORK / STAGE

Ballets with a Twist isn't letting the Omicron variant coop it up. The sassy classical company has found performance locations in the "wilds" of New York City—places that include the Queens Unisphere, a phantom airstrip in Brooklyn, an abandoned architectural gem in Harlem, and the company's Lower Manhattan rooftop. With the dancers outdoors and surrounded by vast space, company director Marilyn Klaus has choreographed *Mirage*, a suite of four ballets that make imaginative use of each environment. Original music was composed by Stephen Gaboury and costumes are by Catherine Zehr. Four days of virtual watch parties are scheduled, so check the company Web site for air times.

—L.J.







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<a href="#">this week in art</a>
<a href="#">this week in Broadway</a>
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<a href="#">this week in dance</a>
<a href="#">this week in film and television</a>
<a href="#">this week in food &amp; drink</a>
<a href="#">this week in lectures, signings, panel discussions, workshops, and Q&amp;As</a>
<a href="#">this week in literature</a>
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<a href="#">twi-ny tenth anniversary show</a>
<a href="#">twi-ny: archive of past events</a>

## BALLETS WITH A TWIST: MIRAGE



*Double Vision* is one of several new works being previewed in Ballets with a Twist watch parties

**Who:** Ballets with a Twist

**What:** Virtual watch parties for short-film series

**Where:** Twist Theater online

**When:** Friday, January 21, 8:00 & 10:00; Saturday, January 22, 2:00, 8:00 & 10:00, free

**Why:** Tribeca-based Ballets with a Twist has been offering a unique twist on ballet for more than twenty-five years. The company's short works are all named for and inspired by potent potables, performed together as *Cocktail Hour: The Show*. Among the pieces that combine drama, humor, mystery, and romance are *Absinthe*, *Grappa*, *Martini*, *Zombie*, *Champagne*, *Boilermaker*, *Cuba Libre*, and *Hot Toddy*

Because of the pandemic lockdown and the continuing spread of various variants, the troupe, founded in 1996 by artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus, has moved outdoors for its latest presentation, *Mirage*, a four-part suite being livestreamed for free on January 21-22 at 8:00 and 10:00, with an additional matinee viewing on Saturday at 2:00. The short film was directed, photographed, and edited by Emma Huibregtse, with choreography by Klaus, original music by Stephen Gaboury, and costumes by designer Catherine Zehr.



In *Ranch Water*, Dorothea Garland struts with a top hat on the troupe's roof. In *La Paloma*, Garland glories across an old airstrip in Brooklyn, almost floating away in colorful costumes. In *Smooth Criminal*, Andres Neira channels Michael Jackson at the historic Queens Unisphere. And in *Double Vision*, real-life partners Claire Mazza and Alejandro Ulloa promenade at a masked ball on the steps of an abandoned castle in Harlem.

After the performances, members of the cast and crew in the studio discuss their process, including Klaus, Gaboury, Zehr, Jennifer Buonamia, Mackenzie Frey, Tori Hey, Margaret Hoshor, Amy Gilson, and Haley Neisser. *Mirage* is a mere aperitif for the upcoming stage version to be held later this year, which will also feature animated projections by Huibregtse and lighting by Dan Hansell. So grab your cocktail of choice, settle in, and join one of the watch parties taking place this weekend.





A MONTHLY  
**CULTURE MATRIX**  
FOR THE COSMOPOLITAN TRAVELER



Ballets with a Twist, "Rooftop," 2021. Photo: Nico Malvaldi. Courtesy of Ballets with a Twist.

## Ballets with a Twist: Rooftops

AVAILABLE ON THE BALLETS WITH A TWIST WEB SITE/  
STAGE

Ballets with a Twist is a swizzle stick of a company. Founded in 1996 by Marilyn Klaus, the effervescent troupe is best-known for its *Cocktail Hour: The Show*, a series of ballets based on classic drinks: Gimlet, Boilermaker, Martini, and more. Recently, due to the surging Delta variant, the company has taken to the rooftop of its Chambers Street studio, where the dancers can perform safely in open space and sky. One of the last dance company's located in Tribeca, Ballets with a Twist has been here for more than 20 years. Indeed, Klaus was in the building on September 11, 2001. "I heard a terrific crash," she recalls. "That was the first plane. Upon seeing the explosion from the second plane, I thought we were being attacked, and it was obvious to me that the entire neighborhood was in danger. I grabbed a VHS tape containing the archive of my choreography and ran to the Chambers Street subway station." Twenty years later, up on the roof, the company has filmed two short dances—toasts to the New York City skyline—*Rooftop Champagne* and *Rooftop Cuba Libre*. The Freedom Tower is in the background and the camera work by Emma Huibregtse and her team is elating. So take a moment and float upward, as classical dancers say, *en l'air*. —L.J.

VISIT

Things to Do

# Ballets with a Twist show brings cocktails to life through dance



By Molly Given

Posted on December 26, 2023



This week, Philadelphians will be able to witness a unique performance at the [Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center](#) with the production of ‘Cocktail Hour: The Show’ by Ballets with a Twist.

The New York-based dance company will be in West Chester on Dec. 29 at 7:30 p.m. with this new production that melds original choreography, music, and costume design in a series of sparkling vignettes.

As the release notes, Philadelphians can watch as numbers like the ‘White Russian’, ‘Hot Toddy’, and other spirits of the season spring off the menu and onto the stage in an evening of “high-style merriment.” The show was created by artistic director and choreographer [Marilyn Klaus](#) and is said to combine the glamour of Hollywood’s Golden Age with a sleek, 21st century sensibility.

'Hot Toddy' will take audience members back in time through the Roaring Twenties, while 'Manhattan' will use the stylings of a jazz trumpet to set the mood. And finally, 'White Russian' will tell the tale of a wintry royal wedding set to the tones of a cinematic piano concerto.

This particular performance was conceived by a trio of powerhouses in the performance world through the company. Klaus' choreography has been seen internationally and she formed Ballets with a Twist in association with Grammy-nominated composer Stephen Gaboury and costume designer Catherine Zehr.

Gaboury's compositions have been performed by celebrated musicians nationwide, and as a pianist, he has collaborated and toured the world with pop/rock icon Cyndi Lauper for more than a decade.

And lastly, Catherine Zehr is the artistic force behind the company's costume design, with her previous work lauding in American fashion houses and through her own label.



As the release notes, Ballets with a Twist will be part of the inaugural Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center Holiday Extravaganza — a month-long celebration of the performing arts in West Chester, and will be appearing on the A. Roy Smith Mainstage, a fully accessible, comfortable, and intimate theater.

Ticket prices range from \$35, \$40 to \$45. For tickets, Philadelphians can visit [uptownwestchester.org](http://uptownwestchester.org), email [info@uptownwestchester.org](mailto:info@uptownwestchester.org), call 610-356-2787, or stop by the box office at 226 N. High Street.



# AUGUSTA GOOD NEWS

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DANCE

## Cocktails Inspire Ballets With A Twist Performance At Imperial Theatre Oct. 28

October 18, 2023 Charmain Z. Brackett [Comment](#)

*(Featured photo Shirley Temple from Cocktail Hour: The Show. Photo by Nico Malvaldi, Courtesy Ballets with a Twist)*

With a name like Ballets with a Twist, a New York-based dance company is sure to offer dance aficionados something different from a traditional ballet performance.



*Bloody Mary from Cocktail Hour: The Show.*  
*Photo by Nico Malvaldi. Courtesy Ballets with a Twist*

Marilyn Klaus formed Ballets with a Twist in 1996. Over the next two decades, “the company appeared at a variety of venues and events throughout New York City, including the Tribeca Film Festival, the Kumble Center for the Performing Arts, the Taste of Dance Festival, To the Pointe programs, and Brooklyn Ballet’s First Look, at the Schermerhorn Performance Space, in Brooklyn,” according to the ballet company’s website.

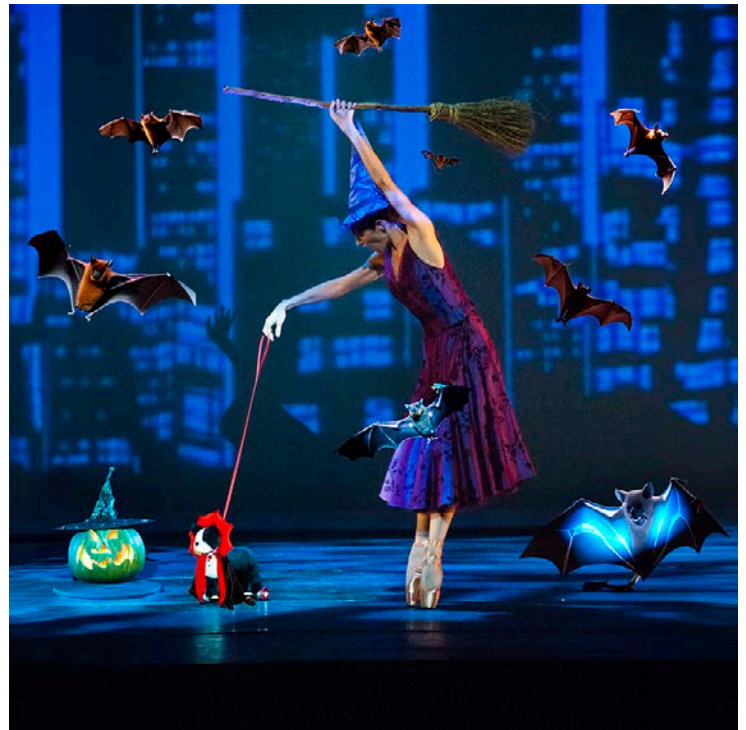
*Cocktail Hour: The Show* debuted in 2009, and Ballets with a Twist performed at the Imperial Theatre in 2018 in honor of the theater’s centennial.

Patrons can join in the fun by donning costumes when attending the performance. Throughout the evening, a special selection of cocktails and mocktails complementing the program will be available in the lobby. Tickets to the show are \$20-\$45.

The company’s signature production is *Cocktail Hour: The Show* with dances inspired by cocktails and spirits.

The standard performance pays homage to Champagne with “eight satin dolls, a touch of tango and a sliver of fresh Ginger Rogers” and the Hot Toddy with “six high rollers, three party crashers, one hilarious heist” all ‘mixed with mayhem,’ according to the group’s website.

But when the company makes its return to the Imperial Theatre stage at 7 p.m. Oct. 28, the cocktails will feature a spooky theme with its new Halloween inspired program. Sci-fi Zombie and a wicked Bloody Mary will shake the repertoire up.



*Manhattan from Cocktail Hour: The Show*

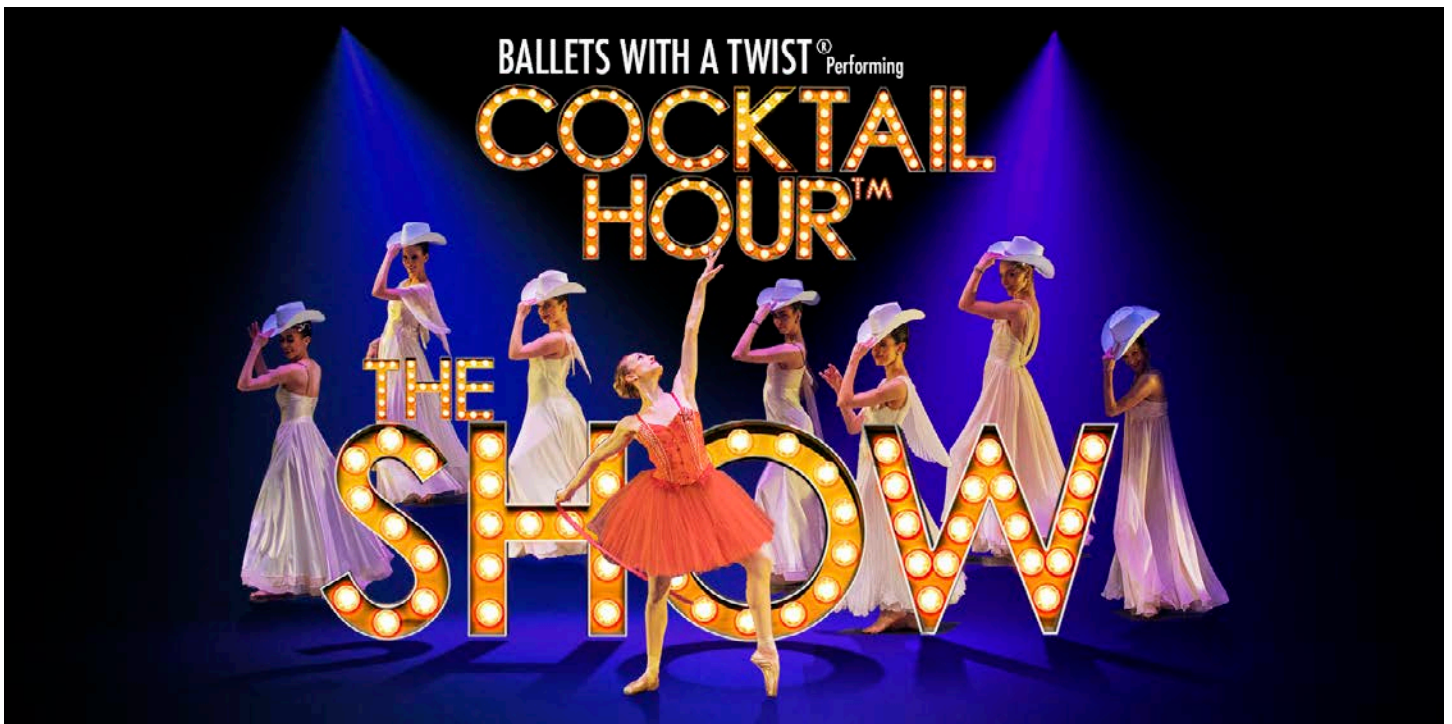
The performance is just the beginning. VIP patrons can dance over to the after party at Edgar’s Above Broad, where they can meet the dancers. VIP tickets are \$25.



## Review: BALLETS WITH A TWIST: COCKTAIL HOUR at UA-Pulaski Tech: The Center For Humanities And Arts

This collection of drinks turned ballet vignettes finished out the ACANSA Festival

By: Theresa Bertram      Oct. 07, 2023



To close out the ACANSA Festival Saturday, Sept. 23, Ballets with a Twist brought the glamour to the UA-PTC CHARTS stage in North Little Rock with an inventive production called COCKTAIL HOUR: THE SHOW. Made up of New York City ballet performers, these classically trained dancers mixed it up with different themed vignettes that brought a new meaning to happy hour.

Before the show, I was able to ask choreographer Marilyn Klaus about the origin of COCKTAIL HOUR: THE SHOW.



*"I started putting different choreographic pieces together in 1996, then we did our first COCKTAIL HOUR show, about 10 or 12 years ago," Klaus said. "Since that time, we have added a tremendous amount of repertory with different cocktails."*

To open the show, the troupe opened with a big group number entitled Brandy Alexander: The Great One, where the dancers were ready to conquer the CHARTS stage. Inspired by the era around Alexander the Great, the dancers marched and twirled in golden hued outfits letting the audience know they were ready for us.

Donned in pink, Shirley Temple (MacKenzie Fey) hip hops her way across the stage complete with sassy star quality attitude and playing with her frilly pink tutu.



Andres Neira handles the tablecloth like a pro in Cin Cin: A Toast to Love. Claire Mazza takes her dog on a walk in Manhattan: On the Avenue. Gliding across the stage, she floats from one end to the other with ease.



Dorothea Garland commands the stage and the men around her (Nickemil Concepcion, Andres Neira, Alejandro Ulloa) during Martini: James Bond's Choice.



My favorite of the small group numbers was Roy Rogers: Rope-a-Dope where Jennifer Buonamia masters the whip while Nickemil Concepcion stood his ground.

Margaret Hoshor tears at your heart as she pines for her long-lost love in Gimlet: Nightcap.



Super cute Tori Hey was spunky in Sputnik: Sour Grapes (pictured left). This was one of my plus one's favorites of the solo numbers. He liked the quirkiness of the piece.



Probably the most beautiful of the group numbers was Champagne: Blanc de Blanc (pictured above), which featured Claire Mazza and Alejandro Ulloa. The dresses were flowy, and the partnering was elegant. Even we knew they were representing bubbles. It was beautiful.



After intermission, their Mirage section started with a western flair with La Paloma: Dove Tales and Ranchwater: Crack Shot. Double Vision: Checkmate had Claire Mazza and Alejandro Ulloa paired against each other, and Andres Neira was stealing the world in Smooth Criminal: Crime Pays With Interest.



I was really excited for *Bloody Mary: Royal Pain* (Margaret Hoshor), because I do love a good bad guy—or girl in this case. She was regal with a big attitude. It was everything you would expect from an evil Queen.

To finish out the program, the whole cast came together for *Hot Toddy: Flappers and Swells*. Dressed in their 1920s costumes, they quickly told the story of the good times gone crazy with a little stealing and swindling and fighting with the law. It was a great finale and left you wanting more.



Music master Stephen Gaboury created so many fascinating miniature soundtracks to go with each scene. Though there were jazzy undertones with most of the segments, the snippets ranged from classical to blues to quirky melodies and so many other lyrical movements to complement the dances.

The costumes occasionally stole the scene at times. Created by Catherine Zehr, the various outfits were visually stunning and enhanced the show to even greater heights.

On Friday, Jennifer Buonamia visited North Little Rock High School Theatre Dance III-IV students to teach a masterclass. "Jennifer was an incredible teacher and was kind and encouraging with the dancers," NLRHS Dance Teacher Christen Pitts said. The dancers had a wonderful time and were challenged and nurtured in the master class."

Up next, *BALLETS WITH A TWIST* will be at The Imperial Theatre in Augusta, Georgia, Saturday, Oct. 28. For more information, visit their website at the link below.

Broadway World would like to thank Nico Malvaldi for the use of these beautiful photos. For more from this artist, check out the website at <http://nicomalvaldi.com>.

Excerpted from:

## **“COCKTAIL HOUR” Ballets End In Country Finale: Ballets with a Twist – Delighted All**

By Dessa Rodeffer

Henderson County Quill – April 19, 2023



“COCKTAIL HOUR, performed by Ballets with a Twist, was brought to the Civic Music “Live on the River” agenda this past Wednesday evening by Burlington sponsor: Southeastern Community College. It was a delightful two-act fast pace performance that brought a happy evening of entertainment, not a traditional ballet.”

“The idea, according to Kay Conrad, President of Civic Music in her introduction, was 'to combine the timeless American spirit with a 21st-century flair.' They did that and more.”

“The lighting highlighted the scenes... outstanding original mix of choreography by Marilyn Klaus was perfect, as was the music by Stephen Gaboury... a spin on various drinks one might have during Cocktail Hour.”

“Viewers will never look at these drinks in the same way – The Manhattan, The Roy Rogers, The Bloody Mary, or Champagne – after watching these polished dancers embrace each drink in music and dance.”

“A note of praise is deserved by the...beautiful costumes which highlighted the dancers performance, perfectly designed for each drink.”

“If you didn’t attend, you missed a delightful evening out.”



# MARILYN KLAUS CHOREOGRAPHS BALLETS WITH A BOOZY TWIST

By Jane Gayduk

*Photography* Mark Aghatise

Published April 25, 2018



Sitting at a window-adjacent table of TriBeCa's storied bistro the Odeon, her favorite New York City restaurant located just a couple of blocks away from her dance studio, choreographer Marilyn Klaus radiates a theatrical aura.

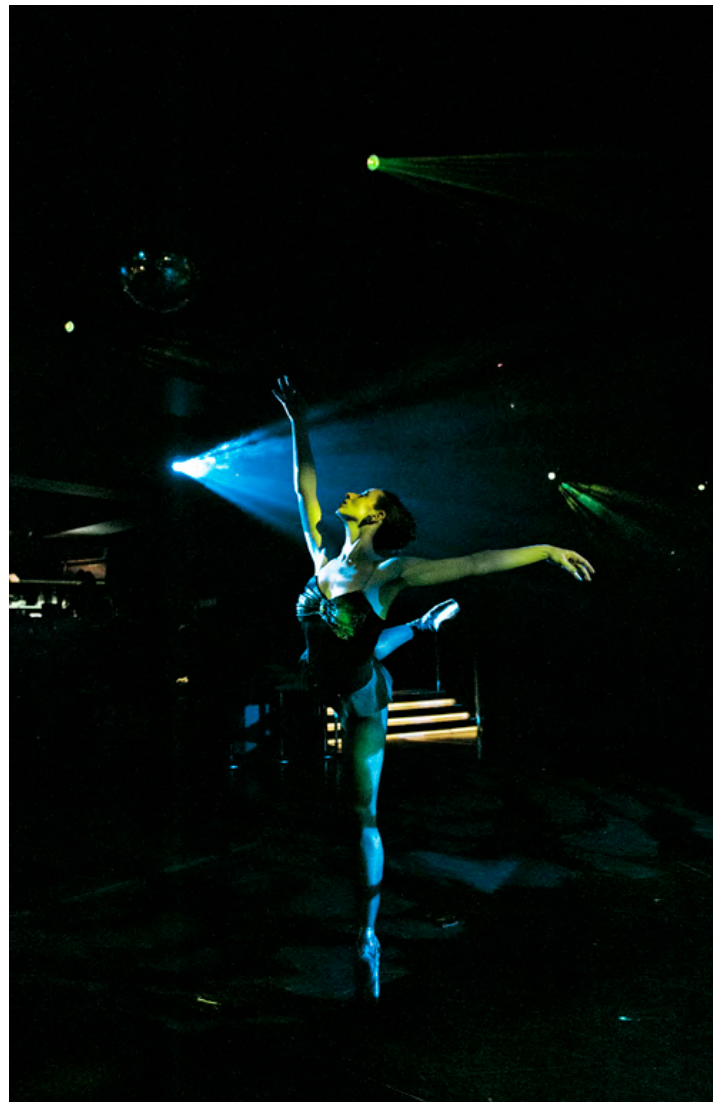
Looking like Diana Vreeland with bold red lips, rouged cheeks, and leopard headwrap perfectly knotted, Klaus orders a virgin Bloody Mary for herself (she needs a clear head during rehearsals later), and her favorite margarita (Don Julio Reposado straight up, no salt, not very sweet) for me.

It's part of her M.O., drinking. Not in the way of a boozing creative but because her dance company, Ballets With a Twist, literally combines cocktails and classical ballet. Each dance is choreographed in honor of a specific libation.

"It's unbelievable, these [dance performances]," Klaus says. "I don't even have to do any research, they're just there. All of the cocktail concepts, they're part of a concept of popular culture, and they wrap in regular culture."

There's no built-in narrative for a show based on a cocktail the way there would be for a full-length classic like *Swan Lake*, so Klaus has an empty glass to fill with natural wit, plus a bottomless well of inspiration, for as long as there can be new drinks, there can also be new dances. She imagines whole stories, sometimes from just a name. The White Russian, for instance, becomes a wedding between members of the Romanov dynasty featuring live inclement weather.

The mix of drinks and ballet makes perfect sense for Klaus. As a child, her father converted the family home's patio into a dance studio, laying wood over the brick floor and creating a trap wall which obscured both bar and barre: one piled with booze and one for practicing battements. This nurtured interest in the movement carried her to a boarding school where she studied the repertoire of Isadora Duncan—known as the mother of modern dance—and then to NYU's brand new School of the Arts in 1970. She acquired her TriBeCa studio in 1979, the same petite space where Ballets With a Twist now rehearses and where she lives.



Her choreographic impulses were not easily satiated, however, and with the help of her husband, the company’s composer/co-founder Stephen Gaboury, and her long-time costume designer Catherine Zehr, the individual pieces she’d been developing for over a decade premiered as a full set in 2009 billed *Cocktail Hour: The Show*.

“I put the company together to create,” she says, pushing aside her celery garnish to take a sip. “So they know that rehearsal—for me—is almost more important than the performance.”

But performances are the lifeblood in a competitive scene not tailored to the success of small, novelty troupes. So with no official venue to call their own, Ballets With a Twist is constantly touring, picking up diverse gigs at universities, nightclubs, local theaters, SAKS Fifth Avenue, and even as an opening act for Cyndi Lauper. The cosmic goal is to set up shop in clubs, an edgy endeavor for a choreographer who admittedly loves the “neutral palette” of classical ballet technique.

“It was just terribly inspiring to me,” she says of the unlikely combo. “So I would say I was never the technician any of the dancers in my group are. But my passion for the form and the training is sort of unsurpassed as far as I can tell.”

For all the dynamic staging and dramatic concepting, Klaus is surprisingly soft spoken, but it’s clear she absorbs everything. Her knowledge of alcohol culture alone is robust: “You know that [the agave plant from which tequila is made] is pollinated by bats,” she asks. (No, I did not.) It makes her output prolific and her process unconventional, because she actually choreographs in silence, without specific dancers in mind. Gaboury watches and creates the musical composition he thinks would work best.

“I’m just totally movement-oriented, and I like it that way, and I really want to keep it that way,” Klaus says. “It’s all I have, my feeling for the movement.”

As she takes the last swig of her Bloody Mary, Klaus notes her placebo-effect woozy-ness. She’s off to lead a rehearsal for her newest dance, Hot Toddy, but not before saying a quick hello to all of her favorite Odeon staffers—one of the hostesses is a dancer too. Like Ballets With a Twist, it’s a perfect, heady mix of dance and drinks.



*Photographs of Marilyn Klaus by Mark Aghatise*

*Photographs of Ballets with a Twist by Nico Malvaldi and Darial Sneed*



# BWW Review: Time for COCKTAIL HOUR at the Crest Theatre at Old School Square

by Courtney Hess

Dec. 22, 2019



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**Time for "Cocktail Hour" by Ballets with a Twist****By Courtney Hess****12/21/2019****Photo: "Hot Toddy"****Photo Credit: Nico Malvaldi**

**DELRAY BEACH, Fla. (December 21, 2019)** - I will never look at classic cocktails the same way after experiencing Marilyn Klaus' immersive show, "Cocktail Hour" by her New York based company, Ballets with a Twist. This innovative and clever show transcended time periods and dance styles with small stories inspired by drinks such as "Lemon Drop", "Cuba Libre", and "Bloody Mary". Some of the pieces were abstract; such as the Absinthe inspired solo performed by Claire Mazza amidst green light and tiny fairy wings, while others were sequential with amusing storylines such as the ensemble opener, "Hot Toddy" (pictured) and the royal wedding played out through emotional tableaux in "White Russian".

Marilyn Klaus' choreography was just as theatrical as promised, at times it was reminiscent of Bob Fosse and others a James Bond film. The choreography for "Manhattan", enhanced by the projections by Emma Huibregste and Shane Rutkowski, was especially innovative - I have never seen such unique propwork en pointe. "Boilermaker", performed by Morgan Stinnett, had wonderfully lyrical gestures that matched perfectly with composer Stephen Gaboury's song, "Five O'Clock Shadow". "Scotch on the Rachmaninoff" was a refreshing male duet so playful in its choreography that the audience was audibly laughing in the end.

The costume designs by Catherine Zehr turned the performance into performance art. Particularly memorable were the lovely asymmetrical bodices and layered romantic tutus in "White Russian" and the elegant 14th century inspired pancake tutu coupled with a bejeweled crown used to enhance the "Bloody Mary" solo. The red and black shape-shifting ensemble for "Shirley Temple" was key to the story telling, from the added black veil piece to the white symbolic tutu. Combined with the choreography by Marilyn Klaus, original music by Stephen Gaboury, and the rich and bright color palette of lighting designer Dan Hansell; "Cocktail Hour" was genuinely original.

While all of the dancers were lovely and a pleasure to watch; Courtlyn Hanson stood out even in the ensemble numbers. She executed particularly quick bourres which were breathtaking in simplicity, and her duet with Seth Ives in "Lemon Drop" was my favorite piece of the night; followed by the grand finale "Holy Water" that lit up the room, and literally, it sparkled. The transitions in "Holy Water" were such a joy to follow, as solo dancers broke off from groups my eyes danced around the stage following the storyline as if I were a part of the piece. The Crest Theatre at Old School Square was the perfect venue to highlight "Cocktail Hour" - it was like seeing history come alive.

Craving more Twist culture? Visit [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com).



TOP BILLING

*Shaken,  
Not Stirred*

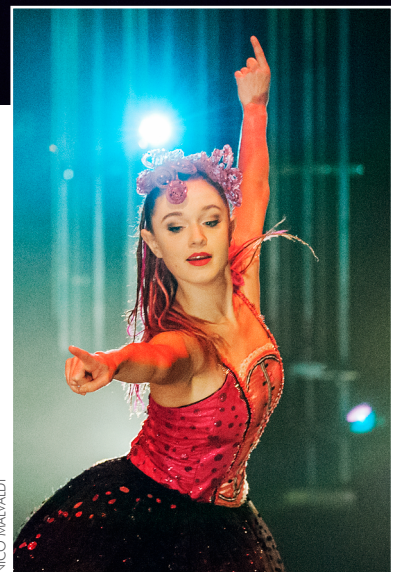
NICO MALVALDI

Libations come to life in *Cocktail Hour: The Show*, onstage at the Crest Theatre at **Old School Square** in Delray Beach December 21. Produced by the New York City-based company Ballets with a Twist, *Cocktail Hour* features more than a dozen original dances inspired by cocktails and mocktails such as the Cuba Libre (above), White Russian, Hot Toddy, and Shirley Temple (right).

Artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus explains that the company's repertoire includes about 30 pieces, but that the exact "mixology" behind creating each number is different every time. "I usually walk into the studio with a general notion of what a particular drink feels like in my mind but an otherwise blank slate,"

she says. Composer Stephen Gaboury and costume designer Catherine Zehr join in the creative process to round out the individual vignettes, which range from a hot Havana night, to a wintry wedding, to a Roaring Twenties romp.

Klaus also stresses the diversity of dance in the family-friendly show, adding that while every company member is classically trained in ballet, there's a "major groove" that permeates the program. "Whether you're a fan of Broadway shows, pop concerts, TV dance competitions, or any other type of fun-loving entertainment, you will likely find something that grabs you during one of our performances." ([oldschoolsquare.org](http://oldschoolsquare.org))



NICO MALVALDI



## HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS AND ART WEEK IN THE 305

makes this month one of the busiest in the whole year! Plan your month accordingly as there are tons of different events to fill up your weekends with. Browse some lovely art at a relaxing art fair, board The Polar Express, and be amazed at a unique ballet show.

### A MAGICAL NIGHT

Dec. 13  
[eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com)

The Atlantic Hotel & Spa knows how to have a good time on Friday, the 13th...Bask in the glow of the spooky moon at their Full Moon Party, which starts at 7:30 p.m. until 10 p.m. The party takes place every month on the 5th floor's oceanfront terrace and features a pre-fixe food menu, live music and entertainment, and fire dancers! A 3-course dinner courtesy of the hotel's restaurant, Wild Thyme Oceanside Eatery, will be provided, and after, if you want to party even longer, complimentary admission will be given to the hotel's SKY Bar. You'll be having such a great time that you'll howl at the moon!

### DELIGHT IN THE LIGHTS

Dec. 13-Jan. 1  
[pinecrestgardens.org](http://pinecrestgardens.org)

There's something about colorful lights that just seems otherworldly and magical. This is especially the case at Pinecrest Gardens' Night of Lights event. Each year, the beautiful park transforms into a "winter wonderland" as it's adorned with thousands of holiday lights. Special activities also run throughout the event, including story time, Santa photo ops, mechanical rides, pony rides, a sing-along with carolers, and a puppet show! On select nights, an admission ticket even includes a holiday concert performance in the Banyan Bowl, so make sure to be on the lookout for those dates. It's going to be a wonderful, whimsical time!

### CHEERS TO COCKTAIL HOUR!

Dec. 20-21  
[oldschoolsquare.org](http://oldschoolsquare.org)

Prepare for a ballet show like no other with Cocktail Hour: The Show by Ballets with a Twist. Created by artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus, the show aims to celebrate the holiday season with its "mix of charismatic choreography, intoxicating music, and exquisite costume design." Dancers will interpret the spirit of different cocktails like "Cuba Libre" and "White Russian" as they twirl and leap across the stage. And how could you watch a show about cocktails without enjoying some yourself? Cocktails and mocktails made to complement the program will be available in the lobby, so you can truly be in on the fun!



Photo credit: Nico Malvaldi



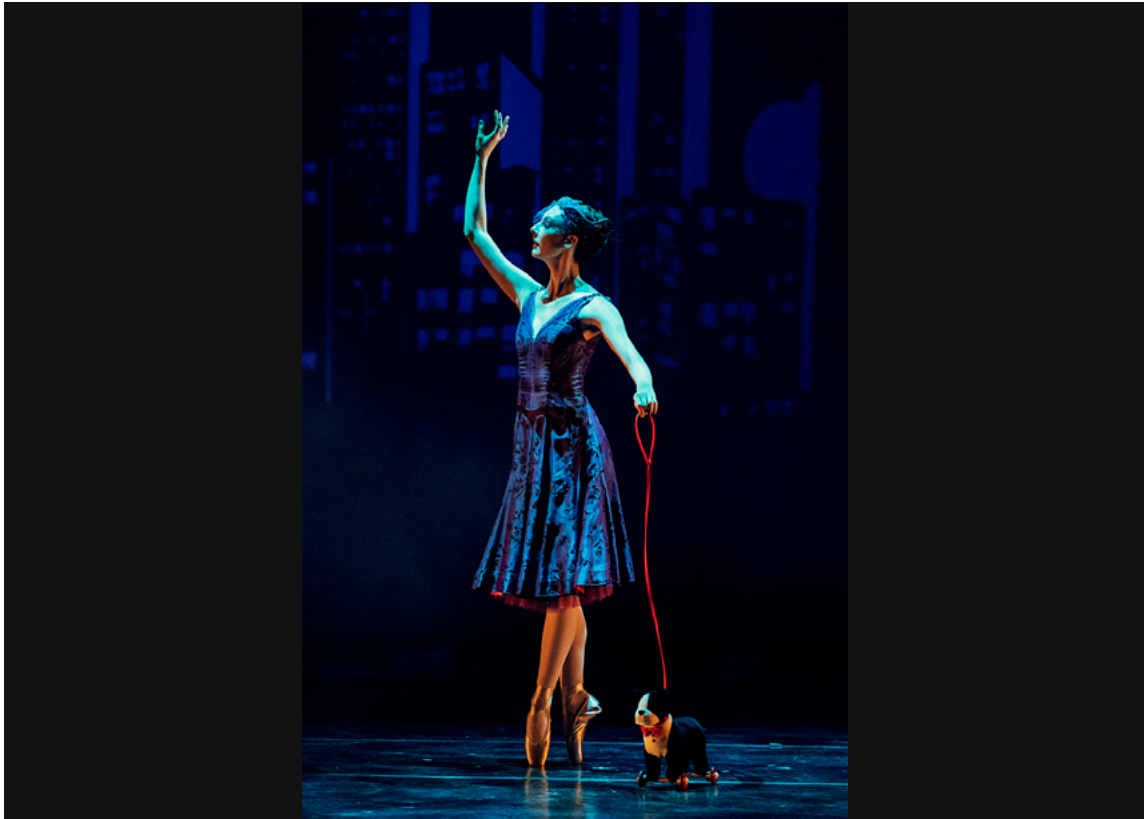
Photo credit: Nico Malvaldi

# DAVENS DANCE

By AALIYAH PASOLS

# “Cocktail Hour: The Show” offers a fun alternative to traditional ballet

By Niki Kottmann Wyoming Tribune Eagle Sep 29, 2019 [Comments](#)



Every soloist in “Cocktail Hour: The Show” channels a cocktail as a character, and this dancer plays the part of Manhattan.  
Photo by Nico Malvaldi

## If you go

**What:** “Cocktail Hour: The Show”

**When:** Oct 4; doors open at 6:30 p.m., show starts at 7:30 p.m.

**Where:** Cheyenne Civic Center, 510 W 20th St

**Cost:** \$15-\$40

**Phone:** 307-637-6363

**Online:** [www.cheyenneevents.org](http://www.cheyenneevents.org)

The words “classical ballet” don’t sit well with everyone. Sure, elegant images of beautiful tutus and graceful arabesques come to mind, but there’s an undercurrent of high-brow artistry that simply isn’t appealing to the average Joe looking for a fun night out.

Cocktails, however – that’s something more of us can get behind.

New York City-based dance company Ballets with a Twist is bringing both to Cheyenne on Friday. “Cocktail Hour: The Show” maintains classical ballet excellence while offering an entertaining performance aimed at audiences of all backgrounds. It’s the vibrant, high-energy creation of Artistic Director Marilyn Klaus, who started the company in 1996 in association with Grammy-nominated composer Stephen Gaboury (Cyndi Lauper’s former pianist).



“For me, it’s more about uplifting of the spirits – and it’s fun because of the various meanings of the term spirit,” Klaus said. “These are cultural cocktails, so it’s a fun way to explore different aspects of culture.”

Every soloist in the show represents a beloved concoction, from gimlet and martini to bloody mary and mai tai, and each is adorned in an extravagant Catherine Zehr-designed costume that transports them back to iconic Hollywood watering holes of yesteryear, such as Trader Vic’s and Coconut Grove.

Klaus grew up in Hollywood and remains inspired by her hometown, so the show has a dreamy, movie-magic vibe to it.

Part of that old Hollywood glamour comes from island culture, so Klaus said the storyline for the mai tai solo, in particular – which she had just finished rehearsing before she got on the phone – was influenced by 1950s-era Los Angeles.

“My parents and all of California were really hit with the Hawaiian influence with it being the 50th state coming to the Union, so I happened to study sacred hula as a child,” she said. “I was really amazed at how the classical mudras of Hawaiian dancing are almost exactly the same as the port de bras in ballet.”

That connection between the graceful arm movements of two different dance forms is an example of how the show blends various influences, but never strays from what Klaus said is the foundation of it all: classical ballet. Every dancer might not be in a tutu with a slicked-back bun, but they’re still highly trained artists. They’re just telling a story that’s much more lighthearted than, say, “Swan Lake” or “Giselle.”



Klaus said this production of “Cocktail Hour: The Show” is catered specifically to Cheyenne audiences. It’s been in the works since she met Cheyenne Civic Center booking and programming manager David Soules a little over two years ago at an arts conference in Seattle, when Soules said his hope was to have the company work with local dancers.

The result was Your Chance to Dance, a workshop that several company members are hosting today, Sept. 29, for young dancers in the Cheyenne community to not only learn ballet technique from experienced professionals, but to audition for a part in Klaus’ Kentucky Derby-themed piece “Mint Julep.”

“It features a racetrack owner’s daughter, two trainers and two thoroughbreds, but it also features small ponies in training, so it’s a ballet that has been conceived of with the younger dancer in mind,” she said. “The parents invest quite a bit (in ballet training), so it’s a good opportunity for their kids to shine in their community up on the Civic Center stage.”

The 14 dancers traveling from New York to Wyoming for the show will star in everything from a zombie pool party piece to an Amazonian warrior-style homage to the Brandy Alexander. But the company also has a special number in store for the Cheyenne audience.

Shirley Temple isn’t the only mocktail represented in the show – she’s joined by the mocktail named after the “King of the Cowboys.”

“We have a hip-hop Shirley, and then she’s followed by the Roy Rogers,” Klaus said. “It’s done to the music from the show ‘Rawhide,’ and it’s a western-themed piece that will be really special for Cheyenne.”

Klaus said her goal for the show is to get people out of their living rooms and away from the TV by offering an exciting nightlife feel often missing from modern live shows. She’s even encouraged the Civic Center to sell mocktails and cocktails in the lobby to add to the lively libation-centric theme of the show.

Although her intention has never been to create an alternative to what many consider stuffy, more traditional ballet, she embraces the wide range of audiences her show attracts, and she’s made it her mission to bring more people into the ballet world.

“We really are a classical company. I’m just extremely lucky that I have a pop sensibility,” she said. “I don’t lower the bar, but I have to say, people do take a risk and say, ‘I’m going to give this a try.’ It’s an audience builder. ... We’ve been touring all over the states and finding very appreciative audiences this way.”

Niki Kottmann is the Wyoming Tribune Eagle’s features editor. She can be reached at [nkottmann@wyomingnews.com](mailto:nkottmann@wyomingnews.com) or 307-633-3135. Follow her on Twitter [@niki\\_mariee](https://twitter.com/niki_mariee).



## Cheyenne Civic Center launches season with “Cocktail Hour: The Show”

Go & Do | September 12, 2019



**Tamara Markard**  
tmarkard@greeleytribune.com



The Cheyenne Civic Center launches its 2019-20 season with a show that puts a unique twist on dance and cocktails.

“Cocktail Hour: The Show” takes the stage at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 4, bringing popular cocktails like the Mai Tai, Manhattan and Martini to life through music, dance and visual optics.

Fascinated with the many different types of cocktails, artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus came up with the idea to bring life and personality to liquor through musical dance performances.

“My parents loved to do social dancing and turned their outdoor patio into a dancing club,” Klaus said. “They also had this hidden bar with all of these gorgeous bottles; kind of like collectors items. “I always thought that was kind of magical,” she added.



Brandy Alexander from *Cocktail Hour: The Show*.

Photo by Nico Malvaldi





Zombie from *Cocktail Hour: The Show*.

Photo by Nico Malvaldi

After moving to New York to work in choreography, Klaus slipped into the idea of creating individual vignettes that “tapped into American, European and Asian cocktails.”

“I’m sure one of the reasons people drink cocktails is because they are so creative,” Klaus said. “They can be so evocative.”

During the show, 15 classically trained dancers from Klaus’ New York City-based company Ballets with a Twist take audience members on a libations filled journey.

Some of the drink-inspired dances featured in the show are the “Brandy Alexander,” “Shirley Temple” and “Mint Julep.”

The show’s opening performance, “Zombie,” features the undead at a Wurlitzer-fueled 1950s American pool party, which is perfect for the October and Halloween season, Klaus said.

“We are closing our program in Cheyenne with our newest dance cocktail the ‘Hot Toddy’,” Klaus said. “It’s a speak easy type of thing where all of the people elude the police.”

While the new addition to the show is only eight minutes long, the choreography and design took more than two years to create, Klaus said.

#### **i** If you go

**What:** Cocktail Hour: The Show

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 4

**Where:** Cheyenne Civic Center,  
519 W. 20th St. Cheyenne,  
Wyo.

**Cost:** Tickets range from \$20 to \$40. Seasonal subscriptions are available.

For more information or to purchase tickets, go to <http://www.cheyenneevents.org> or call (307) 637-6363.



Mint Julep from *Cocktail Hour: The Show*.

Photo by Nico Malvaldi

Denver native Seth Ives is one of the dancers in the show.

“When Marilyn hired me as a dancer, she didn’t know at the time I was also a bartender,” Ives said. “So a lot of the cocktails featured in the show, I knew how to make. So it was kind of a fun way of mixing my day job with dance.”

Coincidentally, Ives favorite cocktail to drink is also one of the dances he performs in.

“Right now I am in to gin martinis, just slightly dirty with a couple of olives,” Ives said, laughing. “Which is funny because I am in a dance called ‘Martini’ as well. It’s a fun performance and kind of James Bond-ish.”

In addition to featuring professional dancers, Klaus is offering a workshop and performance opportunity to local young dancers.

“We are performing a piece called ‘Mint Julep’ and the little ponies in the show will be dancers from Cheyenne,” Klaus said. “We are taking young dancers from the Cheyenne ballet school there and they will be performing with us.”

The dance company performs around 20 shows a year, sometimes more, Klaus said.

The show has made its way across the U.S., performing at a variety of venues such as the Playhouse Square in Cleveland, Zeiders American Dream Theater in Virginia and the Beacon Theatre in New York City.

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— Tamara Markard is the Go+Do reporter for the Greeley Tribune, covering things to go and do in Greeley, Evans, Windsor and surrounding Weld County. Reach her at [tmarkard@greeleytribune.com](mailto:tmarkard@greeleytribune.com), (970) 392-4440, or on Twitter @Tmarkard1.





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# Ballets With A Twist

By ERIN JONES • SEP 27, 2019

PROGRAM  
Features



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BALLETS WITH A TWIST



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A [New York City ballet company](#) is coming to Cheyenne, with a performance called *Cocktail Hour: The Show*. It's exactly what it sounds like: dance vignettes of drinks. The Bloody Mary, the Mint Julep, the Shirley Temple...all performed with original choreography, music, and costumes. This is classical ballet with a twist. Wyoming Public Radio's Erin Jones got the scoop from choreographer Marilyn Klaus.

The show will be served up with drinks, and it's family-friendly. You can see *Cocktail Hour* at the Cheyenne Civic Center on the evening of Friday, October 4.

*Have a question about this story? Contact the reporter, Erin Jones, at [ejones29@uwyo.edu](mailto:ejones29@uwyo.edu).*



## 'Cocktail Hour' dance to begin fall arts season

News

Adam Tumino, Reporter  
September 18, 2019



On the menu at the Doudna Fine Arts Center this Thursday and Friday will be "Cocktail Hour: The Show," the signature work of New York City-based company Ballets with a Twist. The show is a collection of dance vignettes, or cocktails, each named after and representing a different beverage. The shows will take place at 7:30 p.m. both nights. Tickets are \$25 and beverages, including special cocktails and mocktails, will be available.

Ballets with a Twist was founded by choreographer and artistic director Marilyn Klaus and composer Stephen Gaboury in 1996. Klaus said she began putting together the vignettes around that time, but the show was performed for the first time in 2009. "We have about 33 dance vignettes now," Klaus said. "We make a few every year." Since there are so many cocktails to choose from, Ballets with a Twist will perform a different program each night. "I try to figure out what will be a good program and make sure each dancer has enough interesting material to perform," Klaus said, although there are restrictions to which vignettes can be performed in succession.

Dancers Claire Mazza and Andres Neira will perform in the show, and each have a favorite cocktail that will be included at Doudna. "I'm partial to 'Mojito,' which was more recently made," Mazza said. "It's a dance made for six people, but three couples. And I've done two of the different couples so far." She said she enjoys how each couple does different things during the performance and tell their own stories. Neira said his favorite vignette is "Cuba Libre," in part because it was choreographed for him. "It's like my baby," Neira said. "Mojito" and "Cuba Libre" are actually both part of a three-movement piece called "Rum Runner." Along with a third segment, "Caipirinha," this piece will be the final one performed in Friday's show.

Dan Crews, the director of programming at Doudna, said he has been working on getting Ballets with a Twist to campus for a couple of years, and it worked out to have them open the 2019-2020 season. "I looked at them and thought 'that's something that I think would appeal to the people who come to Doudna events,'" Crews said. "We have an audience that's kind of hungry for dance."

Mazza said she thinks the show can also appeal to people who may not be familiar with dance. "It has something for everybody," she said. "It spans from ballet through contemporary to jazz. Each of the spirits of the pieces, pun intended, is also diversified." Neira said people who are new to dance shows could be impressed. "I would call it eclectic," Neira said. "I think it is a perfect show for somebody who has never seen a dance show. It's a perfect gateway to fall in love with it."

*Adam Tumino can be reached at 581-2812 or [ajtumino@eiu.edu](mailto:ajtumino@eiu.edu)*

## Cocktail Hour opens season with dancing, high 'spirits'

Adam Tumino, Reporter  
September 22, 2019

News



The Doudna Fine Arts Center opened its 2019-20 season with a twist, specifically the New York City-based dance company Ballets with a Twist.

They performed their signature program, "Cocktail Hour: The Show" in the Doudna Theatre on the nights of Sept. 20 and 21. Providing a mix of original choreography, music and costumes, the show was attended by both students and community members.

"Cocktail Hour" consists of many dance vignettes, called cocktails, that each represent a different cocktail or mocktail, some of which were available outside the theater. Community members Kristi Lawson and Zeena Christopher said they enjoyed the show.

"I thought it was very fun," Lawson said. "I liked the second half very much."

"They had some very good costumes," Christopher said. "I liked the 'Boilermaker' myself."

"Boilermaker," a solo dance by Morgan Stinnett, was one of the eight cocktails that was a solo dance. The other nine cocktails featured two or more of the dancers.

The dances consisted of many different styles of dance, and the music ranged from classical to techno-punk with other components stirred in.

A standout section of the show came in the second half. Claire Mazza's solo "Manhattan" was about a young woman out walking her dog in New York City at night. Mazza guided the dog, which was a prop on wheels, across the stage as she danced.

The next dance, a solo by Andres Neira called "Cin Cin," tied in "Manhattan" near the end. Neira danced across the stage with a tablecloth, and received praise from the audience when he spun it rhythmically onto a nearby table.

As the performance reached its end, Mazza and her dog entered the restaurant and sat at the table, joining Neira for a romantic dinner.

But perhaps the highlight of the show was the three-part finale, the Latin-themed “Rum Runner.”

It began with “Mojito,” which was set in a nightclub and featured three couples dancing through the night.

This was followed by “Cuba Libre,” a duet for Andres Neira and Catherine Walsh, and “Caipirinha,” which implemented the entire ensemble to bring the show to a close.

Many of the cocktails were also humorous. The Western-themed “Roy Rogers” featured Stinnett, although he did not do much dancing, and Amy Gilson. Stinnett stood in the middle of the stage as Gilson danced around him, lassoing him in various ways.

Tori Hey’s solo dance, “Sputnik,” also got a few laughs from the audience because of its goofy sci-fi theme and cathartic scream midway through.

Senior Spanish major Amanda Kiessling said “Sputnik” was a highlight for her, but she enjoyed the show as a whole.

“I didn’t expect a lot of what happened, but I’m glad it happened,” Kiessling said. “There was so much emotion in each dance.”

Junior English major Mariah Smith said she was not sure if she wanted to attend but was glad she did.

“There was so much stuff going on, I couldn’t really focus on one particular thing,” Smith said. “All of them were amazing.”

*Adam Tumino can be reached at 581-2812 or [ajtumino@eiu.edu](mailto:ajtumino@eiu.edu)*

Cocktail Hour

Cocktail Hour: The Show

Dancing

Doudna Fine Arts Center

Spirits



# 12 Things to Do This Week in NYC: August 9th – August 15th, 2019

 Nicole Saraniero 08/08/2019  ARTS & CULTURE, EVENTS, NEW YORK, NEWS

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*Photograph by Nico Malvaldi. Courtesy of Ballets with a Twist*

This week in New York City, join a math march, hear music from a historic piano, uncover the secrets of the Brooklyn Bridge and so much more. Our Untapped Picks for things to do will take outdoors and inside some of the city's most exciting institutions. Check out what's going on:

## Saturday, August 10th

Summer Streets will take over Park Ave once again this Saturday. The route from Brooklyn Bridge up to 72nd street will be closed to cars and open to pedestrians, runners, bikers and all kinds of outdoor activities as well as entertainment. This Saturday, at the Astor Place Rest Stop stage (Astor Place and Lafayette Street) you can see [Ballets with a Twist's Cocktail Hour: The Show](#) at 12pm. The performance is part of the first ever Summer Streets Dance Festival. Brooklyn's L Train Brass Band will also be on the scene, providing live music for several dance cocktail selections.



## The NYC Department of Transportation's First Dance Fest Features Ballets With a Twist



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A Mai Tai kind of Friday 🍹 Cocktail Hour: The Show 🎤 @nico\_malvaldi

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#maitai #balletswithatwist #btwist #cocktailhourtheshow #tgif #fridayfeeling #fridayfun #happyhour #dance #ballet #ballerina #balletlove #balletpost #instaballet #instadaily #worldwideballet #performance #show #beauty #lines #tutu #fishnets #pointe #hawaii #dancenyc #nycnightlife #nycevents #nyc #danceevent

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On **August 10**, New York-based company Ballets With a Twist brings dance to the streets as part of the New York City Department of Transportation's annual Summer Streets event. Ballets With a Twist will perform their signature work *Cocktail Hour: The Show* as part of the first ever Summer Streets-affiliated dance festival. The performance will feature live music by Brooklyn's L Train Brass Band. The festival also features the neoclassical company XAOC Contemporary Ballet.



# Things to Do With Kids in N.Y.C. This Summer

Summer is still going strong, but you've run out of ideas to keep the kids busy. Here, we offer some suggestions.

Aug 1, 2019



**Summer Streets** along Lafayette Street and Park Avenue, from Brooklyn Bridge to 72nd Street (Aug. 3, 10 and 17) Nearly seven miles of city streets will be open to pedestrians and cyclists from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first three Saturdays in August. There'll be a range of programming along the way, including a performance on Aug. 10 by the TriBeCa-based company Ballets With a Twist at the Astor Place Rest Stop stage (Astor Place and Lafayette Street).

[nyc.gov/summerstreets](http://nyc.gov/summerstreets)



# Avenel PAC to host Ballets with a Twist

## Bob Makin

Central Jersey Courier News and Home News  
Tribune  
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

New York City-based Ballets with a Twist's "Cocktail Hour: The Show" kicks off a five-show run on Aug. 1 at Avenel Performing Arts Center that will incorporate the new Woodbridge Township venue's Curtains Bar.

The fractured fine art will feature mai-tais, martinis, Manhattans and more off the menu and onto the stage through a mix of original choreography, music and design, producers said. Beer, wine and a special selection of cocktails and mocktails will be available at Curtains, as well as in the lobby.

"Cocktail Hour: The Show' is unlike any other show we've had at the Avenel Performing Arts Center," PAC Executive and Artistic Director Anthony Wilkinson said. "We want to offer our audience the opportunity to experience different types of arts programming, and this dance company is the perfect fit. The production brings a unique twist to ballet."

Created by artistic director-choreographer Marilyn Klaus, "Cocktail Hour" reinvents the glamour and excitement of classic entertainment with a pop-infused performing arts experience featuring the magnetism of Hollywood's Golden Age within a sleek 21st-century sensibility. The timeless American spirit is expressed in a series of witty, sparkling vignettes that is fun for all ages.

Program highlights include:

■ "Hot Toddy" — A premiere red-hot rollick through the Roaring Twenties.

■ "Martini" — A dangerous percussive score sets the stage for a blonde bombshell super-spy, who dodges sharpshooters and stays cool in hot situations.

■ "Cuba Libre" — Sparks flying on a hot Havana night when rum and cola collide.

"I've always had a vision of creating 'big' entertainment with an intimate feel, and that's what 'Cocktail Hour: The Show' is all about, blowing audiences away while also drawing them in," Ballets with a Twist Artistic Director Marilyn Klaus said. "We pair ballet and other dance styles with original music ranging from pop and Gospel to Latin and jazz. We combine elaborate costume design with outrageous lighting concepts

## Cocktail Hour

**When:** 8 p.m. Aug. 1 and 2; 2 and 8 p.m. Aug. 3; and 3 p.m. Aug. 4

**Where:** Avenel Performing Arts Center, 150 Avenel St., Woodbridge

**Cost:** \$39.50; discounts available for seniors, active military and groups of 10 or more

**Info:** 732-314-0500, [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com) or [avenelarts.com](http://avenelarts.com)

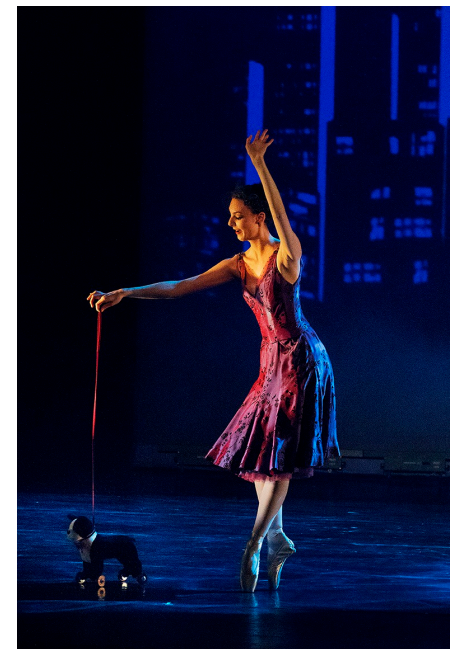
and animations. Essentially, we bring a colorful, glamorous nightlife atmosphere to the stage — and we have fun doing it!"

Klaus, whose choreography has been seen internationally, formed Ballets with a Twist in association with Grammy-nominated composer Stephen Gaboury and costume designer Catherine Zehr. Her company — lauded for "blasting the boundaries between high art and entertainment" — has appeared in a wide range of venues throughout the country, ranging from Cleveland's Playhouse Square and New York City's Beacon Theatre to Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and the Tribeca Film Festival.

Gaboury's compositions have been performed by celebrated musicians nationwide. As a pianist, he has collaborated and toured the world with Cyndi Lauper for more than a decade. Most recently, he joined her alongside New York Pops at Carnegie Hall and Los Angeles Philharmonic at Hollywood Bowl. He also has accompanied Patti Labelle, Norah Jones, and Sarah McLachlan, and has performed at internationally televised events, such as the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony and the New Year's Eve Times Square Ball Drop. His film credits include "Boyhood" and "American Beauty."

Zehr honed her skills while working at major American fashion houses, then designing and manufacturing for her own label.

She studied art and design at Washington University and New York City's Fashion Institute of Technology, where she and the company delivered the presentation "Designing Costumes for Ballets with a Twist" as part of The Museum at FIT's Fashion Culture series.





## DANCE

Home / Entertainment / Arts & Theater / Dance

# At this Beach show, the drinks will dance before your very eyes

By Teresa Annas  
Correspondent  
May 16, 2019



Nico Malvaldi

Part of “Cocktail Hour: The Show” from Ballets with a Twist includes this vision of Champagne.

Don't hand choreographer Marilyn Klaus a drink! She's liable to turn that libation into a dancier creation.

Scoot back in time to her childhood – late 50s, early 60s – for the reason. Her California-cool parents threw glamorous dance parties every Saturday night on the patio, dressed to the max and swing-dancing to big band records. They served a festive array of cocktails.

Klaus has delightful memories of that elegant scene. It inspired her signature work, crafted for her lower Manhattan dance company – short, clever dances that pay homage to that glittering era of classic cocktails and unabashed entertainment.

Her company, Ballets With a Twist, brings its “Cocktail Hour: The Show” this weekend to Zeiders American Dream Theater, with performances Saturday and Sunday.

Klaus stressed that her show is fast-paced and fun, with most of the 14 scheduled dances running from about 3 to 7 minutes. “I feel almost like a pop music producer. I like to get in there, make my point and move on,” Klaus said.

Each dance is based on a drink. Think Mai Tai, Martini, Manhattan. Her company’s dancers are classically trained, but perform in many styles.

Don’t expect movement interpreting a squirt of lime or a splash of grenadine. The ingredients may be listed as part of the videos shown during each dance, but will not be illustrated via bodies in space.

What Klaus came up with is a little more complicated than that. After deciding on a drink, she goes into her studio to choreograph, “and I just get lost.” She’s instinctual.

“I think most of my ingredients are cultural, artistic ingredients,” she said.

For “Singapore Sling: Fan Tasia,” she reflected on a trip she took to Singapore with her husband, Stephen Gaboury, who composes the music for nearly all of her work. They were in Southeast Asia on a tour with pop icon Cyndi Lauper; Gaboury is Lauper’s longtime keyboardist/pianist.

“Sling” features five women dancers in tutus made from paper fans, designed by the company’s costumer, Catherine Zehr. “There’s never been a tutu like this in history,” Klaus said.

Singapore’s humidity is part of what inspired the movement. “You feel the molecules are heavier in the air. You’re more aware of the body’s resistance.”

A history nut, Klaus knew that the Bloody Mary hangover remedy was named after Mary Tudor, the 16th century English monarch who murdered Protestants. She made “Bloody Mary: Royal Pain” a solo dance, in red tutu, gloves and headdress.

As to tone, it’s the program’s most serious dance. Mary’s moves, along with Gaboury’s harpsichord score, show her growing into an imperious queen capable of ordering executions.



## IF YOU GO

**What:** “Cocktail Hour: The Show,” presented by Ballets With a Twist

**When:** 8 p.m. Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday

**Where:** Zeiders American Dream Theater, 4509 Commerce St., Virginia Beach

**Tickets:** \$45, 757-499-0317, [thez.org](http://thez.org)

Many lighter notes will balance those three grave minutes, from a mirroring duet of Shirley Temples (subtitled “Hip Hopscotch,” and performed by Latin teens in dreadlocks) to the sparkly “Champagne” – her first drink-dance, created in the early 1970s.

So far, she’s built a choreographer’s cabinet of 33 drinks. Now she can return to a venue “and do another round of cocktails.”

The Z will serve cocktails with this show. Just don’t expect Klaus to join you. “I actually don’t drink.”

# Danceable Cocktails

May 11, 2019 | Dance, Stage & Film



Ballets with a Twist (Brandy Alexander from Cocktail Hour The Show) Photo by Nico Malvaldi

By Michael Curry

What's your favorite? Brandy Alexander perhaps. Or the Singapore Sling, a Bloody Mary or a good old Manhattan? Of course you recognize the names as classic drinks made famous by the glamorous stars of the golden age of Hollywood. But, there's a twist – and a tasty one at that – these legendary cocktails are also the names of individual ballets or vignettes and they all make up the menu/program for the upcoming performances of the highly inventive New York-based company Ballets with a Twist, being featured at Zeiders American Dream Theater on Saturday May 18 and Sunday May 19.

Hailed by The New York Times as “witty and fantastic” and simply “wonderful” by Dance Magazine, this is a show full of fun, virtuosity, dazzling costumes, enticing music and choreography and stunning dancing. “Like Twyla Tharp’s wonderfully convoluted madcap pieces for the Joffrey and ABT, it seems to be operating on a dozen levels at once,” said Dance Magazine.

Founded in 2009 as a unique collaboration between choreographer Marilyn Klaus, composer Stephen Gaboury and costume designer Catherine Zehr, Ballets with a Twist is breaking boundaries, enticing new and younger audiences to the magic of dance, and earning the highest accolades from critics and audiences alike.

## **THE SHOW — COCKTAIL HOUR**

Cocktail Hour revisits and reinvents the glamour and glitz of Hollywood’s golden age of entertainment with an intoxicating mix of charismatic choreography, exquisite costume design and alluring music. It is a pop-infused experience that brings a sleek 21st-century sensibility to the magnetism of the enduring legends of the golden age. In a collection of witty and sparkling pieces, Cocktail Hour is great fun for all ages. The company of 11 superb dancers, coming to Virginia for the very first time, brings to life the creative genius of choreography, music and costume in an intimate show that is an irresistible blend of night club and theatrical styles.

Choreographer Marilyn Klaus speaks fondly and enthusiastically about the influences that infuse the show. “Having grown up in Hollywood, I used to watch the iconic movies of Busby Berkeley almost every day,” she recalls. “At the time, I didn’t fully realize that his works were created for film. I trained as a dancer and then moved to New York where I established a studio and started creating pieces based on my memories and the glamour of Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly and Ginger Rodgers.” That creative process is still percolating as Marilyn has now created a catalogue or collection of more than 30 of these lively dances, 13 of which will be performed on the program here at The Z. Taking the audience on a journey around the world, Klaus’ main focus has always been to create an uplifting and memorable experience. “I want the audience to savor the magic of a real night life event as that seems to be something disappearing from our culture,” she adds.



In these performances, you will follow the dancers on trips and treks through tropical paradise - The Mai Tai - an homage to film noir - Boilermaker (but don't test a ticking time bomb) - and a steamy night in Havana - Cuba Libre - when sparks fly as rum and cola collide! Then of course, there's 007's famed choice, The Martini, as well as The Shirley Temple (hip-hopscotch), Roy Rogers (rope a dope), Gimlet (lost love and classic jazz) and Singapore Sling (a fan-t-asia on the beauty of cherry blossoms).

## **THE MUSIC**

Every piece on the program is of course different while all of the music is original, composed by Grammy nominated Stephen Gaboury. Also a producer and performer, Gaboury has been a long time collaborator with pop and rock icon, Cyndi Lauper. Indeed, he just performed with her at Carnegie Hall at the end of April. For ten years, he toured and performed with Lauper internationally and also worked with her on her hit Broadway musical, Kinky Boots. He has also performed with many other legends of our times including Patti Labelle, Suzanne Vega, Nora Jones and Ute Lemper. He has also performed at the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony and at the New Year's Eve Times Square festivities. His music has been featured in concerts, on television and motion pictures (including Boyhood and American Beauty). Stephen also regularly directs the Ballets with a Twist orchestra in live performances with the company.

## **THE COSTUMES**

Known for dazzling colors and ornamentations, Catherine Zehr has been creating the stunning costumes for Ballets with a Twist ever since the company gave its first performances. Having worked at some of New York's major fashion houses she created her own label and line of apparel. She studied art and design at Washington University and at the prestigious New York Fashion Institute of Technology. She and Marilyn Klaus first met when Catherine's daughter was studying at Marilyn's school. Catherine of course now has her own design studio and her creations have been seen throughout the country. She and the company of dancers were featured in a highly acclaimed presentation, Designing Costumes for Ballets with a Twist, at the Museum of the Fashion Institute.

Ballets with a Twist's Cocktail Hour evokes a time when entertainment was an engaging and vibrant experience. Bringing timeless American spirits to life, the show also evokes the exotic flavors and creations of such legendary Hollywood haunts Trader Vic's and Coconut Grove.

## **YOU'LL LOVE IT**

Drama, mystery, humor, romance — Cocktail Hour: The Show has it all. Cocktail Hour is also a perfect fit for the region's newest performing arts venue – The Z – which is dedicated to fostering and introducing new works and exceptionally gifted artists – creating an exciting connection between performers and audience on its thrust stage.

As an added bonus, beer, wine and a special selection and cocktails and mocktails will be available in the lobby.

## **WANT TO GO?**

**Ballets with a Twist presents Cocktail Hour: The Show**

**Saturday, May 18 at 8pm**

**Sunday, May 19, at 2pm**

**Zeiders American Dream Theater**

[www.thez.org](http://www.thez.org)

## DAILY Southtown

# New York's Ballets with a Twist brings 'Cocktail Hour' to Palos Hills



"Singapore Sling" is one of the pieces that Ballets with a Twist from New York City performs during "Cocktail Hour: The Show" on April 6 at Moraine Valley Community College's Fine and Performing Arts Center's Dorothy Menker Theater in Palos Hills. (Nico Malvaldi)

By **Jessi Virtusio**

Daily Southtown

March 29, 2019, 8:30 AM

"Brandy Alexander." "Bloody Mary." "Singapore Sling."

They are drinks from a bar menu but also dances in a program coming to Palos Hills.

Ballets with a Twist presents "Cocktail Hour: The Show" April 6 in the Dorothy Menker Theater as part of Moraine Valley Community College's Fine and Performing Arts Center's 25th anniversary season.



“In this show there are seven ladies and five gentlemen. It is an international cast,” said Marilyn Klaus, artistic director and choreographer of Ballets with a Twist, via phone from the company’s New York City studio where rehearsals were beginning later that day.

“They’re all beautifully classically trained dancers and they are also very fine actors and actresses so they tend to really take advantage of the material to reach out and really connect with the audience. We’ve tried to really create the feeling of a nightlife scene,” she said.

“Our lighting is like that too so the dancers are all quite individual, which is very different than a bigger classical company where they need to have everybody looking very similar. We have quite the group. Everyone is quite individual.”

Highlights in “Cocktail Hour: The Show” include “Manhattan,” which features a jazz trumpet echoing the mood of the changing skyline along Park Avenue.



Highlights during Ballets with a Twist’s “Cocktail Hour: The Show” on April 6 in Palos Hills include the number “Martini” in which a percussive score sets the stage for a blonde bombshell superspy to dodge sharpshooters. (Nico Malvaldi)

“Gimlet,” which is set to a classic jazz ballad, and “Martini,” which features a percussive score, are billed as some of the other must-sees in “Cocktail Hour: The Show.”

“All the music is original. Our composer is Stephen Gaboury,” said Klaus, who also cited costume designer Catherine Zehr and lightning designer Dan Hansell as other essential elements in crafting “Cocktail Hour: The Show.”

“We really aim to entertain. We wanted to create an experience inspired by American culture of the 1960s and even going into the 1970s when people really did go to Las Vegas for the floor shows,” she said.

“The other thing we have that’s really fun is wonderful animated projections that are behind us as we’re dancing, which also impart the flavor of the dance.”

Beer, wine and a selection of cocktails and mocktails will be available throughout the evening in the lobby.

“Cocktail Hour: The Show” features drama, humor, mystery and romance and also includes “Mai Tai,” the first cocktail that Klaus presented in 1996.

“I had been working on all the different individual cocktails and I put them together for the first time in ‘Cocktail Hour: The Show’ in 2009. I was able to put together all these vignettes as a show. Since that time we’ve been touring and building up our repertory,” she said.

“Each dance is a complete world. Even though they’re short, when the audience sees them they really dive into a complete three-minute world.”

Klaus, who started studying classical ballet after accompanying her father to ballet lessons, drew from what she saw at home as inspiration for the current show.

“My parents were avid social dancers. They really loved the music from the Great American Songbook. Our home was really filled with that. We even had a room in the house that had been an outdoor patio. They had it enclosed and put a wooden dancing floor down,” she said.

“We were in the suburbs near Hollywood, California. Their friends would come once a month. They would go to each other’s homes and dance together. They dressed up. This was in the ‘60s,” she said.

“They also had a little bar where they could mix cocktails so their friends would have cocktails. I guess I always put dancing and cocktails together. I was dancing my whole life. When it came time to choose a career, I decided I would come to New York.”

“Cocktail Hour: The Show,” which is the signature production of Ballets with a Twist ([www.balletswithatwist.com](http://www.balletswithatwist.com)), has been performed in a variety of venues from nightclubs to Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City.

“Putting the music and the costuming and the magnificent performers all together in one place is really quite a thrill. Really every time I see the show come together I am so happy,” Klaus said.

“It is a lot of detail-oriented work so it is rather wonderful when all those details come together in one big one-and-a-half-hour show.”

### **‘Cocktail Hour: The Show’**

**When:** 7:30 p.m. April 6

**Where:** Moraine Valley Community College’s Fine and Performing Arts Center’s Dorothy Menker Theater, 9000 W. College Parkway, Palos Hills

**Tickets:** \$30 general public; \$25 seniors and staff; \$10 students and children

**Information:** 708-974-5500; [www.morainevalley.edu/fpac](http://www.morainevalley.edu/fpac)

*Jessi Virtusio is a freelancer for the Daily Southtown.*

# ‘Ballets With a Twist’ leads the way in reaching new audiences

DEC  
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2018

Dance · Fashion · Music

ballets with a twist catherine zehr marilyn klaus stephen gaboury wfmw



It doesn't feel like they do it to fulfill a foundation, or government, 'outreach' grant — although [they certainly deserve one](#). They seem to do it by instinct, by coupling brains, creativity and talent with a genuine desire to connect and entertain. That's why I applaud boutique ballet company **'Ballets With a Twist'** for its successful strategy of adding extra value to a general audience's experience. The company's swirling [cocktail-themed repertoire](#) is putting new eyes on dance, and that's something the dance world desperately needs given the recent shutterings of Jessica Lang Dance Company, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and Trey McIntyre Project.

At BWAT, cabaret is not a dirty word. It's an opportunity. "Cocktail Hour: The Show" starts by ceding dance's hegemony over fellow art forms. Company artistic director **Marilyn Klaus** puts her dancers in front of an audience with old-fashioned values. The witty and wonderful costumes are finessed by designer **Catherine Zehr** (she is a modern tutu master). Whenever possible, the troupe dances to live accompaniment by the B-Twist Orchestra led by Grammy-nominated keyboardist/composer **Stephen Gaboury** (for more than a decade a band member and musical arranger for Cyndi Lauper). And they travel to the audience, last evening presenting "Cocktail Hour: The Show" at Jersey City's White Eagle Hall — a highly non-traditional place to view dance. The audience got drink service throughout the program, and a nearby restaurant offered a prix-fixe dinner for show-goers. Win-win-win-win.

I plucked and re-posted, below, several of the engaging 'comments' following a [podcast on WFMU](#) of an interview with Klaus (begins 05:18) in advance of the Jersey City show. I find the comments to be charming (mostly) and wonderful for dance. Not a single one comes from a balletomane. This stiff jigger of arts entrepreneurialism is shaken, or stirred, with Klaus's double-shot of ballet-romanticism. Chin-chin to our friends at Ballets With a Twist ~!





## ENTERTAINMENT/THEATER

**Ballets with a Twist bellies up to the barre with 'Cocktail Hour'**

Famous drinks inspire the intoxicating dances presented in Westhampton Beach.



"Mojito" is one of the numbers performed by Ballet With a Twist in "Cocktail Hour: The Show" at Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center. Photo Credit: Nico Malvaldi

**By Deidre S. Greben**

Special to Newsday

Updated August 21, 2018 6:00 AM

"Music, dancing, and cocktails." That is how Marilyn Klaus remembers her childhood growing up near the glam and glitz of Hollywood in the late 1950s and '60s.

"My parents were social ballroom dancers, and by the time I was 11 or 12 my dad started taking me to the clubs," she says. They also hosted monthly Saturday night soirees in their Los Angeles living room.

Unable to shake that world after moving to New York, Klaus re-created it as the artistic director and choreographer of Ballets with a Twist. The nine-year-old dance company's critically acclaimed signature production "Cocktail Hour: The Show," a heady brew of ballet and beverages, makes its Long Island debut Saturday at the Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center.

"The cocktail focus is cultural, imparting the flavors and perfumes of the period," Klaus explains, likening the dancers to actors who stir up a gamut of emotions.

“There’s something for everyone,” says Claire Mazza, a soloist who trained at the School of American Ballet and joined the company two years ago, attracted by the chance to perform the show’s intoxicating mix of styles and genres.

Mazza is featured as the old-school drink “Pink Lady,” en pointe and dressed in a vintage pink tutu with black accents – satin gloves, beading and a tulle petticoat that is revealed with the dancer’s movements – by Ballets with a Twist costume designer Catherine Zehr. In the sultry “Mojito,” a partner and two couples join Mazza in a ballroom *danzón*, Cuba’s elegant national dance, while in “Brandy Alexander,” the ballerina appears as part of a clan of female warriors moving to martial music by Stephen Gaboury, the Grammy-nominated composer of the company’s original scores.

Other spirited performances from the troupe’s 24-vignette menu include the rebellious rockabilly number “Sputnik,” the “Roy Rogers” mocktail of Klaus’ youth, and the James Bond-inspired “Martini” with a twist (it features a female 007). Audience members can enjoy the “Lemon Drop” as it is conceived onstage, and, if they desire, as an aperitif or chaser for the first act available at the theater’s bar.

The Latin-themed “Rumrunner” suite keeps the heat up as the show’s last call, an enticing mix for local beachgoers to imbibe. “Ballet is often seen as too highbrow,” Klaus says. “For modern viewers, the program has to be fast-paced and fun. It has a show-floor feeling that is put onstage. The dancers have to reach across the lights and pull the audience in.”

**WHAT** “Cocktail Hour: The Show”

**WHEN | WHERE** 8 p.m., Saturday,

Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center, 76 Main St.

**INFO** \$55-\$70; 631-288-1500

Publication: The East Hampton Press & The Southampton Press

Aug 14, 2018 11:18 AM

## Ballets With A Twist Presents 'Cocktail Hour' At Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center On August 25



**UPDATED** Aug 14, 2018 11:25 AM

**By Jaime Zahl**

Manhattan based dance company Ballets with a Twist promises to transport audiences around the world in one evening with their latest show titled "Cocktail Hour," playing at Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center on Saturday, August 25. The show features a series of vignettes inspired by cocktails from all over the globe.

"The cocktails—I like to think of them as sort of snippets of cultural concepts," explained Ballets with a Twist's artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus.

She likens the experience of the show to that of a nightclub act in a performing arts venue. The show features original music created by Ballets with a Twist's resident composer Steve Gaboury, who said the show has a "pop sense" to it as opposed to a piece like "Swan Lake"—a full-length ballet with one theme.

"What's fun for me is that a number doesn't have to be any one specific genre. I just have to watch Marilyn create a piece and work from that," Mr. Gaboury explained. "It really ranges from jazz to pop to R&B. Sometimes it's gospel. Sometimes it's bluegrass. Sometimes it's classical. It's really fun for me that I can explore all these different genres."



Ms. Klaus noted that the show is rampant with echoes of popular culture and history—all linked to cocktails.

“I know with Mai Tai I was really influenced by growing up in Hollywood, California,” she said. She recalled dining at a restaurant with her parents called Trader Vic’s—a long-shuttered Polynesian-themed restaurant.

“They would serve my parents a Mai Tai, which would have an orchid floating in it. I thought that was just the height of glamor. When you’re 8 years old and you go into a place that has bamboo in it ... that type of thing,” she said.

Meanwhile, other numbers are inspired by pop culture ranging from James Bond to Audrey Hepburn to the Marx Brothers.

The numbers are accentuated with a skilled band—featuring drums, bass, guitar, keyboard, violin, trumpet, trombone and Mr. Gaboury, himself, on vocals—as well as elaborate costumes created by Catherine Zehr.

“It’s quite a visual feast. The costuming is very glamorous and really makes the ideas pop,” she explained.

In the “Martini” number, which Ms. Klaus said has a James Bond feel to it, the dancer’s tutus are shaped like an upside down martini glass. In another number, “Cuba Libre,” the female dancer dons heels while her male partner wears a toreador outfit.

“Whatever the theme of the piece seems to call for, we try to get that feel with the movement, the music, the lighting, the dance,” she said.

As a touring company, the group has already shared the unique show with thousands of audience members all over the country.

The team said they look forward to spreading their message to art lovers everywhere.

“The twist of the ballet is its wit, humor and point of view,” Ms. Klaus said. “The pieces are quick for a modern audience that is used to a lot of editing and seeing music videos. It does reach out and attempt to really grab the audience.”

Ballets with a Twist presents “Cocktail Hour: The Show” at the Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center on Saturday, August 25, at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$40, \$55 and \$70. Call 631-288-1500 or visit [whbpac.org](http://whbpac.org).

# The Scarsdale Inquirer



## Cocktails to choreo

Scarsdale dancers pour on the fun at WPPAC

By Danielle Rivera

Twenty years ago, choreographer Marilyn Klaus dreamed up a show marrying old Hollywood with traditional ballet. In the years since, that vision has exploded.

Since the world premiere of "Cocktail Hour: The Show" in 2009, Klaus has added dozens of vignettes channeling world cultures and histories, each inspired by a signature cocktail — or in some cases, a mocktail — think Shirley Temple meets hip-hop-inspired ballet, if you can picture it.

The New York Times called the show "witty and fantastic," and Broadway World dubbed it "pure pleasure."

On June 16, Klaus' Manhattan-based company, Ballets with a Twist, brings its spirits to the White Plains Performing Arts Center with an 8 p.m. performance, including two world premieres in its opening suite, "Soirée."



NICO MALVALDI PHOTOS

Ballets with a Twist dancers perform "Holy Water," top, and "Champagne," above, in "Cocktail Hour: The Show."

The first, "Lemon Drop," is a fast-paced, deliciously flirtatious classical duet, while "Swimming Pool," a dreamy, bluesy trio, circles around the idea of fate.

"It's the kind of thing when you start off, you don't really know if it's going to have legs," Klaus said. "You don't know where it's going to take you."

Looking back, the show's many pit stops have been at once surprising and delightful. Each 3- to 15-minute vignette transports viewers to a wholly different space—fizzling in Motown, Mexican mythology and James Bond with fluidity and style.

The WPPAC performance will feature five advanced students from Scarsdale's own Central Park Dance Studio: Isabella Iannelli, 8, Grace Recine, 9, Shana Weinstein, 9, Ivy Segal, 10, and Iris Liang, 12.

Another familiar face is Eastchester native Kimberly Giannelli, who will be a featured soloist in the show's opening and closing numbers.



Giannelli got her start in ballet fairly late in the game, beginning her studies at Scarsdale Ballet School at age 16. After graduating college, she continued dancing full time and made her return to Scarsdale Ballet, this time in the role of teacher.

"It's nice to have this vehicle for exploring that side of my career [be] so close to home," she said. "So many dancers ... are from all over the world and come to New York. I feel very lucky that I've been able to live out my dreams without having to uproot myself."

Giannelli has performed with Klaus' company for the last nine years, the best part of which is having a say in the creative process, she said.

"For a dancer, that's something really special because we are usually tools for the choreography ... Your job is to take that and interpret it within your own body, but definitely stick to the parameters of what it was."

Under Klaus, dancers have a chance to play with sequences and watch the product evolve, she said. Klaus agreed that sort of synergistic process works great for her.

"I usually work in silence, in a bare room, and just see what magic I can conjure," she said of her early process. "Let me tell you, that's not easy, but I think it's better."

With no end point in mind and a blank slate before her, Klaus lets her movement shape her narrative. From there, composer Stephen Gaboury creates the musical backdrop for each vignette, and costume designer Catherine Zehr paints over their joint musical vision with a decorative brush.

The results are at times poignant, others playful — an immersive tour through time and place set to music.

"In any show, you can live five different lifetimes because you're going into different cultures and places and times," Giannelli said.

Her favorite world to inhabit is "Holy Water," a bold, up-tempo ensemble piece following Giannelli as a Christlike character queerly clad in sequins. But don't sneer just yet — the company performed the piece at the iconic Beacon Theater in New York City, opening for Cyndi Lauper, in 2012.

"It has sort of a James Brown feeling to it, but it's also loosely rooted in the Bible," Giannelli said. "[That performance] was just so explosive and energizing."

Another highlight is the show's heavy use of animated projections in lieu of movable sets, though Klaus said she can't say much about that without spoiling a few of the troupe's many surprises.

WPPAC is located at 11 City Place in White Plains. Curtain rises at 8 p.m. Tickets start at \$27; available at [wppac.com/shows/cocktail-hour-the-show](http://wppac.com/shows/cocktail-hour-the-show).



NICO MALVALDI PHOTO

Dancers offer a tantalizing "Singapore Sling."



# FEBRUARY FUN-A-THON

February is not only the month of love and Valentine's Day, although we know that's exciting too. This month has lots going on outside of the romantic holiday; from medieval festivals to a hypnotic laser show, and even a swimsuit model party, there's plenty of events to mark down on your calendar.

By AALIYAH PASOLS



## MARTINI WITH A TWIST

Feb 9

[balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com)

Its Cocktail Hour: The Show! This performance put on by New York City based dance company Ballets with a Twist, will certainly leave your eyes wide with wonder. This show, created by artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus, reinvents the glamour and excitement of classical entertainment by taking cocktail favorites like Mai Tai, Martini, and Manhattan off of the menu and onto the stage through vibrant interpretations. Revel in a night full of mind-bending choreography, intoxicating music and incredible costume design! To fit the theme of the show, cocktails will be served all night so you can see your drink acted out on stage!

## A SOUTHERN AFFAIR

Feb 10

[beerandbourbon.com](http://beerandbourbon.com)

New this year to South Florida is the Beer, Bourbon, & BBQ Festival. With 60+ beers, 40+ bourbons, and lots of BBQ, there will be more than enough to keep you and your taste buds entertained. Regular admission includes a souvenir tasting glass, unlimited sampling of beer and bourbon, and all extra activities and shows like the live Rock & Blues concert, seminars in the Tasting Theater, games like giant jenga, and more. BBQ plates are extra but they promise to keep the "portions heavy and the prices low!"

## NOT ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL

Feb 10

[parkerplayhouse.com](http://parkerplayhouse.com)

Cutting-edge lasers and high-definition, large-screen video projection will allow you to experience Pink Floyd like you never have before. The Parker Playhouse presents Paramount's Laser Spectacular featuring the music of Pink Floyd. This show is considered a "mind-expanding journey" as the trippy-psychedelic sounds of Pink Floyd are accompanied by a colorful, immersive light show and concert-quality sound. Songs from Dark Side of the Moon and The Wall will be played, two of Pink Floyd's top charting albums.

## THOU SHALL SLAYETH

Feb 10-Mar 25

[ren-fest.com](http://ren-fest.com)

Travel back in time at the 26th Annual Florida Renaissance Festival. This huge festival offers so much to do that it's hard to accomplish it all in one day! Tour the artisan's village where you can purchase handcrafted items and unique souvenirs, get your medieval feast on and eat like a king with hearty portions, "drynk" all you can with favorites like liquor on a stick, and enjoy over 100 performers, games, and shows! Don't forget to dress up as your favorite medieval figure—it makes it all the more fun!



# HOW INTOXICATING

“Cocktail Hour: The Show” Dances Its Way Into Crest Theatre BY LINDA HAASE

Cheers to a new show at the Crest Theatre in Delray Beach that will tease your taste buds – and leave the rest of your senses in awe.

“Cocktail Hour: The Show,” on Feb. 9 at 8 p.m., includes dances with monikers like “Martini” and “Rum Runner,” and there will be a special selection of cocktails and mocktails complementing the program – all in the name of authenticity, of course.

“The show reinvents the glamour and excitement of classic entertainment with an original mix of charismatic chore-

ography, intoxicating music and exquisite costume design,” notes a press release. “The pop-infused performing arts experience combines the magnetism of Hollywood’s Golden Age with a sleek 21st century sensibility, capturing the timeless American spirit in a series of witty, sparkling vignettes. It’s high-style fun for all ages to enjoy.”

Performed by Ballets with a Twist, the showstopper includes the vignette “Singapore Sling,” described as simmering sirens gliding through an exotic soundscape to paint a haunting fantasy.



Notes the Ballets with a Twist website: “Drama, mystery, humor, romance – ‘Cocktail Hour: The Show’ has it all.”

Reviewers have been toasting the troupe for its creativity.

“Dance is literally intoxicating at Ballets with a Twist,” notes *Pointe* magazine. “The New

York City-based dance troupe is known for bringing cocktails to life on stage. It’s a concept that’s sure to bring a younger crowd to the theater.”

For more information, call 561-243-7922 or visit [oldschoolsquare.org](http://oldschoolsquare.org).

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# The Augusta Chronicle

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Ballets with a Twist will include the piece Holy Water just for the Augusta show to pay tribute to James Brown.  
NICO MALVALDI/SPECIAL

## Entertainment

## Imperial Theatre to kick off 100th year with ‘Cocktail Hour’

By Charmain Z. Brackett

Posted Jan 23, 2018 at 9:44 AM

It’s a unique cocktail party to kick off a year of celebrating the Imperial Theatre’s centennial. With its glitz and glam, Ballets With a Twist will present an array of cocktails during its Cocktail Hour show at 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 2, at the Imperial Theatre, 749 Broad St.

“This goes back to the night clubs in New York. It’s an original floor-style show. I love Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers,” said Marilyn Klaus, artistic director of Ballets With A Twist.

The group of classically trained ballet dancers will perform a series of vignettes based on cocktails to original music. The Martini gives a nod to one of the most famous martini drinkers, James Bond. The “recipe” for the dance includes “one blonde bombshell, two super spies, one big band and a shake,” according to the group’s website.



The Mai Tai dance features animation. The drink and dance have an island vibe, and a volcano in the background adds to it.

Holy Water is one number the group hasn't performed in a while, but Klaus said the dancers had to perform it in Augusta because the music has a gospel feel with a little bit of funk.

"It will be our finale in Augusta," she said. "It pays homage to Mr. James Brown."

Also performing will be members of the Academy of Richmond County marching band.

"About a year ago, I opened an email from Ballets With A Twist, and I thought 'this looks like a fun type of event for Augusta,'" said Charles Scavullo, Imperial Theatre executive director.

The Imperial Theatre opened on Feb. 18, 1918, as the Wells Theatre. In honor of its anniversary, four events are planned – one each quarter. There will be a hat party in May, but not to clash with Derby Day weekend. Columbia County Ballet will present *Cinderella* in September and a final event is planned for November, 100 years after Wells Theatre owner Jake Wells sold the theater.

Cocktail Hour tickets are \$20-\$28 from (706) 722-8341 or [imperialtheatre.com](http://imperialtheatre.com).



Ballets with a Twist is a group of classically trained ballet dancers who will perform a series of vignettes based on cocktails. The show at 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 2, will kick off the centennial celebrations for the Imperial Theatre.  
NICO MALVALDI/SPECIAL

# Aiken Standard

## Imperial Theatre to celebrate 100 years with 'Cocktail Hour: The Show'

By Christina Cleveland [ccleveland@aikenstandard.com](mailto:ccleveland@aikenstandard.com) Jan 20, 2018



**Ballets with a Twist at the Imperial - Grappa from "Cocktail Hour." The Imperial Theatre will kick off its 100th Anniversary celebration with New York City's Ballets with a Twist performing "Cocktail Hour: The Show," at 7 p.m. Feb. 2. Submitted/Nico Malvaldi**

The Imperial Theatre plans to stir local audiences as it celebrates its centennial.

The theater, located on 749 Broad St. in Augusta, will kick off its 100th Anniversary celebration with New York City's Ballets with a Twist performing "Cocktail Hour: The Show," at 7 p.m. Feb. 2.

Throughout the evening, a special selection of cocktails and "mocktails" complementing the program will be available in the lobby, according to a media release.

The show, which was created by artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus, "reinvents the glamour and excitement of classic entertainment with an original mix of charismatic choreography, intoxicating music and exquisite costume design," the statement details, combining "the magnetism of Hollywood's Golden Age with a sleek 21st century sensibility, capturing the timeless American spirit in a series of witty, sparkling vignettes."

The show features original music by Grammy-nominated composer Stephen Gaboury. Catherine Zehr is described as "the artistic force" behind the company's costume design.

"I couldn't do it without them," Klaus said. "We're really a team. They allow me to stretch my wings, and really go so I never feel held back by somebody saying, 'This is too wild. 'We'll never do this.' They're like, 'How can we make this happen?'"

Klaus said her idea in creating the show stemmed from her parents, who were avid social dancers that would entertain in the 1950s and 60s.

Later, aspects of her parents' generation, or post-war generation, "really sunk in" with her, she said.

"I really felt that audiences needed that again," Klaus added, "especially for dance, to have a slant of entertainment in ballet."

One day when working in the studio, Klaus remembers deciding the dance she was working on would be a Mai Tai. "It just came to me," she said.

By 2009, she added nine cocktails to her performance menu.

Klaus began working with Stephen Gaboury in the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1996, Klaus formed Ballets with a Twist and began working with costume designer Zehr.

From 1996 to 2008, the company appeared at a variety of venues and events throughout New York City, according to the show's website. "Cocktail Hour: The Show" premiered November 2009 at Manhattan Movement and Arts Center.

There are more than 20 cocktails served up as sharp vignettes for audiences to enjoy in the show. Program highlights included in the release are:

"Manhattan" — After a big-city evening, a socialite steps out with her dearest companion. As they stroll past each lamppost on Park Avenue, a jazz trumpet echoes the mood of the changing skyline.

"Singapore Sling" — Shimmering sirens glide through an exotic soundscape to paint this haunting fantasy.

"Grappa" — An Italian folktale takes a riotous turn in this spirited ensemble caper.

"It's fun, because they're really cultural cocktails," Klaus said. "It's a way our dancers can communicate with the audience. They know the names of these drinks, so they already have a feeling of what it is about. The communication is already set up. It's not a distant, elitist type of thing."

"It's a way for us to really be together and in on something together, and so when you think about it, it's important."

That, Klaus says, piques the interest of audiences who may have not attended the ballet before.

This show will also involve local elements including the Academy of Richmond County marching band. The show will also close with "Holy Water" as an homage to James Brown.

Klaus says she's looking forward to performing at the venue, which has recently undergone a renovation. A meet and greet with dancers will be held after the show.

General admission tickets are \$20-28. To purchase, visit [imperialtheatre.com](http://imperialtheatre.com) or call 706-722-8341.

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#### **Christina Cleveland**

Christina Cleveland is a reporter with the Aiken Standard and has been with the newspaper since October 2015. A native of Seneca, South Carolina, she holds a B.A. in Journalism and Mass Communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.





ARTS

## DOZENS OF COCKTAILS, BUT YOU WON'T GET TIPSY

New York ballet company to help kick off Imperial Theatre's 100th year

*written by Amanda Main | January 17, 2018*

A ballet company from New York City is coming to Augusta for the first time — to help the Imperial Theatre celebrate a whopping 100 years this February. It's actually the ballet company's first time to perform in all of Georgia; despite having been down to Florida several times, they've never even put on a show in Atlanta!

The theater's executive director, Charles Scavullo, is excited to have Ballets with a Twist in town to help commemorate the big milestone.



*Ballets with a Twist: Grappa from "Cocktail Hour: The Show"  
— Photo by Nico Malvaldi*

“The thought was to have a fun event to kick off 100th anniversary activities, and tie that into some sort of a culturally oriented event that would have some basis on what we normally do here at the theater and would be a fun kind of a show,” Scavullo said.

The classically trained company will be putting on their signature show: “Cocktail Hour: The Show” at 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 2.

Ballets with a Twist aims to entertain a broad audience. The company's founder and Artistic Director Marilyn Klaus elaborated about the show.

“The feeling is that people all over the world understand the sort of essences of social beverages, and a lot of these cultural types of cocktails make references to times or places or countries, and so when an audience sits down to take the show in, they immediately can relate to the experience,” Klaus said. “It's not a very ancient fairytale that they may never have heard of.”

“For instance, our martini piece is a real James Bond reference, which I have to say, everybody has seen those films. And those films have been popular for 20, 30 years, so while our score for that is original, it definitely is an homage to the Bond theme song. And we have it switched up a little bit where the protagonist, the super spy, is a blonde bombshell, and she has three G-Men who accompany her throughout her adventures. And these pieces are very, very quick, also to go along with sort of the modern attention span.”

Klaus, who grew up with a father who was a social ballroom dancer in a home where her parents converted their den into a dance studio/social club, has been working on and tweaking “Cocktail Hour: The Show” for decades. Each segment is based on a different drink (not all of them are alcoholic — there is a country-Western vignette based on the Roy Rogers, a kid-friendly concoction made of cola and grenadine with a maraschino cherry). Klaus said the segments range from two minutes all the way to 15 minutes, with the show lasting more than an hour, divided by an intermission.

The company has written vignettes for about 27 different drinks, which means they can go back to a venue where they’ve already performed it and do a completely different production of “Cocktail Hour: The Show.” Klaus said they try to tailor the shows to the area where they’re performing. For example, they are saving the Cuba Libre vignette for Latin audiences in Florida, during their upcoming stop in Delray Beach. For the upcoming Augusta show, the last segment they’re doing seems meant to be for the town.

“We’re closing the show with Holy Water, which a lot of it surprisingly and interestingly enough is an homage to James Brown,” Klaus said. “I adore James Brown’s music; our composer does, as well, so there was no way we were going to go to Augusta, Georgia, without closing with Holy Water.”

The company also reached out to the Academy of Richmond County Purple Pride Marching Band, which has been working on music for the show for a couple of months and will be at the Imperial Theatre to accompany the dancers in a big way.

Klaus started working with the company’s composer, Stephen Gaboury, in the 1980s and ’90s before forming Ballets with a Twist in 1996. The company has done shows with big names including Cyndi Lauper. Ballets with a Twist premiered “Cocktail Hour: The Show” in November 2009. The show consists of 14 dancers, and the company is still working on more vignettes to showcase in the future.

At the Augusta show, the Imperial plans to sell some of the cocktails that are featured in the production. There also will be an after-party hosted by the Augusta Ballet, with a meet and greet featuring dancers.

The Imperial Theatre has more events planned throughout the year to commemorate 100 years (the official anniversary is Feb. 18). Details are still being worked out, but the theater is planning a Hat Party on May 4 — a day before the Kentucky Derby, hence the hats. That event will include a screening of the Marx Brothers’ film “A Day at the Races.” Then in September, the Columbia County Ballet will present their production of “Cinderella,” with proceeds from that performance going toward the Imperial’s capital improvements fund. Finally, in November, the theater will have some sort of an event related to the 100 years since the ending of World War I.

”Cocktail Hour: The Show”

Imperial Theatre

7 p.m. Feb. 2; \$20-\$28

imperialtheatre.com

balletswithatwist.com

706-722-8341



*Ballets with a Twist: Roy Rogers from "Cocktail Hour: The Show"  
— Photo by Nico Malvaldi*

# Raue show offers ballet with a twist

By **Annie Alleman**

Elgin Courier-News

NOVEMBER 9, 2017

**F**or Marilyn Klaus, artistic director and choreographer of New York City's Ballets With a Twist, dancing was a way of life.

New York City's Ballets with a Twist serves up "Cocktail Hour: The Show," a performance where each dance is based on a classic drink, at 8 p.m. Nov. 11 at the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake.

Created by Klaus, "Cocktail Hour: The Show" swirls up dance, music and costumes that invoke the glamour of Hollywood's Golden Age with a modern twist. Some of the dance numbers include "Roy Rogers," "Martini," "Mai Tai," "Champagne," "Sputnik" and "[Shirley Temple](#)."

Klaus grew up in Los Angeles, surrounded by the allure of Hollywood.

"I have been dancing my whole life. My father was a really terrific ballroom dancer and at a certain point in his life he started studying classical ballet," she said. "A person from Ballet Russe settled in the area and my dad started taking lessons from him at night. He took me with him when I was about 5 or 6."

She learned ballet right alongside her dad. He even installed a practice floor and barre in their basement.

On the weekends, her parents' friends would come over for drinks and dancing in their DIY-nightclub.

"I was obviously fascinated by the whole scene," she said. "They had their own dancing club. So I never realized there was any difference between ballet and pop culture. So when I came east to New York, I was rather shocked. Minimalism had gripped the ethos in New York and people were dancing in black socks and tennis shoes and climbing up ladders and holding umbrellas and I was ... completely out of my element. I guess out of desperation I created my own world so I could survive and that's what the show is."

Ballets With a Twist rehearse all year long to create these vignettes, or "cultural cocktails," as she calls them, because they speak about a specific place and time.

"They evoke a feeling that the audience can bathe in. The dancers are classical virtuosos, but they're usually very good actors," she said.

For example, soloist Morgan Stinnett is featured in the dance, "Boilermaker."



"It's really nice because ... we get to portray so many different characters in our group pieces and solos that we do," Stinnett said. "So 'Boilermaker' is (about) a rough guy who goes out drinking every night and looks to fight and cause trouble — and ends up being too drunk to do anything. So it's really fun to portray these different characters and really let loose and explore your acting side or your theatrical side with your dancing or your ballet training. It's a really cool mix between the two."

The dances take a long time to put together, even though they are designed to be short and snappy for the modern audience, she said. A new piece she's working on now, "Hot Toddy," will be a year in the making and probably only last seven minutes, she said.

Klaus' aim is for audiences to know what the dances are about without reading the program.

"That's my complete goal, is to really entertain and clarify," she said. "I've created a lot of these dances with the concept of floor show. I've tried to create these pieces so the dancer can really reach out and tell the story. One of the things that is really fun and we'll be able to take advantage of at the Raue Center is our animated projections. For instance, when the 'Mai Tai' dancer comes onstage, the first thing that happens is a beautiful projection of an abstract volcano with clouds of smoke come puffing out and a fun graphic that spells out 'Mai Tai.' So all of the dances have the projection."

The dances have a pop culture element, because Klaus herself loves pop culture. They should resonate with audiences, she said.

"I like that the audience gets it. I don't like to be distant and removed and on some lofty plane," she said. "I like to get down with the audience."

One of her favorite dances is "Martini," she said.

"And that's definitely shaken and not stirred," she said. "It's a Bond-inspired score. The lead figure is a blonde bombshell super spy. Her tutu is in the shape of a martini glass and it's bathed in crystals. There are three sharp shooters that are with her wherever she goes. The audience definitely gets that feeling — like the credits of a Bond movie."

Her goal was to create a nightlife experience so people would want to get out of the house and away from the television and have a fun night on the town, she said.

"When people think of going to the ballet or theater they think of this one-sided experience where they watch something happen," Stinnett said. "But Marilyn puts a really cool twist on it — you can interact with the dancers. We look at the audience. We view them as being in on the story, we pull them into the story. We invite people to laugh. We invite people to have fun and escape. It's a really cool experience. I had this lady come up to me in Oregon and she said that some of the pieces really reminded her of growing up and it was

really cool to time-travel back there and see the beauty and the elegance of when she grew up. So that's a really cool thing we get to do for people."

*Annie Alleman is a freelance reporter for the Courier-News.*

## 'Cocktail Hour: The Show'

When: 8 p.m. Nov. 11

Where: Raue Center For The Arts, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake

Tickets: \$35-\$45

Information: 815-356-9212; [www.rauecenter.org](http://www.rauecenter.org)

Copyright © 2017, Chicago Tribune

**This article is related to:** [Dance](#), [Shirley Temple](#)

# Coming to Crystal Lake Raue, Ballets with a Twist combines drink, dance in 'Cocktail Hour'

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By JAMI KUNZER

Nov. 2, 2017

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Photo provided by Nico Malvaldi

Have a favorite drink? Ballets with a Twist likely has a dance for it.

The New York-based dance company's unique pairing of drinks with dance – “Cocktail Hour: The Show” – has drawn interest nationwide, including from those at the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake, where Ballets with a Twist will make its Raue debut at 8 p.m. Nov. 11. The show will feature at least 13 dance vignettes, each named after cocktails, such as the Mai Tai, the Roy Rogers, the Martini, the Manhattan, the Zombie, the Rum Runner and others.

“Yes, they are named after beverages, but they really are kind of cultural cocktails,” said Marilyn Klaus, the artistic director and founder of Ballets with a Twist. “I try to get the flavor, sorry for the pun, of that drink or of that time and place.”

Each dance is performed with subtitles, she said, such as the Boilermaker, with the words “five o'clock shadow” under it. “This is the guy that leaves work like Don Draper and just goes and ties one on,” Klaus said.

A Zombie vignette will have animated projections behind it. “One of the ways I describe it is it's like a sci-fi pool splash, a 1950s invasion of a Los Angeles pool party by very elegant zombies,” Klaus said. The dance's musical score has a “Godzilla” or Alfred Hitchcock feel, she said.



The dancers, including 10 women and five men, all are classically trained and perform mainly to original music created by the Ballets with a Twist composer. Except for the Roy Rogers number – “Fellas, beware! With a crack of the whip, this rodeo gal corrals her man, America’s Wild West as the backdrop for this amorous chase” – which just had to have “Rawhide” as a musical theme, Klaus said.

“They’re quick [dances] and kind of like for a modern-day audience that doesn’t have a lot of patience,” she said.

Hopefully, she said, audience members will be immersed in the experience, not telling themselves things, such as, “ ‘This is ballet. Am I really going to like it? Somebody dragged me to ballet,’ that kind of thing.”

Along with the show, of course, will be a special selection of cocktails available to buy in the lobby throughout the night. Tickets start at \$35 at [www.rauecenter.org](http://www.rauecenter.org), 815-356-9212 or the Box Office at 26 N. Williams St.

The production is described as “pop-infused” combined with the “magnetism of Hollywood’s Golden Age with a sleek 21st century sensibility.”

Klaus created Ballets with a Twist in 1996, having grown up with parents who loved big bands and dance. It was a time when Saturday nights meant dressing up for a night on the town.

Klaus tries to recreate that experience with her productions – with wit. What began with the Mai Tai grew into numerous themed dances, such as the Sputnik, described as a “hip rockabilly remix and a rebellious attitude.” And then there’s the Martini – “A dangerous, percussive score sets the stage for this blonde bombshell super spy, who dodges sharpshooters and stays cool in hot situations.”

Performing throughout New York City initially, the dance company eventually was touring the country.

“We get these calls that say, ‘What you’re doing, it might bring our dance audience back,’ ” Klaus said.

What to do, where to be and what to see, from

# THE DENVER POST

## Ballets with a Twist brings Hollywood glitz and pizzazz to Chautauqua

**K**

By Mark Jaffe

June 15, 2017

Marilyn Klaus is ballet's mixologist, combining *ronde de jambe* to strains of a James Bond theme. More Sinatra than Tchaikovsky. More Busby Berkley than George Balanchine.

As a 20-year-old dancer from Southern California, Klaus arrived in New York in the early 1970s with dreams of the swank and sophisticated, the cabaret floor show, tinkling martini glasses and satin. What she found instead was the modern dance scene in the throes of dour minimalism.

"I was really bummed out by minimalism," Klaus said in a telephone interview. "I couldn't get it. I thought it was rather dull." So she went out and made "Champagne," a Busby Berkeley-suffused dance.

Flash-forward 45 years, and another 25 cocktail-themed dances have joined "Champagne." There's "Mai Tai," "Brandy Alexander" and, of course, "Martini." Klaus has woven these dance vignettes into "Cocktail Hour: The Show," which her company, Ballets with a Twist, is bringing to the Colorado Chautauqua Association in Boulder on June 23.

While wed to classical ballet technique, Klaus strives for more Hollywood glitz and pizzazz. "It's not 'Swan Lake,'" she said. This from a woman who learned tap and the hula before mastering a grand jeté.

Why cocktails? "They are great mixes of cultural concepts and historical periods," Klaus said. "They are evocative of people going into a cocktail lounge, or a party, so ready made for music and dance."

It also harks back to Klaus' childhood when her parents would have cocktails, their friends would come over and they'd all listen to Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra and dance.

The three- to 15-minute dances are replete with stories or themes and original music by Stephen Gaboury. "Gimlet" is the tale of a woman who comes home and realizes her husband has been there with another woman. "Martini" has a James Bond theme to Gaboury's 007 music.

"Grappa," an idea that came to Klaus after the company performed at the Italian wedding of the sister of one of her dancers, is an operatic send-up set in a 19th century village where a young woman is kidnapped and the village women, wielding kitchen utensils, rescue her.



Morgan Stinnett in "Boilermaker," a Ballets with a Twist performance in Boulder on June 23. (Nico Malvadi, Ballets with a Twist)



Kimberly Giannelli performs "Champagne."  
(Nico Malvaldi, Ballets with a Twist)

For "Mai Tai," Gaboury has strains of Hawaiian Don Ho. "Brandy Alexander" is set to martial music. "Roy Rogers" is danced to the theme of the television show "Rawhide."

Klaus is adding about two cocktails a year. She is now working on a hot toddy. "It's funny, we can't seem to stop," Gaboury said. "But it allows us to tailor the show to the size of the venue, to the dancers we have."

The Boulder show will offer 14 cocktails, including "Singapore Sling," "Martini," "Boilermaker" (after a long, hard week, a factory worker goes into a bar looking for a fight) and "Grappa."

Ballet is a demanding discipline that requires constant practice and fine-tuning, but Klaus is committed to using it, saying "ballet is the most modern form." It has a more flexible vocabulary than modern dance forms, she said, and it is the "most uplifting."

Still, Klaus is a far cry from George Balanchine, the founder of the New York City Ballet, who, while knowing how to put on a show, elevated ballet with his abstract, plotless dances.

Finding dancers for a small, traveling company hasn't been difficult. "There is a stable of incredible ballet dancers in the country, and they are not working because there aren't jobs," Klaus said.

One of those dancers is 25-year-old Seth Ives, who comes to the company by way of Vail, Denver, Moscow and New York. Ives, who eschewed snowboarding and skiing for the dance studio, moved from Summit County to Denver to attend the Denver School of the Arts.

Then, he moved to the really big city: New York. A summer intensive course by the visiting Bolshoi Ballet Academy led to nearly two years at the Bolshoi in Moscow. Then, it was back to New York to find work.

"As a freelance dancer, you try to line up the gigs that get you through the week, that get you through the month," Ives said. "You constantly audition." And so Ives has been a contract dancer with the Metropolitan Opera and performed with the New York Theatre Ballet, a tiny but respected ballet company in the city.

"Right now, Ballets with a Twist is a pretty big part of my life," Ives said. "It's some security."

Klaus' company has been dancing "Cocktail Hour" since 2009, and while proving itself a marketable commodity, the show doesn't sell itself. "Some dancers are deeply involved in bookings; no one can sell the show like the dancers," said Klaus, who is also a fixture at booking trade shows.

And so Ballets with a Twist has danced at an alcohol-abstaining, Methodist college in Northern Illinois, with a high-school marching band in Cleveland, and at a perfume launch at Saks Fifth Avenue's Manhattan store, as well as in El Paso, Texas, and Medford, Ore.

What Klaus craves most is to find a home for the company in a New York nightclub. Lounges, however, come and go in the city's ephemeral club scene. "We're going to keep trying," Klaus said.

**If you go:** Ballets with a Twist will perform "Cocktail Hour: The Show" 7:30 p.m., June 23 at the Chautauqua Auditorium, 900 Baseline Road, Boulder. Tickets can be bought online.



# INSIDE ARTS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTERS

CONFERENCE 2017

## VOICE

## BUZZ THRILL

**W**hat do you get when you mix a jigger of midcentury Hollywood glamour with a double shot of formal training in ballet, a splash of costume design, and a twist of intoxicating music? Ballets with a Twist — a New York-based company that leaves audience stirred, not shaken. Over the course of two decades, choreographer Marilyn Klaus, along with her collaborators, Grammy-nominated composer Stephen Gaboury and costume







designer Catherine Zehr, have developed a menu of 25-plus highly nuanced dance pieces shaped by Klaus' childhood in Los Angeles.

"It was really just a hotbed of inspiration, between the post-war interest in Sinatra, the Rat Pack, going to Las Vegas with my parents," says Klaus, whose parents introduced her classical ballet, tap, ballroom and hula dance. She went on to study ballet with Carmelita Maracci. "I came to New York when I was 18, and I was very, very influenced by the whole Busby Berkeley milieu. I arrived at the apex of the Post-Modern movement, and I was very surprised, but I just kept doing my thing."

As it turns out, her thing was "cultural cocktails," starting with the James Bond-inspired *Martini* and moving on to the *Margarita*. From there, she mixed up the

*Zombie*, which she describes as "a sci-fi pool splash" that plays on Cold War fears, and the *Sputnik*, set to a Rockabilly score.

"It was a very long incubation period. I finally made so many cocktails I was able to do the Cocktail Hour show in 2009," she says.

Since that debut, Klaus and her colleagues have created an experience that keeps audiences and presenters coming back for another round.

At some venues, presenters use the event to build community and participation by bringing in a local mixologist to serve up custom cocktails. At others, they customize the experience accordingly, such as a costume-focused show at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Klaus and her crew often arrive a few days early for pre-show media tours to build buzz and attendance.





“We think [marketing] is our job,” Klaus says. “We try to support the venue. It seems more and more that they need it. We want to come back, so if we can be a part of an article or interview that goes out at the right time to boost ticket sales, that’s really important.”

Another important element? Involving members of the local community in the production. In Cleveland, that meant having a 50-piece high school marching band come on stage to perform the score for *Brandy Alexander*. At Ohio Northern University — located in a dry county — that meant serving up virgin drinks and incorporating college students into the performance. In El Paso, that meant recruiting young dancers from a local studio to dance the pony role in *Mint Julep*.

“When we work with performing arts centers, we often hear that audiences are getting smaller, so this seems like a good way to excite people, knowing that they or their kids are going to be part of an event,” Klaus says.

Despite the show’s decidedly cocktail-centric theme, it’s by no means a 21-or-older event. Often, children come with their parents and grandparents (the lineup even includes Shirley Temples and Roy Rogers). For Klaus, whose inspiration knows no bounds, the experience isn’t about the spirits, but rather the spirit.

“For me, it’s putting a nightlife experience on stage like the ones I attended with my family,” she says. “Between the classic entertainment and the modern pop influences, we have it going on.” **||**



Ballets with a Twist

NICO MALVALDI



# Ballets with a Twist's 'Cocktail Hour' brings spirited dance to Ada

First Posted: 7:00 pm - January 28th, 2016

By Amy Eddings - [aeddings@civitasmedia.com](mailto:aeddings@civitasmedia.com)



Ballets with a Twist performed "Holy Water."  
Nico Malvaldi photos

ADA — What is the "twist" that defines the style of the dance company Ballets with a Twist?

Choreographer and company founder Marilyn Klaus said she didn't know.

"Thank God I don't know what the 'twist' is, or I wouldn't go into the studio every day," she told The Lima News. "I'm ordering up a [ballet] vocabulary and an experience that has a twist to it."

On Saturday, the New York City-based company brings its signature dance, "Cocktail Hour: The Show," to Ohio Northern University's Freed Center for the Performing Arts.

"It's a series of vignettes — pardon the pun — of spirited [dances] that refer to the human desire to be up there in the clouds, or whatever reason people go to a cocktail hour for," explained Klaus.



Members of Ballets with a Twist performing "Holy Water."  
Nico Malvaldi photos

The vignettes are named for different alcoholic mixed drinks. There's "Martini": "She's a blonde bombshell superspy and her tutu is kind of like an upside-down martini glass." There's "Manhattan": "She's a fabulous Fifth Avenue matron and she walks her dearest companion, her dog, down Fifth Avenue." There's the finale, "Holy Water": "It's got a gospel score, an absolute Motown feel."

Klaus and her company spent the week leading up to the show working with Ohio Northern University's dance students. They will open the evening by performing one of Klaus' early works, a dance called "Return to Normalcy."

"It's a barefooted ballroom dance suite for eight women and it's a reference to Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers," she said. "I'm also planning on honing the students' improvisatory skills by having them enter and exit through the back of the house and interact with the audience."

There's that 'twist' that Ballets with a Twist is looking for. Bracing and refreshing, like that coiled lemon zest on the rim of your gin martini.



A Ballet with a Twist dancer in the dance "Return to Normalcy."  
Nico Malvaldi photos



A dancer and her "dog" in the dance, "Manhattan" by Ballets with a Twist.  
Nico Malvaldi photos



Performers in Ballets with a Twist's "Eau de Vie."  
Nico Malvaldi photos

## Free Ballet Performances at Brookfield Place

**When** Saturday, December 17, 2016 - 1:00pm - 5:00pm

**Where** Saks Downtown, Brookfield Pl.



Ballet with a Twist will be at Saks Downtown on Saturday. Photo: Nico Malvaldi

Three free shows by Ballet with a Twist will be performed at 1, 3 and 5 p.m. at Saks Downtown at Brookfield Place on Saturday.

Ballet with a Twist will perform three free showings of *Holiday Parade*, a whimsical contemporary ballet with choreography by Marilyn Klaus, music by Stephen Gaboury and festive costuming by Catherine Zehr.

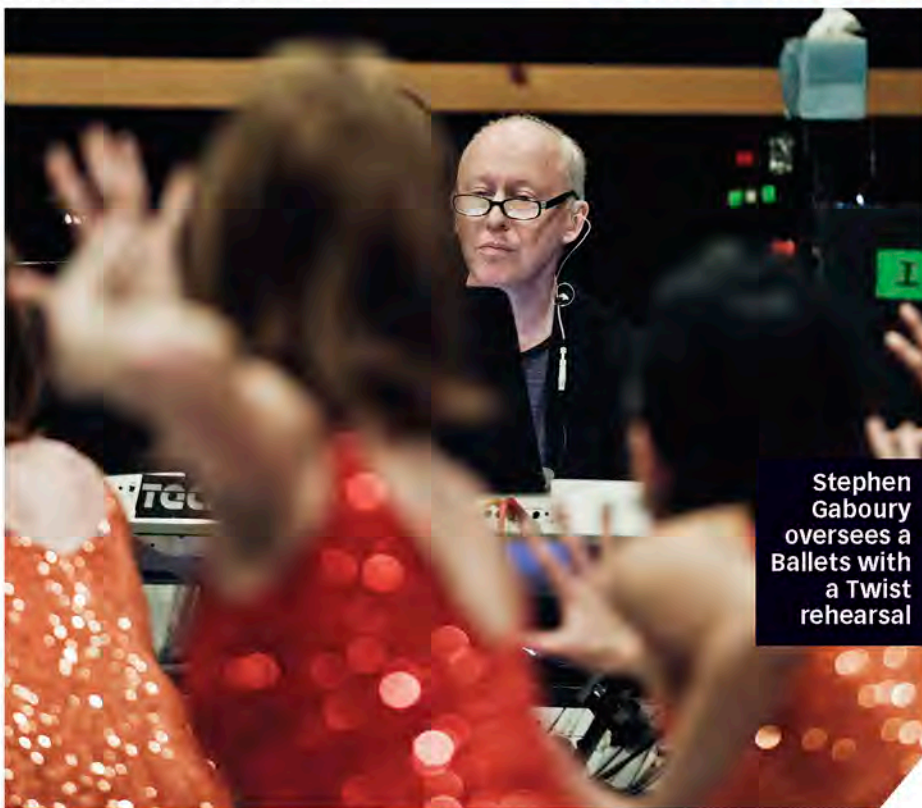
There will be complimentary white hot chocolate from 4 to 7 p.m.

**When:** Saturday, Dec. 17. 1, 3 and 5 pm

**Where:** Saks Downtown, 2nd floor, Brookfield Place



**A**CCORDING TO Stephen Gaboury, writing music for a ballet suite isn't all that different from writing songs for the Broadway stage. He should know: Not only has he been the principal composer of the dance troupe Ballets with a Twist since 2009, but he also contributed to Cyndi Lauper's Tony-winning score for the musical *Kinky Boots*. "It's all about watching the music move," he says.



Stephen Gaboury oversees a Ballets with a Twist rehearsal

## Good Moves

Gaboury, who studied composition at San Francisco State University, has been writing music since he was in junior high school. Initially he concentrated on pop songs, before moving into jazz. Then he became mesmerized by dance. "*West Side Story* [the stage and film musical with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, music by Leonard Bernstein, and choreography by Jerome Robbins] was interesting to me, because I saw how music, lyrics, and dance told a story."

When Gaboury first met Ballets with a Twist's choreographer Marilyn Klaus, she was teaching a barre exercise to a ballet class, which may not sound all that exciting but was, because "instead of playing Tchaikovsky, she was playing Run-D.M.C.!" The two have since become close collaborators.

"Technically, I've been writing music and lyrics for Ballets with a Twist by myself, but I still feel like I'm co-writing because I'm writing with the whole production," Gaboury explains. "Marilyn is extremely

musical. When I do something, she hears it. I don't have to explain it."

In Ballets with a Twist's signature show, *Cocktail Hour*, choreography evoking old-time musicals collides with ballet. The show aims to capture the culture of a region; its separate parts are named for beverages associated with a particular place. Klaus often suggests a cocktail to Gaboury, then starts creating an appropriate dance. Gaboury will videotape her movements and "try four or five different musical styles [to accompany the video] ... like jazz, classical, blues, etc. Then I'll go back to Marilyn with a concept and take it from there."

Even with such visual cues, inspiration can sometimes be hard to achieve. In those cases, Gaboury looks elsewhere for ideas: "A friend of mine suggested that I write a short story about what the piece's subject is, and then all of a sudden you have all of these markers. We have one piece called

'Holy Water.' Marilyn told me she wanted to do a gospel suite. I was looking through Renaissance paintings; one painting was an angel telling the Virgin Mary what was going to happen to her. I grabbed onto the story in that painting and wrote the music in a couple of hours."

Another Ballets with a Twist piece, "Brandy Alexander," took on a different life

### A versatile composer transitions between Broadway and the ballet.

recently in the hands of a high school marching band. Gaboury adapted that piece while working as an affiliated artist at the Union County Performing Arts Center in New Jersey so that the nearby Rahway High School band could play it. But that wasn't all. After the band members had gotten some rehearsal under their belts, Gaboury invited them to perform his music while marching up and down the aisles during his colleague Cyndi Lauper's holiday show at New York's Beacon Theater—yet another way in which this forward-thinking composer continues to bring music and movement together. **T**

"I saw how music, lyrics, and dance told a story." —Stephen Gaboury



NOVEMBER 2016

# ARTS NEWS



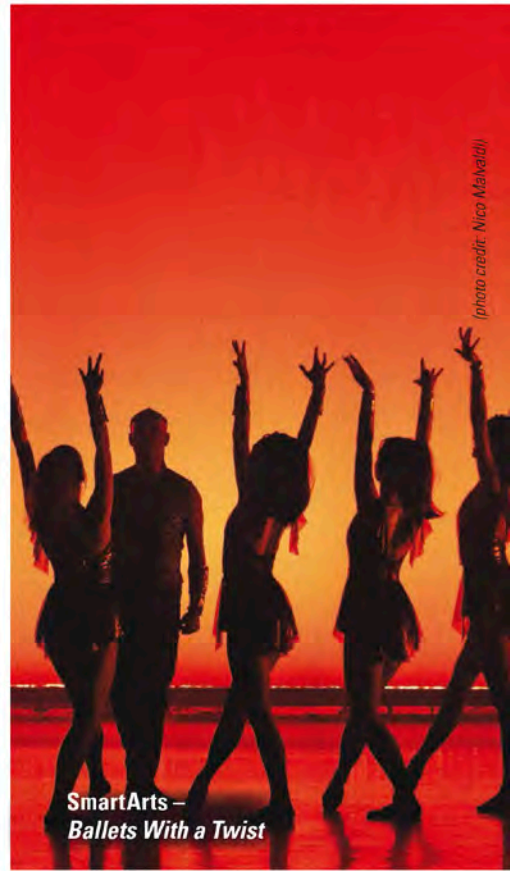
Clay Art Center -  
Hot Pots

(False Profit by Jocelyn B. Armstrong)



ArtsWestchester -  
Remedy

(Hearthrob #2, David Bowie by Matthew Cox)



SmartArts -  
Ballets With a Twist

(photo credit: Nico Malvaldi)



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NOVEMBER 2016

# ARTSNEWS

## event highlights

### The World Premiere of New Work by Doug Varone and Dancers



Doug Varone and Dancers (photo credit: Paula Lobo)

Doug Varone's professional career has been born and bred at Purchase College (PC). His company Doug Varone and Dancers, now in its 30th season, has since become internationally recognized for its vision, versatility and technical prowess. On November 5, the PC alum and professor will present the world premiere of *Into the Shelter of the Fold*, a work that was co-commissioned by the College's Performing Arts Center (PAC), which the company has been developing and rehearsing on PC's campus. Select students from the school's Conservatory of Dance will perform in the piece as part of an initiative by PAC to ensure that their students gain from interactions with top-tier artists that perform on its stage. Also on the program will be *ReComposed*, a dance based on the pastel drawings of American abstract artist Joan Mitchell and set to a score by composer Michael Gordon. For more info, visit: [artscenter.org](http://artscenter.org).

### Steffi Nossen Dance Foundation Showcases Modern Choreography

Steffi Nossen Dance Foundation (SNDF) will host its annual choreography showcase on November 20. The event features the work of emerging and established choreographers. While all within the "modern" dance classification, the performances vary greatly within the realm of the genre: Maxine Steinman's *A Lily for Monet* is a portion of a larger piece inspired by water lilies; Deb Meunier (*Fusionworks*) blends modern, jazz and Broadway based on her time in Rome and New York City; and Jessica DiMauro's *Lala Salama*, based on a reoccurring dream, builds tension. Matthew James (*U R B A N / T R I B E*) presents emotionally charged physical works while Gierre Godley (*PROJECT 44*) erases preconceived notions of masculinity. Indah Walsh and Catarina Rago were each commissioned to create new works by, and for, SNDF. A post-performance Q&A, led by DiMauro, SNDF's Artistic Director, will take place with choreographers, dancers and audience members. For more info, visit: [steffinossen.org](http://steffinossen.org).



Maxine Steinman (photo credit: Fernando Ferreira)

### A New Twist on Classic Ballet

On November 19, SmartArts is shaking things up with Ballets with a Twist. In "Cocktail Hour," Artistic Director Marilyn Klaus brings the floorshow, often seen in nightclubs, onto the stage for an event that reinvents the typical ballet performance. A touch of Hollywood glamour, an amped up musical score by a Grammy Award-nominated composer and colorfully artistic costumes add an extra dose of excitement to creatively choreographed dances. Carefully-orchestrated lighting further brings the performance to life. This event takes place at Westchester Community College's Academic Arts Theatre in Valhalla. For more info, visit: [sunnywcc.edu/smartarts](http://sunnywcc.edu/smartarts).



Cuba Libre, a dance piece in Cocktail Hour (photo credit: Nico Malvaldi)

## Keep pouring ballet cocktails, 'Ballets with a Twist'

by Debra Levine, [artsmeme.com](http://artsmeme.com)



I'm a fan of the dance invention — and entrepreneurialism — of choreographer Marilyn Klaus. **Her company, [Ballets with a Twist](#), performs in all kinds of unexpected venues — small-to-medium-sized performing arts centers across the nation, and even lounges, cabarets, and soon, casinos.**

Her customized dance menus, packaged as "**Cocktail Hour: The Show**," comprise 24 choreographed cocktails — yummy dance-vignettes often performed to original music. Pictured above is "Absinthe." Others include "Singapore Sling," "Bloody Mary," "Martini," "Roy Rogers," and a personal favorite, "Zombie."

Ballets with a Twist has captured the fancy of off-beat chanteuse Cyndi Lauper, who has invited the company to open for her upcoming "Home for the Holidays" show at the Beacon Theatre. This is a first for me — seeing a ballet company opening a pop performance.

Klaus cites Busby Berkeley and Lucille Ball as inspirations. Working with collaborators, music composer/director Stephen Gaboury and costumer Catherine Zehr, she deserves kudos for drawing new eyes to choreographed dance — and for not shying from the idea that **dance can (and should) entertain.**

**'Ballets with a Twist,' opening for [Cyndi Lauper, Home for the Holidays](#)  
| The Beacon Theatre | Dec 3**



EVENTS Performing Arts



NICO MALVALDI/COCKTAIL HOUR: THE SHOW

Ballets with a Twist perform "Holy Water" from "Cocktail Hour: The Show."

MARCH 24, 2016

**"Cocktail Hour: The Show"**

Friday, April 8 through Sunday, April 10  
\$35-\$85 per person

**Bucks County Playhouse**

70 S. Main St., New Hope, PA  
215-862-2121



# 'Cocktail Hour: The Show' mixes drinks with ballet in Bucks County



Visions of martinis danced in their heads



EVENTS PERFORMING ARTS NEW HOPE BALLET DANCE BUCKS COUNTY COCKTAILS

BY **SINEAD CUMMINGS**


*PhillyVoiceStaff*

  **N**ew York City dance company Ballets with a Twist will perform at Bucks County Playhouse over the weekend of April 8-10. Guests are invited to grab cocktails or mocktails to watch the ballet "Cocktail Hour: The Show."

  The performance is the company's signature piece and combines old Hollywood glamour with 21st century pop. The show also does something unique by creating personas for cocktails like the Manhattan, mai tai and martini.

  During the "Martini" performance, guests will watch as a dancer turns into a super spy who dodges bullets. Bucks County Playhouse will also get to see a new choreographed piece, "Singapore Sling," which will premiere at the theater.

 Ballets with a Twist is known for blending high art with entertainment.

 There will be four performances in total over the weekend. The Friday show begins at 8 p.m., the Saturday performances are scheduled for 3 p.m. and 8 p.m., and the Sunday show will be at 2 p.m.

## ARTS AROUND TOWN

# Arts Around Town: Ballet served with a twist at Bucks County Playhouse



**Susan Kalan**, WFMZ.com Arts Reporter, [news@wfmz.com](mailto:news@wfmz.com)

Posted: 1:18 PM EDT Mar 31, 2016



To a bartender, adding a twist is adding lemon or lime to a glass. To artistic director/choreographer Marilyn Klaus, adding a twist is adding drama, humor, romance and mystery to a stage with “Cocktail Hour: The Show,” featuring original dance, music and costumes. Klaus’ vast mix of exotically-flavored, cocktail-themed vignettes will be performed by **Ballets with a Twist**, on the menu for **Bucks County Playhouse** in New Hope, April 8-10.

Klaus formed Ballets with a Twist, based in New York City’s Tribeca, in 1996 in association with Grammy-nominated composer/husband Stephen Gaboury

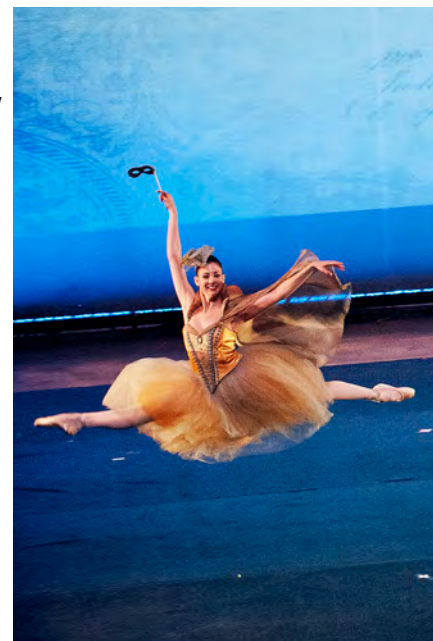
and costume designer Catherine Zehr, a graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology who worked at major American fashion houses.

The score of “Cocktail Hour” features original music by Gaboury, who toured internationally with pop/rock icon Cyndi Lauper and collaborated with her on the score for Broadway’s “Kinky Boots.”

Ballets with a Twist has performed at Lauper’s annual True Colors Fund benefit concert, “Home for the Holidays,” at New York’s Beacon Theater. The dance company also has appeared with high school marching bands from Rahway, New Jersey, and East Cleveland, Ohio.

In a phone interview with Klaus from her New York studio, she said the classically trained standing company of 14 dancers – nine women and five men – has performed the signature floorshow-to-stage production in such venues as New York’s Lincoln Center, Hollywood’s SoHo House, Cleveland’s Playhouse Square, and El Paso’s Plaza Theatre.

With more than 20 vignettes in the repertoire, no two performances are said to be the same. She described the show as “segments of cultural cocktails, both American and European.” It reinvents the glamour and excitement of classic entertainment with an original mix of charismatic choreography, intoxicating music and exquisite costume design.



# ARTS AROUND TOWN

Klaus said the opening number, “Brandy Alexander,” has a rousing marching band reveille as The Great One arrives with loyal troops in tow ready to conquer the dance floor. “Martini” is more the style of the James Bond period with a dangerous, percussive score and blonde bombshell super-spy.

Two pieces will premiere, Klaus said: “Cuba Libre” with a Latin ballroom flair, and “Singapore Sling” with an exotic soundscape and haunting fantasy. She said the grand finale, “Holy Water,” is gospel-themed and uplifting.

Klaus, who hails from the Los Angeles/Hollywood area, said she comes from a family of avid ballroom dancers who loved big band and jazz. She studied under American ballet instructor/choreographer Carmelita Maracci, who taught American Ballet Theater principal dancer Cynthia Gregory and whose dance students included Charlie Chaplin.

When asked how she would like Bucks County audiences to leave after experiencing “Cocktail Hour,” she answered, “Elated... We create an atmosphere with short, snappy uplifting numbers. We like to reach out across the lights and grab with our performances.”



What’s next for Klaus and Ballets with a Twist?  
Did someone say “Mojito?”



## A choreographic cocktail party comes to Norwich

PUBLISHED BY [BILL SNYDER](#) | DECEMBER 3, 2015 12:24 PM



[Ballets with a Twist](#) presents Cocktail Hour in Norwich. Artistic Director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus talks about this show of short dances, each inspired by a cocktail. Some are humorous, some are thoughtful, and they have original music by composer Stephen Gaboury. "Cocktail Hour, harks back to a time when entertainment was an engaging, vibrant social experience. Inspired by the likes of Busby Berkeley and Lucille Ball and infused with the exotic flavor of legendary Hollywood haunts Trader Vic's and Coconut Grove, this pop-infused production brings timeless American spirits to life, launching the Mai Tai, Martini, Manhattan and more off the menu and onto the stage."

Photo by Nico Malvaldi via Ballets with a Twist

TAGGED IN  
[dance](#), [norwich](#)

# The Tri-Town News

VOL. 149 - NO. 49

SIDNEY, NEW YORK — THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2015

SUGGESTED PRICE 75¢

## An Interview with Ballets With A Twist's Marilyn Klaus

By Allison Collins

NORWICH — Marilyn Klaus is the artistic director and choreographer of the NYC ballet company, Ballets With a Twist, slated to visit Norwich this holiday season on Dec. 5. Klaus has been called a blaster of boundaries and her shows described as “innovative,” “electrifying,” and “pop-infused.”

Though Klaus's company began in 1996, with all performances taking place in various NYC venues, she said, “We really revved it up in '09.” It was then that she began building Ballets With a Twist's repertoire in earnest and took the outfit on the road, touring nationally.

Cocktail Hour: The Show, being performed in Norwich, grew to be Klaus's signature show. Comprised of 23 rotating vignettes with cocktail- (or “mocktail-”) inspired titles, Klaus expressed a special excitement about the company's upcoming Norwich show because, “One of three vignettes still in preview will be shown in Norwich for the first time.” “Singapore Sling” is a vignette created in the famous Singaporean Raffles Hotel (one-time host to Rudyard Kipling) that pays homage to the hotel's distinctly colonial, atavistic cultural feel. “Singapore Sling” is the most recently created of the 23 vignettes and Klaus said, “We are very excited

to put it on the stage for the first time.”

Klaus went on to share that the Norwich show will start off with “Champagne,” a ball-room dance suite for seven women; to be followed up with “Pink Lady,” a solo performed only once before; the “Hawaiian Mai Tai” vignette; the “Roy Rogers,” a rollicking vignette that Klaus called a “‘mocktail’ for children” wherein a “rodeo gal gets her guy;” “Martini,” a piece about a blonde bombshell superspy, featuring what Klaus called an “outrageous costume, ten years in the making;” and “Sputnik,” a ballet mash-up placing elements of classical ballet side-by-side with rockabilly, punk music and cultural nods to Russia and the 1950's-60's Space Race.

What might seem incongruous (classically-trained ballet dancers performing en pointe to punk rock), not only works in Cocktail Hour, but makes sense when contrasted with Klaus's own upbringing. A child of Hollywood, Klaus said, “I grew up in a home that was steeped in music and dancing, but it wasn't a highbrow situation.” Klaus recalled the likes of Sinatra and Dorsey filling the rooms of her childhood home while her parents, who she called avid dancers, dressed up, sashayed in their bouffants and dresses, and swilled actual cocktails along to the juke box. Of her

decidedly Californian early years, Klaus said, “That never left me.”

Situated as she was in a unique cultural time and place, Klaus grew up exposed to entertainment in the home as well as in the broader social clime. She recalled being taken to see the Bolshoi Ballet visiting in Los Angeles several times, seeing musicals that came to town, and being taken by her parents to “goofy Polynesian theme restaurants.” Her signature production, then, functions as an amalgam of her life and her childhood made real, made dance.

Speaking to that Klaus said that what's she been after with Cocktail is “the essence of a period, its spirit.” She added, “I've also always loved world history.” She has taken the components of her life, shaken and stirred them, and what's come out is, in her own words, literally “a cultural cocktail.”

*Ballets With a Twist* is a standing company and features classically trained professional dancers. “That's just what's so wonderful,” Klaus gushed. “The audience is seeing the finest dancers. A classical dancer can do anything.” The versatility of the classically-trained ballet dancer shines through in Cocktail's vignettes, in long lines and the laser-sharp execution of steps whose difficulty and intricacy are belied by the production's extraordinary sensibility.

Of ballet as a whole and the art form's staying power in today's sometimes flash-oriented performing arts culture, Klaus said, “For me it is impossible to imagine ballet as a dying art. There is no more extreme sport. Ballet is the body conceived of as machine. Ballet discovers and minds the body as instrument like no other.”

When asked about her company's purported “community-centered approach,” Klaus said of their upcoming stint in Norwich “The Chenango Arts Council found us! It's lovely to be approached by somebody close enough [that the company can drive to] because my number one goal is to get my dancers on stage. We're very, very happy that the CAC saw us as something that could turn on audiences.”

The at times percussive, vibrant and exotic Cocktail Hour promises to leave more than mere visions of sugarplums dancing in the heads of audience members and offers an exciting performing arts option for theatergoers this holiday season.

Tickets to this premiere holiday event can be purchased online at <http://bit.do/CACCocktailHour> or by call-ing the box office at 336-2787. Discounted tickets are available for seniors, youths, and CAC members.

# Vermont to Welcome **BALLETS WITH A TWIST** for Spruce Peak Premiere, 9/19

by BWV News Desk

June 4 9:25 PM 2015



Photo Credit: "Eau de Ville" by Nico Malvaldi

On Saturday, September 19, 2015, at 7:30 pm, the Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center presents the Vermont debut of New York City's Ballets with a Twist in Mint Julep and Other Spirited Dances.

Created by artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus, the show reinvents the glamour and excitement of classic entertainment with an original mix of charismatic choreography, intoxicating music and exquisite costume design. Praised by PBS for its "surprising style," this family-friendly pop-infused performing arts experience combines the magnetism of Hollywood's Golden Age with a sleek twenty-first-century sensibility. The dynamic program unfolds in a series of witty, sparkling vignettes, each recalling the unique flavor of a particular place and time. It's an enchanting adventure for all ages to enjoy!

**For tickets**, visit <http://bit.ly/SprucePeakTickets>.

Mint Julep and Other Spirited Dances is comprised of selections from Klaus' acclaimed Cocktail Hour: The Show. Drama, mystery, humor, romance - the production's versatile, ever-expanding menu has it all. Highlights of the Spruce Peak engagement include

"Martini" - A dangerous, percussive score sets the stage for this blonde bombshell superspy, who stealthily dodges sharpshooters with a cool head and serious style.

"Shirley Temple" - Daring damsels frolic through soda pop-fueled imaginations to an after-school hip-hop soundtrack.

"Mint Julep" - Saddle up! It's off to the races with this lively nod to the Kentucky Derby, featuring prize-winning fillies on their way to an unforgettable photo finish.

## The Company

Klaus, whose choreography has been seen internationally, formed Ballets with a Twist in association with Grammy-nominated composer Stephen Gaboury and costume designer Catherine Zehr. Her company - known for its community-centered approach to the arts - has appeared in a wide range of venues, from Cleveland's PlayhouseSquare and New York City's Beacon Theatre to Lincoln Center and the Tribeca Film Festival.

Gaboury's compositions have been performed by celebrated musicians nationwide. He has collaborated and toured the world with pop/rock icon Cyndi Lauper for more than a decade, and has also shared the stage with legends such as Patti Labelle, Suzanne Vega and Ute Lemper. Gaboury's music has been heard in concert, on television and in films (including *Boys n the Hood* and *American Beauty*).

Zehr is the artistic force behind the company's costume design. Her creations evoke the origins and essence of each dance with dazzling colors and ornamentation. Zehr honed her skills while working at major American fashion houses, then by designing and manufacturing attire for her own label. She studied art and design at Washington University and New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, where she and the company recently delivered the presentation "Designing Costumes for Ballets with a Twist" as part of The Museum at FIT's Fashion Culture series.

Craving more Twist culture? Visit <http://balletswithatwist.com>.

## The Venue

The Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center (located at 122 Hourglass Drive, Stowe, Vermont, at the top of Mountain Road and the base of Spruce Peak) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit arts organization dedicated and committed to entertaining, educating, and engaging our diverse communities of Stowe and beyond. The 420-seat multi-use theatre, which opened in December 2010, offers world-renowned entertainment as well as emerging artists and performers from around the region, state, nation and world. Lead Sponsor: PC Construction. Season and Series Sponsors: Bourne's Energy, Darn Tough Socks, Farrell Distributing, People's United Bank, PepsiCo, VPR, WCAX, The Stowe Reporter and Waterbury Record.

Directions and other details can be found at <http://sprucepeakarts.org>.



# the MAGNIFICENT

# 7

MUST SEE, MUST DO THIS WEEK  
COMPILED BY KRISTEN RAVIN



1

## SATURDAY 19 SHAKEN OR STIRRED

Classic entertainment and contemporary cool collide in a dazzling display in **Ballets With a Twist: *Mint Julep and Other Spirited Dances*** (pictured). Titled for timeless American cocktails and mocktails, vignettes and dance routines such as "Shirley Temple," "Manhattan" and "Roy Rogers," feature intoxicating choreography by artistic director Marilyn Klaus. Raise your glass this Saturday at the Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center.

SEE CALENDAR LISTING ON PAGE 55

2

## TUESDAY 22 Northern Exposure

While Michigan-born **Lord Huron** have been filed in the "indie folk" category, their music transcends the trappings of the title. The band's 2015 album *Strange Trails*, packed with dusky songs of love, death and revenge, conjures Johnny Cash as much as Mumford & Sons. Ben Schneider and company head to Higher Ground in South Burlington with opener Dave Monks.

SEE CLUB LISTING ON PAGE 76

## LOOKING FORWARD

3

FRIDAY 18

### Piano Man

Wilmington, Del., isn't exactly known as a wellspring of jazz music, but it did produce pianist and composer Matthew Shipp. Described by *All About Jazz* as an "idiosyncratic mix of sunshine and thunder," Shipp's improvisational mix of playing is well-balanced for an unpredictable yet pleasing listener experience. The **Matthew Shipp Trio** appear at the FlynnSpace on Friday.

SEE CALENDAR LISTING ON PAGE 54

4

SUNDAY 20

### Sweet Beginning

Let's face it — it's time to bid farewell to summer and welcome autumn, when both the air and the apples are crisp. The **Shoreham Apple Fest** opens its gates to kick off the season with an afternoon of fall festivities. An apple pie competition and a selection of ciders, both hard and not, get folks into the spirit.

SEE CALENDAR LISTING ON PAGE 57

5

SATURDAY 19

### For the Birds

Audubon Vermont invites avian enthusiasts to spread their wings at this week's **Celebration of Birds**. Fans of feathered fliers flock to Charlotte's Staige Hill Farm for live animal demonstrations, taxidermy and woodcarving exhibits, and the chance to mingle with area experts. Local eats and live music by Aaron Flinn complete this ornithological affair.

SEE CALENDAR LISTING ON PAGE 56

6

ONGOING

### Making Impressions

Art takes shape in three dimensions at the Carving Studio & Sculpture Center's **"Memory Work: SculptFest 2015"** in Woodstock. Guest curator DJ Hellerman selected site-specific sculptural installations and performance pieces to compose an exhibition around the theme of recollection. Creations by Samuel Spellman, Mary Zompetti, Stella Marrs and others are on display at this annual outdoor showcase.

SEE REVIEW ON PAGE 78

7

SATURDAY 19 & SUNDAY 20

### No Reservations

Come 'n' get it! Foodies rush to Burlington's Oakledge Park for **Eat by Northeast**, a festival presented by the Skinny Pancake and Higher Ground to celebrate all things edible and local. Live music, craft ales, farm-fresh fare and more than 20 seminars keep locavores eating, drinking, listening and learning 'til the grass-fed cows come home.

SEE CALENDAR LISTING ON PAGE 56



# 'Ballets With A Twist' Serves Up Cocktail-Inspired Dance At Spruce Peak Performing Arts

By MARY WILLIAMS • SEP 17, 2015



*This dance, titled 'Mint Julep' is part of Ballet With A Twist's cocktail-themed performance, choreographed by Marilyn Klaus.*

NICO MALVALDI

## SHARE

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New York choreographer Marilyn Klaus stages ballets, but for her latest project she's also part mixologist.

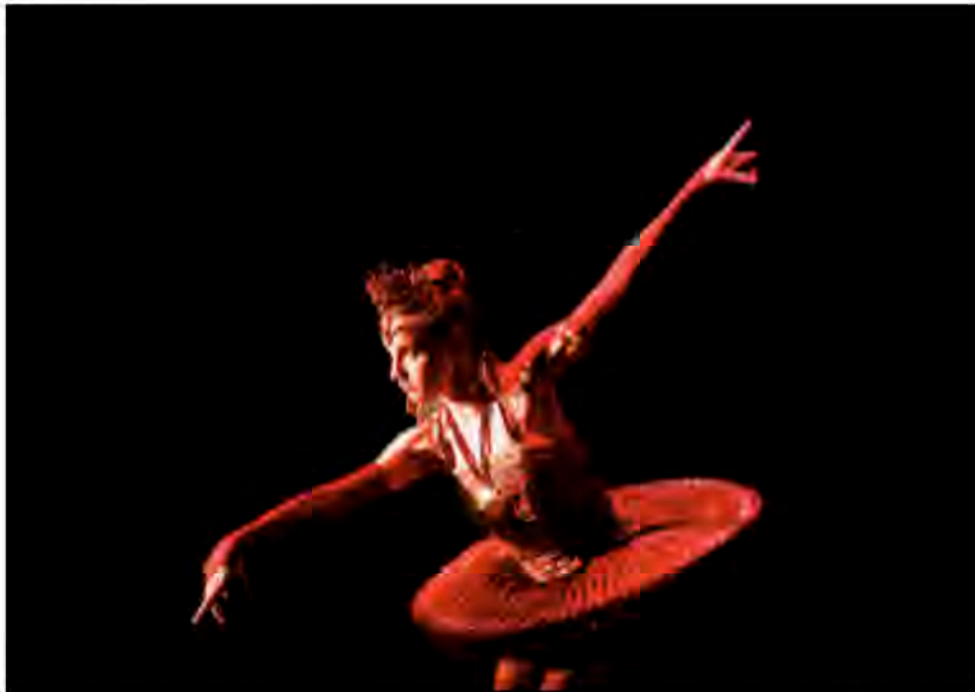
By combining the essence and spirit of ballet with characteristics of classic cocktails and old Hollywood glamour, her performing company Ballets With A Twist serves up the glitz and excitement of big, classic dance numbers.

*Mint Julep And Other Spirited Dances* premieres this weekend at Spruce Peak Performing Arts in Stowe and Klaus joined VPR to talk about the show.

### **On the inspiration for *Mint Julep And Other Spirited Dances***

"I'm originally from Hollywood, and I grew up in a home that was just steeped in music and dancing. My parents were also extremely active social dancers. Our home was a place where on Saturday evenings they would have their friends come over ... and the ladies would wear dancing dresses, the men would wear suits, and I would just peek at them. I would sit on the staircase and look through the spindles and look at them dance.

"I think the flavor of that period that I grew up in, with my parents dancing and then actually studying dance with my father, I think the light bulb went off when I was 5 or 6. I had been choreographing and I had decided to make a Mai Tai. The Mai Tai was about the theme restaurants that I would go to with my parents, where they would serve these Polynesian recipes. It really catches a kid's imagination, so I said 'Well I'm going to make this dance, I'm going to make a Mai Tai.' And I had studied sacred Hula as a child, being from the West Coast, and I was shocked at how the Hawaiian hand gestures had so much similarity with the classical ballet port de bras. So the dance is very, very classical, it just happens to be worn with a velvet, leopard tutu and with the Hawaiian feeling, just like the little cocktail umbrella you would find in the glass."



Klaus says much of her inspiration comes from growing up in Hollywood, in a house that was 'steeped in music and dancing.'

CREDIT NICO MALVALDI

### **On capturing an audience**

"We've performed in different night clubs in New York, as well as in large, 1,000-person houses and they don't feel like they are coming to something off-putting or un-relatable. I adore ballet but I'm just lucky that I have a feeling about it that it has sort of a pop appeal; I'm very serious about it."

### **On the influence of Hollywood glitz and glamour**

"When I came to New York to dance, I was 18, and I didn't realize that the Busby Berkeley environments in those films – I didn't realize those never existed. I thought that's where I was coming. I didn't realize that was his dream, and that he was trying to take people's minds off the Depression and all the financial suffering people were undergoing. I must have been 40 by the time I went, 'You know what? That never existed at all, so I'm going to make it myself.'

"The romance and the wholesomeness of the feminine and masculine imagery of that time I felt was really missing. I thought, that's something that's really inspiring to have something to look up to ... and the beauty of the music and the costuming, that you can get really carried away, that you can let your imagination flow up onto the stage and really get carried away ... I've gradually been edging into this, I think we have about 23 or 24 'cocktails of culture' now; 24 pieces now that I can come back to a town or a venue and do another round. And it's so exciting to do a premier at Stowe."

*Mint Julep And Other Spirited Dances premieres at the Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center in Stowe on Saturday, Sept. 19.*



# Ballets with a Twist

MINT JULEP  
AND OTHER  
SPIRITED DANCES

ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, at 7:30pm, the playful and sophisticated Ballets with a Twist: Mint Julep and Other Spirited Dances comes from NYC to Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center in Stowe, Vermont. “It’s wholesome, glamorous and I do like a bit of wit,” says artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus. The company of 16, which includes three little girls, brings an American and European experience through dance vignettes inspired by cocktails.

The program combines the seriousness of “Bloody Mary” about the tragic life of Mary Tudor, with the lightness of “Manhattan Cocktail” represented by a lady walking her dog down Fifth Avenue. A new vignette, “Pink Lady,” has a dreamy 1930’s and 40’s heroine showing off the Schiaparelli pink of the era.

“Mint Julep,” the Vermont show’s namesake, is the special drink of the Kentucky Derby and “is a way to capture the essence of the event in shorthand,” says Klaus. It features the racetrack owner’s daughter, a trainer, thoroughbreds and three little ponies played by the company’s three little girls.

Klaus is originally from southern California. “My parents loved dancing,” she says. Her father, though an entrepreneur, had studied ballet with a member of the Ballet Russes who had stayed in the U.S. She describes herself as “bitten by the dance bug early.” By age six, she had taken lessons in sacred hula, tap, and started ballet. She later moved to New York, and in 2009 formed Ballets with a Twist, comprised of a team of three, including her as artistic director/choreographer, a composer and a costume designer.

Ballets with a Twist performs in a variety of venues from intimate Manhattan clubs to 1000-seat theaters. “Wherever we go we make an essential grouping of cocktails,” Klaus says. “We create short vignettes for a modern American audience.”



To purchase tickets, visit [www.sprucepeakarts.org](http://www.sprucepeakarts.org)

# SEPT CALENDAR

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Like the University of Vermont Medical Center on Facebook and get weekly updates from Dr. First!  
See "First With Kids" videos at [uvmhealth.org](http://uvmhealth.org).



## Highlights

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6 NEW WORLD FESTIVAL

More than 70 musicians celebrate Vermont's Celtic and French Canadian heritage through traditional tunes, children's activities and dance. Chandler Music Hall, Randolph, noon-11 p.m. \$12-39; free for children ages 2-12. Info, 728-6464.

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 BEE HERE NOW FESTIVAL

The honey makers steal the show at this celebration with an observation hive, quilt activity and parade. Dress up as a bee for a chance to win a prize. Shelburne Orchards, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Free. Info, 985-2753.

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 CELEBRATION OF BIRDS

Avid avian fans delight in this fête of feathered friends featuring exhibits, speakers and food. Staige Hill Farm, Charlotte, 4:30 p.m. Free. Info, 434-3068.

### SATURDAY & SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26-27 CHAMPLAIN MINI MAKER FAIRE

Tech enthusiasts celebrate the DIY mindset at this quirky science fair featuring robotics, student experiments, arts and crafts and more. Shelburne Farms, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. \$6-9; free for ages 10 and under. Info, 863-5956.

## High Spirits

In 1996, choreographer Marilyn Klaus founded Ballets with a Twist, a dance company devoted to mixing classical ballet with high-energy choreography. Its latest production, **MINT JULEP AND OTHER SPIRITED DANCES**, brings together lively pop music, whirling movement and colorful costumes for a series of vignettes inspired by iconic American refreshments. PBS praised the New York City-based company for its "surprising style." Belly up to the barre and enjoy!

**BALLETS WITH A TWIST: MINT JULEP AND OTHER SPIRITED DANCES:** Saturday, September 19, 7:30 p.m., at Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center in Stowe. Recommended for ages 7 and up. \$20-59. Info, 760-4634. [sprucepeakarts.org](http://sprucepeakarts.org)

COURTESY OF BALLETS WITH A TWIST



## Ballets with a Twist to bring dance show *Cocktail Hour* on stage in NYC

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2015

A fashionista reads a trade magazine. Lights flash and four zombies enter. Their mauve-lace masks, Devo hats and metallic black unitards are as stylish as her cat glasses and form-flattering sweater and sweats. But a red outline is all that remains of the guys' ties and their girlfriends' pearls are blood stained. They dance menacingly around their prey and carry the girl off.

No ballerinas were eaten during *Zombie Cocktail*, one of the playful vignettes choreographer Marilyn Klaus concocted for *Cocktail Hour* and her company Ballets with a Twist. On February 26<sup>th</sup>, as part of The Museum at FIT's lecture series, Klaus and costume designer Catherine Zehr discussed their 20-year collaboration and work on this dance. In between their conversation, Ballets with a Twist dancers performed and modeled their costumes on the Katie Murphy Amphitheater's semi-stage/semi-catwalk.

*Cocktail Hour* is an ongoing work-in-progress with an original score by Stephen Gaboury. Artistic Director Klaus creates two new cocktail dances a year for a current drink menu of 20. Selecting the cocktails depends on the performance space, which ranges from theaters to nightclubs. A ballet presented out of context can be jarring (or a blessing if it's from the Soviet era), but *Cocktail Hour* allows for a genuinely unique performance opportunity for dancers and audiences alike. For FIT, only sections of each cocktail were presented, but to an advantage, to show off the costumes and choreography without the distraction of scenery or visual effects.

Designing for this ambitious production is a challenge Catherine Zehr relishes. Both she and Gaboury are part of the rehearsal process. Large ballet companies like New York City Ballet have their own costume shop; Zehr and her assistant make, repair, restructure and clean everything. The personal touch is a wildly creative one: tiaras have vintage broaches and tutus are in the shape of stiff Elizabethan collars or fans. The Zombie's Devo hats also resemble the Guggenheim. Each costume is unique.

However, one essential remains untouched. Pointe shoes are dyed but never embellished. Because of the shoe's structure to support balance, altering them for performance is hazardous.





Two cocktails were especially gorgeous. An excerpt from *Absinthe* was a solo danced by Emily Anton. Ms Absinthe's backstory is that she once danced at the Paris Opera and is now with the Folies Bergère. Her green costume reflects both the drink's color and the fairies who populated the forests of 19<sup>th</sup> century ballet. Because she has fallen on hard times, her dress and wings look intentionally shabby. Her textured black tights add to the sharp, sad contrast. Absinthe's traveling steps and arms, suggesting flight, echo those of Bournoville's *Les Sylphide*. She also dances with a candle, something the Sleepwalker in Balanchine's *La Sonnambula* also does. These two spectral beings have agendas; Absinthe just wants to dance.



Paris is also the setting for *White Russian*. The now-penniless nobility residing in Paris recall their lives in pre-revolutionary Russia. The choreography is pure classical ballet with one couple (Erin Gallagher and Aengus Ortiz) and a corps of women. The bodice of the costume is in the shape of white chocolate (an ingredient in some White Russian cocktail recipes) and the cream, taupe colors on the long tutu are the color of the drink. Rhinestones sparkle on long gloves. Aengus Ortiz's costume is not a jacket, but a vest fastened with Velcro for ease of movement. His medals too are velcroed in place.

As this was a FIT lecture, Catherine Zehr gave aspiring costumers strong advice on how to cut patterns, volunteer with a local dance and/or theatre company and never stop studying. The FIT alum still takes classes and learns from her peers.

Story ballets always feature some kind of feast. Therefore, it is only fitting that the drinks get their own dance and stunning costumes.

**Patricia Contino**

*Photos: Ballets with a Twist*

*Ballets with a Twist is planning performances of Cocktail Hour in New York City this summer. For further information on FIT Museum Public Programs visit [here](#), for further information on Ballets with a Twist visit [here](#).*

DANCE

# Dance Listings for Feb. 20-26

FEB. 19, 2015

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*Full reviews of recent dance performances: [nytimes.com/dance](http://nytimes.com/dance). A searchable guide to these and other performances is at [nytimes.com/events](http://nytimes.com/events).*

**Ballets with a Twist** (Thursday) The costume designer Catherine Zehr returns to her alma mater for a conversation on “Designing for Dance,” featuring examples of her designs and performances by Ballets with a Twist. The company presents excerpts from its popular “Cocktail Hour: The Show,” choreographed by Marilyn Klaus. Classic libations, like absinthe and the Bloody Mary, serve as muse for Ms. Zehr’s colorful frocks and Ms. Klaus’s bubbly dance numbers. At 6 p.m., Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Avenue, at 27th Street, 212-732-1813, [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com). (Schaefer)





## BWW Reviews: CATHERINE ZEHR of Ballets with a Twist Talks Costuming at FIT

by Marina Kennedy

March 10 10:06  
2015



Photo Credit: "Eau de Ville" by Nico Malvaldi

Costuming is a fascinating element of fashion. And Broadwayworld.com attended a special event at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) where Costume Designer, Catherine Zehr discussed her career working with the NYC dance company, "Ballets with a Twist." The program was held on February 26th at 6:00 at the college's Katie Murphy Amphitheatre on the 7th Avenue campus. The sold out event was part of the FIT Museum's Fashion Culture series. In attendance were students, professors, dance enthusiasts and special guests from fashion houses that included Jason Wu, Dior and Lanvin.

The program featured performance excerpts from Artistic Director and Choreographer, Marilyn Klaus' dance works. The event shed light on the process of designing costumes for dance. Klaus weighed in on the discussion to provide additional insight about Zehr's contribution to the company's success and joined her in answering audience questions.

Klaus, whose choreography has been seen internationally, formed Ballets with a Twist in association with Zehr and the company's composer Stephen Gaboury. The company has performed its signature floor show-to-stage production, *Cocktail Hour*, in a wide range of venues, from Lincoln Center and Ohio's PlayhouseSquare to SoHo House and Manhattan nightclub Stage 48.

The depth of collaboration between Zehr and Klaus is more than impressive. They have worked together for over 20 years and they revealed how they capture the aesthetic of their themes while making dance the center of their creation. Zehr attends all the company rehearsals year round as does their music composer, Stephen Gaboury.

I have personally been a fan of the Ballets with a Twist. Years ago, I saw my first performance of them in Rahway, New Jersey at the Union County Performing Arts Center (UCPAC) where they present their annual spring season. I admire their distinctive style and costumes with dance selections that showcase the company's talent including the pieces *Mai Tai*, *Shirley Temple* and *Martini*.

Zehr is the artistic force behind *Cocktail Hour*'s costume design. Her creations evoke the origins and essence of each spirit with vivid colors and embellishments. Zehr honed her skills while working at major American fashion houses, then by designing and manufacturing attire for her own label. She studied art and design at Washington University and FIT. Even with her impressive background, Zehr continues to take classes and seminars to expand her art as a costume designer.

At the FIT Fashion Culture series program, excerpts from a number of the company's choreographies were presented and the costumes were discussed in depth. The evening's dance pieces included *White Russian*, *Bloody Mary* and *Singapore Sling*.

Zehr pointed out the detail and fabric qualities of each costume. She also told the audience that the costumes have to be very functional, allowing for complete freedom of movement for the dancers. She discussed the fact that each and every costume requires post-performance maintenance that includes mending and laundering.

There are special elements that make Ballets with a Twist costumes eye-catching and appealing from the exciting array of colors and trims, to the inventive styles. Speaking of accessories, Zehr said, "Headpieces are my favorite things." She even makes the tiaras by hand twisting wire and adorning them with sequins and jewels. Special effort goes into every piece. Zehr said that she trims the back of tiaras so that they are attractive from every angle.

When asked by the audience for advice for aspiring costume designers, Zehr had very practical and helpful tips. She suggested that people learn to make patterns and also know how to sew. She also advised interning or volunteering with a costume designer to get hands-on experience.

For more information on the company, Ballets with a Twist, visit <http://balletswithatwist.com/>. For learn more about the Museum at FIT and their Fashion Culture series, visit <http://www.fitnyc.edu/museum.asp>.





BY MELISSA HALL / NEWS/EVENTS

## — THE MUSEUM AT FIT PRESENTS DESIGNING COSTUMES FOR BALLETS WITH A TWIST —



*Photo credit: Darial Sneed*

**W**hat goes into wardrobe for a dance company that is a mix of art and entertainment?

The Museum at FIT presents Designing Costumes for New York's Ballets with A Twist as part of their spring Fashion Culture series on February 26, 2015. FIT alumna and costume designer Catherine Zehr will discuss the process of designing for dance. The night will also feature excerpts from artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus' *Cocktail Hour: The Show*. Klaus will talk about Zehr's impact to the production and answer audience questions.

### Event Details

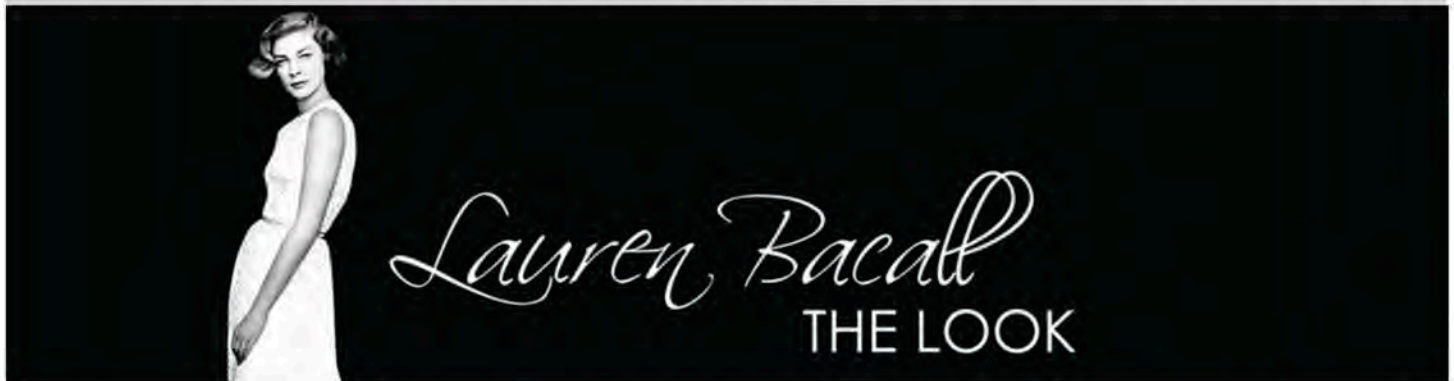
Thursday, February 26, 2015, at 6:00pm

Cost: Free

Location: Katie Murphy Amphitheater, 7th Avenue at 27th Street

Learn more and get your tickets at the **Museum at FIT**

<http://theemergingdesigner.com/the-museum-at-fit-presents-designing-costumes-for-ballets-with-a-twist/>



Upcoming Exhibition



*Lauren Bacall: The Look*, a celebration of the film and theater star's unique style, opens on March 3rd. [Read more about the exhibition.](#)

Visitor Photography



**PHOTOGRAPHY IS ALLOWED FOR THIS EXHIBITION**

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#YSLhalston | #FakingItFashion

We are pleased to announce that still photography for personal use is now permitted in designated galleries! Flash, tripods, and selfie sticks are not allowed, however. Look for the signs listing our exhibition hashtags and social media handles!

Fashion Culture



New York's Ballets with a Twist will perform excerpts from *Cocktail Hour* on Thursday, February 26 at 6pm. It's free and followed by Q & A with the costume designer (an FIT alumna). [Register today!](#)

Special Event



On February 24th, MFIT's digital media manager will be a keynote speaker at Digital Fashion Futures, an international fashion conference organized by Europeana Fashion at MoMU in Antwerp. [Learn more.](#)



"Bloody Mary" from *Cocktail Hour*, dancer Emily Anton. Photograph by Darial Sneed.

**Designing Costumes for Ballets with a Twist**

Thursday, February 26 | 6pm  
Katie Murhpy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz Art and Design Center

Costume designer and FIT alumna Catherine Zehr will discuss her career designing for New York's Ballets with a Twist, and the company will perform excerpts from artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus's *Cocktail Hour*. Klaus will then join Zehr to answer audience questions.



# Fashion Culture

Special Programs

Spring 2015



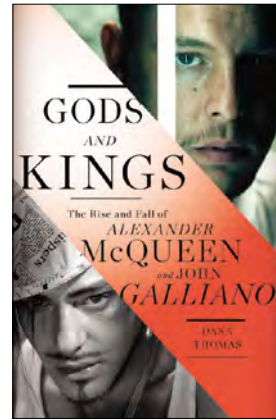
The Museum at **FIT**

## Fashion Culture

Spring 2015  
Special Programs

### GODS AND KINGS: THE RISE AND FALL OF ALEXANDER MCQUEEN AND JOHN GALLIANO

Dana Thomas



**Wednesday, February 11, 6 pm**  
Katie Murphy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz Art and Design Center  
Join acclaimed journalist Dana Thomas for a preview of her new book, *Gods and Kings*. It is an unflinching look at the relentless world of couture and the price it demanded of Alexander McQueen and John Galiano, even as they helped luxury fashion grow from a clutch of small, family-owned businesses into a \$280 billion-a-year global corporate industry.

A book signing will follow the presentation.

Photo: Cover of the book, *Gods and Kings*.

### MADMOISELLE: COCO CHANEL AND THE PULSE OF HISTORY

Rhonda K. Garelick



**Thursday, February 19, 6 pm**  
Katie Murphy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz Art and Design Center  
A writer on fashion, performance, art, and cultural politics, Rhonda K. Garelick has crafted a unique, seminal biography of Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel, one the greatest fashion designers of the 20th century. Join Garelick for a portrait of Chanel as a woman of daring and a designer who branded a century and remade the world in her own image.

A book signing will follow the presentation.

Photo: Cover of the book, *Mademoiselle*. Courtesy of Random House.

### FILM SCREENING: PASSAGE #5: CHRISTIAN DIOR, SPRING/SUMMER 2011

Alexandra Palmer



**Tuesday, February 24, 6 pm**  
Katie Murphy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz Art and Design Center

Dr. Alexandra Palmer will introduce the documentary film *Passage #5*, chronicling the creation of a sensational Christian Dior gown commissioned, along with the film, for the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada. Running time is approximately 50 minutes, to be followed by a Q and A.

Photo: *Passage #5* one-piece coat dress, with belt ensemble, designed by John Galiano for Christian Dior. Paris, Couture, Spring/Summer 2011  
Photograph by Brian Boyle ©Royal Ontario Museum, 2011.

### DESIGNING COSTUMES FOR BALLETS WITH A TWIST

## DESIGNING COSTUMES FOR BALLETS WITH A TWIST

Catherine Zehr and Marilyn Klaus



**Thursday, February 26, 6 pm**  
Katie Murphy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz Art and Design Center

Costume designer and FIT alumna Catherine Zehr will discuss her career designing for New York's Ballets with a Twist, and the company will perform excerpts from artistic director and choreographer Marilyn Klaus's

*Cocktail Hour*. Klaus will then join Zehr to answer audience questions.

Photo: "Bloody Mary" from *Cocktail Hour*, dancer Emily Anton. Photograph by Darial Sneed.

## FUTURE FAKES

Susan Scafidi in conversation with Arielle Elia

**Tuesday, March 3, 6 pm**

Katie Murphy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz Art and Design Center

As the technologies of fashion design, production, distribution, and imitation advance, how will we identify fakes? How does one define authenticity in a world of 3D, print-it-yourself accessories and downloadable watch faces? Join Susan Scafidi of the Fashion Law Institute and MFIT assistant curator Arielle Elia for a lively inquiry into the future of fashion copying.

## BEAT OF AFRICA: THE ETHICAL FASHION INITIATIVE

Simone Cipriani



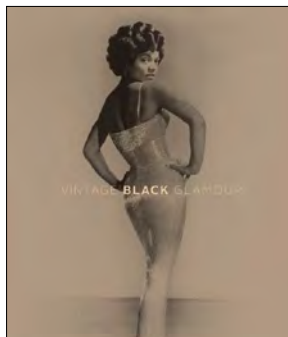
**Tuesday, March 24, 6 pm**  
Katie Murphy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz Art and Design Center  
Simone Cipriani is the founder of the Ethical Fashion Initiative, a flagship program of the International Trade Centre. Cipriani will talk about EFI's efforts to propel the international fashion industry in Ghana, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Kenya, and how EFI enables artisans living in urban and rural poverty to connect with the global fashion chain, while

encouraging the use of sustainable, environmentally sound materials and practices.

Photo: *duaba serwa*. Courtesy of Altaroma. Luca Sorrentino Photography.

## VINTAGE BLACK GLAMOUR

Nichelle Gainer



**Tuesday, March 10, 6 pm**  
Katie Murphy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz  
Art and Design Center

Join fashion, lifestyle, and arts journalist Nichelle Gainer for a presentation of her new book, *Vintage Black Glamour*. This stunning publication's historic photographs and insightful biographies tell the stories of black

women of the 20th century—actors, dancers, writers, and entertainers—who rarely appeared in the same publications as their white counterparts.

A book signing will follow the presentation.

Photo: Cover of the book, *Vintage Black Glamour*. [vbgbook.com](http://vbgbook.com).

## YVES SAINT LAURENT

Roxanne Lowit



**Thursday, March 19, 6 pm**  
Katie Murphy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz  
Art and Design Center

Fashion photographer Roxanne Lowit is as much a celebrity as the people she photographs. Now she presents a pictorial history of the great couturier Yves Saint Laurent. Included are intimate views of life backstage at his shows—as Lowit herself experienced it. Whether surrounded by beautiful models or peeking at the catwalk from the

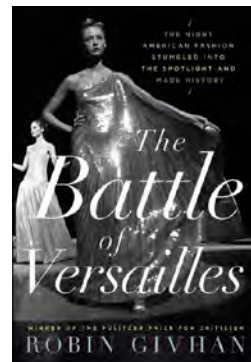
wings, every moment was a magnificent photo opportunity. Contributors to the book include Catherine Deneuve, Betty Catroux, and Lucie de la Falaise.

A book signing will follow the presentation.

Photo: Cover of the book, *Roxanne Lowit Photographs Yves Saint Laurent* ©Roxanne Lowit. All rights reserved.

## THE BATTLE OF VERSAILLES: THE NIGHT AMERICAN FASHION STUMBLER INTO THE SPOTLIGHT AND MADE HISTORY

Robin Givhan in conversation with Patricia Mears



**Wednesday, April 1, 6 pm**  
Katie Murphy Amphitheatre  
Fred P. Pomerantz Art and Design Center

Robin Givhan, Pulitzer Prize-winning fashion critic for the *Washington Post*, presents her first book, *The Battle of Versailles*, the story of a 1973 face-off between five American designers—including Halston and Oscar de la Renta—and five French designers (Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Cardin among them). Buoyed by a decision

to use ten African American models (unheard of then), the underdog Yanks pulled off a victory, cementing American fashion as a major player on the international stage.



# Texas Monthly

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## Six Must-Attend Events: January 23-February 5

THE STATE'S TOP OFFERINGS, FROM WHAT INFINITY FEELS—AND SOUNDS—LIKE TO ANOTHER REASON TO COMMEMORATE FEBRUARY 2 THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE ANY GROUNDHOGS.

by MICHAEL HOINSKI

FRI JANUARY 30, 2015 6:45 PM



"The Infinity Machine," a sound installation that will blow your mind at the Menil's Byzantine Fresco Chapel, in Houston.

### HOUSTON

#### *To Infinity and Beyond*

You can get the most out of "The Infinity Machine," located in the Menil Collection's Byzantine Fresco Chapel, by lying down on the floor. The sound installation features a huge rotating mobile draped with 150 antique mirrors, which reflect computer-controlled lighting installed on the room's perimeter amid broadcasted sounds that are reminiscent of bird chirps, electric guitars, and whale songs but are in fact ambient noises from the solar system recorded by the Plasma Wave Detector aboard NASA's Voyager I and II space probes. This engulfing experience, taking up a space measuring 30 feet by 45 feet, is the brain-dropping of the married Canadian artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller. "It's super-cool," said Toby Kamps, the Menil curator overseeing the project. "The sounds blend in glorious ways and approach symphonic levels of beauty and intensity." The Menil commissioned the piece for the chapel's debut as an exhibition space for contemporary art and it's the first in a series of yearlong installations there. (The chapel opened in 1997 expressly to house a set of Byzantine-era frescoes that were rescued from the island of Cyprus, but in 2012 those restored pieces were returned to the Greek Orthodox Church and the chapel was repurposed.) At the forty-ninth Venice Biennale, in 2001, Cardiff and Miller won multiple awards for their *Paradise Institute*, a reality-bending conceptual piece involving a sixteen-seat movie theater wherein viewers watch a film that takes on new meaning when paired with the incongruent sounds transmitted through

the audience's headphones. "Janet and George are important artists because they combine the most advanced video and sound-recording technologies in works that illuminate consciousness," said Mr. Kamps, who will open the exhibit with an artist talk on Saturday at 6 p.m.

*The Menil Collection, Jan. 31, 2015 to Jan 31, 2016, menil.org*

## AUSTIN

*Two Guys Walk Into A Bar*

The Museum of Human Achievement hosts incredible programs and exhibits, from speed-dating sessions led by Thor Harris, the Austin drummer and Renaissance man, to a show presented during last year's East Austin Studio Tour in which the space was transformed into a replica IKEA showroom. But because the museum has no social media presence and doesn't list its address on its website, it has remained somewhat of an underground sensation. That secret is bound to come unglued a bit this weekend with the opening of *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, the comedic play written in 1993 by Steve Martin (yes, the wild and crazy guy), about an imagined conversation between Pablo Picasso and Albert Einstein in a Paris bar, in 1904, right before Picasso painted *Les Femmes d'Alger* and Einstein published his theory of relativity. The show is a production by the Austin theater group Present Company, managed by Lindsay Doleshal and Stephanie Carll, cousin of singer-songwriter Hayes Carll. Promising to "absurdly bend the space-time continuum," the theater company challenges the audience to "ponder the definition of creativity, the surreal nature of existence, and the meaning of life."

*The Museum of Human Achievement, Jan. 29 to Feb. 15, presentcompanytheatre.com*

## DALLAS

*Posing With Putin*

Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, is a meme machine. His dour countenance begs for snarky captions, and those bare-chested photos of him riding a horse in the Siberian wild spawned a number of outtakes. The Russian Winter Festival, a two-day eating and drinking binge at Hotel St. Germain, will offer cutouts of Putin so that revelers can take selfies and perhaps start memes of their own. Organizers at the hotel, a member of the *Relais & Châteaux* collective of five hundred fine restaurants and hotels around the world, are requesting that participants consider a jacket and gloves for the outdoor ice pavilion and bar with caviar hors d'oeuvres and vodka shots served in glasses made of ice. Following that there will be a feast of Russian and European foods including golubtzi, piroshki, and black bread, with imported Russian candies like chocolate-covered hazelnuts, Putin's purported late-night indulgence.

*Hotel St. Germain, Jan. 30 & 31, 7 p.m., hotelstgermain.com*

## EL PASO

*Twist-off*

Ballets with a Twist, the New York theater company that collaborated with Cyndi Lauper for a charity performance of her song "True Colors," likes to make audiences feel drunk. Their revue-style signature production, "Cocktail Hour," conjures up almost twenty classic drinks invoked as body movements. For example, Michael Dominguez, the company's lone Texan and an El Paso native, performs a solo dance as a boilermaker (a shot of whiskey and a beer chaser) in which he nearly boils over with rage. Other depictions on the "menu" include absinthe, a Bloody Mary, a margarita, a White Russian, and even holy water. The show, a mix of formal ballet and contemporary dance, has received raves from the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice*, and it will make it its only Texas stop in El Paso.

*Plaza Theatre, Jan. 30, 8 p.m., balletswithatwist.com*

## AUSTIN

*Into Intaglio?*

Print Austin is in the middle of a month-long celebration of traditional printmaking at almost two dozen galleries and art spaces. Dive into the mix on Thursday at Women & Their Work, where the artist Ann Johnson, a faculty member at Prairie View A&M University, will do a show-and-tell titled "It's the not knowing that burns my Sole: experimental printmaking," about intaglio printing, an age-old process that she administers on unconventional mediums like feathers and leaves in expressions of her African-American ancestry.

*Women & Their Work, Feb. 5, 6 p.m., womenandtheirwork.org*

## SAN ANTONIO

*1, 667 Years of Peace*

Centro Cultural Aztlan, a San Antonio nonprofit that was founded in 1977 to promote Latino art and culture, started the "Segundo De Febrero" program the following year to commemorate the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in 1848 to end the Mexican-American War and establish the Rio Grande as the Texas-Mexico border. The nonprofit's history is inextricably linked to the program and these dual stories will dovetail on Monday for the 167th anniversary of the treaty signing with an exhibit of works by more than three dozen artists.

*Centro Cultural Aztlan, Feb. 2 to March 29, centroaztlan.org*



DANCE

# HEY, BARRE-TENDER

PHOTO BY NICO MALVALDI—BALLETS WITH A TWIST

‘Cocktail Hour: The Show’ brings nightlife-inspired ballet (and a former El Pasoan) to the Plaza Theater

To Ballets with a Twist, a margarita isn’t a margarita if the tequila isn’t on pointe.

The New York-based ballet company brings the allure of the nightlife glamour to the Plaza Theater on Friday with its performance of “Cocktail Hour: The Show.” The company’s signature production takes its inspiration from such classic cocktails as the zombie, the margarita and the mint julep. “(The show) is an embrace and a love of culture,” Marilyn Klaus, said on the phone interview from New York.

Ballets with a Twist also includes a former El Pasoan, Michael Dominguez. Dominguez was born in California and began his dance training there before moving with his family to El Paso. Here, he participated with the Caperettes Dance Team at Parkland High School and performed

with El Paso Playhouse. He was also a featured dancer in “Viva! El Paso” production.

He studied dance under Ingeborg Heuser and Andrée Harper at UTEP, performing with Heuser’s Ballet El Paso. After Leaving UTEP to continue his studies, he earned a number of awards and honors and had guest appearances with Ballet Mississippi and engagements with New York’s Metropolitan Opera and El Paso Opera.

Dominguez joined Ballets with a Twist as a soloist, and now also serves as the rehearsal assistant and co-director of youth outreach, which provides dance lessons to children and includes them in some performances.

For the performance in El Paso, Ballets with a Twist



Former El Pasoan Michael Dominguez dances in “Boilermaker,” a gruff, masculine performance inspired by a shot of whiskey and a beer. Artistic director Marilyn Klaus says Dominguez has been integral to the creation of many dances seen in “Cocktail Hour: The Show.”

is using children from D’Ansa Jazz Stage. Maria Regina Seade 9, is among the participants. She said she was equal part excited and nervous during a recent workshop with Dominguez and Klaus.

Maybe the kids were nervous at first, Dominguez said. But any trepidation that Maria or the other children had at the start of the workshop melted

away after a few minutes.

“I enjoyed going back and helping out with the arts in El Paso,” Dominguez said. “It’s nice that we were able to go back and include (dancers from the region) in the ballet. Instead of just watching it, there’s an element of interaction with the show - to show them what they can achieve.”

CONTINUE ON PAGE 5

**MAKE PLANS**

**What:** “Cocktail Hour: The Show”

**When:** 8p.m. Friday

**Where:** Plaza Theater in Downtown El Paso

**Tickets:** \$20-\$60 plus fees; Student, senior and military discounts are available. Tickets are available at the Plaza

**Theater Box Office** and through Ticketmaster outlets, by phone at 800-745-3000 and online at ticketmaster.com

**Information:** 231-1100; elpasolive.com

**Online:** facebook.com/gotoballetswithatwist; balletswithatwist.com

By Kyle Alvarado » [kalvarado@elpasotimes.com](mailto:kalvarado@elpasotimes.com) » [@kalvaradoEP](https://twitter.com/kalvaradoEP) on Twitter



In photo at left, former El Pasoan Michael Dominguez leads Kiara Palcios Salas, 8, left and Maria Regina Seade, 9, during a workshop at D’Ansa Jazz Stage. At right, he



reminds Maria to face the audience as she practices a scene from “Mint Julep.” Dominguez works with Ballets with a Twist, which is performing its signature production “Cocktail Hour: The Show” on Friday at the Plaza Theatre.

PHOTOS BY MARK LABIE—EL PASO TIMES



PHOTOS BY NICO MALVALDI—BALLETS WITH A TWIST

The dancers from Ballets with a Twist in “Brandy alexander” during a performance of “Cocktail hour: The Show.”

# “Cocktail Hour”

FROM PAGE 1

## ON THE MENU

A sampling of the cocktail-inspired dances to be performed

- “Bloody Mary”
- “Boilermaker”
- “Gimlet”
- “Holy Water”
- “Mai Tai”
- “Manhattan”
- “Margarita”
- “Mint Julep”
- “Roy Rogers”
- “Sputnik”
- “Zombie:”

Artistic director Marilyn Klaus says more dances may be added.



A scene from “Roy Rogers” dance in “Cocktail hour: The Show.”

Dominguez said “Cocktail Hour” has expanded his approach to ballet.

Klaus “gives us the concept, and as a performer it’s interesting because I feel like we’re giving the audience a taste of the drink,” he said. “Some people like the strength of a drink, others like the softness of it. I feel like it’s our job giving you the taste, to entice you and , through movement, give a sampling of each cocktail.”

Klaus said Dominguez has been instrumental in many of the dances seen on “Cocktail Hour,” originating roles in the dances “Miint Julep,” “Scotch on the Rachmaninoff” and “Holy Water.”

The show premiered in 2009 with nine dances. Now the “menu” has stocked up 10 more “drinks,” allowing the company to return to venues with an entirely different show.

Klaus said Dominguez was her muse for “Boilermaker,” a solo that premiered in 2014. The gruff and-masculine dance is inspired by the drink, a shot of whiskey with a beer chaser.

Other dances reference different cultures and their histories through

movement and costuming, Klaus said.

The “Bloody Mary,” for instance, tells a condensed version of Queen mary Tudor’s attempt to restore Catholicism to England.

Despite the sometimes broad themes, the show takes many of its aesthetic cues from the intimate settings at smaller venues.

“We have had and continue to have the opportunity to perform in nightclubs,” Klaus said. “The nightclub environment has informed the lighting design palette when we perform in larger art performing art centers or large theaters,” such as the Plaza Theatre.

Among the troupe’s most intimate numbers is “Holy Water,” a dance inspired by the vodka-and-rum concoction. It has been performed with gospel choirs in other venues. Through that dance, Klaus demonstrates her respect for the audience, the dancer and movement. “It’s truly about the spirit. Where does the spirit take you? The dancer? The audience?”

“Cocktail Hour” is making its Texas premiere in El Paso through a partnership with the El Paso City Ballet. Lisa Skaf, artistic director for El Paso City Ballet, said that a show with a idiosyncratic inspiration like “Cocktail Hour” should help expand ballet’s definition in El Paso beyond tutus and nutcrackers.

“People in El Paso might think that only ballet out there is ‘The Nutcracker,’ but there’s so much more to ballet,” Skaf said. “I’ve never seen the whole show, but I felt in my gut that people will like this.” Skaf also appreciates the local connection that Dominguez brings with him and the community outreach that is integral to Ballets with a Twist.

“I thought it was a really good fit to bring back people who have made it outside of El Paso and showcase them in the new ballet,” Skaf said.

Kyle Alvarado may be reached at 546-6281



# El Paso Inc.

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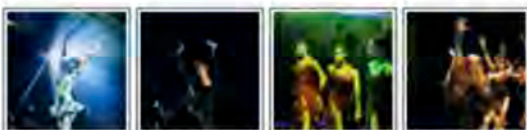
## 'Cocktail Hour' makes Texas premiere in El Paso

[Story](#)[Comments](#)[Image \(4\)](#)

Photo by Nico Malvaldi

### Cocktail Hour

A dancer portrays a Martini in the ballet production of 'Cocktail Hour.'



The show includes more than a dozen vignettes "starring" libations like Manhattans, Margaritas, Mai Tais, Shirley Temples, Gimlets and White Russians. Some dances are solos, some are ensembles, some are extended and some are quite short. All are imaginative dance numbers that will stick in your mind the next time you enjoy a Bloody Mary at brunch or a Scotch on the rocks at dinner.

Veteran choreographer and Ballets with a Twist artistic director Marilyn Klaus created "Cocktail Hour" in 2009 for her professional dance troupe, which she founded in 1996 in association with composer, musician and

Posted: Monday, January 26, 2015 8:00 am | Updated: 10:20 am, Thu Jan 29, 2015.

By Cindy Graff Cohen El Paso Inc. columnist

### On the rocks or neat

This Friday brings an event I've been really looking forward to: "Cocktail Hour: The Show," a high-energy, high-concept ballet coming straight from New York. From everything I've read and the videos I've seen, it sounds like the cleverest, most engaging dance production around and we are lucky to have it here.

Brought to the Plaza Theatre Friday for one night only by the El Paso City Ballet, the production represents the Texas premiere of the show, which was created in 2009 for the Ballets with a Twist dance corps. Since then, it has charmed audiences at a wide variety of venues across the country, ranging from Lincoln Center to nightclubs.

A special bonus for us: The event brings back El Pasoan Michael Dominguez, who grew up performing with "Viva! El Paso," Ballet El Paso, El Paso Opera and many more local productions. Talented, athletic and handsome, he has achieved what so many dancers only dream of: a successful dancing career in New York City.

### Intoxicating imagery

"Cocktail Hour" is like a cabaret ballet, a sophisticated melding of music and movement that will nevertheless appeal to all ages. The idea is a fun one: to stylishly portray some of our culture's most iconic cocktails through dance, song, costumes and lighting effects.

Think about it. What could a martini look like, who would drink it, what music might be playing in the background, what images does a martini stir up in your mind?

songwriter Stephen Gaboury and costume designer Catherine Zehr.

Gaboury's lively compositions and often witty lyrics underscore that he's not your typical ballet composer. In fact, he's written music for icons such as Cyndi Lauper and recorded or toured with stars as diverse as Yma Sumac, Suzanne Vega, Stevie Wonder, Norah Jones and Country Joe and the Fish. He was also a collaborator on Lauper's "Kinky Boots," the 2013 Broadway hit that garnered six Tonys.

Zehr's creative costumes representing the different cocktails will be a big part of the show's impact. Sure, there will be some classic tutus, but other costumes range from retro to futuristic, from Las Vegas glitz to romantic elegance. Critics have loved her work and next month, her alma mater, New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, hosts a special event for Ballets with a Twist with Zehr discussing her career in costumes.

Klaus is warm, friendly, and passionate about ballet and I thoroughly enjoyed talking with her last month when she was in El Paso to get to know the Plaza Theatre and audition young dancers for a fun role: the ponies in the Mint Julep segment. She says the show "aims to entertain" and adds that the work was inspired by her love of classic dance routines starring Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly and others in the Busby Berkeley era of glamour and grace.

### **Local connections**

Dominguez was also visiting El Paso to help with educational outreach and auditions. Klaus had high praise for him and what he brings to his role as the Boilermaker – that's whiskey with a beer chaser.

"He is an absolute natural – a marvelous soloist and a terrific partner," she says. "He's very good at visualizing the choreography and directs some rehearsals."

A graduate of Parkland High School, Dominguez attributes his success to his dance education in El Paso.

"I was able to grow with the foundation of culture I gained here and everything I learned from Ingeborg Heuser, Andree Harper, Hector Serrano and others," he says. "I want to give back to the arts community and Ballets with a Twist is a great opportunity to do this. It's about more than dance – it's about music, costumes and art."

We can thank Lisa Skaf, founder and artistic director of the El Paso City Ballet, for bringing Ballets with a Twist to the Border.

Like Dominguez, Skaf also studied with Harper and Heuser, and although she was accepted at the prestigious San Francisco School of Ballet and Colorado's Ballet West summer program, her life took a different turn and she stayed in El Paso to study nursing at UTEP.

However, even as her career in nursing kept her busy, she never lost her love for ballet. She launched El Paso City Ballet as a non-profit more than a decade ago, and with the help of mentor Edward Villella, the revered founder and artistic director of the Miami City Ballet, she learned how to run a ballet company.

Over the years, the organization has presented a number of professional productions, including their "Gala Gala" event in 2013, which marked the first time any work from the great choreographer George Balanchine has been performed in our area.

Eventually Skaf dreams of El Paso having its own resident ballet company, but in the meantime, she's been instrumental in broadening El Paso's cultural offerings.

This week's show has been acclaimed everywhere, but I especially like what one dance critic wrote for The Huffington Post. "Klaus blasts the boundaries between high art and entertainment," says the writer. "We have seen the future of dance, and it is fun!"

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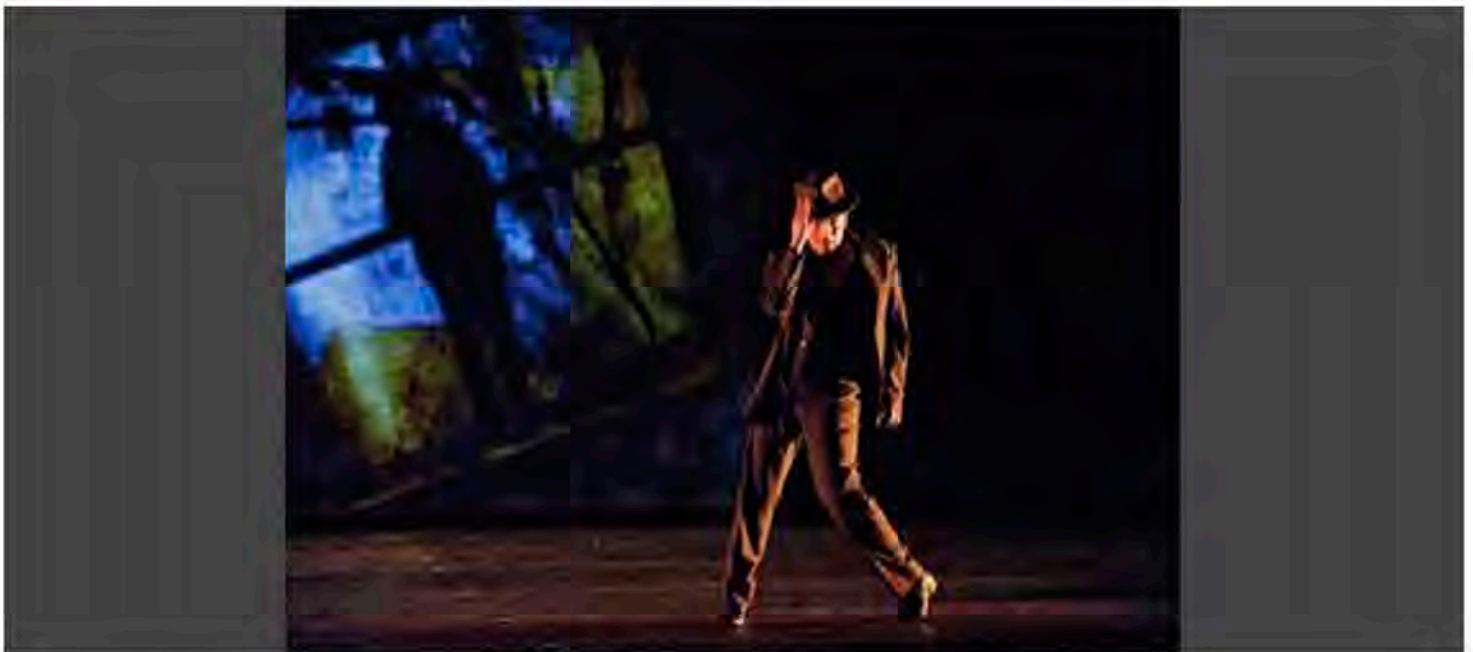
*Email arts and culture columnist Cindy Graff Cohen at [cindygraffcohen@gmail.com](mailto:cindygraffcohen@gmail.com).*



## Michael Dominguez is The Prodigal Outlaw: Ballets With a Twist

■ Interviews Jan 6, 2015

Like 74 Tweet 7 Share 7 Pin It Email Print



By Stephanie Woodard of Dance Informa.

Michael Dominguez is sweating. The lithe, dark-haired El Paso native is a soloist with the New York City dance company Ballets With a Twist. He and director-choreographer Marilyn Klaus are rehearsing at her Manhattan loft for the company's upcoming El Paso appearance, called *Cocktail Hour: The Show*, at the Plaza Theatre on January 30. In the show, images of iconic American drinks—Martini, Bloody Mary, Mai Tai, and more—are starting points for dance adventures.

Klaus and Dominguez have spent the last hour rehearsing the latest role he has created for Ballets With a Twist, AKA B-Twist. A solo called *Boilermaker*, it's about a guy who's looking for a fight. He's angry and defiant, and any opponent will do—someone else, himself, the universe.

"I enjoy the puns in the dance's title," says company composer Steve Gaboury, who wrote the raunchy, cabaret-like accompaniment. A "boilermaker" is a shot of whiskey and a beer chaser, Gaboury explains. It also refers to someone who works in a foundry and makes boilers. "And the character in the dance is himself about to boil over."

In today's rehearsal, Klaus and Dominguez are turning up the heat, choreographically speaking, by looking carefully at just one turn from the dance. Klaus takes the movement apart—deciding how Dominguez will straighten the leg he's turning on, when that heel will leave the floor, how he'll lift the other foot to his knee, where he'll place his shoulders and arms.

That's for starters. Klaus asks Dominguez to do the turn in excruciatingly slow motion. Over and over.

For months, Klaus has created and eviscerated every step of the dance. For a while, she felt Dominguez was playing the movements too light and easy. She added five-pound weights to his arms and legs. "I couldn't even move if I had to wear them," Klaus confesses.



For Dominguez, the weights led to a revelation. "I felt both grounded and assertive," he says. "I rethought my ballet technique. I saw that I was doing some things for the wrong reasons—over-performing them, instead of letting the steps do the work. When the steps take over, the simplest things, like walking, become big and exciting."



Michael Dominguez in 'Boilermaker'. Photo by Nico Malvaldi

Those insights informed the role. "In this dance, Marilyn makes it so I'm fighting the movement," says Dominguez. "It means the character is menacing, but the menace is directed inward as well as outward."

Says Klaus, "The more Michael and I work, the more we find out about the *Boilermaker* guy. I didn't have an objective when I started. I'd give Michael movements. I'd notice things that were wobbly or not right, and we'd work till we got to the bottom of it. When you approach choreography that way, the dance goes off on its own ride."

This particular dance is about struggle, but a career in dancing need not be, says Dominguez. When he teaches, he encourages students—young and adult, in El Paso and New York City—to think of the "whole world" of dance. "If you want to be a performer, you have to commit to it," he recalls telling them. "But you can also keep taking class while working in the administrative or business side of the field. You may not earn your living as a dancer, but that doesn't mean you have to exclude yourself from this world."

As B-Twist rehearsal assistant, Dominguez helps other dancers learn and practice roles. In doing so, he applies lessons learned in *Boilermaker* to very different works by Klaus—ecstatic *Holy Water*, courtly *Eau de Vie*, Old-South charmer *Mint Julep*, and others. "After *Boilermaker*, I'm rethinking how I move," says Dominguez. "It's about finding the internal logic, working the tiny muscles, not overdoing. Now, I find I can transfer that to other dancers."

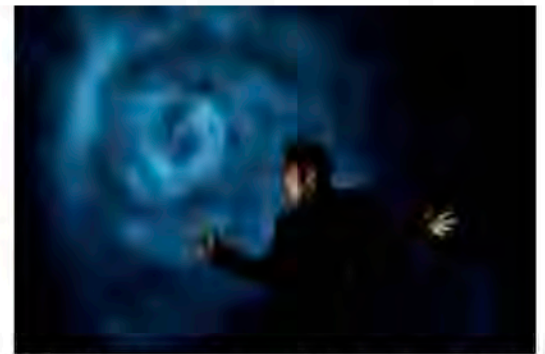
Before Dominguez left Texas 10 years ago to pursue a New York City career, he danced with Ballet El Paso and in shows such as *Viva El Paso!* Since then, he's returned to appear in the El Paso Opera production of *West Side Story* and *War and Peace* by New York's Metropolitan Opera. Favorite memories include being captain of Parkland High School's Caperettes dance team, which meant he taught, directed rehearsals, and did guest appearances at other high schools.

"I was a shy kid, and it let me see I could dance, coach, teach, and have authority," he recalls. "I realized I could see formations and remember other dancers' parts. That led to similar work in college, including a scholarship and a Texas Commission on the Arts artist-in-residence award. The skills I learned in high school paid for college, and later led to my job at Ballets With a Twist."

*Boilermaker* has given Dominguez intellectual challenges, as well as physical ones. He found Gaboury's lyrics for the accompaniment provocative. "The words gave me a lot to think about," says Dominguez. "They were the character talking to me in my head, or a bartender talking to me. The music made me breathe and feel even more grounded. It made me slow down." Which made the dance more internal, more difficult—and better, he and Klaus agree.

Early-20<sup>th</sup>-century German composer Kurt Weill inspired Gaboury as he was writing the music. "The character needed something dark and Germanic," Gaboury says. He also used shifting meters and what he calls a "borderline painfully slow" tempo. "There are aspects of the music that are deep and central, but I also wanted the guy off-kilter, stumbling."

The costume offered Dominguez more opportunities. At first, the slick business suit the character wears included a traditional shirt and tie and evoked the 1950s, says company costume designer Catherine Zehr. "Then one hot day, Michael put on a tank top instead of the shirt and tie," remembers Zehr. "He looked phenomenal. It was perfect." The tank top made the character feel like a boxer, says Dominguez, while the hat gave him gangster imagery to play with.



Michael Dominguez in 'Boilermaker'. Photo by Nico Malvaldi

That ambiguity is what Klaus was going for. "I didn't want the role to be a stock character the viewer recognized immediately," she says. "I wanted him to be someone we keep finding out about. When you stay with a character—when you work at it but don't demand anything, it gives back."

A special electrified prop Zehr fabricated is part of *Boilermaker's* surprise ending. Dominguez's dark-brown eyes sparkle as he demonstrates how the item works. But you're not going to find out any more about it here—no spoilers allowed! You'll just have to go see the dance.

For tickets to *Cocktail Hour: The Show*, [click here](#).

Photo (top): Michael Dominguez in 'Boilermaker'. Photo by Nico Malvaldi.



## ENTERTAINMENT

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By Kyle Alvarado and Dave Acosta / El Paso Times

POSTED: 01/11/2015 12:00:00 AM MST



A still from Ballets with a Twist's performance of "Cocktail Hour: The Show." The performance seen here is the Kentucky Derby-inspired mint julep. (Nico Malvaldi — Ballets with a Twist)

**"COCKTAIL HOUR: THE SHOW"** >> If a shot or two of tequila puts your toes en pointe, you might find yourself utterly engrossed with New York-based Ballets with a Twist's performance of "Cocktail Hour: The Show." Set to take the stage of the Plaza Theatre on Jan. 30, the tour takes inspiration from classic cocktails — the Manhattan, boilermaker and gimlet, to name a few. It mixes high art, classical ballet and modern dance moves with a unique inspiration for an evening of nightlife-inspired glamour.

Ballets with a Twist has partnered with the El Paso City Ballet to bring the performance to the Borderland. "El Paso City Ballet is so excited to be able to bring the city's dance world up to speed through Ballets with a Twist's performance," said Lisa Skaf, El Paso City Ballet's artistic director.

Information: [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com).





# The Art Avenue

ARCHITECTURE DESIGN ILLUSTRATION PERFORMING ARTS PHOTOGRAPHY SOCIAL VIDEO VISUAL ARTS

## Mixologists of Dance

by

Farzad Farrokhnia



There is a story behind just about every cocktail. Ballets with a Twist is giving audiences the opportunity to build on those stories with a spectacle of dance and ballet. Choreographed by Artistic Director, Marilyn Klaus, the company is bringing their innovative show, *Cocktail Hour*, not only to El Paso but to Texas for the first time on Jan. 30 and with it, they're bringing one of their stars home.

Michael Dominguez joined the NYC-based company of Ballets with a Twist as a soloist in 2011. Dominguez says he has been dancing for as long as he can remember. Here in El Paso, he performed with the El Paso Playhouse, Music Theater El Paso and was a featured dancer in VIVA! El Paso. His professional training took him from UTEP to West Texas A&M, where he acted as captain of the university's Dance Ensemble and ballet master of the Lone Star Ballet. His career continued to take him to greater and greater heights, performing with New York's Metropolitan Opera, Ballet Mississippi, and the El Paso Opera.

Dominguez has been dancing his whole life so, to him, dance is not a career. "Growing up here, I feel like I was introduced to a lot of different styles of dance and different ways of performing. Indoor, outdoor, in schools—things like that. I feel like I was given the opportunity to do this and now I feel like I'm able to show other students that I'm still dancing." Dominguez wants to show students that it is possible to build a career out of a passion.

During his most recent holiday trip to the Sun City, Dominguez paid a visit to the class his mother teaches at a school in Clint to demonstrate some dance routines for their yearly talent show. taught his mother's class some routines for their yearly talent show. It's something he tries to do whenever he comes home for a visit. Now, he has the opportunity to share *Cocktail Hour* with the city he loves.





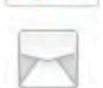
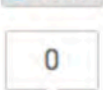
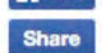
There's more involved in *Cocktail Hour* than just ballet and alcohol. The show also revolves around the history of cocktails. "It goes beyond that into the celebration of American Artwork," explained Aengus Ortiz, a native of the Southwest and also a featured dancer in *Cocktail Hour*. "Influenced by spirits, not just alcohol but also the spirits of life in general."

Among the many historical cocktails they'll be bringing to the Plaza Theatre is the Margarita, which they'll be performing for the first time ever on tour here in El Paso. It's the perfect place for the tour debut of the piece since El Paso is actually one of the many purported birthplaces of the legendary drink.

## Cocktail Hour:

The Show makes its debut at the Plaza Theatre on January 30 at 8pm. To learn more about Ballets with a Twist and Cocktail Hour: The Show, visit [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com).

Tickets available for purchase from all Ticketmaster outlets or at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com)



This entry was posted in Extras on January 22, 2015 by Julia Zamponi.

<http://theartave.com/?p=5490>

The Art Avenue © 2015

ASSAYER OF STUDENT OPINION

THE

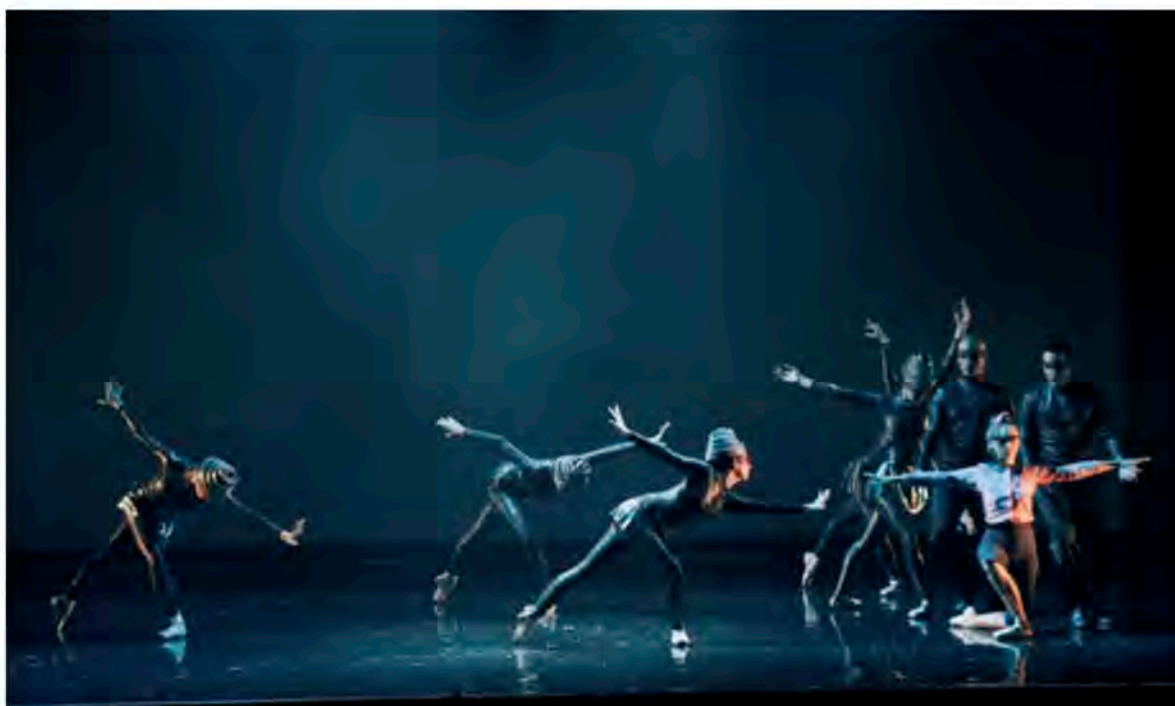
# PROSPECTOR

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO SINCE 1915



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January 27, 2015



‘Cocktail Hour: The Show’ will take place Fri. Jan. 30 at the Plaza Theatre in downtown El Paso.

## ‘Cocktail Hour: The Show’ brings nightlife to El Paso

Jesus Lopez, Contributor  
January 27, 2015  
Filed under Entertainment

Ballets With a Twist, a group from New York City that does ballet performances, will be presenting “Cocktail Hour: The Show” at 8 p.m. Jan. 30 at the Plaza Theatre. The original and intoxicating ballet piece brings the viewers into an unforgettable experience.

The performance aims to reach every member of the audience as if they were part of the show.

It features UTEP alumni Michael Dominguez, who studied dance under former dance instructors Andree Harper and Ingeborg Heuser.



“I’m excited to come back to perform at El Paso,” Dominguez said. “This is where my eyes were opened to different styles and levels of dance, the unique culture of the city and its art unlocked opportunities for me that helped me grow. I feel like I am going back home to give a little piece of me back.”

“Cocktail Hour: The Show” features dancers who will be performing for the audience and create the illusion of dancing with the audience.

“We do invite them in, as if they could taste the drinks represented before them,” Dominguez said. “Through our costumes and movements, we want them to recall personal memories, experiences they might have had in the past with this many flavors. If they haven’t savored it before, by watching, they will be able to feel it pouring in the back of their mouths and experience their various sensations.”

Each of the moves, from the toes to tip of the head, have all been thought out and planned as a collaboration of the entire team of talented artists.

“We want to reconstruct the experience of what New York City nightclubs used to be,” said Marilyn Klaus, artistic director of the show. “Bringing back the era of the colorful American nightlife, in which, through energetic dancing, people were able to step out of their skin and actually get to feel. We want everyone to feel part of the ‘Cocktail Hour’.”

The passion and their dedication of the dances comes through in their descriptions of the production.

“For instance, we have Zombie, a drink that gained its popularity as an L.A. cocktail, characterized by its ability to bare humans with the power of Rum,” Klaus said. “After drinking Zombie, people simply aren’t human anymore.”

Klaus said that the character Zombie, an African spirit, represents the fear of death walking on Earth. The associations of each drink and character to its exclusive flavor, its culture and the ideas and history behind them, is part of the performance.

Visit [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com) for more information on the artists behind the performances. For ticket information, visit [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com).

Jesus Lopez may be reached at [theprospectordaily.ent@gmail.com](mailto:theprospectordaily.ent@gmail.com).

Tags: [Cocktail Hour: The Show](#), [El Paso](#), [Nightlife](#), [The Prospector](#)

- See more at: <http://www.theprospectordaily.com/entertainment/2015/01/27/cocktail-hour-the-show-brings-nightlife-to-el-paso/#sthash.ielz7fDJ.dpuf>

## New York City's Ballets with a Twist to Pirouette into El Paso

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Posted: Tuesday, January 27, 2015 7:22 am | Updated: 7:36 am, Tue Jan 27, 2015.

Brynn Herndon, Staff Writer

Martinis on the rocks spark up an impulse to dance for most people; Ballets with a Twist infuse their New York flavor into their revue-style production “Cocktail Hour: The Show.”

“The concept behind Cocktail Hour — dancing drinks, groovy music, outrageous costumes — is so naturally American to me,” Marilyn Klaus, artistic director and choreographer, said. “The show is more than just something you watch; it's this totally glamorous entertainment experience that everyone can relate to.”

B-Twist’s “Cocktail Hour” is a suite of dances each reflecting the distinctive nature of well-known alcoholic refreshments, transmuting the cocktails from purely taste sensations into visual ones. Cocktails that will be performed include the Martini, Gimlet, Manhattan, Shirley Temple, Sputnik, White Russian and Zombie.

“Performing is just what I was meant to do. When I'm on stage, I'm creating a whole different world with these other wonderful dancers and it's the most amazing feeling,” said Aengus Ortiz, soloist. “The funny part is that we work so hard to perfect everything in rehearsal, but

when the curtain goes up, all bets are off. Anything could happen, and I love that!”

Klaus’ signature show, “Cocktail Hour,” became a mixed beverage experience with her collaboration with talented personnel and first premiered in 2009. “Cocktail Hour” is an endless, rotating collection of cocktail-themed vignettes mixed with fresh choreography, music, costumes and ideas.

The performance features Stephen Gaboury’s original music. Gaboury received a Grammy nomination along with Cyndi Lauper. He contributed as a co-writer for selections in Lauper’s musical “Kinky Boots,” which was



nominated for multiple Tony Awards and won one Grammy award. Gaboury leads the B-Twist Orchestra, an ensemble of New York musicians who perform along with the company.

“Cocktail Hour” features the costume designs of Catherine Zehr that express the essence of each spirit with vivid color and elegant embellishments.

This performance is presented by El Paso City Ballet, the only professional, world-class ballet company in the nation’s largest border community.

"El Paso's arts community has been unbelievably supportive, and we are so grateful to El Paso City Ballet for presenting us," Klaus said. "A gorgeous theater, an enthusiastic audience, incredible dancers and crew... as a director, I really couldn't ask for anything more."

Two of Ballets with a Twist’s soloists grew up and trained in New Mexico and Texas before their careers led them around the country.

"I'm from New Mexico and one of my fellow soloists is from El Paso, so this is a very exciting tour for us," Ortiz said. "We'll be leading workshops for young dancers throughout our trip, and we're really looking forward to giving these kids a taste of what it means to be a professional artist."

Some features of the “Cocktail Hour” include quintessential quaffs of famous spirits such as the “Mint Julep,” “Gimlet” and “Margarita.” There will also be special guest appearances by young dancers from El Paso’s D’ansa Jazz Stage. Cocktails and other beverages will be catered through the concession stand at the venue.

The upcoming production will be staged at The Plaza Theatre Performing Arts Center in El Paso, Friday, Jan. 30, 8 p.m. Ticket prices vary from \$20-\$60 based on seating location.

Student discounts will be available at the Box Office with proof of ID. Parking is available in the Convention Center Parking Garage.

“We would be delighted to see the NMSU community at the theater,” a representative of Ballets with a Twist said.

# what's up

Home Features ▶ Arts & Culture Nightlife Music Sports Food Columns El Paso Inc.

## Ballets With a Twist is a cocktail of culture, local talent



Photo by Nico Malvaïdi

### **Roy Rodgers, a featured 'cocktail.'**

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Posted: Wednesday, January, 21, 2015 10:51am

By Victoria Guadalupe Molinar

If cocktails were personified, how would they behave? What places would martinis and margaritas frequent?

Performed by the critically acclaimed New York-based company Ballets with a Twist in partnership with El Paso City Ballet, "Cocktail Hour: The Show" will attempt to answer those questions. The production will grace the stage of the Plaza Theatre on Friday, Jan. 30.

EPCB artistic director Lisa Skaf previously worked with Ballets with a Twist dancer Michael Dominguez, a former El Pasoan, when he performed with her company for several shows. As a principal dancer in "Cocktail Hour," Dominguez is looking forward to dancing in his hometown after years of working in New York City.

Dominguez's participation was integral in getting Ballets With a Twist to perform in El Paso, rather than any other city in Texas.

"Lisa Skaf wants to reinvigorate the arts in El Paso and we have such a good twist on our show," Dominguez said. "It's not just a dance show; there's also the lighting

and the costumes and the music and a lot of culture within the context of the choreography."

Fueled by music composed by Grammy nominated Ballets with a Twist co-founder Stephen Gaboury, elaborate costumes by Catherine Zehr and a diverse group of vivacious professional dancers, the vision of choreographer and co-founder Marilyn Klaus even caught the attention of quirky pop icon Cyndi Lauper, who performed with the company at XL Nightclub in New York. This will be Cocktail Hour's Texas premiere.



# what's up

Attendees can sip on made-to-order cocktails and mocktails at the Plaza concession stand as they enjoy an evening with Brandy Alexander, Mai Tai, Bloody Mary and other vibrantly colored concoctions coming to life. The night will also feature the Margarita's first performance outside of New York.

"We realized we could not go to El Paso without performing the Margarita and we're bringing three beautiful professional young children from the East Coast," Klaus said. "They play the part of little Mayan petroglyphs and goddesses."

A variety of elements inspired Klaus' vision, particularly her upbringing and interest in the past.

Lesser known cocktails will also be included on the menu, such as the Zombie, which Klaus described as a Sci-Fi pool party," and the Sputnik, which references the Cold War.

"I'm from Los Angeles and the Hollywood area, and I'm very inspired and influenced by classical American films and musicals of the 30s and 40s," Klaus said. "The thing I'm the most interested [in] is world history. It's so fabulous that you can pinpoint a moment in time when a cocktail was created, what was happening at that time, and I like to think that a margarita is a combination of Our Lady of Guadalupe meets Rita Hayworth. It's the glamour of the American screen goddess with the actual goddess."

For the Mint Julep, four students, ranging from ages six to nine, will play ponies at the Kentucky Derby racetrack. The dancers hail from local studio D'anza Jazz Studios.

"[The Children] are an integral part of the creation of that piece," Klaus said. "When we perform around the country, we try to have young local ballet artists perform with us."

In December, Dominguez led workshops for D'anza Jazz Studios, an experience he described as moving.

"I really do enjoy working with the young ones because they remind me of myself when I was their age," Dominguez said. "When I was little and I moved to El Paso, there were so many different types of dance that I was able to learn – ballet, jazz, hip-hop, folklorico, flamenco, things that I did not even know I was interested in. It brings warmth to my heart that I'm able to come back and show them that it's not just a hobby; it's something that you can do later in life and continue."

REVISTA SEMANAL

Jesús Gamboa/ EL DIARIO

## ¡VAMOS! al teatro

### COCKTAIL HOUR

30 de enero  
8:00 p.m.

Plaza Teatre  
125 Pioneer Plaza,  
El Paso

Entrada: de 20 a 60  
dólares  
Venta de bolets en  
[www.elpasolive.com](http://www.elpasolive.com)

## Ballet, como nunca antes visto

‘Cocktail Hour: The Show’ es un espectáculo que a través de 12 bailarines profesionales representa un tipo de bebida

Cuando se piensa en el ballet, lo primero que viene a la mente son tutús, súper elasticidad, coordinación y música clásica... Pero, ¿qué pasaría si se le agregara un

poco de vodka, un toque de Brandy alexander, un Bloody Mary o quizá un Martini? ¿Imposible mezclarlos?

¡Para nada! Porque este 30 de enero los bailarines de compañía neoyorquina Ballets with a Twist demostrarán lo contrario con ‘Cocktail Hour: The Show’, que se llevará a cabo en The Plaza Theatre, a partir de las 8:00 de la noche.

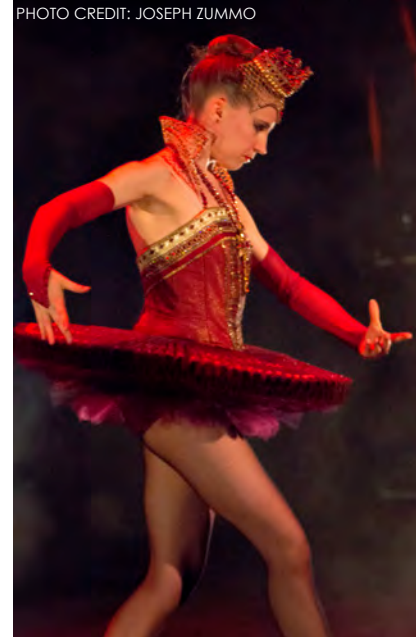
Presentado por El Paso City Ballet y dirigido por la coreógrafa Marilyn Klaus, los asistentes disfrutarán de una puesta de ballet como nunca antes la habían visto, ya que se trata de un espectáculo en el que cada danza representa un tipo de bebida —da aquí su nombre—, reflejándose en el uso de colores, sonido y movimientos según la ‘suavidad’ o ‘aspereza’ de los licores.

Estrenado hace seis años en Nueva

York, Cocktail Hour llega por primera vez a tierra paséña, para lo cual contrará con la participación de 12 bailarines profesionales, un grupo de niños de la D’Ansa Jazz Stage, una escenografía renovada y un ‘menú’ de más de 10 clases de bebidas.

“Un espectáculo como éste debe ayudar a ampliar la definición de lo que entendemos por ballet, más allá de los tutús y ‘El Cascanueces’. El concepto de ‘Cocktail hour’ es asombroso, de allí la razón de traerlo la ciudad”, explicó Lisa Skaf, directora artística de El Paso City Ballet.

Entre los números más interesantes, se encuentra ‘Holy Water’, una danza que se inspira en la conexión del vodka con el ron. Este cuadro ha formado parte de varios coros góspel. También se representarán los cuadros dencísticos ‘Margarita’, ‘Shirley Temple’, ‘Mai Tai’ o ‘Brandy Alexander’.



### EL ESPECTÁCULO

- Cocktail Hour, que nació en 2009, se presenta por primera vez en El Paso, Texas, como parte de una asociación entre El Paso City Ballet y la compañía neoyorquina Ballets with a Twist.
- Lo distintivo de este show es que cada danza representa una bebida de coctel -de aquí su nombre- lo que se refleja en el uso de colores, sonido y movimientos según la ‘suavidad’ o ‘aspereza’ de los licores.
- La dirección artística está a cargo de la paséña Lisa Skaf y Marilyn Klaus, de Nueva York.
- El objetivo es ampliar el conocimiento de los fronterizos acerca del ballet, que sepan que esta disciplina va más allá de obras clásicas como ‘El Cascanueces’.
- Participan 12 bailarines profesionales.
- También actúan pequeños danzarines de la ciudad, quienes integran la D’Ansa Jazz Stage.
- La coreografía, que corrió por cuenta de Marilyn Klaus, de la compañía neoyorquina Ballets with a Twist, está diseñada de acuerdo con las escenas representadas.
- Se ofrecerán bebidas de degustación con cargo extra.





¡VAMOS!

ballet

'COCKTAIL HOUR: THE SHOW'

# Embrigante

La compañía neoyorquina 'Ballets With a Twist' se presenta en The Plaza Theatre



PHOTO CREDIT: JOSEPH ZUMMO

## EL ESPECTÁCULO

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La coreografía, corrió por cuenta de Marilyn Klaus, quien dirige la compañía neoyorquina



PHOTO CREDIT: JOSEPH ZUMMO

Jesús Gamboa/ EL DIARIO

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Entre los números más interesantes, se encuentra 'Holy Water', una danza que se inspira en la conexión del vodka con el ron.



## COCKTAIL HOUR, ESTRENO DEL SHOW DE BALLETO NEOYORQUINO

CUÁNDO: 30 de enero, 8:00 p.m.  
DÓNDE: Plaza Teatre  
125 Pioneer Plaza,  
BOLETOS: Desde \$20 a \$60  
A la venta en la página electrónica  
[www.elpasolive.com](http://www.elpasolive.com)

PHOTO CREDIT: NICO MALVALDI

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## Editors' Picks

### Cocktail Hour: The Show

St. George Theatre  
October 11, 2014

## Cocktail Hour: The Show

Sat, Oct 11, 2014, 8:00pm

Drama, mystery, humor, romance — **Cocktail Hour** has it all! Ballets with a Twist's acclaimed signature show reinvents the glamour and excitement of classic American entertainment...



### OCTOBER

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Tickets: \$15, \$20, \$35

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Drama, mystery, humor, romance — **Cocktail Hour** has it all! Ballets with a Twist's acclaimed signature show reinvents the glamour and excitement of classic American entertainment with a fresh blend of charismatic choreography, exquisite costume design, and intoxicating live music. Deemed "witty and fantastic" by *The New York Times*, this cinematic, pop-infused performing arts experience launches the Mai Tai, Martini, Manhattan and more off the menu and onto the stage. It's high-style fun for the whole family to enjoy!

The company's debut at the St. George Theatre will feature live musical performances by the exclusive **B-Twist Orchestra** and Newark Symphony Hall's Gospelfest award-winning youth choir, the **Special Ensemble**. For a taste of true Twist flavor, adventurous audience members are invited to visit the St. George concession stand, where cocktails (and mocktails!) from the show will be made to enjoy in the theater.

**St. George Theatre**  
35 Hyatt Street  
(at Central Avenue)  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
(718)442-2900

### Directions

From Staten Island Ferry Terminal: 2 blocks uphill

### About this organization

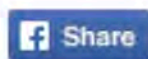
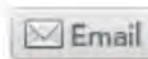
**St. George Theatre**  
The historic 2,800-seat St. George Theatre opened in December, 1929. Today the theater serves as a cultural arts center for a myriad of activities. Performers who have appeared here since 2004 include Tony Bennett, k.d. lang, The B-52., Don McLean, Art Garfunkel, New York City Opera and Ailey II.





New York

Washington DC



## Ballets with a Twist: A Truly Unique Dance Company

Monday, November 3rd, 2014

by [Marina P. Kennedy](#) on [Playing Around](#)

Ballets With a Twist, a modern ballet dance company, performs nationwide with a glamorous mix of critically-acclaimed choreography, music, and costume design. The troupe's uncommon themes and extraordinary talent sets it apart from other dance companies.

Ballets With a Twist's signature program, *Cocktail Hour*, is a sassy suite of dances conceived and choreographed by celebrated dance-maker Marilyn Klaus (above). The show serves up classical ballet with an irreverent pop sensibility, launching the *Martini*, *Gimlet*, *Manhattan*, and more off the menu and onto the stage. Original scores by Grammy-nominated composer Stephen Gaboury and costume design by Catherine Zehr complete the picture. The performances appeal both to dance connoisseurs and those who wish to see something entertaining, clever, and colorful.

"I am trying to make work that I would like to watch," Klaus said in an interview, commenting on what makes her company so distinctive. "It just so happens that classical training enables a performing or creative artist to have the greatest range because you're dealing with the fullest human. What we have is a scientifically expressive machine with all the muscles, all the bones engaged in an extreme sport. I hope that the company members will have a chance to go further in their technique and their expression than they have in their past experiences;





that the work is not something that's just plastered on top of them. It should be something that comes from within, an exploration of their art."

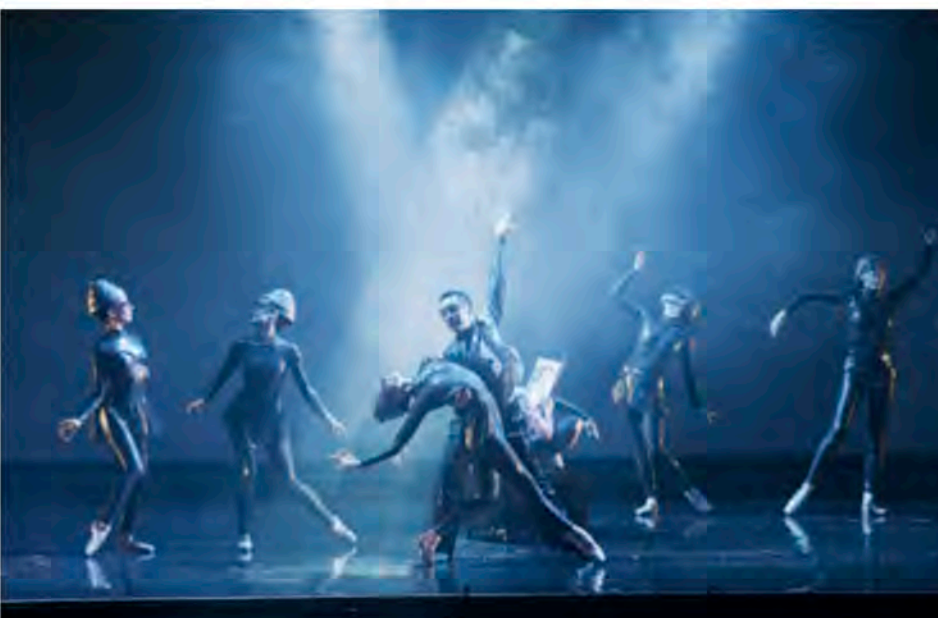
When selecting company members, Klaus said she looks for those with patience, "not a characteristic in great supply. Usually, the very fine dancers are singled out for their ability to learn quickly. In my work, that's not always a good thing because if a person is bored, it's not easy to get to a deeper level. It's really important to me that they be willing to wait."

Rather than auditioning dancers, Klaus said she invites them to a rehearsal. "I also don't hire contemporary dancers," she said. "This is a classical group of highly modern people. It's a thrill that there are still artists who are very modern and very, very hip dedicating themselves to classical training."

According to Klaus, company members have input in the company's repertoire. "One time, when we were preparing for a show in a nightclub, I was working on the male solo for *Brandy Alexander*, and four ladies were there of their own volition, just learning his part. I said, 'Well, that's that,' and there have been four ladies in the piece ever since."

Klaus said that she gets input from her dancers when they are in the process of creating a piece. "I constantly get ideas from what the dancers are doing in the studio," she said. "I tend to edit my choreography all the time. In fact, I only recently learned that years ago, the dancers apparently started taking bets after rehearsals about what choreography would stay and what would go."

Klaus is always thinking of ways to move the company forward. "The fact that presenters in small cities and out-of-the-way places want to take a chance on us, that they think their audience would like to see our show, is really gratifying," she said. "It's not just New York City that's making things happen. In fact, New York City complains that it isn't getting audiences into the theater because internet and TV have a greater hold on the market share. So, when small places and small theaters take an interest in what we're doing, I am validated."





I believe that we have an audience out there. It's the *I Love Lucy* audience. Lucille Ball was comedic, beautiful, wholesome, an absolute crack-up and out of her mind. That's what *Cocktail Hour* is about: the heyday of classic American entertainment."

The company's next performance will be on December 6, at New York's Beacon Theatre during *Cyndi Lauper's Home for the Holidays* benefit concert. After that the group heads to Texas and, then will return to New York for a performance at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology. "Our dream is to have a permanent venue in New York where the B-Twist Orchestra, our own group of world-class musicians, can accompany us and where the out-of-town audiences can come to see us when we can't come to them," she said.

Klaus said that the company loves working with marching bands, beautiful choirs, and local talent. "We love to collaborate," she said. "We also rehearse a lot, 48 weeks a year, mostly on weekends." The company's repertory continues to grow. "Our cocktail menu grows yearly by two to three vignettes," she said, noting that *Singapore Sling* is now in the works.

Klaus is proud of her creative team, composer Stephen Gaboury and costume designer Catherine Zehr, who designs and makes all of the costumes and whose creativity contributes to the company's presentations. "Since the show has a nightclub atmosphere to it, I try to make the costumes look fun, playful, magnetic," Zehr said. "This isn't about fairy princesses or storybook ballets, which is nice because I'm not trying to make something new out of an idea that has been explored a million times. We're making cocktails, and there's not much precedent for that." She noted that the most difficult aspect of designing for *Cocktail Hour* is that the costumes have to read well in a big theater and close-up, in a nightclub-type venue.

Like Klaus, Zehr is always planning for the future of *Cocktails With a Twist*. "When faced with a new cocktail, I generally start going to rehearsals early on to get a feel for Marilyn's basic vision," she said. "I kind of have to sit back and enjoy the ride until she pretty much gets it down because she throws a lot of ideas in at the beginning, then edits herself down. The next step is to study the movements to see what kind of costume is needed. Then, I think of a general silhouette and I think of color. I try to pick a color that doesn't reflect something else in our show, if it will work."



For more information on *Ballets With a Twist* and its upcoming performances, visit their web site at [www.balletswithatwist.com](http://www.balletswithatwist.com).

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Friday, October 14, 2014 2:00am



"Ballets With a Twist"

### ON THEIR TOES, NOT THE ROCKS

On Saturday, Staten Island's St. George Theater hosts a one-night blast of drink-inspired classical dance numbers, **"Ballets with a Twist."**

Each dance is named after a drink. "Champagne," for instance, features elegant dancers in white. "Bloody Mary" is steeped in drama.

"We couldn't ask for a more magnificent venue," said choreographer Marilyn Klaus. "Phenomenal lighting capabilities, killer acoustics, a gorgeous stage. It may sound silly, but these are the things we dream about."

Saturday at 8 p.m., 35 Hyatt St., Staten Island. Tickets: \$19.45-\$23.45; [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com).

Justin Rocket Silverman



DANCE

# Dance Listings for Oct. 10-16

OCT. 9, 2014

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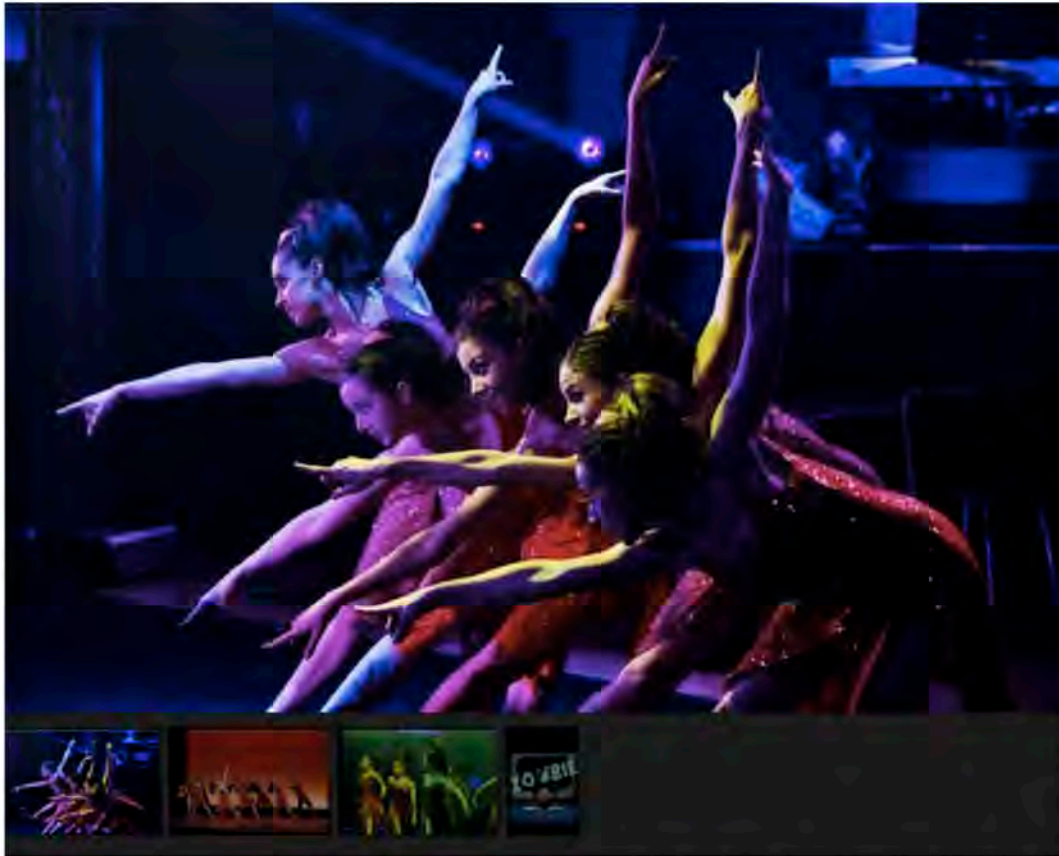
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*Full reviews of recent dance performances: [nytimes.com/dance](http://nytimes.com/dance). A searchable guide to these and other performances is at [nytimes.com/events](http://nytimes.com/events).*

**Ballets with a Twist** (Saturday) Shaken or stirred, on the rocks or neat: Cocktails are so versatile. In “Cocktail Hour,” this company takes inspiration from an assortment of libations, interpreting the mai tai and margarita, among others, as fun and frothy dance vignettes. Accompanied by a live orchestra and choir, this troupe blends vaudeville flash and flair with tutus and point shoes. At 8 p.m., St. George Theater, 35 Hyatt Street, St. George, Staten Island, 800-745-3000, [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com); \$15 to \$35. (Brian Schaefer)

# 'Cocktail Hour' buzz hits PBS before Staten Island show at St. George Theatre



Dancers from the ballet Cocktail Hour, pictured above, will be performing at the St. George Theater Oct. 11. (Nico Malvaldi/Ballets with a Twist)

By Lauren Steussy | lsteussy@siadvance.com  
on October 02, 2014 at 11:25 AM, updated October 02, 2014 at 11:35 AM

## Cocktail Hour

**What:** A cocktail-themed ballet show with original music and choreography

**Who:** The music is scored by Grammy-nominated composer **Stephen Gaboury**, who contributed to sections of the Broadway musical "Kinky Boots," and choreographed by the company's artistic director Marilyn Klaus

**When:** Saturday Oct. 11, 8 p.m.

**Where:** St. George Theatre, 35 Hyatt St, St. George

**Cost:** \$15, \$20 and \$35 at **Ticketmaster** or the box office Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**More info:**  
**StGeorgeTheatre.com** or 718-442-2900.

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — Marilyn Klaus is in the middle of making a cocktail.

Calling from her Manhattan dance studio, the artistic director of the dance company **Ballets with a Twist** is creating a Singapore Sling — a complicated mix of cherry brandy, gin and fruit juices created in 1915 at a hotel bar in Singapore.

"It's practically undrinkable if you ask me, but it's just so fantastic that people went to such great lengths to make this cocktail," Klaus said.

But she's no lush. The former dancer and California native is concocting not a drink, but the choreography to her constantly evolving show, "Cocktail Hour." The themed show served alongside actual cocktails will make its first appearance in Staten Island when they perform at the **St. George Theatre** on Oct. 11. Curious? Catch their TV special on at 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 1, and noon Sunday, Oct. 5, on PBS Thirteen.



Each dance is named after a cocktail, and with that, a story of how the cocktail came to be known in American culture.

The mint julep tells the story of pony races in Kentucky. The martini is the Bond-esque depiction of escape from a private eye assassin-type. The Bloody Mary follows Queen Mary's efforts to bring Catholicism to England.

The Manhattan?

"That's our Fifth Avenue lady, a Holly Golightly character who stays out so late she can see the sunrise but she still walks her little dog through Manhattan," Klaus said.

Among the newer pieces added to the 22-dance collection is the Zombie, a dance named after a southern California fruit cocktail.



The flyer for Ballet with a Twist's production of Cocktail Hour

"If you drink too much you won't really be a human in the morning," she said of the drink.

The style of dance is non-traditional and accessible to the non-ballet aficionado. It holds a mirror up to American social culture, in which cocktails often take center stage. Klaus has always been fascinated with that culture. When she was a girl growing up in Hollywood, her parents were part of a dance group that met every month for drinks at dancers' homes.

"The ladies would come over and they'd have their bouffant hairdos and their martinis and this and that," Klaus said. "The atmosphere never left me. It was a part of me."

Over the past four years since the company came to be, Klaus revisited that culture and infused it into traditional ballet.

"People say, 'the ballet, isn't that just for a certain percentage of society?' Our show is really like a show you would see in Las Vegas. It's lively with a lot of variety. Some of the dances aren't even done in pointe shoes."

After touring around the country, this is the first time the company will perform on Staten Island.

"It's like going on tour but all we have to do is get on the ferry," Klaus said.

The location also allows the company to include some of its staple favorite performers, like the Newark Symphony Hall's youth choir and the Rahway Dance Theatre, whose younger performers will make select appearances in the "Mocktail" performance of Shirley Temple.

The event is family-friendly and runs about 90 minutes. Dances will be performed alongside the ballet company's B-Twist Orchestra. Drinks can be purchased and consumed during the performance.



# Ballet up to the bar: Touring troupe's 'Cocktail Hour' generating buzz on Staten Island



## Cocktail Hour

A performance by NYC-based dance company Ballets with a Twist.

**When:** Saturday, Oct. 11, 8 p.m.

**Where:** St. George Theatre, 35 Hyatt St, St. George

**How much:** \$15, \$20 and \$35 at **Ticketmaster** or the box office Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**Dress:** Casual but nice — i.e. no cut-off shorts

**More info:** [StGeorgeTheatre.com](http://StGeorgeTheatre.com) or 718-442-2900.

The flyer for Ballet with a Twist's production of Cocktail Hour

By Lauren Steussy | [lsteussy@siadvance.com](mailto:lsteussy@siadvance.com)

on September 13, 2014 at 11:02 AM, updated September 17, 2014 at 10:56 AM

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — If sipping a martini has ever made you feel so classy you could just *plié*, you probably need to snag tickets for this upcoming show.

Manhattan-based dance company **Ballets with a Twist's** "Cocktail Hour" will pair ballet dancing with a menu of cocktails and mocktails at the **St. George Theatre** on Oct. 11. Tickets are on sale now.

The original "vaudeville-style" dance vignettes interpret the culture and energy of American nightlife and the way our favorite cocktails make us feel. The music is scored by Grammy-nominated composer **Stephen Gaboury**, who contributed to sections of the Broadway musical "Kinky Boots," and choreographed by the company's artistic director Marilyn Klaus.

The event is family-friendly (Shirley Temples anyone?) and is appearing for the first time on Staten Island.

Dances will be performed with singing from the Newark Symphony Hall's youth choir, the Special Ensemble alongside the ballet company's B-Twist Orchestra. Drinks can be purchased and consumed during the performance.

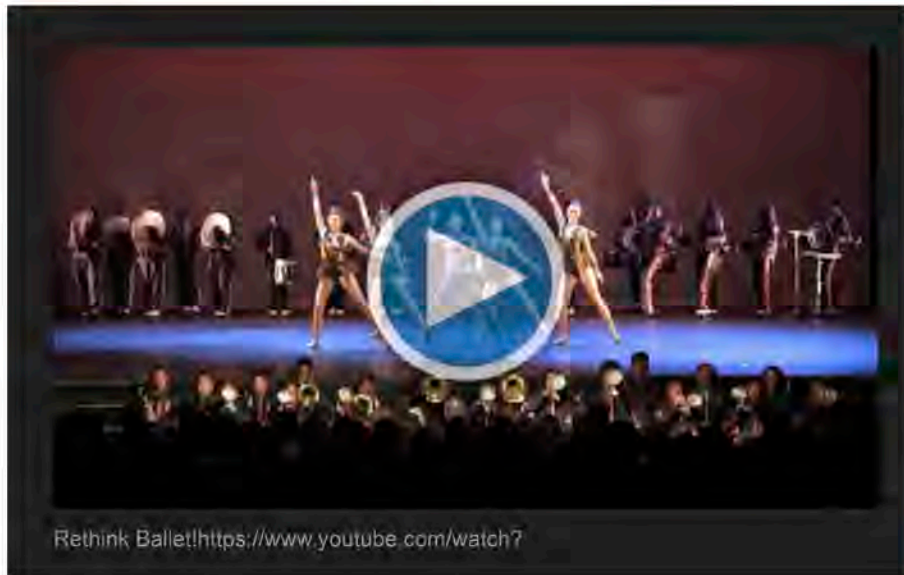
The Huffington Post raves that Klaus is "blasting the boundaries between high art and entertainment," and that her style is a distinctive mix of "Hollywood glitz and New York polish," while The New York Times praises her as "witty and fantastic."

**Check out the company's website for more information** on the performance.

[http://www.silive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2014/09/ballet\\_and\\_cocktails\\_partner\\_u.html](http://www.silive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2014/09/ballet_and_cocktails_partner_u.html)



## Ballets with a Twist: Rethink Ballet



### Related Photo:



Sierra Mullins  
Medford Ballet Examiner



August 15, 2014

### *Ballets with a Twist: Rethink Ballet*

Going to watch a live performance of the Nutcracker ballet is, for many, a Christmas tradition. However, once the holiday season is over, most people will not see a ballet performance again for another year because pink and white tutus and classical orchestra music are just not up their alley. But the *Ballets With a Twist* dance group is now offering avant-garde performances to the public, prompting their audiences to rethink ballet.

The *Ballets With a Twist* dance troupe was founded in the 80's and 90's by former vaudeville and ballet dancer Marilyn Klaus when she joined forces with composer Stephen Gaboury. Together, they brought original dance creations from the troupe's home base of New York City to cities all over America and into Europe. *Return to Normalcy* and *Silver Thaw* are just a few of Klaus' highly acclaimed productions which were praised by sources like the *New York Times* and *Dance Magazine*. Through adding rock n roll and even honky-tonk to her ballets, Klaus' work reaches out to people of all tastes, not just to the traditional ballet crowd.

On September 13, 2014, *Ballets With a Twist* is bringing Cocktail Hour to Medford Oregon's Craterian Theater, showcasing it's unique flavor in the Rogue Valley for one night only. The evening will be filled with dances that represent every delicious drink from the bubbling, non-alcoholic Shirley Temple to the bold, spirituous Bloody Mary. Patrons will be able to enjoy sipping on their favorite drinks as they are colorfully presented on the stage! *Ballets With a Twist* invites dance lovers, both young and old to join the ballet troupe for this memorable performance of their trademark production.

For more information on this innovative company visit:

[http://www.balletswithatwist.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=7&Itemid=137](http://www.balletswithatwist.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7&Itemid=137) or check out their billing on the Craterian Theater's website at: <http://www.craterian.org/event/ballets-with-a-twistcocktail-hour/>

<http://www.examiner.com/article/ballets-with-a-twist-rethink-ballet>



## An evening with Ballets with a Twist



Sierra Mullins  
Medford Ballet Examiner

September 14, 2014

Ballets with a Twist brought a new flavor to Medford Oregon's Craterian Theater last night. The unique brilliance of contemporary dance with a little classical ballet flavor added in lit up the stage in this New York-based company's "Cocktail Hour."



Riveting portrayals of various beverages from the Roy Rogers to the Gimlet were performed with extraordinary inventiveness. Not only was the talent of each troupe member's dance ability showcased, but the adeptness the performers possess when it comes to incorporating acting into their pieces was also put on display.

The dancers of Ballets with a Twist are a remarkably versatile group. "Cocktail Hour" contained a fair share of pointe work as well as a large amount of purely modern dance that was performed in bare feet or jazz shoes. The dancers appeared at home in whichever style they happened to be dancing, which is no easy task.

A pleasantly surprising aspect of the performance was that classic, old fashioned tunes were placed throughout the show. The addition of these musical pieces added a touch of class to the evening and also provided variety among the more modern selections. The performance sent its audience from enjoying the elegant, light-as-air movement of "Champagne" to classical orchestra music into the organic, jazzy portrayal of "Holy Water" to a lyrical piece with engaging rapidity.

Ballets with a Twist will be performing in their home state of New York on October 11th at St. George Theater next. Visit the Ballets with a Twist website at <http://www.balletswithatwist.com/> for more information on this innovative company's upcoming performances.



## NEWS NOW

## DANCE

**'Cocktail Hour' shows at the Craterian Theatre**

The dance show is Ballets with a Twist's signature performance

Emily Anton is living a dancer's dream right now. The former Stillpoint Dance Studio dancer who spent her middle and high school years in Ashland is now a member of the Ballets with a Twist company in New York City.



**By Edith Decker**  
**Grants Pass Daily Courier**

Posted Sep. 11, 2014 @ 3:57 pm

Updated Sep 11, 2014 at 3:58 PM

Emily Anton is living a dancer's dream right now. This former Stillpoint Dance Studio dancer, who spent her middle and high school years in Ashland dancing at various studios in the area, is now a member of Ballets with a Twist company in New York City.

Anton will be featured in several of the dances that make up "Cocktail Hour," a modern ballet based on a cocktail menu, to be presented at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 13, at the Craterian Theater, 23 S. Central Ave., Medford. Tickets cost \$27, \$30 or \$33; \$19, \$22 or \$25 for ages 18 and younger; and can be purchased at the box office, 16 S. Bartlett St., online at [www.craterian.org](http://www.craterian.org) or by calling 541-779-3000.

Anton and the company's director, Marilyn Klaus, recently spoke by phone from the company's New York studio as they prepared for their West Coast tour.



Emily Anton as Bloody Mary in Ballet with a Twist's "Cocktail Hour," showing Sept. 13 at the Craterian Theater. Photo courtesy of Nico Malvaldi

"I think I always had it in my heart that if I truly wanted to be a professional dancer that I needed to move to New York," Anton says of her 2011 leap of faith. "I got a one-way plane ticket, packed two suitcases and said, 'OK, I'm moving.' I had a place to stay for three weeks. And during that time I did tons of auditions.

"One of those was for an off-the-beaten-path ballet company founded by Klaus in 1996 called Ballets with a Twist.

"I was auditioning for dancers, and Emily sent in her resume and along with that came video," Klaus recalls. "She sent

two of the most beautiful classical variations — they were just amazing — from 'Aurora's Wedding.' It was like seeing something from the Royal Ballet, definitely an English style, and I was very taken with the video."

Klaus invited Anton to the studio along with several other dancers to begin work on the company's repertoire, knowing she'd hire only one or two.

"Emily was the last one standing," Klaus said. "I couldn't have been more impressed.

Since then, Klaus choreographed a new cocktail for her menu of ballets in "Cocktail Hour" specifically for Anton — "Bloody Mary" — in which Anton plays Mary Tudor, the infamous queen of England.

"I love that era in history. So when Marilyn was creating that piece — and it has an amazing costume that was being created around the same time — I thought, 'This is a person I can jive with,' " Anton says.

Now she's jokingly called Maleficent by her fellow dancers when she's in character. "I surprise myself how evil I can pretend to be."

She's also a large part of the newest cocktail, "Eu de Vie," which features eight dancers, as well as the finale, "Spirits and Chasers," based on a gospel and Motown feeling and featuring the entire company.

Klaus debuted "Cocktail Hour" in 2009. "I keep adding more cocktails and different cocktails to the show," Klaus says. "It's like 'Superman I' and 'Superman II,' because we now have enough material to do two separate shows."

A dozen cocktails will be in the touring show.

Anton, who also works in the studio's front office, had a hand in bringing the company to Oregon. They previously performed in California only during West Coast tours. But Anton called friends who put her in contact with the Craterian management, who jumped at the fun, offbeat show.

Anton says she's thrilled that her parents, who still live in Ashland, and especially her long-time ballet teacher and coach Sylvia Bolton, will be able to see the show in all its costumed glory. Other relatives and friends are coming from around the Pacific Northwest.

As a youngster in Los Angeles, Anton took various types of dance at a studio that taught a variety of genres.

"From the very first lesson of ballet, I was drawn to the grace and the beauty of ballet and the elegance of it," Anton says. "When I put on my first pair of pointe shoes, it was all over. It was beyond anything I could have imagined. Pointe shoes take ballet up many notches, the level of challenge as well as the feeling that, when you get up all the way on your pointe shoes, you're flying."

After the family moved to Ashland, she found Bolton's studio and specialized in ballet, dancing and taking classes with several Rogue Valley companies, including Stillpoint in Grants Pass.

She was part of three of the studio's "Nutcracker" ballets, in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

"That was a fun experience, the Grants Pass arts center," she said, adding that the spring shows were a favorite.

"That's when Sylvia brought out her classical repertory. Every year she picks out one variation for us and also we'll do group pieces. That was an amazing experience."

She credits Bolton's work with her for her start in dance as a career. "It wasn't until we moved to Southern Oregon and I got the training with Sylvia that I really tangibly felt, 'Oh, this is something I could do professionally.' "

She went to college after her 2007 graduation from Ashland High School and eventually took a dancing contract with the Oakland Ballet and the Peninsula Ballet Theatre.

She tried several colleges with dance programs, including Butler and Southern Oregon University. Either they weren't for her, such as Seattle's Cornish College of the Arts, with an emphasis on modern dance, or teachers felt she didn't fit into their programs.

But she finished her "not very ordinary" move through college just this past June when she graduated from a program from the State University of New York, designed for those who had college behind them, but were having difficulty finishing up a bachelor's degree. She did her final year of classes online and worked with a mentor to get credits for the dance she was doing as a profession.

"Education is so important, and in doing that (getting her degree), I realized I'll never stop learning."

Reach Grants Pass Daily Courier reporter Edith Decker at 541-474-3724 or [edecker@thedailycourier.com](mailto:edecker@thedailycourier.com).

<http://www.mailtribune.com/article/20140911/ENTERTAINMENT/140919909>





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# *ballets with a twist*

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Meet Marilyn Klaus and learn about her unique twist on dance and drinks.

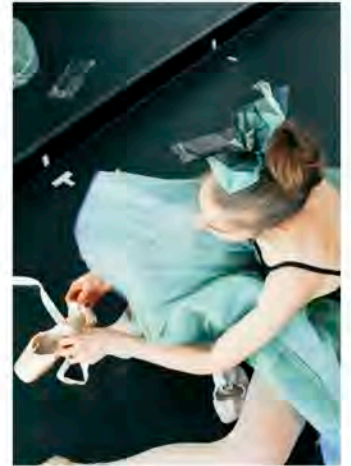
by rachel schwartzmann

"We make the distinction between ballet and fluff... I think I dissect the whole thing." This is one of many powerful statements that stayed with us from our recent chat with Marilyn Klaus, an esteemed choreographer and creator of **Ballets with a Twist**. The company's signature show, *Cocktail Hour*, pays homage to the American cocktail culture all while staying true to classical ballet technique - And after having witnessed the company in action during their Saturday rehearsal,

we were thrilled to have the opportunity to explore the parallels between *stories*, something we here at The Style Line focus so much of our stories on; and *dance*, which is something we *wish* we could do more of! In this interview you'll read more about Klaus' artistic background, inspiration for this truly one-of-a-kind concept and view intimate moments and portraits of the dancers. Inspired to join in on the fun? Well just remember to dance, dream and drink responsibly.

**Talk to us a bit about the inspiration behind, well everything. It's so inspiring, why did you choose to go this route?**

It's so much fun that I'll probably never have to do anything else as long as I live! Being an American and all of us being into cocktails... This just seemed natural. I've literally been choreographing since I was three, which sounds silly... I don't know why, but the first piece I made for Ballets with a Twist ended up being a Mai Tai. This was a long time ago, like in 1996, and I was just doing solos and things like that. I made it because my parents used to take me to these restaurants in L.A., like **Don the Beachcomer**, **Trader Vic's** and places like that. To me, those experiences were extremely theatrical — though my parents did take me to pretty cool ballet shows, too! I also studied ballet and my father took class with me... This was in Old Hollywood. All of the old **Ballet Russes** dancers had decamped and taken jobs in films, which gave us the opportunity to study with them. My dad was a phenomenal social dancer and he took me with him. So somehow, I ended up doing this Mai Tai dance. It was just *totally* in my family. The cocktails, the people dancing on Saturday nights — they were the perfume of my childhood. It was all totally natural.



Marilyn Klaus of **Ballets with a Twist**



**Interesting, so would you envision the atmosphere around the Mai Tai?  
The costumes, lights...**

No...I have no lighting talent and no costume talent – In fact, I would have my dancers perform in only leotards and tights, which would be so unfortunate! I have no vision in that area, though I do start getting crazy ideas that sometimes make their way into the pieces as we finish them.

Even though I'm very, very nervous for only, like, two rehearsals a year, it's usually *those* times when *it* happens. I go in with a complete blank slate – I have no plan. I literally go in with just a hint of an idea. But I guess I have such a wacked-out imagination that I can just go there. I'm sorry you weren't able to meet our composer today, but it's the same thing for him. He'll be here working with us and we [literally] make something *out of air*. For that reason, I think what we do is a little less boring than it could be. We can go anywhere.

**What stories are you looking to tell with Ballets with a Twist?**

I think my main point of view is the secret feminine, the sacred feminine and the magic coming out of the glass – the dancers being the glass. So they're like sacred entities. And when I started adding men to the company, I felt the same way about them... But it's a little more difficult getting them to accept their sacred nature. But they do. And a part of that really has to do with technique, honing the most refined classical technique instead of following only the strict training they've had — because they just want to be really good. I try to peel back all of those layers to get to a real core. And to tell you the truth, that's the essence of the drama for me. That's why I never go anywhere with the costumes or anything until we've really worked out what the essential physical drama is. It's like America or western culture on a pedestal: How can we get there? Where did we come from? All of these different elements — they're all based on these very cool vignettes that America has offered us.

**So it also seems that your work is very reminiscent of your childhood. Do you try to have that youthfulness come across?**

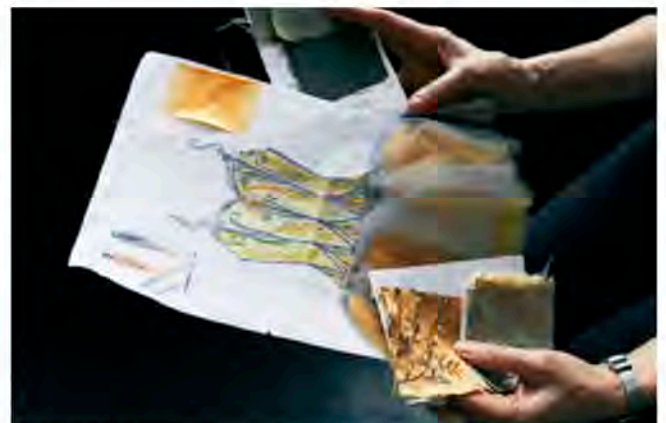
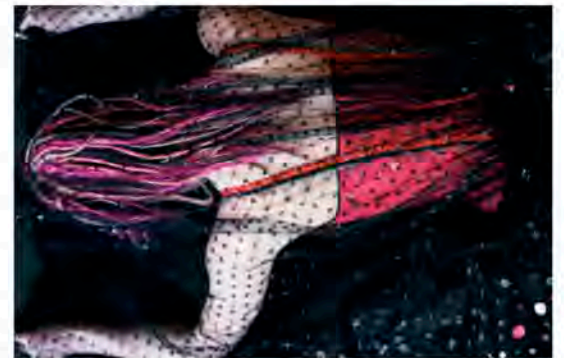
Yeah, I think so. I don't realize all of these things and then as I'm talking about them, I remember. I don't try to do anything, actually. I think I would fall flat if I tried. I really, really want to be very, very humble at all times. It's a little bit hard for the dancers, because they want answers that I usually can't give them. I'm always waiting so long to solidify the final... But as the years go on, they have a little more faith that things are going to work out. As you can imagine, they don't want to get up on stage and look like idiots! What's really nice is that some of them are so experienced and all of them are so intelligent. If they're not in a dance, they'll come and sit out and help me clean and see what's going on, which is kind of fabulous because I just keep wanting to dream! I love the classical vocabulary, but I only use it as a tool. I don't get too concerned with a lot of "important" things that the dancers need to have...

**Do you think this all more accessible than something you'd see in a more traditional venue?**

I don't really know. I just make what I want to see. I love ballet. But I have to tell you: We have to push extremely hard to get people to book us. When they see the word "Ballets" rather than our whole name, "Ballets with a Twist," they just don't like it! I can't get it, because I live, eat and breathe ballet. For me it's the essence of modernism. Classicism is modernism. The dancers are the physical instruments of expression. I mean, I was brought up with ballet: My mom fled the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression and my dad was the son of a boxing champion. They were working-class people, but I was brought up with dance. I just don't get why people don't like ballet. I guess it's not my problem, though, because I'm already doing this thing.



How gorgeous is the *Shirley Temple* costume?



A sketch from *Ballets With A Twist* costume designer Catherine Zehr.

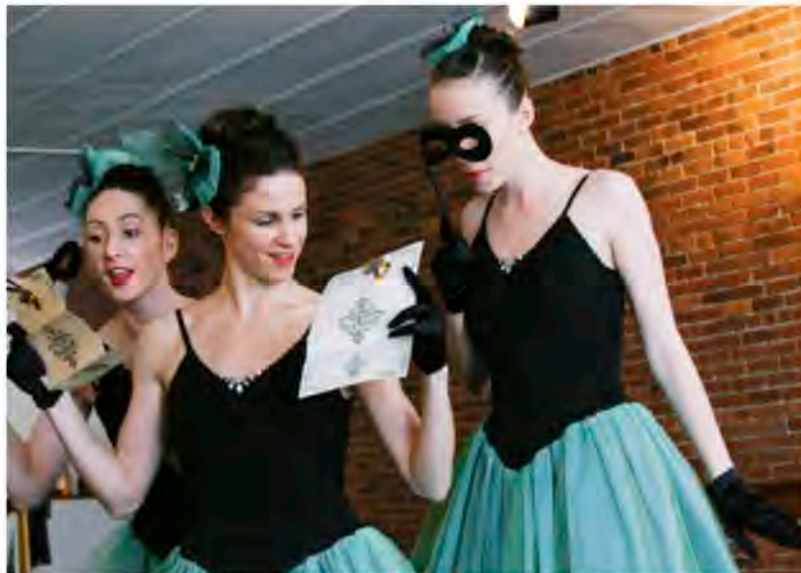


**Well with that in mind, is there any one question you wish people asked you more often?**

It would be, "May we offer you more tech time? Can we offer you more time in the theater?" Those are the questions I'd like to be asked. That's the only thing that really means anything to me. With enough tech time, we'll get the performance. That's what I fight for now, literally. It's been going well, but I have to push for it. In a big theater, I like to have an entire day before the show. I don't want to lose a gig over this, though. I want the dancers to work as much as possible.

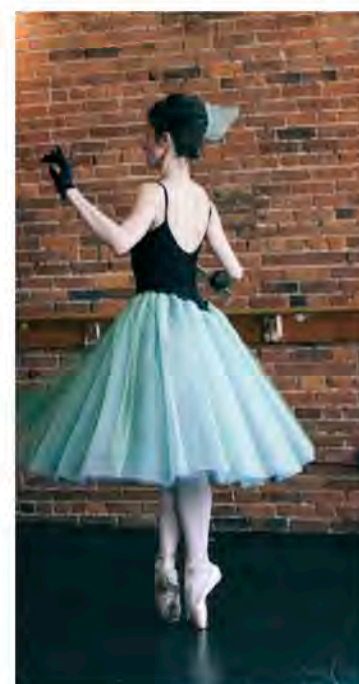
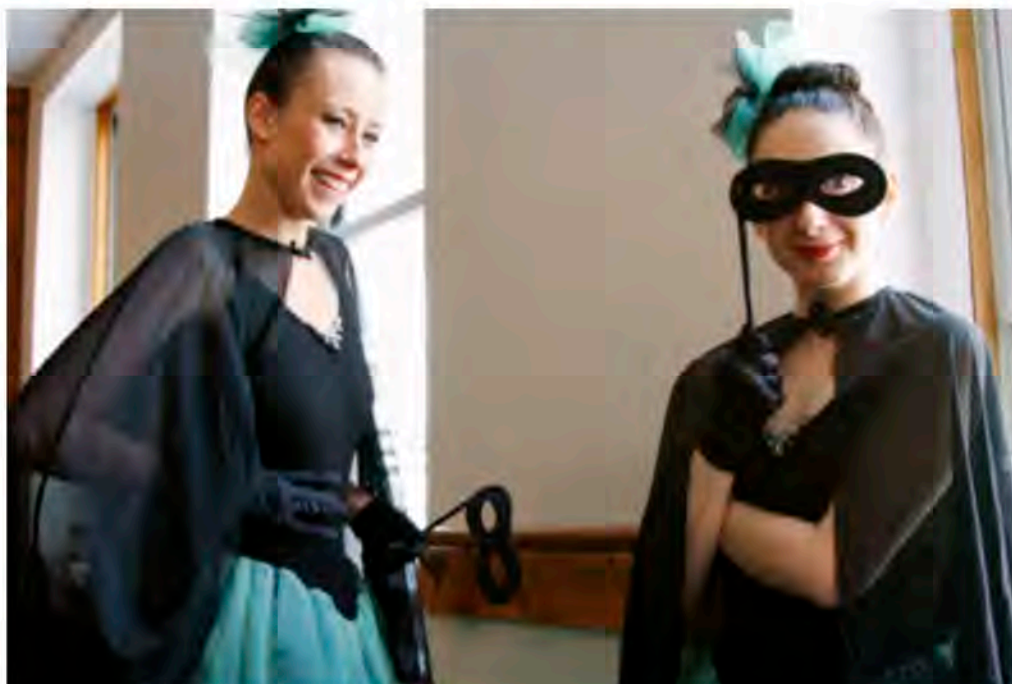
**What role does playfulness play in your personal and professional passions... Any outside of Ballets with a Twist?**

Well, I don't have any! It's everything to me. However, I think that's such a cool concept you have. The more serious I am — and I am very, very, very serious — the funnier the dances are. Every piece ends up being comedic. You know, it's funny: I went to Catholic school, which I adored because of all the religious icons. Luckily, it was L.A — I hear it's really rough out here, with the meanness of the teachers. But I choreographed religious rituals, even as a child! I got that right away and I would go to the nuns and say, "I have a show that I would like to tour within the school today." And I'm sure they were like, "Oh, my, what's going on here?" But I would tour my religious choreography around the classrooms. Of course, I didn't know what comedy was at that time... In May, we had to do a coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary every day. When it came to my turn, I decided to do something different: Instead of just showing up with a little rose headdress, I got a bunch of guys and girls to wear these 1812 overture helmets from a Halloween store and I choreographed a piece to a Country Western song. At the end, I had a girl go up and put the crown on. So, there you go! I had no idea that this was slightly sacrilegious and slightly horrifying. They continued to let me [choreograph these pieces], and I never had any problems. I was very religious... Now, all that religious energy goes into ballet!



**How would you describe the Ballets with a Twist community?**

I think it's very good right now. Catherine [our costume director] said this to me recently: "I feel like our rehearsal process right now is a nice one for everyone." That's so important to me. My concern is that I'm so involved in my own world when I'm working that I may not notice if there's a problem going on with the dancers. Now, I'm pretty careful to keep a very positive environment. Some of the dancers are like, "I'm going to go out and do it, one way or another." For other dancers, tension within the group can remove the sense of safety around getting on stage and interpreting a role and around continuing to develop their technique. But I think right now, we've got a really good thing!



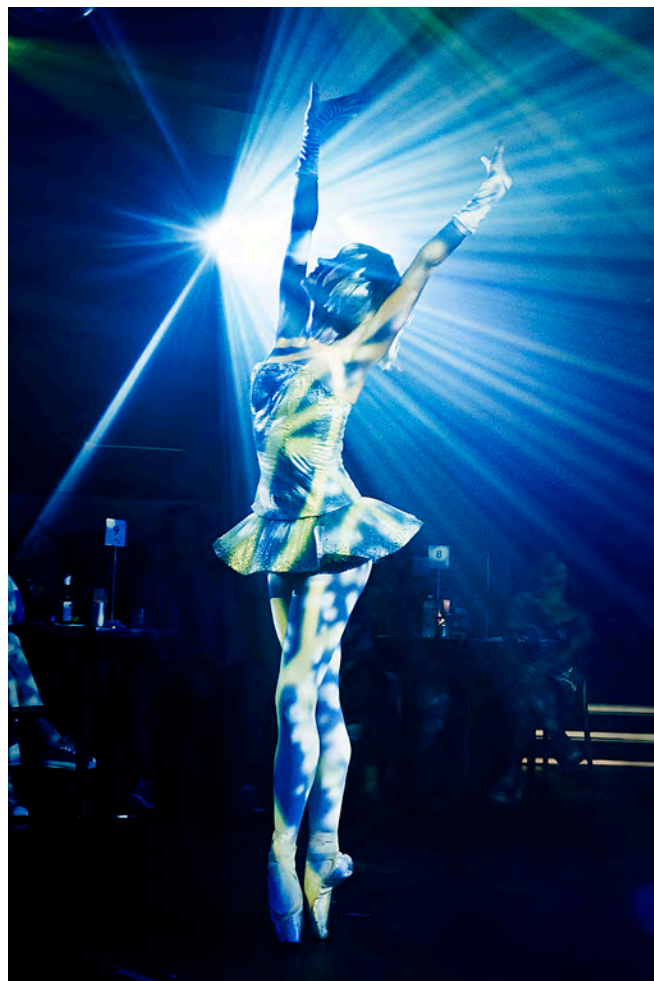


# Ballets with a Twist to perform in Morristown

Dance company mixes it up at the Morris Museum's Bickford Theatre

Written by Bill Nutt For the Daily Record

Nov. 23, 2013 |



Dorothea Garland dancing 'Martini,' one of the pieces that make up 'Cocktail Hour.' / Photo: Nico Malvaldi

## COCKTAIL HOUR BY BALLETS WITH A TWIST

**WHAT:** A suite of witty dance pieces with alcohol-themed titles such as "Martini," "Gimlet," and "Scotch on the Rachmaninoff," presented by the members of a "next-generation" dance company led by choreographer Marilyn Klaus.

**WHEN:** 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 23; 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 24  
**WHERE:** Bickford Theatre at the Morris Museum, 6 Normandy Heights Road, Morristown  
**TICKETS:** \$25, \$20 for Morris Museum members.  
**MORE INFORMATION:** Call 973-971-3706 or visit: [www.bickfordtheatre.org](http://www.bickfordtheatre.org)

Marilyn Klaus has many memories of growing up in Hollywood in the 1950s. One is of the portable hidden bar that her parents had installed in their house. The other is of taking dance lessons at age five, while her father was studying classical ballet.

"It was a way of life," Klaus says. "It didn't really have anything to do with the drinking. It was that time of post-war leisure activity."

For the past few years, Klaus – now an experienced dancer and choreographer – has been serving up a program that combines those memories with a commitment to present a style of dance that is distinctly American.

The program, "Cocktail Hour," consists of a series of dance pieces named after different libations, such as champagne, mai tai, and gimlet. Klaus refers to each piece as a "cocktail."

"Cocktail Hour" is on the menu for the Bickford Theatre at the Morris Museum this weekend, Nov. 23 and 24. The dances will be performed by Ballets with a Twist, the company that Klaus founded in 1996.

The production will include a screening of "Temple of Swing," a short film featuring more of Klaus'

work, set to an original score by the composer Stephen Gaboury.

Gaboury (whose extensive credits include serving as arranger, producer and performer with Cyndi Lauper) also composed most of the music to "Cocktail Hour."

His contributions are critical to the appeal of Ballets with a Twist, according to Klaus. She also praises the costumes by Catherine Zehr and the lighting design by Sarah Sidman as important to the impact of Ballets with a Twist.

"It's all the parts working together to



create a full experience,” Klaus says. “Catherine’s costumes are beyond belief. With our lighting, we try to offer a floor show or nightclub experience in a performing arts setting.” Klaus dislikes referring to Ballets with a Twist as a modern dance troupe. She prefers to call it a “next-generation” company that provides music and dance in ways that have not yet been explored. (Although she says she would like to claim that she came up with the name “Ballets with a Twist” because of her “cocktails,” such is not the case. The company’s name was suggested by her dance teacher, Valerie Grieg, who died earlier this year.)

Klaus started Ballets with a Twist as an outlet for a different type of dance. “I felt that I wasn’t seeing dance that reflected the American experience as I’ve experienced it,” she says.

“I wasn’t interested in existentialism or alienation. I wanted to draw on the filmic experiences of Busby Berkeley, Fred Astaire, and Gene Kelly,” she says. “There was something soulful and glamorous that I think needed to be seen.”

At the same time, Klaus points out that all 11 dancers in her standing company are trained in classical technique.

“But I use every style that I need to express what I want to say,” Klaus says. For example, she has another piece called “Holy Water” that draws from gospel music.

Klaus finds inspiration from many sources. “Roy Rogers,” one of the pieces in “Cocktail Hour,” is performed to the theme from the TV series “Rawhide.”

Her dancers understand what Klaus is trying to do. “They embrace it and make it their own.”

Klaus thinks that audiences exposed to her company’s work are similarly enthusiastic. “There’s a hunger for music and dance with a pop sensibility,” she says. That’s what we’re trying to do.”

*Categorized |* **Reviews, Reviews - USA**

## Ballets with a Twist sparkles in New Jersey

Posted on 30 October 2013. Tags: [Aengus Ortiz](#), [Ballets With a Twist](#), [Catherine Zehr](#), [Cocktail Hour](#), [Crystal Mosquera](#), [Cynthia Dragoni](#), [Dorothea Garland](#), [Emily Anton](#), [Erin Gallagher](#), [Kelsey Gibson](#), [Kimberly Giannelli](#), [Lily Balogh](#), [Makayla Dean](#), [Marilyn Klaus](#), [Marissa Frey](#), [Michael Dominguez](#), [New York City Ballet](#), [Steve Gaboury](#), [Vanessa De Jesus](#)

Hamilton Stage, Rahway, New Jersey  
October 27, 2013

By Stephanie Woodard.

The mirrored disco ball rotating above the stage set the tone for Ballets with a Twist's October 27th matinee at Hamilton Stage in Rahway, New Jersey. As audience members filed into the 200-seat theater, glasses of free bubbly in hand, the sparkling reflections made clear that this performance, the last of three, wouldn't offer just classical steps.



We were sure to be treated to a big splash of showbiz as well—in music director Steve Gaboury's pop-infused accompaniments, in Catherine Zehr's glittering Vegas-meets-Paris costumes, and in choreographer Marilyn Klaus's *Cocktail Hour*, a ballet suite that winks at the imagery behind iconic drinks.

The proof was in the dancing, and Dorothea Garland and Kimberly Giannelli delivered. They romped through rock-and-roll *Sputnik* and naughty-schoolgirl *Shirley Temple*, respectively, with the kind of theatrical intelligence that reaches out, grabs the audience and doesn't let them even blink until it's over.



In *Margarita*, Kelsey Gibson offered just as much charisma, though in a lower key. She radiated serenity as a saintly figure worshipped by a trio of child acolytes—Makayla Dean, Vanessa De Jesus and Crystal Mosquera. Cynthia Dragoni's port de bras were so gracious and expansive, she seemed to float above *Manhattan's* after-hours dreamscape. Marissa Frey charmed in *White Russian's* romantic-ballet wedding scene, and Aengus Ortiz and Michael Dominguez slathered on the slapstick as dueling concert pianists in *Scotch on the Rachmaninoff*.

Highlights from performances earlier this fall: In *Mai Tai*, Lily Balogh deftly garlanded ballet port de bras with hula gestures, as though creating Hawaiian leis in dance form. In *Roy Rogers*, she played a comic siren—Lucille Ball if she'd done a stint in the New York City Ballet, as Balogh has. She thoroughly appreciates Klaus's use of ballet as an armature for luscious movement, dazzling characterizations and complicated subject matter. In Balogh's dancing, the big, pristine classical signposts are all present, but they're not her destinations. The deliciousness in getting there is what it's about.



While we're on the subject of luscious, dazzling and complicated, in recent appearances Erin Gallagher has deepened her interpretation of Klaus's *Gimlet*, choreographed to the jazz lament "You've Changed." Once about overcoming tragedy, the dance is now about embracing and transcending it. Gallagher's attitudes en pointe are about yearning and her deep upper-body swings about melancholy; her pirouettes show us release. We see how very large the human spirit can be.

Over the past year, Ballets with a Twist has been performing a lot. The group has appeared in New York City and around the country in theaters, at Lincoln Center's David Rubenstein Atrium and in nightclubs, including shows presented by impresario Beto Sutter at swanky Manhattan hotspot, Stage 48. The continual performing and varied venues have widened all the dancers' scope. They are taking more liberties with the choreography, especially in the nightclub appearances, which have the feel of next-generation floorshows—sexy, brainy and elegant.

At Hamilton Stage, Emily Anton had plenty of opportunities to test her formidable range. In *Absinthe*, Anton swooped and swirled through the shadowy world of a faded 19th-century Parisian beauty. In *Bloody Mary*, she attacked the ferocious steps, with their improbable balances and severe épaulement. The costume Zehr created for the role had a cartridge-pleated, dark-red tutu and jewel-encrusted bodice that were as grand and unbending as the noble lady.

Anton was also the ingenue sweater-girl lead in *Zombie*, the full-company finale with its eerie music and fifties-meets-futuristic costumes. Retro fear-factor projections warned of nuclear attack and, post-apocalypse, showed bathing beauties plunging into swimming pools to glorious brass music. The ladies of the *Zombie* corps navigated this sci-fi universe wearing silvery pleated helmets that looked like mini Guggenheim Museums perched on their heads. The dancers appeared equally ready for an artsy cocktail party or disaster.

But then, aren't we all nowadays?

Photos: Ballets with a Twist performing *Cocktail Hour*. Photos by Joseph Zummo.

[http://www.danceinforma.com/USA\\_magazine/2013/10/30/ballets-with-a-twist-sparkles-in-new-jersey/](http://www.danceinforma.com/USA_magazine/2013/10/30/ballets-with-a-twist-sparkles-in-new-jersey/)



## BWW Reviews: Ballets With A Twist Present COCKTAIL HOUR at UC PAC

October 30 1:11  
2013

by Marina Kennedy



Skip your evening social drinks, and see *Cocktail Hour* by Ballets with a Twist where you will have an opportunity to enjoy *Brandy Alexander*, *Bloody Mary*, *White Russian*, and *Margarita* among others.

We attended their performance on Friday evening, October 25th at the Hamilton Stage of Union County Performing Arts Center (UC PAC). We were treated to the show that lasted about an hour; just right to enjoy the unique variety of pieces

set to vibrant music, wonderfully performed. With choreography by Marilyn Klaus, music by Stephen Gaboury, and costumes by Catherine Zehr, *Cocktail Hour* was pure pleasure.

Ballets with a Twist "cocktails" are well blended (excuse the pun) with classical and contemporary styles. Performers take ballet to a refreshing level, often integrating a bit of humor in their pieces. The variety of pieces was outstanding including the humorous *Scotch on the Rachmaninoff*, danced by Michael Dominguez and Aengus Ortiz, the hip colorful solo, *Shirley Temple*, danced by Kimberly Giannelli, and the full company Sci-fi Splash piece, *Zombie*. A simple set with video screen backdrop and lighting effects were all the dancers needed to captivate their very appreciative audience.

For more information on Ballets with a Twist, visit their web site at [www.balletswithatwist.com](http://www.balletswithatwist.com). Union County Performing Arts Center continues their 2013-2014 season with wide variety of shows for every age and taste and more dance performances. For information and ticketing for UC PAC, visit their web site at [www.ucpac.org](http://www.ucpac.org).

Photo Credit: Nico Malvaldi



## The 7 best things to do in New Jersey this weekend



By [Ronni Reich/The Star-Ledger](#)

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on October 25, 2013 at 8:00 AM, updated October 25, 2013 at 3:20 PM

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**Dances with Zombies in Rahway** - Ballets with a Twist features zombies and a killer queen in "Cocktail Hour: White Russians, Bloody Marys and Other "Tails" at the Union County Performing Arts Center. Dances include "Zombie," based on a 1950s pool party sci-fi story. Performances are today, tomorrow and Sunday. Saturday's show will be followed by Shirley Temple's Second Annual Spooky Soirée with spirits and, for the kids, non-alcoholic drinks and a costume contest, [ucpac.org](http://ucpac.org).

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## Ballets with a Twist presents **Cocktail Hour**

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Photo Nico Malvaldi

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# AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

Thursday, September 19, 2013

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## New York dance company promises to intoxicate with 'Cocktail Hour'

By Kerry Clowson  
Beacon Journal staff writer



Ballets With a Twist's dancer Dorothea Garland performs *Martini* for the dance company's *Cocktail Hour*, which makes its Cleveland premiere at PlayhouseSquare Thursday.

(Photo Credit Nico Malvaldi)

[View More Photos >>](#)

Local ballet enthusiast Jessica Wallis stumbled upon the hip New York ballet company Ballets with a Twist via Twitter, a fortuitous connection that led to her bringing the company to Cleveland to make its Northeast Ohio debut.

Wallis, a 2000 Cuyahoga Falls High School graduate and former dancer with Children's Ballet Theatre (now Ballet Theatre of Ohio) is the founder of Ballet in Cleveland, a nonprofit committed to presenting professional classical ballet performances and events in Cleveland.

In May 2012, Wallis was researching what was happening in the dance world, brainstorming what company her fledgling organization could bring in for its inaugural presentation. "It all started with a tweet," said Wallis, who created a Twitter account for Ballet in Cleveland and soon had Ballets with a Twist following her.

That led to talks and an invitation from Ballets with a Twist for Wallis to come to New York to see their signature evening-length work, *Cocktail Hour*, a suite of dances celebrating the glamour of cocktail culture.

Wallis saw the company perform at XL Night Club, with Cyndi Lauper singing in a fundraiser for her True Colors Fund. *Cocktail Hour*, whose music was composed by Lauper's friend Steve Gaboury, was inspired by well-known beverages ranging from the martini to the Manhattan. The ever-evolving work debuted in New York in 2009.

Ballets With a Twist will offer a one-time performance of *Cocktail Hour* at 8 tonight at PlayhouseSquare's Ohio Theatre. The company fuses classical ballet with an irreverent pop sensibility, using a projection system rather than a traditional set and creating a nightclub vibe with modern lighting and fog.

Fourteen dances, full of humor, wit, glitz and drama will range from the burlesque-style *Gimlet* — where creator Marilyn Klaus says a soloist removes layers of her soul to Nancy Wilson's *You've Changed* — to the *White Russian*, which pays homage to the Russian imperial court. The *Martini* becomes a James Bond-type dance, and the *Manhattan* is represented by a duet with a little dog on wheels being walked down Fifth Avenue.

In New York, audience members return to see the ever-morphing show over and over again, company founder Klaus said.



"I think this [company] really has what it takes to get people talking and saying 'I want to go to that again,'" said Wallis, a Munroe Falls resident. "There's been a lot more ballet in pop culture of late and I want to capitalize on that," said Wallis, 31. "It's classical ballet with something different."

Dancer Aengus Ortiz is featured dancer in *Brandy Alexander*, where he portrays the Macedonian warrior as the "Brandyettes" flank him wearing battle togas. Ortiz, who grew up a rodeo champion in Albuquerque, N.M., says he's back leading the rodeo team, rallying the troops into battle with martial arts-based movement. Ballets with a Twist has invited the Mighty Shaw High School Marching Cardinal Band to open the show with them for the *Brandy Alexander* number.

Klaus, described over the years as a hip ballet romantic, has created the new *Bloody Mary* dance just for Cleveland, complete with full costumes. "*Cocktail Hour* is sort of a never-ending process," she said. Audience members can purchase real cocktails represented in the dances and will receive recipe booklets for mixing their own cocktails at home.

Wallis, formerly a full-time educator, has an undergraduate degree in early childhood education and a master's in literacy from the University of Akron. She now teaches courses at both Kent State University and UA, teaches dance at Cuyahoga Falls Dance Center, tutors and also runs the nonprofit she founded. Classical ballet has always been her passion.

In *Cocktail Hour*, each cocktail dance has its own style and mood. The performance, deemed a family-friendly show, will feature 10 local children dancing with the professionals in *Clean Sweep* and *Mint Julep*. In the latter, young ballerinas play prized ponies in a Kentucky Derby-themed dance, accompanied by Cleveland Institute of Music violinist Heidi Kim. "It's amazing how much classical ballet vocabulary has the feeling of beautiful horses," Klaus said of her inspiration for *Mint Julep*.

Local child dancers in *Clean Sweep* — an interlude in which the "mess" onstage is swept up after the *Scotch on the Rachmaninoff* dance — include Emma Grass of Akron, who studies with Nan Klinger Excellence in Dance in Cuyahoga Falls, and Tessa Miracle of Uniontown, who dances with 8 Count Dance Studio in Akron. Both attend Miller South School for the Visual and Performing Arts.

According to Wallis, the company's level of classical ballet artistry as well as its excellence in teaching children were impressive. The company of 12 dancers arrived Sunday for member Dorothea Garland to teach master classes to local youth dancers. "They're technicians. They're dancers, they're glamorous but they've got the technique behind it," Wallis said of company members.

Klaus, who founded Ballets With a Twist in 1996, created her first cocktail dance — the *Mai Tai* — the same year. The choreographer, who has an eclectic dance background, originally was inspired by her father, who won ballroom dance competitions in California as an amateur. She began studying with Busby Berkeley dancer Gladys Gartman and vaudeville star Mae Murray, moving on as a teen to the tradition of Isadora Duncan, who focused on natural movement and dance as a sacred art. "I found ballet to be the most intriguing, the most compelling, but I wouldn't give up my other influences for the world," Klaus said.

Dancer Ortiz described Ballets With a Twist as an artist's collective whose creative process is a laboratory experience. That may start with some music that makes Klaus laugh, which leads to the evolution of new movement. After Gaboury watches the dance, he returns with original music. The costume designer also is inspired in a process that Ortiz says is never forced. The result, Ortiz said, is "basically blowing people's minds." As the Huffington Post said in its review, the company is "blasting the boundaries between high art and entertainment."

*Cocktail Hour* tickets cost \$20-\$40. VIP tickets for \$100 include a pre-show cocktail reception, VIP seats and a champagne toast with the dancers after the show.

Call 216-241-6000 or see [www.playhousesquare.org](http://www.playhousesquare.org).

Arts writer Kerry Clawson may be reached at 330-996-3527 or [kclawson@thebeaconjournal.com](mailto:kclawson@thebeaconjournal.com)





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**Cyndi Lauper during Ballets with a Twist's September show at XL Cabaret**

Photo: Darial Sneed

**New York, NY - (November 29<sup>th</sup> 2012)** – Following a sold-out performance benefiting the True Colors Fund featuring special guest **Cyndi Lauper** at New York City's XL Nightclub and Cabaret, **Ballets with a Twist**, the hot next-generation ballet company, will reunite with Lauper for a charity event at New York City's historic Beacon Theatre.

On December 8<sup>th</sup> at 8:00pm, the True Colors Fund will partner with stars of song, stage, and screen to present *Cyndi Lauper & Friends: Home for the Holidays*, a concert to raise awareness about homelessness within the LGBT youth community and to support equality for all. The event, hosted by style-savvy Emmy winner Carson Kressley, will feature performances and appearances by Sarah McLachlan, Whoopi Goldberg, Rosie O'Donnell, Roberta Flack, and many more. One of these illustrious celebrities will make a surprise appearance with Ballets with a Twist as the company takes the stage to offer a taste of "Holy Water," an excerpt from the intoxicating, evening-length dance experience, *Cocktail Hour*. For the first time, the dance will feature live music, including vocal performances by some of New York's most soulful singers. On January 13th, Cocktail culturists can drink in the full *Cocktail Hour* suite when Ballets with a Twist returns to XL Nightclub and Cabaret with even more live music blended into the show.

Conceived and choreographed by celebrated dance-maker **Marilyn Klaus** — whose eclectic background ranges from vaudeville and show dancing to Isadora Duncan and classical ballet — *Cocktail Hour* is a sassy suite of dances, each inspired by a well-known beverage. The show both reinvents ballet and pays respect to the rich creativity of cocktail culture, launching the Martini, Mai Tai, Gimlet, Mint Julep, Shirley Temple and more off the menu and onto the stage.

*Cocktail Hour* features original music by **Stephen Gaboury**, who has collaborated with Klaus for over 20 years. Gaboury's music has been featured in film and on television. In 2004, he received a Grammy nomination for his work with pop/rock legend Lauper, with whom he recently contributed as co-writer for selections in her new musical *Kinky Boots*. He has also performed with many A-listers including Patti LaBelle, Suzanne Vega and Ute Lemper. **Catherine Zehr** is the artistic force behind the glamorous costume design. Her exquisite creations evoke the origins and spirit of each libation with vivid colors and embellishments.

Critics and audience members agree: *Cocktail Hour* is an artistically seductive must-see. *The Huffington Post* raves that Klaus is "blasting the boundaries between high art and entertainment," and that her style is a distinctive mix of "Hollywood glitz and New York polish," while *The New York Times* praises her as "witty and fantastic." Recent performances also caught the attention of *The Wall Street Journal* and New York City's PIX11 Morning News.

For more information on Ballets with a Twist, please visit [www.balletswithatwist.com](http://www.balletswithatwist.com) or [www.facebook.com/gotoBalletswithaTwist](http://www.facebook.com/gotoBalletswithaTwist). For more information on the True Colors Fund or to make a donation, please visit <http://truecolorsfund.org>. Tickets for Ballets with a Twist's January performance at XL Cabaret can be purchased in advance at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/286711>.

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Sep 28 / matthew

## Dd Response: Ballets with a Twist performs Cocktail Hour at the XL Nightclub

 Ballets with a Twist, Cocktail Hour, Cyndi Lauper, Marilyn Klaus, Matthew Donnell, True Colors Fund, XL Nightclub

Last week, at the XL Nightclub, audience members were treated to an intoxicating evening of music and dance when Marilyn Klaus's innovative company, Ballets with a Twist, presented her evening-length *Cocktail Hour*. Proceeds from the performance went to benefit Cyndi Lauper's True Colors Fund, an organization whose mission is to "engage everyone, especially straight people, to become active participants in the advancement of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality and to raise awareness about and bring an end to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth homelessness." What ensued was an unforgettable evening that melded music, lighting, and exquisitely inventive choreography into a truly delicious event. The audience went wild when Lauper began her signature song "True Colors," setting the mood for the evening. Three young ballet students, whose unison and focus set the bar high, joined Lauper for the song. Klaus's first piece, *Return to Normalcy*, with music by Stephane Grappelli, costumes by Donald Damask and Catherine Zehr, and lighting by Sarah Sidman, introduced us to the ladies of Ballets with a Twist. Wearing long flowing evening gowns and walking about



Pop Singer Cyndi Lauper  
opens the show  
Photo: Darial Sneed

the space as if in a dream, they broke into duets and performed ballroom-esque movements with an eerie serenity. The smoothness carried on into a jazzy tango, which was followed by a large group number that allowed each artist's individual expression to shine through the unison movement. The piece was a lovely throw back to the Busby Berkeley Hollywood era, and I was taken in by its seductive subtleties.

*Cocktail Hour* followed with superb musical arrangements by Stephen Gaboury, beautiful and elaborate costumes by Catherine Zehr, and trance-inducing lighting by Sarah Sidman. A series of signature beverages were brought to life. Each cocktail was announced with its recipe



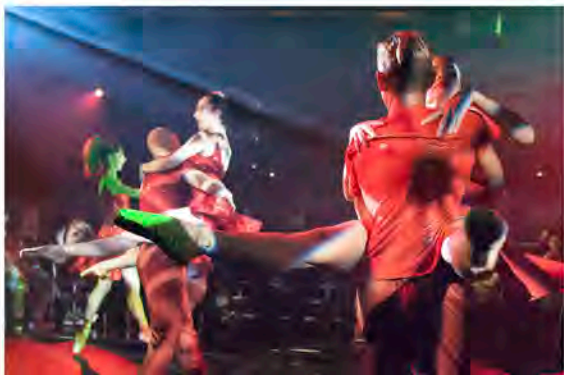
displayed on the electronic backdrop. Klaus stayed true to technical ballet vernacular, yet added elements and shades of neo-classicism and contemporary jazzy. The dancers footwear was as varied as the dances themselves, ranging from bare feet to jazz sneakers to pointe shoes.



*BwaT dancers in Return to Normalcy*  
Photo: Darial Sneed



*Dorothea Garland in "Manhattan"*  
Photo: Darial Sneed



*The dancers of BwaT in "Holy Water"*  
Photo: Darial Sneed

Each dancer brought unique elements of characterization to their solo work. Leah Gerstenlauer's chilling opening as the Green Fairy of "Absinthe," drew us into the moment. Traci Finch dazzled in "Mai Tai" with her playful, flirtatious eye contact and her precise footwork. Later, she further demonstrated her technical mastery in "Roy Rogers," performing fouette turns while slinging a belt/whip over her head. As "Shirley Temple," Kimberly Giannelli showed her comedic chops as she cartwheeled, mooned, and bit her thumb defiantly at the audience. To the song "You've Changed", Erin Gallagher performed a saucy, yet classy "Gimlet," maintaining her technical balletic integrity while telling a beautiful story. In "Scotch on the Rachmaninoff," Michael Dominquez and Aengus Ortiz had a classical and laugh out loud piano duel. Donning tuxedo tails, their sparring egos continued the already established fun of the evening.

Throughout the evening, I was blown away by Dorothea Garland. Her long, luxurious lines complimented her spot on 'femme fatale' portrayal as a Bond Girl in "Martini." In "Manhattan", she brought class and grace to her unique pas de deux with a toy dog on wheels.

The final section, "Holy Water," could have been a full ballet unto itself. By using the full company, Klaus demonstrated her ability to masterfully create group work that still challenged and entertained the eye.

Ballets with a Twist is a company with momentum. The word is getting out, and interest is rising nationally and internationally. Jessica Wallis, director of Ballet in Cleveland, came to NY specifically to view the company for potential future bookings. If you have the opportunity to see them, do. This company is going places.

If there was such a thing as a good hangover, *Cocktail Hour* gave me the best I could hope for, and I'll be thinking about the evening for quite some time.



# Not Your Mother's Ballet Company: Choreographer Marilyn Klaus at NYC's XL Nightclub

Posted: 06/26/2012 7:00 pm

**Stephanie  
Woodard**

*Writer on human rights and culture*



We have seen the future of dance, and it is fun! For two nights in June at XL Nightclub, in New York City, choreographer Marilyn Klaus's company, Ballets with a Twist, took viewers for a spin with its 21st-century take on an American tradition -- blasting the boundaries between high art and entertainment.

The evening opened with the women of the company in white satin dresses and sparkling crystal headpieces, shown left, swirling through pinwheels of light in a dreamscape created by lighting designer

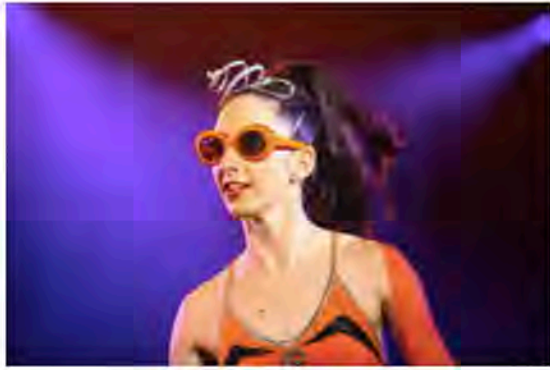
Sarah Sidman and music director and composer Steve Gaboury. After this prologue, the group presented *Cocktail Hour*, Klaus's suite of ballets inspired by classic American drinks. Long-limbed Traci Finch was hilarious in "Roy Rogers," as she lassoed her partner, then whipped off virtuoso fouetté turns to the theme song from *Rawhide*. In "Mai Tai," right, Finch rode the waves of Gaboury's exotic, erotic Don-Ho-style accompaniment.

Dancing softly, but wielding a formidable technique, Erin Gallagher shaped quiet classical steps into a meditation on love and betrayal in "Gimlet," to jazz singer Nancy Wilson's rendition of the 1940s pop tune "You've Changed." It was impossible to even glance away, as Gallagher presented a beautiful woman who has loved and lost, tragically and with great dignity.

While the performers served up danced cocktails, XL's waiters carried trays of actual drinks to patrons at tables around the dance floor.





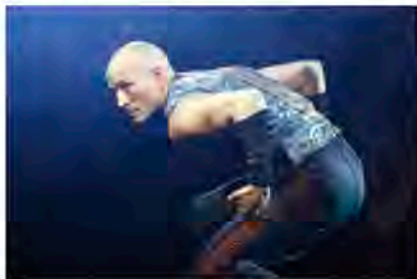


Onstage and off, the look was chic and smart -- the perfect setting for Klaus's mix of Hollywood glitz and New York polish. I half expected Fred and Ginger to glide in and take a turn.

There were casting changes from past appearances. Riveting performer Mika Fox has played the solos "Sputnik" and "Shirley Temple" as self-possessed post-modern bad girls. On June 21 -- the second XL show -- spitfire Kimberly Giannelli, left in "Sputnik," gave these roles a merrier twist.

Igor Konyukhov brought gracious athleticism and understated humor to the dueling classical pianists of "Scotch on the Rachmaninoff," and Leah Gerstenlauer, right, was the latest specter flitting through the shadows of "Absinthe," a tribute to the green wormwood-flavored liqueur associated with hallucination, addiction, and 19th-century Paris.

It's impossible to say which of designer Catherine Zehr's glorious, wildly embellished costumes was most spectacular. The applied hot-pink dots bubbling around the "Shirley Temple" skirt, iridescent black lace on the bright-green "Absinthe" bodice, and crystal-embroidered frills hiding under the white "Martini" tutu put these costumes on the short list. One of Zehr's signature techniques is layering differently colored and textured fabrics -- orange, red, and rust for "Roy Rogers" or fuschia, pale green, cream, and black for "Mai Tai" -- producing complex colorations that are as subtle and alluring as nature's hues.



More stand-outs: Aengus Ortiz, left, powering through the high-energy "Brandy Alexander," to the trumpets and drums of clashing, growling martial music by Gaboury; Dorothea Garland, as luminous and fluid all evening long as her "Martini"; Michael Dominguez's musicality in "Holy Water." Emma Huibregtse was serene in the prologue, and Klaus's Kentucky Derby nod, "Mint Julep," trotted out elegant Cynthia Dragoni and sleek Stephanie Wolf, along with four little girls who played the part of prancing ponies. Later in the

program, the children charmed in the role of mini-stagehands.

Jessica Black, right, dazzled in the evening's rousing gospel-style finale, "Holy Water," below left. Black played the lead as a woman possessed, physically and spiritually. Throughout the evening, the dancers paid homage to the care Klaus devotes to training and coaching them, as she marries the body's technique with the soul's expression--and has a good time doing it.



*Photographs by Joseph Zummo.*

*For more photos, see [stephaniewoodard.blogspot.com](http://stephaniewoodard.blogspot.com).*

*For future performances of Ballets with a Twist, go to [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com).*



CULTURE CITY | June 10, 2012, 7:31 p.m. ET

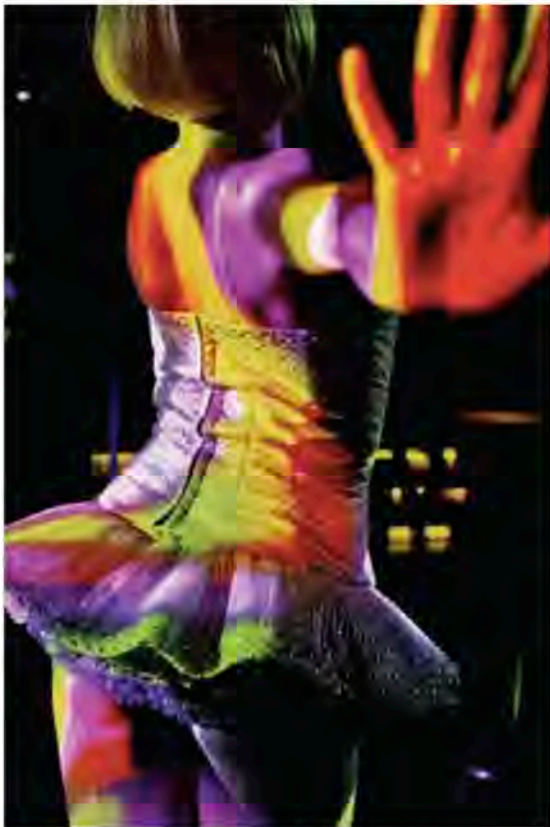
## Clubs for Those Who Choose to Schmooze

By PIA GATTON



Keeping up with the nebulous, ever-changing nightlife scene in New York City is almost impossible, but over the years some broad-brush trends have emerged. And there's a good one snowballing now.

For most of the 20th century, night owls ventured out to the city's clubs and lounges both to see a show of some kind—a band, maybe, or a singer or comedian—and to do a little schmoozing with friends and colleagues. But as music, technology and culture evolved, the expectation that one could both see a live show and socialize at the same time gradually faded. More and more, it was one or the other. By the late 1990s, venues were entertaining huge crowds of clubgoers by filling hangar-sized rooms with deafening beats and pulsing lights.



And what did all those people do at the end of the night? They spilled out into the streets, making noise and trouble. That's when Mayor Rudy Giuliani tried to curb the problem by cracking down on clubs operating without cabaret licenses, which were required thanks to a 1920s-era law that regulated dancing in clubs.

But times have changed again. Warehouse-sized clubs may always appeal to the youngest nightlife stratum, but for most of us, it's not enough to simply turn the music up to 11 and hand out thousands of glow sticks. A more diverse experience is expected, and club owners are beginning to deliver with stage acts.

"It makes your nightclub experience so much more exciting than bouncing against people and never interacting with them," said Randy Weiner, a partner in the Box, the Lower East Side neo-vaudeville room where doors open at 11 p.m. and the shows—edgy takes on dance, tributes and comedy—start at 1 a.m.

Mr. Weiner is also one of the producers behind "Sleep No More," the grown-up haunted house that blends dance, theater and nightlife inside a meticulously converted warehouse space on West 27th Street. After a few hours wandering through the old McKittrick Hotel, guests wind up in a swanky speakeasy where a jazz band performs as patrons gab around small tables. Talented though its members are, the band is really a part of the larger aesthetic experience, something to help transport us back to the show's 1930s setting. "It's not just a band," Mr. Weiner said. "We're trying to add another level."



On West 42nd Street, the recently opened XL Nightclub, Cabaret & Lounge is taking a different approach, one that harkens back to an era when performers were the draw at clubs. Co-founder Beto Sutter said that while the word "cabaret" implies a certain type of performance, he is presenting dance, music, drag and theater.

"In cabaret, there are some great venues with really good sound, but I miss the theatrics," he said. "You only see that off or off-off Broadway."

One of the more inventive upcoming acts is "Cocktail Hour," a series of brief ballets designed to evoke various drinks. Created by choreographer Marilyn Klaus, the dances range from the semi-burlesque "Gimlet" to the naughty schoolgirl "Shirley Temple."

Ballet as a floorshow in a gay nightclub might not exactly conjure "Swan Lake," but Ms. Klaus's company, Ballets With a Twist, is all about trying new things. When she started working on the choreography, she recognized the generation gap in nightlife culture. "My parents used to go to Las Vegas, and they took me. These young dancers have grown up without nightlife," she said.

For XL and other venues, there are practical reasons to host performances before the regular crowd comes in. Clubs still have to cater to those expecting a night of uninterrupted partying. And because that starts late, the clubs are typically empty before 11 p.m. Adding a show at 8 p.m. gets people in the door. "If you come for the show, you can stay for the club," Mr. Sutter said.

Also, club owners are always chasing tech systems that artists may not have access to in black-box theaters.

"Clubs are ready-made with sound and lighting systems," Mr. Weiner said. "Suddenly you got all this technological power."

He pointed out that audiences may shy away from paying to see new work in traditional venues, but they're more open in a club context. "I'm interested in the most avant-garde, edgy work," he said. "It's not hard to get people to pay for a drink."

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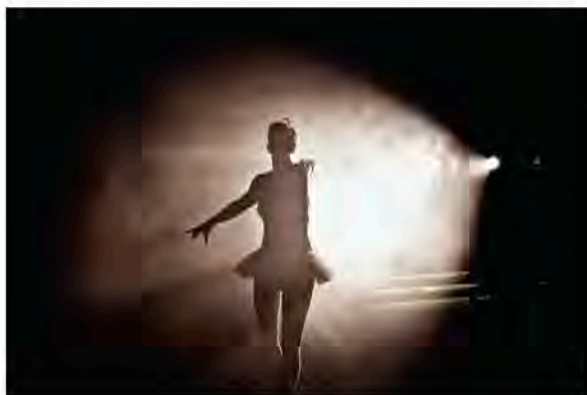
June 12, 2012 10:19AM

# Cocktail Hour

By WSJ Staff

The recently opened XL Nightclub, Cabaret & Lounge on West 42nd Street is taking a different approach to entertainment in New York City, one that harkens back to an era when performers were the draw at clubs. Co-founder Beto Sutter said that while the word "cabaret" implies a certain type of performance, he is presenting dance, music, drag and theater.

Photographer Philip Montgomery, on assignment for The Wall Street Journal, photographed a rehearsal last week for the series "Cocktail Hour," which opens June 14.



A dancer rehearses for an upcoming series "Cocktail Hour," at the new XL Nightclub, Cabaret & Lounge last week.



"Cocktail Hour" is a series of brief ballets designed to evoke various drinks. Created by choreographer Marilyn Klaus, the dances range from the semi-burlesque "Gimlet" to the naughty schoolgirl "Shirley Temple."

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Dancers stand offstage during rehearsal.



Dancers Bella Pitman, Maya Olson and Tatyana Sgaraglino (left to right), from Ballet With A Twist, wait offstage.



A dancer rehearses.



A dancer turns.



A dancer pauses.



The show is set to open on June 14, 2012.

<http://blogs.wsj.com/photojournal/2012/06/12/cocktail-hour/?mod=WSJBlog>



## Cocktail Hour Gets Choreographed

Posted: April 27,

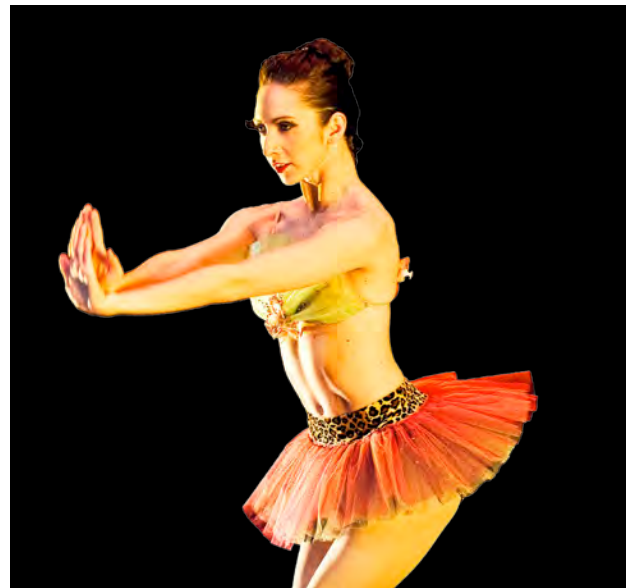
[Ballets With a Twist](#)

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Dance is literally intoxicating at Ballets With a Twist. The New York City–based dance troupe is known for bringing cocktails to life onstage. Choreographer Marilyn Klaus’ work celebrates popular drinks like the martini, the mai tai and the manhattan—and audience members get one to sip on the spot. It’s a concept that’s sure to draw a younger crowd to the theater. This weekend Ballets With a Twist will premiere “Mint Julep” at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City. To learn more, check out [balletswithatwist.com](http://balletswithatwist.com).



Kimberly Giannelli  
Ballets with a Twist’s Mai–Tai solo

23 April 2012

## Tribeca Film Festival off to the races with "Ballets With A Twist"

Category: [Dance](#), [Film](#) | Tags: [ballets with a twist](#), [carmelita maracci](#), [marilyn klaus](#), [mint julep](#), [stephen gaboury](#), [tribeca film festival](#)



On a recent visit to New York, it was my great pleasure to sit in on a rehearsal of a new work by choreographer Marilyn Klaus. She was preparing the latest addition to her roster of thirst-quenching ballets based on a cocktail menu. Thus the name of Klaus's boutique troupe, "[Ballets With A Twist](#)."

By serving up drinks right on the spot, Klaus preempts the mad dash to the bar after the show. The company's standing-room-only showcase at Lincoln Center's David Rubenstein Atrium, in August 2011, left a queue wrapped 'round the block. Now she's adding a new beverage to a repertory line-up that already offers the Martini, Mai-Tai, Margarita, Manhattan, Shirley Temple, Gimlet, and Roy Rogers.

It's the Mint Julep. A score by composer Stephen Gaboury spurs the horse race.

In the kind of film world/dance world mash-up that we like to see, "Mint Julep"'s premiere will take place at the [Tribeca Film Festival](#) on April 28, 2012.

Now, we all know that film geeks start drinking early, but this may be taking it to extremes. The show starts at 10:15 am!

Klaus's horsey affair draws from all kinds of inspirations — the pony-tailed ballerinas of the 1950s and Greek centaurs come to mind. But primary motifs draw from the Kentucky Derby. That's visualized with consummate chic by [designer Catherine Zehr's](#) green-and-brown costumes, with pink plaid accents. The men don stable-boy gear. Debonair little riding hats top off the ladies' heads. The ballet's duets illustrate a consummate love connection — the one between a horse and its trainer.

The refreshingly forthcoming Klaus chats during rehearsal without peeling an eye from her dancers. "I love to drink," she admits, of course with a laugh. Combining this avocation with her vocation, she launched her highly marketable, themed company.

One of her lead fillies burbles by in an airy *embôité* jump-step. Seeing it, the choreographer's face softens to a smile. "Yes," she calls out, encouragingly, "So light!"

Instructing another mare to perch with pointe shoe in a forced arch, she says, "Stay there ... like an old fashioned ballet." Indeed, Klaus, who grew up in Los Angeles studying with top ballet teacher Carmelita Maracci, forges a sensibility that unites the retro, the chic, the feminine, and the Hollywood.

A set of junior prancers charges by. One of the two children hesitates, stumbles, then pouts. Klaus warns her sternly, "Just do it. I don't want to hear about it." So 'round and 'round the racetrack the pony trots.

Photo credit, Nico Malvaldi, courtesy Marilyn Klaus.  
"Grooming" photo: Michael Dominguez, Dorothea Garland, Kimberly Giannelli, Aengus Ortiz

<http://artsmeme.com/2012/04/23/tribeca-film-festival-off-to-the-races-with-ballets-with-a-twist/>



# THE HUFFINGTON POST

THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY

Debra Levine

SEPTEMBER 17, 2010

artsmeme.com

Posted: September 16, 2010 04:15 PM

## "Ballets With A Twist" Serves Drinks All Around



It was one of those magical Los Angeles evenings.

In a location as romantic as its name -- Rustic Canyon -- the New York-based Ballets with a Twist made its local debut Friday night. The forested glen, tucked about a mile inland from the Pacific Ocean, provided a fantasy setting for the choreography of Marilyn Klaus, an L.A. native whose dance influences range from Isadora Duncan to Busby Berkeley to the great ballet instructor Carmelita Maracci, with whom she studied. Returning home after a career in Germany and New York, Klaus brought her retro, pop-culture-infused sensibility to a town that gets the references.





The program's main event was "Cocktail Hour," a smartly themed pastiche of solos, duets and group dances that springs a cocktail-bar menu to life. A bevy of pretty ballerinas, reminiscent of Berkeley's cinema girl-parades of the '30s, pranced on pointe through dance-nuggets interpreting the Martini, Mai-Tai, Margarita, Manhattan, Shirley Temple, Gimlet, and more. Clad in Catherine Zehr's fetching costumes that cross-cut nostalgia with the contemporary, nine ladies and one lucky guy delivered charming dance send-ups of adult beverages.

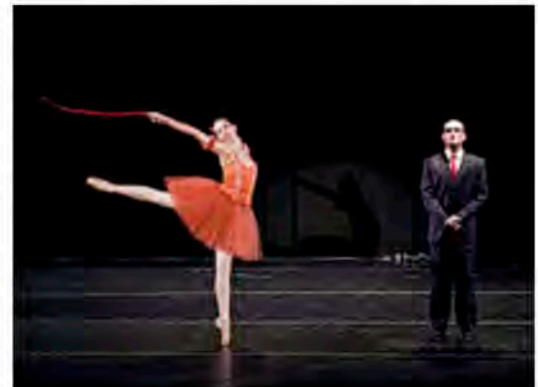
Clever. Well-branded. What's more, in Rustic Canyon Friday night, the drinks weren't just on the stage.

An arts-loving couple, architect David Martin (grandson of A.C. Martin, a key mid-century builder of Los Angeles) and his wife, Mary (the choreographer's sister), hosted the show at their chic modern home. Erected in the midst of their rather

massive front yard was a full-blown stage amply equipped with lighting and sound equipment.

After mounting a steep incline to the hilltop mansion (golf carts were on hand to help), the audience was generously plied with wine and hors d'oeuvres to put everyone in a good mood. As the sharp ocean air spread its mist over the festivities it picked up provocative aromas: scented candles, the light sweat of dancers, and perfume worn by the handsome ladies in attendance.

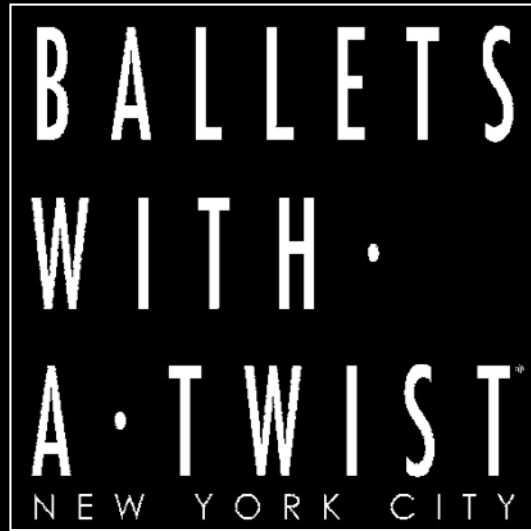
Klaus's simple jazz-inflected ballet language delighted with its musicality (swank lounge music by Stephen Gaboury) and in its hunger for moving out; there was a kind of pleasant grasping for space. A choreographer unabashedly concerned with entertaining her audience, Klaus deployed light humor effectively. In an adorably performed solo as a "Roy Rogers" cocktail, Traci Finch cracked a whip over the hapless Aengus Ortiz to theme music from *Rawhide*.



Klaus, a hip ballet romantic, reasserted the art form's feminine mystique, pushing back against the gender-flattening egalitarianism of contemporary choreography. This conservative bent from a stylish dance maker is evident in the title of her group dance pictured below, "Return to Normalcy."







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