

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **BALLET VIRGINIA INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES STUDENTS AND FACULTY**

Ballet Virginia International opened its doors and welcomed eight new faculty members on June 23, 2008. Led by directors Janina Michalski Bove and Suzanne Lownsbury Long, this Ballet Virginia International team has been bringing productions to Hampton Roads for many years. Patricia Sorrell has taught ballet in the Hampton Roads area for 34 years. She has served as the Assistant to the Director of the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet summer program since 1975 and is on the faculty for the Commonwealth of Virginia Governor's School for the Arts. Lydia Roberts Coco toured with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as a principal dancer for seven years. Ms. Coco has taught modern dance in Hampton Roads for three years. Lisa McCarty has performed for the Richmond Ballet, the Nevada Dance Theater and in many Las Vegas Casino shows. Ms. McCarty has taught ballet and jazz in Hampton Roads since 1999. Helen Watson has participated in programs with the Virginia School of the Arts, the North Carolina Dance Theater, the Dance Theater of Williamsburg and the Joffrey Ballet. Ms. Watson danced with the Virginia Ballet Theatre Company from 2003 through 2008. Sanderlin Hodges is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University and the Charisma Performing Company. Ms. Hodges has taught ballet, tap and jazz in Hampton Roads for eight years. Tomomi Brown has studied with the School of Hartford Ballet, San Diego Ballet School and the Joffrey Ballet. Ms. Brown has performed with the Sanrio Puro and Shinjuki Theatre in Tokyo, Japan.

Ballet Virginia International brings over 100 years of combined professional dance performance and dance education to their students. Bove stated, "During their many years of teaching, our faculty has sent well over 100 dancers on to professional careers." Offering instruction in classical ballet, modern, jazz and tap, this faculty will provide students with an eclectic curriculum. Ballet Virginia International is offering summer classes at three locations throughout Hampton Roads.

Ballet Virginia International offers dance training at a variety of levels in the region. The children's program is designed to instill the love of dance in children three to seven years old. The community program is designed for the busy student who wants to continue to dance, but can commit to only a couple of classes per week. The premier pre-professional program is designed for those students who would like to develop a professional career in dance. This program, unique to this region, allows students to develop a well-rounded dance background with many performing opportunities.

Hope Paryzek, President of the Board of Directors said, "Each one of our faculty has a strong resume on their own. Combined, they are unmatched in this region. They will be producing great performances filled with incredibly talented students. From choreography to instruction, this team is a powerhouse! It is a pleasure to watch their students dance."

Long adds, "Our pre-professional dancers audition for summer intensive programs every year. Twenty-four of our students were accepted to fifty-one national and international programs. Ballet Met, Houston Ballet, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, American Ballet Theatre, and The Royal Ballet in London, England are just a few of the programs they will be attending."

Roni Mahler, formerly a principal dancer at American Ballet Theatre and on staff at Julliard, will be a guest teacher at one of Ballet Virginia International's summer intensive programs. Mahler will also be providing master classes during her stay. Ballet Virginia International will be offering several summer intensive programs for local dancers.

**Ballet Virginia International** will offer three productions during its debut 2008 - 2009 season. The productions will be at venues throughout Hampton Roads. *Our goal is to bring Hampton Roads together through dance.* By offering productions and academy classes throughout the region, Ballet Virginia International will be able to share the love of dance with all. Please visit the company website at [www.BalletVirginia.org](http://www.BalletVirginia.org) for academy and production schedules.

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