

Spotlight 2025 Ballet Semifinal Judges

James Ady is a former member of American Ballet Theatre and principal dancer with Pennsylvania Ballet. Soloist and Principal roles include: John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet*, Albrecht in *Giselle*, Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake*, *La Fille Mal Gardée*, Jerome Robbins' *Fancy Free*, as well as George Balanchine's ballets, including *Agon*, *The Four Temperaments*, *Slaughter on 10th Avenue*, *Serenade*, and more. During his time with ABT, he worked with Lar Lubovitch, Natalia Makarova, Stanton Welch, James Kudelka, Georgina Parkinson, and David Parsons. After retiring, he graduated magna cum laude from Boise State University. In 2013, Mr. Ady accepted an offer to become Ballet Master with Ballet Memphis. In 2015, he became an assistant professor and lecturer at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

Ellen Bauer danced professionally as a member of the National Ballet of Canada, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Los Angeles Ballet. Her principal roles have included many of Balanchine's master works: *Allegro Brillante*; Rubies from the ballet *Jewels*; *Concerto Barocco*; Raymonda Variations (after Petipa); *Scotch Symphony*; *Square Dance*; *Swan Lake Act II*; *Valse Fantaisie*; and Tchaikovsky's *Pas de Deux*. Other repertoire includes leading roles in *Coppelia*, *Don Quixote*, *Le Corsaire*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Flower Festival Pas de Deux*, among others.

Molly Bogunovic is a former ballerina with Pennsylvania Ballet and Los Angeles Ballet. Her repertoire includes soloist roles in *The Four Temperaments* (Balanchine), *The Nutcracker*, Ben Stevenson's *Cinderella*, *Five Tangos*, Peter Martin's *Fearful Symmetries*, *Giselle*, *Raymonda Variations*, *Serenade*, and others. While with Pennsylvania Ballet, she had the honor of going on tour to the Kennedy Center and the New York City Center. Additionally, she had principal roles created on her by Christopher Stowell and Stacey Tookey (from *So You Think You Can Dance*). Currently, she is a lecturer in ballet at USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance, guest lecturer at UC Santa Barbara, and teaches internationally.

Francine Kessler Lavac is a former Soloist with Ballet West and Harkness Ballet Company where she performed both classical and contemporary repertoire. Ms. Kessler Lavac's principal roles have included Swanhilda in *Coppelia*, Dew Drop and Sugar Plum in *Nutcracker*, leads in Balanchine's *Pas de Dix*, *Irish Fantasy*, *Serenade*, *Four Temperaments*, and John Butler's *Carmina Burana* and *Cinderella*. Ms. Kessler can be seen as the partner of Mikhail Baryshnikov on the Baryshnikov Television Special for CBS with choreography by Michael Kidd. Ms. Lavac regularly teaches master classes and private instruction, plus group classes. She was recently invited, as one of ten teachers nationally selected, to attend a teacher workshop at School of American Ballet.

Adrian Blake Mitchell is an arts leader, curator, and educator, committed to the ethos that the transformative power of the arts should be accessible to all. He trained at the Ellison Ballet Professional Training Program and made history twice as the first Black graduate of the Vaganova Academy and the first Black male dancer at the Mikhailovsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia. His repertoire includes leading roles in both classical and contemporary repertoire, including Espada in *Don Quixote*, Fairy Carabosse in *Sleeping Beauty*, Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*, Von Rothbart in *Swan Lake*, and partnering with Polina Semionova in Nacho Duato's *White Darkness*. Mr. Mitchell acts frequently as an Artistic Ambassador for the ABT JKO School, is a guest leading dancer and ballet master with the Los Angeles Ballet, and adjudicates for Youth America Grand Prix. He also serves as Artistic Director of Dance in Color, a nonprofit that he co-founded which provides scholarships to children from diverse and underserved communities to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the professional dance industry. Currently, he serves as the Associate Executive Director of Westside School of Ballet and will serve as Artistic Director of "An Evening of Dance" at the prestigious Festival Napa Valley later this year.