

# island scene

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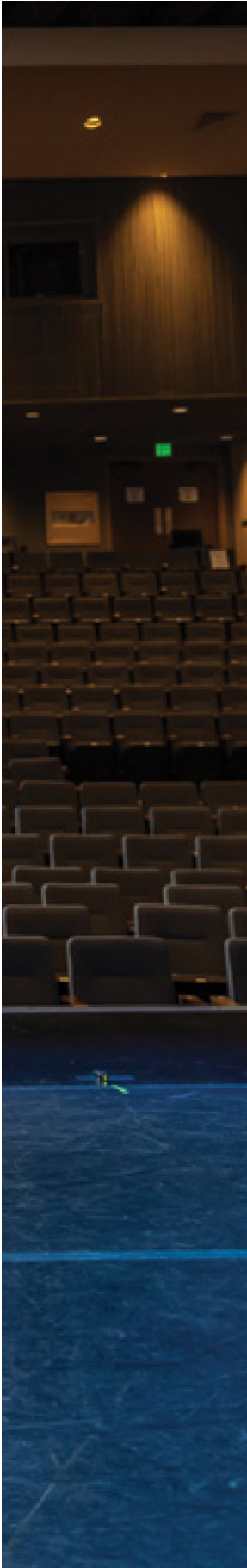
ballet hawaii:  
a legacy in dance



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# a legacy in dance

**words** Anna Koethe Pavao

**photos** Romeo Collado

*Tombé, pas de bourrée, glissade, pas de chat, assemblé.* This is just one of the “corner” combinations aspiring prima ballerinas use to gracefully warm up for a full day of dance during Ballet Hawaii’s annual summer intensive program.

Each year, Emmy award-winning Ballet Hawaii brings the top dancers and master teachers from Broadway and the best companies of the world so local students can experience professional-level workshops in ballet, jazz, hula, character dance, and contemporary styles.

“It’s really all about providing our students with opportunities they wouldn’t have otherwise without leaving the state,” says Richard Vida, Ballet Hawaii executive director. “The caliber of dancers we’re able to feature is second to none.”

With studios in Honolulu and Waipahu, Ballet Hawaii is home to more than 300 students, ranging from the littlest dancers to the most experienced athletes pursuing professional careers.



Left: Ballet Hawaii student Emma Baynes holds a flawless *développé à la seconde* as she prepares for her performance in the summer intensive program showcase.

Above: Pamela Taylor-Tongg and Richard Vida lead Ballet Hawaii’s artistic offerings to aspiring dancers, including the renowned summer intensive program.





Dancers apply for one of the 90 spots in the program and commit to three weeks of rigorous training. Classes and rehearsals are held daily, with some participants dancing for more than eight hours each day.

"It was tough, but totally worth it," says Emma Baynes, a 17-year-old dancer from Honolulu. "I couldn't believe how much I learned. And to dance alongside principal dancers from some of the country's most renowned companies felt like a once in a lifetime experience."

Baynes earned a spot to study and is currently representing Hawai'i in the world-class Boston Ballet after graduating from Ballet Hawaii's performing ensemble.

The summer intensive is led by artistic director Pamela Taylor-Tongg, who has been with the organization for 38 years, and Vida, an Emmy award-winning artist, who has more than 30 years of experience in television and film and on Broadway. This year, nine celebrated dancers joined the studio's faculty, including:

- Robert Barnett, a living legend known for his role as an original member of George Balanchine's New York City Ballet and his 36-year tenure as Atlanta Ballet's artistic director.
- Megan Fairchild, a principal dancer for the New York City Ballet and author of *The Ballerina Mindset*, which includes advice on taking care of your mental health while striving toward excellence.
- Maiqui Mañosa, a former principal dancer with Atlanta Ballet with experience at Central Ballet of China, Singapore Dance Theater, and other Asian dance companies.
- Lainie Sakakura, award-winning Broadway choreographer and theatremaker who was classically trained at San Francisco Ballet.
- Courtney Schenberger, principal dancer at Carolina Ballet and a Ballet Hawaii graduate.

Rehearsals underway for the 2024 Ballet Hawaii summer intensive program showcase performances. Top: Lainie Sakakura directs students in a Broadway-style number. Middle: Behind the scenes of the summer intensive program showcase performances, which were held at Leeward Community College. Bottom: Emma Baynes (left) and Courtney Schenberger (right) perfect their posture in preparation for their performances.






Students in the 2024 Ballet Hawaii summer intensive program show off their newly developed skills in a thrilling Broadway-style performance of *Groove is in the Heart* by Dee Lite, choreographed by Lainie Sakakura, to close out three weeks of nonstop dancing.

Taking care of the dancers' bodies is a top priority for all involved. "We take the physical and mental health of our dancers very seriously," says Vida. Before starting the program, students complete an orientation by Jennifer King, D.O., a Ballet Hawaii board member and chief of pediatric sports medicine for Hawai'i Pacific Health. Dr. King covers a range of tips to help students keep their bodies and minds healthy so they can fully immerse themselves in the program safely.

The summer culminated in a showcase of diverse performances that ranged from classical ballet styles to Broadway at Leeward Community College. Top guest artists and masters shared the stage with their students, who proudly demonstrated their hard work and dedication.

Schenberger, a former student and now program instructor says, "It's humbling to come back after all these years and inspiring to see young, up-and-coming dancers shine.

Hawai'i truly has an amazing source of home-grown talent right here at Ballet Hawaii's studios." 

*Since 1976, Ballet Hawaii has been committed to enriching Hawai'i's cultural environment by teaching, presenting, producing, and promoting dance. To learn more about upcoming classes, performing opportunities, and shows, visit [ballethawaii.org](http://ballethawaii.org) or call (808) 521-8600.*

For a behind-the-scenes peek into the summer intensive program, scan the QR code for a video.



For physical and mental health tips from Dr. Jennifer King and Megan Fairchild, visit [islandscene.com/more](http://islandscene.com/more).