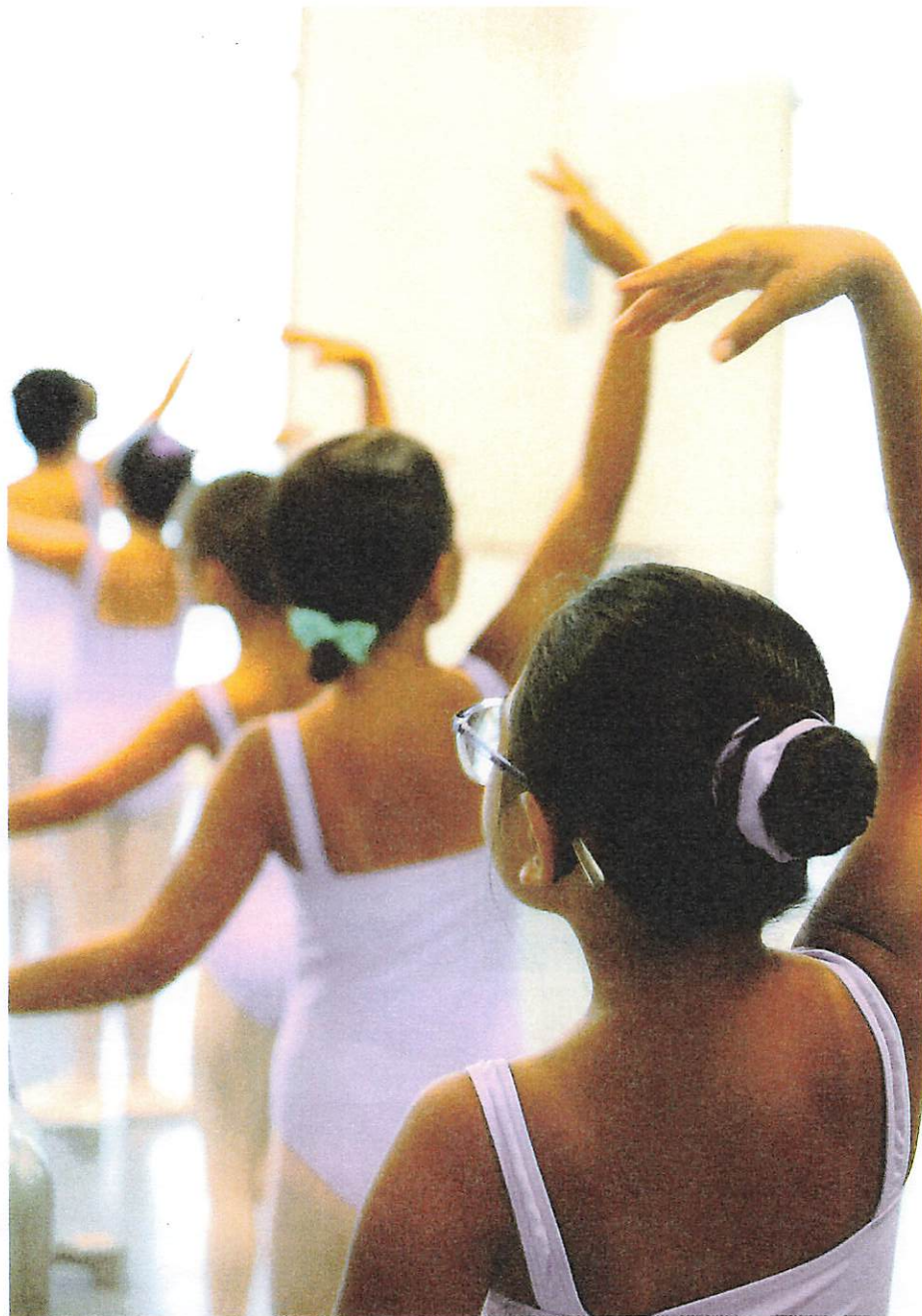






PHOTOS COURTESY: BALLET HAWAII

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On Pointe

A new partnership is expanding opportunities for ballet dancers in West O'ahu.



For many young dancers, the journey begins with a dream and a place where they can pursue it. Thanks to a new partnership between **SHANGRI LA** and **BALLET HAWAII WEST**, more students in West O'ahu will have the opportunity to do just that.

Shangri La, a Center for Cultures & Ideas and Museum of Islamic Art, has awarded a grant to Ballet Hawai'i West to improve the learning environment for students while reducing financial barriers that can prevent young dancers from pursuing their training.

The grant will fund two initiatives: dance education scholarships for five students, and a new sound system that will enhance the classroom experience for everyone at Ballet Hawai'i West. Together, the investments expand access to dance education while improving daily instruction.

The collaboration began with a conversation between the two organizations, which quickly discovered they shared a commitment to supporting young artists and strengthening the arts in West O'ahu.

"What grew out of these meetings with Shangri La is incredibly meaningful because it reflects what can happen when two organizations believe deeply in the power of art, culture and community," says Ballet Hawai'i executive director Richard Vida. "At a time when arts organizations are facing immense challenges, partnerships like this remind us that collaboration is essential."

For Ballet Hawai'i, which has served Hawai'i for 50 years, the partnership advances its mission of making high-quality dance education accessible to students regardless of financial circumstances.



Vida said dance education reaches beyond preparing students for professional careers.

"We are here to help create complete human beings and engaged citizens," Vida said. "Through dance, students learn imagination, discipline, teamwork, self-confidence and creativity — qualities that help them succeed not only in the arts, but in life."

Those lessons have shaped generations of Ballet Hawai'i students, many of whom have gone on to careers in dance, medicine, aviation, law and other professions.

For Shangri La, the investment aligns with its mission of fostering creativity, cultural exchange and community partnerships across Hawai'i.

"The arts are essential to society, and artists deserve genuine support to do their work," says Shangri La executive director Ben Weitz.

"When we saw the opportunity to bring our resources to West O'ahu, it was a natural next step."

Weitz said he hopes the partnership also demonstrates the value of investing in local communities.

"We want the West O'ahu community to know that their young people's creative ambitions are worth investing in," Weitz says.

"When we have the means to make that investment, there is no question about whether we should."

As Ballet Hawai'i West continues welcoming students from preschool through adulthood, both organizations see the partnership as the beginning of a lasting relationship.

More than funding new equipment or scholarships, the grant reflects a shared belief that every child deserves a safe, inspiring place to grow, create and discover their potential through the arts. In West O'ahu, that belief is taking center stage.

To learn more, visit ballethawaii.org and shangrilahawaii.org.

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