

## Exploring AH – Ballet Hartford

By Bernie Michel

Ballet Hartford seemed to have sprung up out of nowhere with an article in the Courant back in November. Not surprisingly, when I noted that they rehearse at the 224 Ecospace, I knew I needed to know more about them. The article featured their holiday production of an original ballet adaptation of Handel's Messiah, rather than the traditional Nutcracker.

I went to the performance at Bruyette Athenaeum, at St. Joseph University, and it was great. The dancing was truly professional and included dancers from the Hartt School, while the musicians and chorus were from Yale. It was wonderful to see such a collaboration of partners and institutions.

To find out more about this new energy in our neighborhood, I reached out to Betsy MacMillan, the founder and artistic director of Ballet Hartford.

It began as Vivid Ballet in 2016 and only became Ballet Hartford in 2018, when Betsy decided to connect more fully to the City and its community.

Betsy came to Connecticut from Texas when her husband was accepted into Yale University. She had a strong career in Texas, and brought both her passion for ballet and her connections with her when she moved here. She began on the faculty of the Dance Division of the Hartt School, but always had a dream of starting her own company.

The facilities at The 224 EcoSpace, which were originally built for the Hartford Ballet Co. were ideal for them. It's great to see that they are once again being used for their original purpose.

Beginning this past August, the School of Ballet Hartford began under the direction of Susannah Israel-Marchese, with Betsy as Artistic Director. There are four levels of students as well as two levels of pre-ballet. The idea is to allow the young people interested in dance to develop in concert with their ability, determination and physical growth to become the best dancers they can be.

Betsy has great plans for the future as well. They will present a spring performance at the University of St. Joseph Featuring Les Sylphides, and original works by Silas Farley, New York City Ballet; Stephen Pier, Artistic Director of The Hartt School Dance Division; Betsy McMillan, Artistic Director Ballet Hartford; and Michelle Thompson-Ulrich (formerly Ballet Austin) at 7:30pm on May 19th. Photos are available at:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/E1u4Sbz7HjjJXgo9>

