



THE ROCK SCHOOL 2003
Annual Report



The Rock School for
Dance Education
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OUR MISSION

The Rock School is dedicated to enriching the lives of all students and preparing those students who are specially gifted in ballet for careers as professional artists.

The Rock School remains steadfast in its mission to develop the finest artists for professional companies and, through its outreach program, is committed to making dance more accessible to local communities.

Known for encouraging quality academic education as well as for nurturing artistic excellence, The Rock School instills a quality of thought and action that enriches the lives of all the students regardless of their ultimate careers.

Emily Corney, Rock School alumna, lead in Fame on 42nd Street

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This year we were delighted to kick-off the Rock School's 40th Anniversary Celebration. Barbara Weisberger founded The School at the urging of George Balanchine, who stressed that before you can have a company you must first have a school. For four decades, The School has focused on its educational mission to provide dance training of the highest caliber. The professional accomplishments of our alumni and the talent of our students give testament to The School's tradition of excellence.

In the past ten years, under the direction of Bo and Stephanie Spasoff, The Rock School has experienced its most dramatic growth, enhancing its reputation as one of the nation's top programs and increasing its direct impact on the local community.

The School has more than 1,200 students, two facilities, an outstanding faculty, and exchange programs with prestigious dance institutions abroad. The Rock School student body spans Philadelphia to Camden, West Chester to Pittsburgh, and England to Japan. Our student dancers can annually be seen in Pennsylvania Ballet's Nutcracker, in West Chester Ballet Theatre productions, at The Academy of Music, at The Mann Center for the Performing Arts, and at The Prince Theatre, as well as at schools throughout the region. Our faculty also shares their artistic skills with the community, choreographing productions for other arts organizations and teaching dance in the public schools.

*Ashlee Knapp, Rock School Alumna,
Princess Grace Award Winner 2001,
member New York City Ballet*

This year alone RockReach, The School's multi-faceted outreach program, brought live performances, dance training, and arts-based curricula to 15,000 school children! We were delighted to have this program featured in *Degas and the Dance*, a Channel 10 special. If you missed the program, let us know. We would be proud to share it with you!

We recently completed the second year of a unique pilot academic program that uses the latest technology to serve the educational needs of the most focused young artists. Dancers, like athletes, must begin a rigorous training regimen at a very early age to achieve professional success. The Rock School has spent years developing an academic program to ensure that these bright and talented young people do not sacrifice their education for their art as we train the whole person. I am pleased to report that our second senior class was graduated with pomp and circumstance and Pennsylvania high school diplomas in June 2003.

This past year, alumni joined Pennsylvania Ballet and PA Ballet II. Others joined New York City Ballet, Ballet West, and Pacific Northwest Ballet, and still others can be seen on Broadway and in film. Each day our students spend hours in the studios honing their skills with the goal of reaching their full potential and sharing their talents with the community. Your support creates critical scholarship funding to ensure that no student is denied this opportunity. On behalf of The Rock School Board of Trustees, I thank you for investing in our youth and programs.

— **Caro U. Rock, Chairman**



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“It takes each of these program elements, as well as talent, focus, and determination to develop an exceptional artist. The School strives and succeeds in training the body and nurturing the spirit.”

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS

Over the course of The School’s history, we have been unwavering in our efforts to build a superior training program to develop world-class dancers. Our faculty of respected and highly skilled professionals is complemented by the strengths of our Artistic Advisor, Violette Verdy, as well as a host of internationally renowned guest artists. We recruit talented students throughout the region, through a 22-city national audition tour, and through international exchange programs.

Twenty-five students moved to Philadelphia this year specifically to train at The Rock and participate in our full-time residence program. We are particularly proud that we can now offer these high caliber students academic programs that ensure that their education is comprehensive every step of the way.

The Rock School has set itself apart from its national competitors by offering a caring, integrated blend of nurturing and training to each child, teenager, and young adult. Our syllabus is on the cutting edge by today’s standards, and our curriculum includes performance and career placement opportunities. We have completed the first of a two-phase capital improvement project as we move toward creating a state-of-the-art facility to house our pre-professional training program.

It takes each of these program elements, as well as talent, focus, and determination to develop an exceptional artist. The School strives and succeeds in training the body and nurturing the spirit. Without opportunity, however, the potential of even the most gifted young person remains unrealized. Thank you for your support, which has created opportunities where there were none. The success of our students and alumni promises a bountiful return on your investment.

— **Bojan Spassoff and Stephanie Wolf Spassoff**





GLIMPSES OF THE YEAR

SEPTEMBER 2002

The Marine Club Residence is opened to 25 Rock School boarding students.

Rock School student Henry Graham is cast in the Broadway production of *Aida!*

20 students begin their studies in the Rock Academic Program Alliance (RAPA).

OCTOBER 2002

Olga Kostritzky, a permanent instructor at the School of American Ballet and long-time guest instructor at The Rock School, presents a seminar to Rock School faculty on the newly revised syllabus.

The Rock School presents the first of the year's 25 Dynamics of Dance outreach programs.

More than 100 public school classrooms are introduced to the Rock School Academic Lesson Series.

24-week RockReach residency programs are launched at Durham and Kearney Elementary Schools in Philadelphia.

NOVEMBER 2002

Joaquin De Luz, former soloist with the American Ballet Theatre and current soloist with New York City Ballet, is in residence at The Rock School to teach a weeklong series of master classes.

The Rock School has developed a menu of in-school and after-school arts programs designed to inspire, motivate and enhance young peoples' academic performance, develop their awareness of future opportunities, and channel their mental and physical energy into positive and constructive action.

DECEMBER 2002

Rock School students perform *Nutcracker* Teas at The Four Seasons eight times throughout the month.

More than 120 Rock School students perform in Pennsylvania Ballet's *The Nutcracker*.

JANUARY 2003

Rock School faculty hits the road for a 20-city national audition tour.

Philadelphia's NBC Channel 10 films Rock School students in *Degas and the Dance*, a primetime special.

FEBRUARY 2003

The Rock School collaborates with the Philadelphia Museum of Art for a lecture and performance celebrating *Degas and the Dance* at the Gershman Y.

Degas and the Dance special airs on NBC Channel 10.

MARCH 2003

Rock School student Christine Shevchenko wins the regional competition of Youth America Grand Prix.

APRIL 2003

Christine Shevchenko is named a finalist in the national competition of the Youth America Grand Prix.

Film star and dancer Patrick Swayze speaks to Rock School students about careers in the arts.

MAY 2003

The Rock School hosts auditions for its City Dance Program.

Members of the Rock School Academic Advisory Board meet for the annual Rock School Education Symposium.

The Rock School kicks-off its 40th Anniversary Celebration with its Scholarship Benefit at Independence Seaport Museum. Susan Rock and Bernard Poussot chair the event, which is host to more than 500 guests.

Artistic Advisor Violette Verdy visits The Rock School and teaches master classes for the students.

JUNE 2003

More than 300 Rock School students take the stage at the Academy of Music for the Rock School Annual Student Showcase, *Rock, White and Blue*.

Six Rock School students graduate from the Rock Academic Program Alliance with Pennsylvania high school diplomas.

Over 40 jazz students receive training from some of the industry's best instructors in jazz and hip hop during the school's one week jazz intensive for local dancers.

JULY 2003

The Rock School six-week summer session is attended by more than 300 students from all over the nation and abroad.

Washington Ballet Artistic Director, Septime Webre, and New Haven Ballet Artistic Director, Phil Otto, participate as instructors in the Benoliel-Rock Career Development Program.

AUGUST 2003

Rock School students perform for over 4,000 children in a free performance at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts.

A free performance at the Annenberg Center culminates the Rock School Summer Session.



Violette Verdy, Rock School Artistic Director, former Artistic Director of the Paris Opera Ballet Company, Boston Ballet Company, Principal Dancer and Ballet Mistress for New York City Ballet, a renowned international master teacher, and recipient of numerous international awards.



ONGOING PROGRAMS

TRAINING

The Rock School offers a full range of dance classes to its 1,200 students of all ages and career interests. Ballet training includes study at the early dance, formal, and professional levels as well as open classes for non-matriculated students. Classes in jazz, tap, and hip-hop are also available. The School endeavors to provide all of its students with the highest caliber dance training under the guidance of an experienced and distinguished faculty.

SUMMER SESSION AND THE BENOLIEL-ROCK CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

In addition to offering school-year classes, The Rock School conducts an intensive six-week summer session. More than 1,500 students audition each year during The School's national audition tour. Nearly 350 of those selected come to Philadelphia to train in ballet, jazz, modern, partnering, repertory, and injury prevention with The Rock School's respected faculty and a collection of renowned guest artists.

The Benoliel-Rock Career Development Program further enhances the summer program by bringing students in contact with artistic directors from professional dance companies. This exciting initiative introduces students to the different styles of today's companies, includes master classes and lectures, and provides young dancers with opportunities to be seen by decision

makers in the field. The Career Development Program is generously underwritten by Constance W. Benoliel.

ROCKREACH

This dynamic, multi-faceted outreach program provides interactive performances, residencies, training, and arts curriculum activities to the Greater Philadelphia community with a particular emphasis on providing arts education programs for public school children in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Camden, New Jersey. With leadership support from the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the William Penn Foundation, The Rock School has developed a menu of in-school and after-school arts programs designed to inspire, motivate and enhance young peoples' academic performance, develop their awareness of future opportunities, and channel their mental and physical energy into positive and constructive action.

PERFORMANCES

Part of the RockReach program, outreach performances are an integral component of The Rock School's curriculum. These programs provide students with important performance experience and enhance the public's awareness of dance. Performance venues have ranged from the Republican National Convention

Rock School faculty member Natasha Nikulin Bar and student Christine Scherchenko, 2003 Princess Grace Award Winner, 2003 Youth America Grand Prix Finalist.



to Mayor John Street's Year of the Child Program to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. During this year our students performed at 25 inner-city public schools for more than 15,000 local children. Approximately 120 Rock School students dance each year in Pennsylvania Ballet's *The Nutcracker*, and all students take the stage at The Academy of Music for the annual Rock School Showcase. Through lecture-demonstrations, outreach performances, and guest engagements, our talented young students provide a very accessible view of dance and possess a youthful enthusiasm for the art that is contagious to audiences of all ages.

ROCK ACADEMIC PROGRAM ALLIANCE (RAPA)

The Rock School strongly champions a good academic education for all of its students, believing it is essential to the development of well-rounded individuals and especially important in light of the risks and brevity of dance careers. In recent years The School had been approached by many of its most talented students who were finding it difficult to combine a full and solid high school curriculum with their demanding dance training, forcing some students to compromise either their academics or dance.

During 2002-2003, The Rock School and the 21st Century Cyber Charter School joined in partnership to provide a quality academic education to students pursuing a high level of dance training. This partnership provided these focused young dance students with a compelling alternative to traditional schools. RAPA facilitated access to this charter school

and supplemented this program with a full-time, on-site Dean of Students and RAPA instructors who monitored, assisted, and oversaw the academic progress of the students and developed extra-curricular activities to facilitate socialization and enhance the on-line learning program.

RESIDENCE PROGRAM

The Rock School Residence Program aids students who must leave home to prepare for careers in professional dance. Students reside in a fully supervised dormitory located on a single floor of the Marine Club Apartment Complex directly across from the Ballet Centre.

The program provides young men and women with a supportive living and learning environment that promotes responsibility, citizenship, and independence and enables students to pursue their goals in dance.

Students living in the Rock School residence are granted a moderate amount of independence and are subject to the rules, regulations, and code of conduct found in the residence program handbook. A residence director also lives at the Marine Club Apartments to supervise the students and serve as a liaison between the Rock School, the students, and the parents.

CONSERVATORY TRAINEE PROGRAM

The Rock School offers a Conservatory program for the most promising young dance talents. Conservatory trainees receive full scholarships for their dance training, housing, dance supplies, and academics. In addition to the demanding training program, conservatory students receive exclusive coaching by members of The Rock School senior faculty and represent the core of The Rock School's performing ensemble. This program was conceived to attract artists of the highest quality to Philadelphia where they could develop their special talents and share them with the Philadelphia community.



The Rock School strongly champions a good academic education for all of its students, believing it is essential to the development of well-rounded individuals and especially important in light of the risks and brevity of dance careers.



2003 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

Unrestricted Fund

Fiscal Year ended August 31, 2003

REVENUES

Contributed	\$1,618,681
Earned	\$2,351,909
Total Revenues	\$3,970,590

EXPENSES

Programs	\$2,711,874
Management & General	\$399,516
Fund Raising	\$716,803
Total Expenses	\$3,828,193

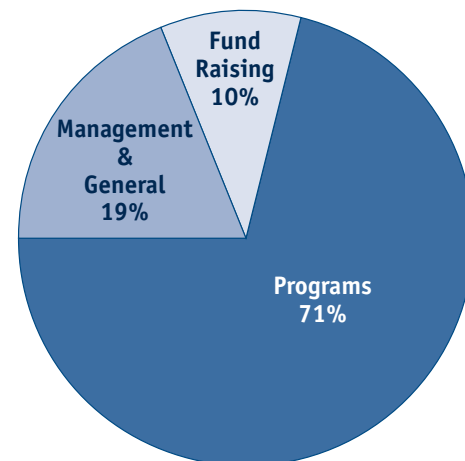
excludes amortization & depreciation

NET ASSETS

Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$2,527,635
Net Assets at End of Year	\$2,459,448
Change In Net Assets	-\$68,187

includes amortization & depreciation

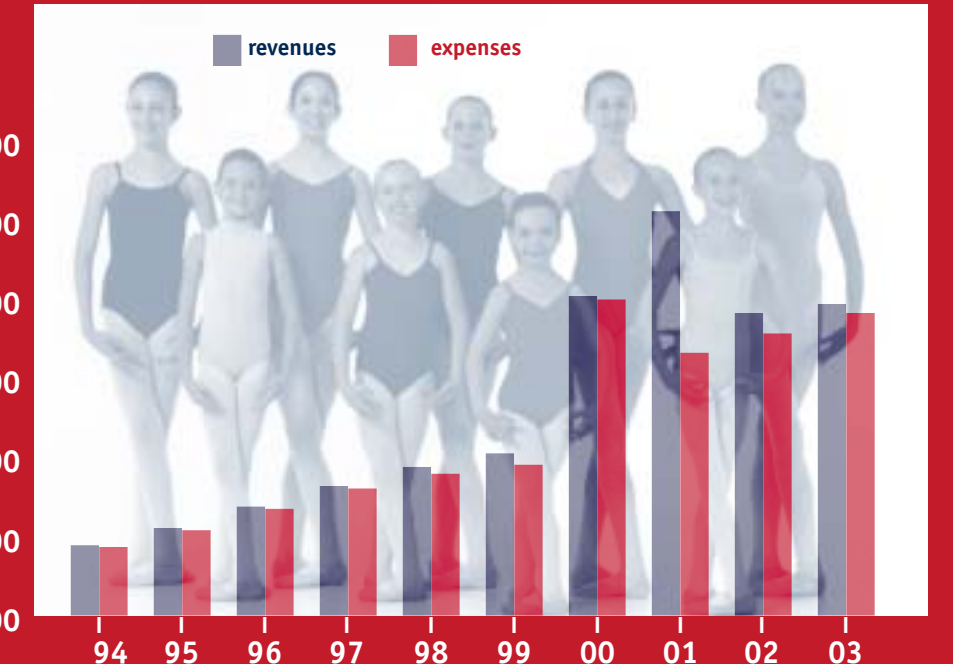
ROCK SCHOOL EXPENSE BREAKDOWN FOR FISCAL 2003



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Violette Verdy, *Artistic Advisor*

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Jennifer Wheat, *RockWest Ballet Coordinator*
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Karen DeFrancesco, *Jazz Coordinator*

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Stephanie Phillips, *Director of Annual Giving*
Ian Moss, *Development Assistant*
Sanggee Kim, *Development Assistant*

ROCK REACH

Tama Alesson, *Rock Reach Manager*

STUDENT LIFE

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Alison Staplin, *Assistant Dean of Students and
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Gennifer Lashley, *Residence Director*
Dana Lynn, *Residence Assistant*
Tony Costandino, *Building Manager*
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United States Department of Justice
William Penn Foundation
Wyeth Pharmaceuticals
—Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Poussot

“It is clear why the Rock School is recognized as one of the best schools of dance in the world. ...I found students with excellent facility and open minds.”

—**Michael Smuin**

former Artistic Director, San Francisco Ballet
Tony and Emmy Award Winner, choreographer for
George Lucas / *Star Wars*



Jennifer Savelli, Rock School alumna, former Pennsylvania Ballet dancer, cast member of Fosse and the motion picture Chicago

