

# DANIELLE GARDNER

emerging artist



Photo by Nathaniel Siri.

After graduating from the Langley Fine Arts School in Fort Langley, BC, I sometimes felt like a fish out of water. I had no clue where I belonged or how to make my first move into the professional world of dance.

I participated in *on the MOVE*, the DTRC's conference for emerging artists, in 2007. As a young dancer still unsure of my path, I sought advice from one of the guest speakers, who told me to "look fear in the face and run with it". That advice has been with me since, and has allowed me to take my career to the next level.

My first professional job was dancing on *So You Think You Can Dance Canada*, Season 3. I had auditioned for the previous season just for fun and ended up getting a ticket straight through to Toronto week. I made the Top 40 and learned so much in the process. I left knowing what to work on for next year; I had to find out who I really was as a dancer. For me, there was no better way to explore that than to work with

Modus Operandi, under the direction of Tiffany Tregarthan and David Raymond. After a year of hard work I was not only a stronger person but I had a clearer vision of how I wanted to be perceived as a dancer. With newfound knowledge and strength I auditioned for Season 3. I made Top 20 this time, and in fact, ended up earning a place in the Top 4 girls in Canada – an amazing experience.

As a young, emerging artist I really appreciated how *on the MOVE* brought dancers of different ages and ability levels together. Doing so created an atmosphere in which we could build connections and learn from each other. I returned to *on the MOVE* as a guest speaker to share some of the lessons I have learned so far as an emerging artist. My hope is to inspire these young dancers, and to provide the same guidance to them as was provided to me.

I am currently rehearsing for an upcoming tour of Thailand with *MOVE: the company*, under the artistic direction of Josh Beamish, who inspires me daily to do my very best. I am also collaborating with dancers in Vancouver and New York on some new works to be performed next year... stay tuned!

**BIRTHPLACE:** Surrey, BC **PRINCIPAL TRAINING:** Danzmode Productions **ATTENDED on the MOVE:** 2007 **CURRENTLY:** Dancing with *MOVE: the company*

# MISTAYA HEMINGWAY

student of  
urban planning

At some point in my dance career, the question of ‘...but what will I do after?’ began to linger in the back of my mind.



Photo by Sabrina Reeves.

I had a feeling that it would take many years of thought and trial to find something that could ever hope to equal the place that dance has held in my life. To find one passion in life is a gift – to find two seemed a challenge.

The work done by the DTRC definitely reminded me to enjoy the present while also preparing for the future. In the spirit of research, and also as an important escape from those long evenings and extensive tours when my mind would be occupied by enduring thoughts of rehearsal, I began to take correspondence classes through Athabasca University. Cultural anthropology was my first class and I remember being completely captivated by the stories. A few years later, an event that would focus my interests more clearly

and specifically on urban design occurred – two buildings in Edmonton designed by my late father, an architect with a true and rare talent, were in danger of demolition. The news came crashing down to my brother and I at the last possible minute, and suddenly I found myself at the head of a national campaign to preserve them. Between rehearsals I would be sneaking in telephone calls to Edmonton city councilors and the national press, and in the evenings, sending out a flurry of letters to anyone and everyone to sign our petition and help us save these buildings. The more I spoke about the critical importance of design in our ever-more-homogenous cities, the more I began to realize that cities, the beauty of the built environment and the movement of people within structures, had the potential to become my second passion. At this point, I contacted the DTRC for assistance and re-directed my studies towards urban design while continuing to dance.

Today, along with being mother to a two year old, I am enrolled in Urban Planning at Concordia University – and, gratefully, I am still dancing whenever the opportunity arises.

**BIRTHPLACE:** Edmonton, Alberta **PRINCIPAL TRAINING:** Canada's National Ballet School, Royal Ballet School summer program, Stuttgart Staatstheatre **DANCED WITH:** Stuttgart Staatstheatre, Dutch National Ballet, Alberta Ballet, LaLaLa Human Steps, Hubbard Street Dance **RETRAINING IN:** Anthropology and urban planning **CURRENTLY:** Studying at Concordia University, dancing, volunteering with a community action group, and mother

# ANNEBRUCE FALCONER

organic farmer

**BIRTHPLACE:** Winnipeg, Manitoba **PRINCIPAL TRAINING:** Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, Le Groupe **DANCED WITH:** Louise Bedard, Danielle Desnoyers, Jean-Pierre Perrault and independently **RETRAINED IN:** Organic horticulture **CURRENTLY:** Co-owner of Liberland Farm



Photo by Angelo Barsetti.

Right now, my sow is due to give birth to a litter of piglets any day, and my to-do list includes milking the cows, harvesting this year's crops of potatoes and beans, and canning the tomatoes.

I bought the 25 acres of land that Liberland Farm currently sits on six years ago, when I was still living in Montreal dancing, teaching and touring full-time. I had always maintained a garden, but my busy performance schedule didn't allow me the time I needed to really focus on keeping it up – I was only able to go up on weekends, which I did as often as I could. I had been dancing for over 20 years when one day in the studio, I looked out the window and suddenly

thought, "I think I just lost my kale crop". It became clear I couldn't do both, that my split city/country life was not working, and I was faced with a choice: had I toured enough? Was dance still ultimately satisfying? Could I really make a change this big? I felt the answer deep down, "I have to do this, and though I don't know why now, I will eventually." My husband was the one who encouraged me to contact the DTRC.

As I began researching what taking farming full-time would involve, I realized the magnitude of what I'd have to learn just to begin. Additionally, since I was interested in small-scale, bio-dynamic organic farming, traditional education was not for me – I needed to learn with my hands. After a significant amount of research, I submitted my apprenticeship proposal to the DTRC. No one had ever proposed such a thing before, and I was nervous. However, my plan was accepted enthusiastically, and I was thrilled – and nervous!

I began with basics like soil dynamics and root systems, but most importantly, humility in the face of Mother Nature. The farmers from whom I began learning treated me like an equal right from the beginning. I realized that what I initially believed was an apprenticeship was actually my new life – the learning process is ongoing and lifelong, each year is different from the last, there's always something new to learn, and there is no room for ego – much like dance. I wanted the same adrenalin rush and opportunity to create I got from dance, and not only did I find it in farming, but it also felt just as natural.

from

# KEVIN LAW | director of trading

I'm told I fell into dance, literally. At the age of five, I was sent to the local ballet school to improve my poor coordination. It is hard to pinpoint what exactly held my interest as a child, but when I enrolled in Canada's National Ballet School, the challenge and physicality of dance had me hooked.

I was fortunate enough during my career to dance with The National Ballet of Canada and tour extensively with Opera Atelier. However, I think I always knew I would have a post-dance career one day. Throughout high school I really enjoyed math and science, so with the help of Joysanne Sidimus and the DTRC, I began auditing some Calculus classes at the University of Toronto. I finished my university prerequisites and began taking courses by correspondence from the University of Waterloo, all while still dancing and touring.

After dancing professionally with The National Ballet for six years, I retired from performance and enrolled in the University of Waterloo's Systems Design Engineering co-op program full-time. The experience was indispensable. I had known only ballet my whole life and had no idea the range of professions and opportunities that existed beyond the world of dance. During my co-op, I worked on an engine production line at Ford Motor Company, with MD Robotics repairing a damaged space shuttle Canadarm (seriously!), and finally with ITG as a student trading strategist. It was from this last position that I landed my first full-time non-ballet job, building computer programs that profit from small inefficiencies in the stock market.

Although a transition from classical ballet through engineering to stock trading is unusual, I found I had a surprising number of transferable skills. The work ethic, perseverance, precision and experience performing well under pressure demanded by classical ballet have all served me well in my current job. I know I couldn't have succeeded in this transition without the support of my family and the ongoing moral and financial support from the DTRC. However, I do miss being on stage. My wife and I joke that after a successful day at work it would be nice if someone stood up and applauded. Aside from that, take heart, there is life after dance!



Photo by Peter Redman.



Photo by Bruce Zinger.

**BIRTHPLACE:** Guelph, Ontario **PRINCIPAL TRAINING:** Canada's National Ballet School  
**DANCED WITH:** The National Ballet of Canada, Opera Atelier **RETRAINED IN:** Systems Design Engineering followed by finance industry licensing **CURRENTLY:** Director, Trading, ITG Canada Corp.

from

# DION MACARTHUR

social worker

Today at work, I watched 1,200 people gather to eat a meal at a downtown Toronto shelter. I witness this endless giving every day – and, this is where I find myself after transitioning from a wonderful dance career.

Early in my professional dance career, my life beyond the studio and stage led me to help others. I spoke to thousands of high school and university students about the perils of eating disorders and the importance of believing in oneself, and brought the physicality of dance to hundreds of Toronto District School Board inner-city students. While dancing has been my first love since I was five years old, I have always been drawn to help those in need.

A few years into my dance career, I saw a DTRC career counsellor who encouraged me to attempt my first university course. As scary as it was, I completed it and kept going. I began my BA in Social Development Studies via distance education at the University of Waterloo, while simultaneously meeting the demands of an incredible 15-year career with the Danny Grossman Dance Company. I remember listening to course lectures on cassette tapes while on tour and sending in hand-written assignments via fax at theatres and hotels. It took me 12 years to graduate with my first degree.

Injuries eventually caught up with me around the time that I was ready to tackle university full-time in my late thirties. Two years later, I graduated with my Masters in Clinical Social Work. Currently, I work for Veterans Affairs Canada supporting military service men and women who have proudly served our country and now find themselves homeless.

Looking back when I began my first course – with self-doubt, fear and anxiety – life as a dancer did prepare me for a second career. Qualities ingrained in me as a dancer are with me every day. While I miss the stage, I now channel my energy into helping clients conquer obstacles and support them as they make significant life changes. Their gratitude fills my soul.

During my 14-year retraining journey, the DTRC believed in me all the way. I send many, many thanks for your financial support and endless encouragement.



Photo by Kirk McMahon.

**BIRTHPLACE:** Winnipeg, Manitoba **PRINCIPAL TRAINING:** Brandon School of Dance, The School of Toronto Dance Theatre **DANCED WITH:** Danny Grossman Dance Company **RETRAINED IN:** Social Work **CURRENTLY:** Case Manager, Veterans Affairs Canada, Toronto Homeless Veterans Initiative



In 'Rooms' choreographed by Anna Sokolow. Photo by Cylla Von Tiedemann.

from

# BLAIR NEUFELD | hospice care worker

After twenty years as a professional dancer working across Canada, I was ready to retire from the world of dance. I wanted a complete change, and the chance to explore a variety of my other interests.

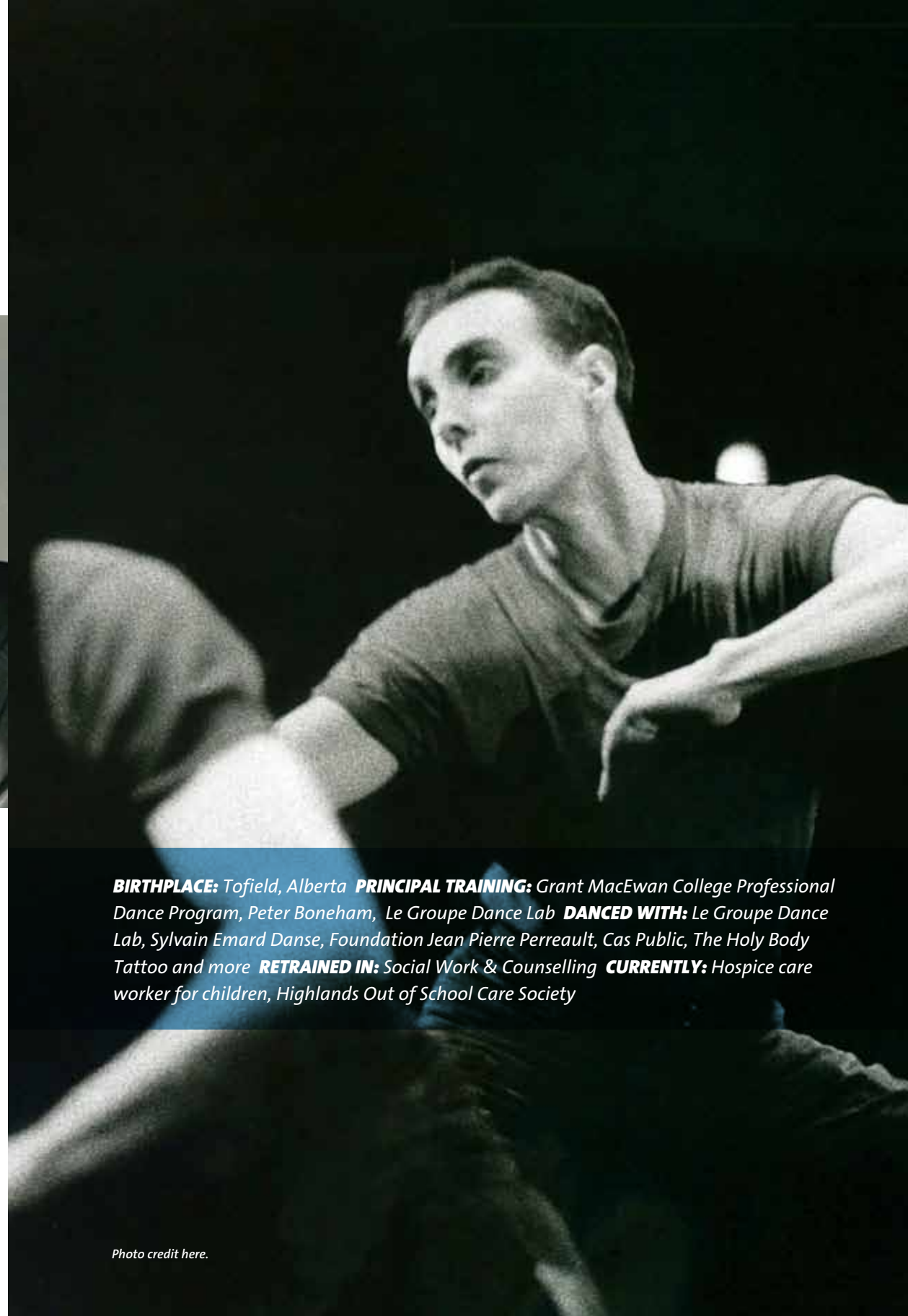
I already had a few ideas as to what I might like to do as a new career. At first, I thought transitioning from dance would be simple and completed in just a few short months, but that perspective soon changed after I moved from Montreal to Vancouver. My dance transition became my life transition.

I was very fortunate to have received the first Founders' Award from the Dancer Transition Resource Centre, which allowed me to take the time to explore different career possibilities. The award also gave me the confidence to be open to new ideas, take risks and challenge myself in new areas. I started to volunteer in the field of palliative care and realized that I really wanted to start working with children again. I began working at Canuck Place, which is the first hospice for children in North America. I jumped into this new environment with my eyes wide open taking in as much as I could – learning, discovering and re-acquainting myself with many personal qualities that I had also used as a dancer. By completely immersing myself in my new environment I felt very comfortable quite soon, and I knew that this would be my new career. Being able to listen, comfort and understand when someone is in end-of-life care offers me challenges and rewards equal to or even greater than in my career in dance.

Transitioning from one career into another has its ups and downs. At times, things will flatline and you think, "What am I doing! Am I doing the right thing?" My advice is to keep asking yourself these questions, and keep moving forward as you never know where your path will take you. When I reflect on my dance career now, I feel very lucky to have achieved all the goals I set for myself. However, I had to know when to create new goals. With the support of the Dancer Transition Resource Centre, I was able to focus on creating and working towards these dreams.



Photo by Sonya Stefan.



**BIRTHPLACE:** Tofield, Alberta **PRINCIPAL TRAINING:** Grant MacEwan College Professional Dance Program, Peter Boneham, Le Groupe Dance Lab **DANCED WITH:** Le Groupe Dance Lab, Sylvain Emard Danse, Fondation Jean Pierre Perreault, Cas Public, The Holy Body Tattoo and more **RETRAINED IN:** Social Work & Counselling **CURRENTLY:** Hospice care worker for children, Highlands Out of School Care Society

Photo credit here.

# ERIN RICHARDSON

veterinary technician

Life as a professional ballet dancer can be so absorbing and so demanding that contemplating a transition to another career is quite literally unthinkable – it leaves the mind blank.



Photo by David Richardson.

From the ages four to 26, I lived and breathed ballet – it was the structure of my life. Then, rather suddenly it seemed, I faced the moment many dancers dread: the decision to hang up my pointe shoes. In my case, painful bone cysts in my metatarsals made performing torturous and made retirement from dance inevitable. The Dancer Transition Resource Centre helped me approach my blank canvas with optimism and purpose. I was able to use their career counselling services to explore many possibilities and to discover not only what I would be good at, but also what I loved. The DTRC helped me see that my love of animals and my concern for their well-being could well be my next passion.

Here is where my story has a unique twist. Having decided that I wanted to pursue a career as a veterinary technician, I recalled having met a veterinarian at a season closing reception – Dr. Terry Boston and his wife Diane are patrons of The National Ballet of Canada. They care not only about dance, but just as importantly, about dancers themselves. I contacted Dr. Boston and without hesitation, he offered to

take me on as an assistant so that I could gain first-hand experience and determine if I was suited to this career path.

With the DTRC's support, I completed the pre-requisite courses for the Seneca College Veterinary Technician Course, and graduated from the program with Honours in the spring of 2009. I was immediately offered an emergency technician position at the prestigious Mississauga-Oakville Veterinary Emergency Hospital and Referral Group. I passed the exam to become a Registered Veterinary Technician that summer.

Now that my transition is complete and I am established in a new field, I look back fondly on my life as a dancer and value the self-discipline and determination it instilled in me. At the same time, I am equally passionate about my new career and I look forward to what it may hold. I am grateful that the DTRC and Dr. Terry Boston have helped give me another opportunity to make a difference.

**BIRTHPLACE:** Victoria, BC **PRINCIPAL TRAINING:** Island Dance Studio, Canada's National Ballet School **DANCED WITH:** The National Ballet of Canada **RETRAINED IN:** Veterinary Technology **CURRENTLY:** Veterinary Technician, Mississauga-Oakville Veterinary Emergency Hospital and Referral Group