

Immortal Waltz

Ballet Pixelle





BALLET PIXELLE
presents the original ballet
Immortal Waltz

Story, Animations, Choreography by Inarra Saarinen
Music by Than van Nispen, Sacko22, kthugha

Dancers

Aiyana Tripsa
Deyna Broek
Luci Yokosuka
Sherainbow Merlin
Tik Merlin
Vivienne Darcy

Amelie Dibou
Dubhna Rhiadra
Patros Zifer
Tatiana Kurri
Tinka Bondar
Xanthi Oridium

Ballet Coordinator, Ballet Mistress (Euro) – Vivienne Darcy

Ballet Mistress, Animations Assistant - Amelie Dibou

Costume Mistress – Blanche DuBois

Financial Manager - Calia Cachin

Photographer – Leko Littlebird

Set Design – Leko Littlebird and Build - Tik Merlin

Sound Coordinator – Willis Rossini

Theatre Build, Roadie, Playbill – Espresso Saarinen

Usher Coordinator – Anaid Daviau

Webmaster – Skip Flossberg (<http://balletpixelle.org>)

Artistic Director – Inarra Saaarinen

BALLET PIXELLE COMPANY

Fall 2011



Alexa Sideways - Montreal
Aiyana Tripsa - Florida
Amelie Dibou - Washington, DC
Anaid Daviau - Second Life
Asami Larsson - Tokyo
Blanche DuBois - Colorado
Calia Cachin - Hawai'i
Cecilia Mistwalker - Florida
Derrick Perl - Chicago
Deyna Broek - California
Dubhna Rhiandra - England
Espresso Saarinen - Tokyo
Hiroko Kimono - Tokyo
Inarra Saarinen - Tokyo
Leko Littlebird - Virginia
Luci Yokosuka - Osaka
Lucia Tophat - Washington
Neena Botanical - New York
Patros Zifer - Toronto
Sherainbow Merlin - Spain
Skip Flossberg - Chicago
Tatiana Kurri - California
Tik Merlin - Portugal
Tinka Bondar - Pennsylvania
Vivienne Darcy - Colorado
Willis Rossini - Washington, DC
Xanthi Oridium - Estonia

IMMORTAL WALTZ
a new original ballet

A story about how life is movement. And we dance and live an immortal waltz.

What is life? Isn't it movement? A constant cycle of movement, no movement, movement... through the ages. From dance to dance...

ACT I - The Cemetery

We see an old lady sitting in a graveyard watching herself lying in a grave. Suddenly, the dead lady vanishes and the living one begins moving. Then other dead people begin to appear and move bringing themselves to life.

ACT II - An Alive Space

The people, now alive, create a strange dance party of wild and wonderful characters. They live on through dance!

ACT III - The Same Space

Margaret, the lady in Act I, performs her dance of dreams. What does she dream? Has it kept her alive all these years?

ACT IV - The Cemetery

After this time, each person ceases movement and disappears until we are left at the beginning with the old lady and her dead self. The cycle is complete for this time but will continue again....

Everything is tilted just a little out of the ordinary in this world where a waltz is immortal and eternal.





Inarra Saarinen
artistic director-choreographer

Ms. Saarinen is the founder and artistic director of Ballet Pixelle (formerly Second Life Ballet). She is also a First Life dancer and choreographer for stage, film, and video. She is interested in exploring the unique capabilities and intersection of movement in virtual and physical space and blended realities, and investigating and developing an aesthetic and vocabulary of virtual dance -- whether it be by tiger, dragon, bird, or human.







Aiyana Tripsa
dancer

Ms. Tripsa says that dance and music are her life's blood. In First Life, she began dance classes at age 5, music at age 7, and theater at age 9. If she's not dancing she is probably listening to music or playing her piano. For the past decade, Ms. Tripsa has been studying Flamenco dance and hopes to bring all that experience to dancing in Second Life. She is nervous and excited and absolutely thrilled to be dancing with Ballet Pixelle because it combines so many of her loves.



Amelie Dibou

animations assistant, ballet mistress, dancer

Ms. Dibou has danced with Ballet Pixelle since its inception and was a member of the original cast. She has premiered in all ballets written for Second Life and serves as the Ballet Mistress. Some of her Costumes, Botanicals & other creations are featured in several Ballets. A dancer and musician in First Life, Amelie loves developing these arts in Second Life.



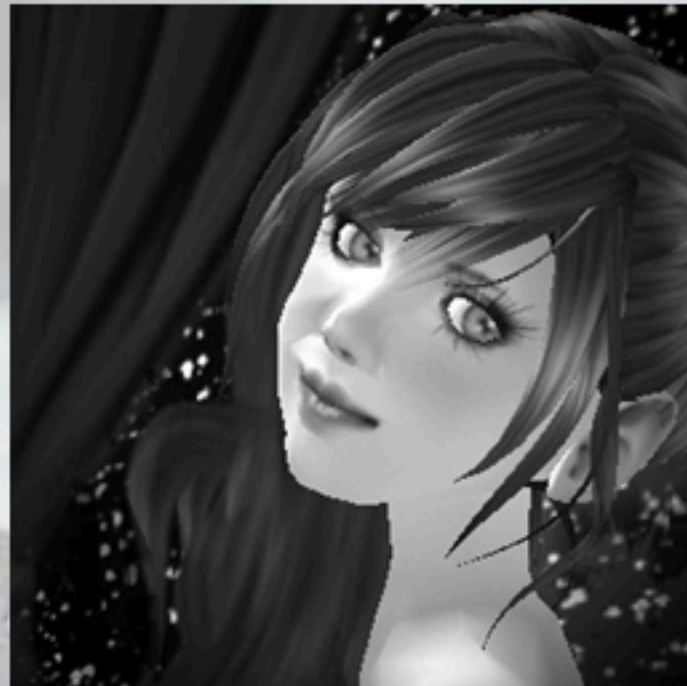
Deyna Broek
dancer

Ms. Broek is 34 and a California Native. She
feels blessed



Dubhna Rhiadra
dancer, sound

In her First Life, Ms. Rhiadra has been involved in community dance for over 20 years. In Second Life she has been performing as a story teller, sometimes interpreting stories in dance. She is in Second Life for the creative opportunities it offers and is thrilled to be able to dance and perform in this world, too.



Luci Tokosuka
dancer

Ms. Yokosuka is a Balinese gamelan player as well as a manager of the Students' Union of University of Human Arts and Sciences, and a VWBC newscaster.



Patros Zifer
dancer

Mr. Zifer commenced dancing in First Life about a week after birth. His movement obsession proved such a time consuming challenge to his parents that they put him into gymnastics training at the age of eight. In his mid-teens tumbling begat tendu as he traded the parallel bars for ballet barres and hasn't looked back since...certainly not without a reasonably well-lined "attitude". His very minor professional career ended early by injury but he continues to work in the field as both a dance photographer and as the perennial bad-penny in daily company class. Fifth position will always be home to him. Patros welcomes the opportunity to bourée on in Second Life without the nagging pull of gravity.



Sherainbow Merlin
dancer

Born in Spain within a family of Arts lovers --melomanos, composers, dancers, designers, writers, bullfighters... -- in Meridional Europe bullfighting is an art-- Ms. Merlin was born for dancing and delivered into First Life by her feet -- en pointe.. Classical ballet is in her blood and her deepest passion. The only reason she was introduced into Second Life, knowing very little of this exceptional media to express one's soul. Due to the continuous traveling of her parents she only started proper training at the age of 8 and she has danced ever since assimilating the best of the techniques of the different academies she attended in various parts of the world.



Tatiana Kurri
dancer

Trained as a swing dancer and belly dancer in her First Life, Ms. Kurri enjoys that these two types of dances are also in her Second Life. She also loves to start each day in First Life and Second Life with Tai Chi.



Tik Merlin
dancer, sets

Mr. Merlin lives his First Life surrounded by keyboards, musical applications, and programming snippets. He has always been mesmerized by the beauty of movement and amazed by the weight of his feet. Dreams do come true in Second Life and when not busy scripting, landscaping, or building sets, he's been passionately learning the art of dancing with Ballet Pixelle, plus the magic of gracefully escaping from inside tiny Nutcracker doll.



Tinka Bondar
dancer , mc

Ms. Bondar is from Philadelphia, USA. She is a lover of the performing arts along with being a trained figure skater. Tinka values her friends and family and loves meeting new people.



Vivienne Darcy
ballet coordinator, ballet mistress (euro),
dancer

Ms. Darcy is dancing for joy at the opportunity to don her toe shoes for Ballet Pixelle! She is from Colorado and when not skiing loves to dance!



Xanthi Oridium
dancer

Ms. Oridium has been attracted to music and visual arts as long as she remembers, so it's quite natural that both have quickly become her interest after joining Second Life. Xanthi used to dance only for her own pleasure in First Life, until she discovered a true deep passion for dancing in Second Life. Now she joined Ballet Pixelle to use every chance to learn and elevate her skills. She loves to perform and to show that dancing in Second Life is so much more than just sitting on a poseball or clicking on a club dance machine.







Anaid Daviau
usher coordinator

Ms. Daviau started with Ballet Pixelle as an usher and is now Usher Coordinator. The ushers provide the key technical and courteous interface that allows our audience to enjoy the ballets.



Calia Cachin
financial manager & stage manager

Ms. Cachin has been financial manager and stage manager with Ballet Pixelle for some years. She feels a heavy responsibility to the Company in handling all financial transaction in a transparent way. In addition, she calls all of the cues for each performance. Ms. Cachin does not dance since she has very large feet and an inability to count unless it is in Linden dollars. Ms. Cachin is honored to be part of Ballet Pixelle.



Espresso Saarinen
builder, roadie

Mr. Saarinen is an over-attenuated computer scientist in First Life, which has given him a small leg up in the various tasks of building, scripting, and general technical work to assist the ballet. He makes the playbill and is the builder of Ballet Pixelle's Theatres.



Leko Littlebird
set design, photography

In both Second Life and First Life, Mr. Littlebird is known for his dual professions of stage design and stage photography. In Second Life he also owns Littlebird's Dream Creations.



Skip Flossberg
dancer , mc coordinator, web master

Mr. Flossberg manages the Ballet Pixelle website www.balletpixelle.org, is also the MC Coordinator, and sweeps up after the shows! He is also, at times, a dancer.



Willis Rossini
sound engineer & coordinator

Mr. Rossini joined Ballet Pixelle in Spring 2007 playing sound for all the productions. He is also the chief sound engineer, editing and signal processing the music to fit the ballet, producing sound effects, and improving the quality of the sound as it is broadcast to Second Life.





The Making of a Ballet in Virtual Space

Inarra Saarinen, Artistic Director

Creating ballet in Second Life is truly an amazing experience -- one that stretches all of us in the Ballet Pixelle Company artistically, technically, and logistically. Dancing original works in the virtual world requires an extraordinary dedication and adherence to highest professional standards. It is not a task for the faint of heart, yet each performance lifts us all to the heights of artistic accomplishment. I had quickly realized the creative and dance possibilities from my first days in Second Life. Now after five years of hard work, a lot of perseverance, and some fabulously talented and committed people we have brought thirteen ballets to audiences in Second Life and three into First Life as well. Each ballet is different from the others, yet they all begin in the same place.

The Goal

My goal from the beginning has been to explore and investigate physical and virtual dance and movement. This has never changed.

So far, we have held an invited presentation of *The Nut* at a New York City dance kinetics workshop where I was interviewed while in Tokyo. We were deemed "charming" by NYC dance critics. We danced our commissioned *Phylogeny* which was shown under a big screen while the Indiana Telematics Ensemble played live in Indiana. We presented and performed *Shuzenji* at the time - transcendence - performance conference hosted by Monash University in Australia. Recently we performed at the Tokyo Performing Arts Workshop.

The point is threefold, one to blend the realities of physical and virtual space, two to define a new aesthetic for virtual and virtual dance, and three, to create a new vocabulary of virtual / physical dance. We are well on our way.

Now that we have brought Ballet Pixelle into First Life, and Second Life to Second Life, we are now bringing First Life dance into Second Life.

How the Ballet Begins

Every ballet begins with an idea. Part of the beauty of writing a story specifically for Ballet Pixelle is that I am able to utilize the unique aspects of Second Life, a three-dimensional virtual world, to bring the story to life. For example, In *Olmanen* I saw dragon-like creatures appearing in the air, a couple in love spiraling down to earth, sprites flying, and a beautiful woman transforming instantly into an old woman while the man transformed into one of the evil beings. In *Windows* I saw silhouetted women dancing in the air, teenagers doing slow aerial flips, and a dream sequence where a man and woman transform to their younger selves and the lovers rise up to the air together. In *Shuzenji* I saw how to dramatize the bonds of everlasting love as a hero murdered in a jealous rage enters the spirit world before our eyes and then returns to dance with his beloved. Once I've written the story and outlined the characters and their relationships, it is time to animate and choreograph. The story is expanded and refined over time as the dance continues to take shape in my head and in rehearsal.

Developing the Choreographic Animations

I began creating Ballet Pixelle movements with different animation software programs and have created the majority of our animations over the course of the eight ballets. I have used Avimator, Qavimator, Poser and others as a starting point in this process. I now have approximately 950 original animations. When choreographing a ballet, I put these animations into gestures, similar to musical phrases in ballet. This way the choreographer, dancers, and composer are able to work in a normal First Life style. These gestures also allow very precise timing between animations (in tenth of seconds but, alas, not counting lag) and compound animations. That is, in a gesture if you do not add a "wait" step the two animations happen at the same time. Each dancer can decide how to activate these gestures, for example by mapping the gestures to function keys or using chat `/gesture_name` to activate the phrase. Ballet Pixelle dancers rehearse and time the execution of each

gesture in order, with the music, and with other dancers. I have tried working with both off-the-shelf and custom HUDs, but neither of them gave me all of the functionality that I needed. There were added lags in a HUD, for example, even though having buttons might have been convenient for the dancers.

It is important to recognize that there is a significant difference between Ballet Pixelle's animations and the typical dance animations avatars use at clubs in Second Life. Club dances are simply loops of movement the avatar clicks onto and the animations play on their own. In Ballet Pixelle rehearsals and performances each dancer performs his or her own animation in sequence as though dancing on a real stage. And no poseballs!

How the Music is Played

Music is usually composed specifically for Ballet Pixelle's ballets. Sometimes it is played from a recording, sometimes it is played live by the composer, and streamed into the Second Life theatre. In *Shuzenji* the composer wrote lyrics afterward and sang and played live from Tokyo to accompany some performances. And sometimes the orchestra is in First Life playing to a large-screen playing Ballet Pixelle dancing!

Rehearsal is Part of the Creative Process

Once the story begins to fall in place and the animations are written, I can begin to see my visions in the rehearsal process and refine what will work on stage. What a wonderful freedom to be able to choreograph with dancers who have grand jetés that are full splits in the air, perfect "turn-out", and timely forever turns! The virtual world also suggests movements impossible on a traditional stage. Here *Nutcracker* snowflakes can float and swirl in mid-air without wires. This limitless movement lets me envision and then produce stunning effects of which other choreographers can only dream. Rehearsals take place in almost exactly the same

way a First Life rehearsal does -- except for the "I need you to hover up a bit" kind of directions. Of course, these are real dancers, so there are always the "I thought said you wanted me to come downstage?" kind of discussions. The dancers are definitely not puppets!

Costumes and Sets Play a Role in Ballet Pixelle

For Ballet Pixelle a "costume" is more than a tutu and a wig, it can be the entire look of a character including body shape, gender, size, and skin texture. For some characters we designed and built our own specialized avatars, for others we sought resources outside the Company. Second Life is a user-built community filled with creative people. Ballet Pixelle spends a significant amount of time working with designers of clothing and of avatar body and skin types to find the pieces that work to fulfill the ballet's artistic vision. We negotiate with each designer to make the costumes "transfer ok". In this way, costumes can go out to the dancers and then are transferred back into Ballet Pixelle's wardrobe department. Designers who contribute costumes are acknowledged in the playbill.

Ballet Pixelle sets have character as well. We have a number of extremely creative designers and builders within our Company. I describe my vision for the look and even action of the set pieces and after a lot of hard work and very long hours they deliver pieces that enhance the overall impact of the ballet.

We Quickly Outgrew Our First Theatre

We debuted in our home theatre in Quat. The theatre originally held 20, then 30, then 40 avatars, then we could no longer hold our audience. So we investigated and researched plans for a more efficient, reduced lag, larger theatre. Eventually, we built a theatre hosted by IBM in the their sims. This theatre stretched across two sims -- an audience of up to 80 in one and the stage and dancers are in the other, aside from reducing lag and allowing for a larger audience. With IBM moving behind their firewall, we moved back home to Quat and Marunogere, in our own two sim theater.

Real People in a Virtual Ballet

At every step in the process from first thoughts through performance, I am working with wonderful collaborators literally all around the world. We are able to meet in Second Life and work together live, as though we were really in the same geographical time and place. This intercontinental collaboration would be impossible in First Life. Some composers for our ballets live in London, the United States, and Japan. Our theater architects are in Australia and Japan, and our dancers and crew are from Estonia, Canada, the U.S., England, Hawai'i, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Japan. The entire cast and crew are volunteers who are interested in pursuing artistic movement and dance in the virtual world that is Second Life. Each person from the emcee to the lighting and sound technicians and stage manager, put in long hours to assure the performances go as smoothly as possible within the complexity and variability of the Second Life platform. The dancers are also cross-trained in some crew positions. Understanding this commitment is a part of the audition process. Ballet Pixelle dancers are extraordinarily dedicated and are a large part of why the ballet works.

What Next?

From what we have learned over four years, we moved to our long-awaited next step in *Degas*, where we had Second Life dancers dancing with a machinima, or video, of another Second Life dancer. So there is a new element of time and we can bring Second Life to Second Life and explore what that means. The next step, to bring in First Life dancers into Second Life, was realized in *Avatara*.". A Second Life dancer could finally dance with a Real Life dancer!

In *one nine four two* we brought in two different kinds of First Life media, photos and video, to juxtapose the physical world and the

virtual world. This allows a stronger impact on our perceptions in Real Life.

In our Summer 2011 work, *Archidance*, we brought in historical photos and videos of key choreographers and dancers who shaped dance.

In our latest work, we play with the idea of movement is life in a ballet called *ImmortalWaltz*.

In Closing

In closing, this is an exhilarating experience with an absolutely wonderful committed artistic team. We are learning an amazing amount about the limitations and possibilities of virtual and physical dance and how they interact. We look forward to more exploration in the future. Remember, if you have the chance to sit it out or dance, dance.

Join us in dancing into the digital future!

Music Thanks To

The Scream thanvannispen Than van Nispen t.P.

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White Out (Shades of the Moon Mix) SackJo22

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Coventry Carol (Lully Lullay) kthugha

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Margaret's Lullaby SackJo22

Featuring: Speck, Abstract Audio, Admiral Bob, WIM,
Sandyrb

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The Sigh thanvannispen Than van Nispen t.P.

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Special Thanks To...

An anonymous donor,

Fairyzette Sahara for costume support,

And you, our audience, for supporting us and
joining us in creating the magic of dance.

