Ballet Pixelle presents

Windows





Windows Program

Story, Animations, & Choreography Original Music Set Design Inarra Saarinen

Louis Volare Inarra Saarinen & Leko Littlebird

Dancers

Aiyana Tripsa Cecilia Mistwalker Dubhna Rhiandra Patros Zifer Skip Flossberg Tinka Bondar Xanthi Oridium Amelie Dibou Deyna Broek Luci Yokosuka Sherainbow Merlin Tik Merlin Vivienne Darcy

Ballet Mistress
Ballet Coordinator
Set Scripting
Sound Engineer
Wardrobe Mistress
MC Coordinator
Ushers
Usher Coordinator
Theatre Build
Photographer
Machinamatographer
Roadies

Amelie Dibou, Vivienne Darcy
Vivienne Darcy
Tik Merlin
Willis Rossini
Blanche DuBois
Tinka Bondar
Alexa Sideways
Anaid Daviau
Espresso Saarinen
Leko Littlebird
Pia Klarr
Derrick Perl, Espresso Saarinen

Artistic Director

Inarra Saarinen

BALLET PIXELLE COMPANY Spring 2012

Alexa Sideways - Canada Aiyana Tripsa - Florida Amelie Dibou - Washington, DC Anaid Daviau - Second Life Asami Larsson - Japan Blanche DuBois - Colorado Calia Cachin - Hawai`i Cecilia Mistwalker - Florida Derrick Perl - Chicago Deyna Broek - California Dubhna Rhiandra - United Kingdom Espresso Saarinen - Japan Gershom Wycliffe - Michigan Hiroko Kimono - Japan Inarra Saarinen - Japan Leko Littlebird - Virginia Luci Yokosuka - Japan Patros Zifer - Canada RW Yheng - United Kingdom 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

Synopsis

Windows are openings that allow us to see a glimpse of a person's life; to be a bit of a voyeur for a moment in time.

Windows allow us to look into a person; their heart and soul, dreams and hopes, failures and disappointments.

In the first act we see a shadow of a mature woman, alone with only her thoughts of past love and lost dreams -- one of many in the city. In the second act, we see teenagers flirting and vying for attention and love -- one wins, one loses. And in the third, and old couple, who know each other too well, who try to rediscover their lost love. Do they?

ACT I - THE CITY

Jane lives in a apartment in the 1940's. She comes home exhausted and undresses while thinking. What does she have? She performs a sexy dance for an imaginary man in a chair. She tries on different looks and poses. Then she cries in the chair and cries to the heavens. Has she loved?

ACT II - THE DINER

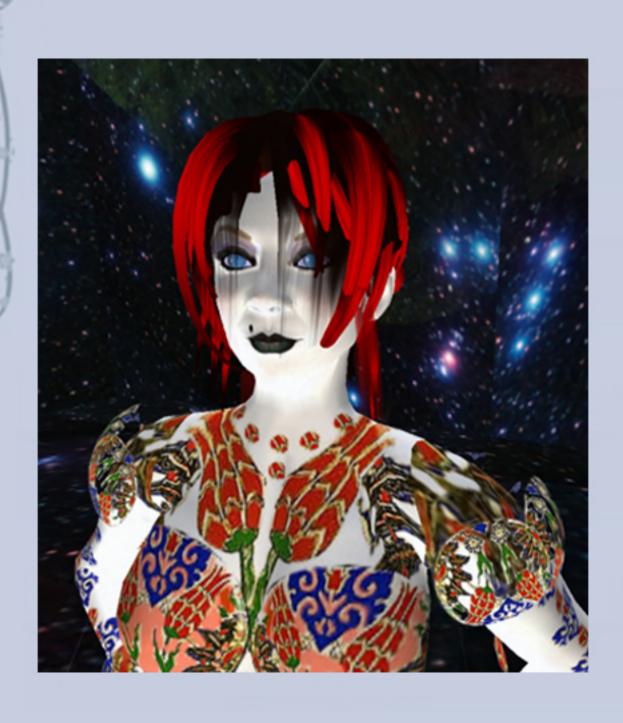
Two teenage girls and one teenage boy are dancing. The First Girl dances for the Boy, then the Second Girl dances. Each girl dances for the Boy, each girl vying for attention and love. Who is the victor in love?

ACT III -

Scene 1 - The Apartment

Scene 2 - The Park

An old couple are in their apartment together, but in different worlds. The Old Man is drawn to his wife, but the Old Woman knits and sees nothing. He remembers when they were young and in love. Do they rediscover their love?



Inarra Saarinen director-choreographer

Ms. Saarinen is the founder and artistic director of Ballet Pixelle. 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 investigating and developing an aesthetic and vocabulary of virtual dance -- whether it be by tiger, dragon, bird, or human.



Louis Volare

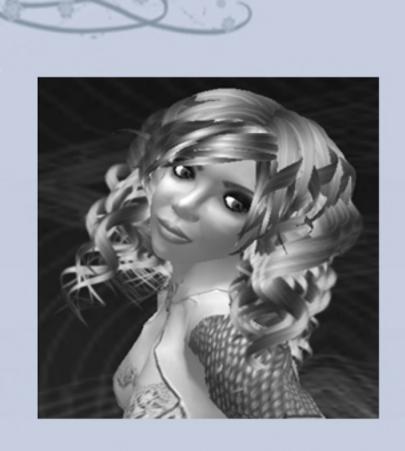
composer

Mr. Volare composed the original score for Windows. He has played classical music in First Life for Mikhail Baryshnikov and has written and produced music for film, video, and commercials. Mr. Volare currently performs live in Second Life and as Louis Landon in the New York tri-state area in clubs and concert venues.

http://louislandon.com/cd/index.php







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.



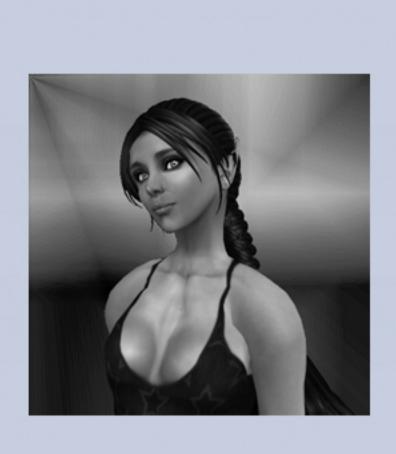
Cecilia Mistwalker dancer, graphic artist

Ms. Mistwalker has been fortunate to have danced ballet since she was 2 years old, thanks to her aunt who has both taught and danced. Cecilia feels very fortunate to have been selected to be with Ballet Pixelle. Dancing is Cecilia's passion, and Second Life is another way of expressing it, especially with so many talented people. Ms. Mistwalker is also a graphic artist, and designs art for the Company.



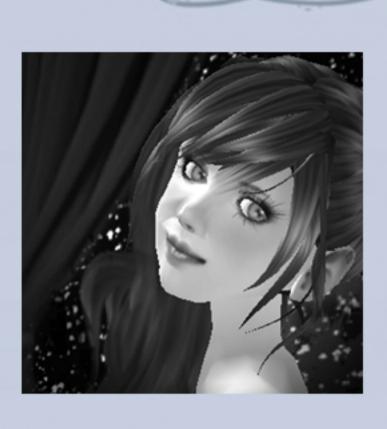
Deyna Broek dancer

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



Dubhna Rhiadra dancer

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 Yokosuka 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 badpenny 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 entered Second Life, knowing very little of this exceptional medium, was to express her soul. Due to the continuous travelling 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.



Skip Flossberg dancer, sound, web master

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



Tik Merlin

dancer, sound, set scripter

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 coordinator

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.









Alexa Sideways usher, mc

Ms. Sideways is an usher with Ballet Pixelle and is happy to assist our audience to fully enjoy our performances. The first Ballet Pixelle production she attended was *The Nut*. She was amazed by the fluidity of movement, the grace of the dancers and their interpretation of music. Designer of Absolutely Smitten, a line of women's clothing. She sometimes combines her loves of fashion and dance by creating outfits worn by our ushers. Alexa is proud to have supported the artistry of Ballet Pixelle since 2009.



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.



Blanche DuBois

costume mistress

Although her origins are shrouded in mystery, the Company has noticed that Ms. DuBois tends to rely upon the kindness of strangers.

What is known is that Blanche has been indentured to Inarra Saarinen, Ballet Pixelle founder and artistic director, as the result of a series of youthful indiscretions. It appears she will be chained to her sewing machine for many productions to come.



Calia Cachin

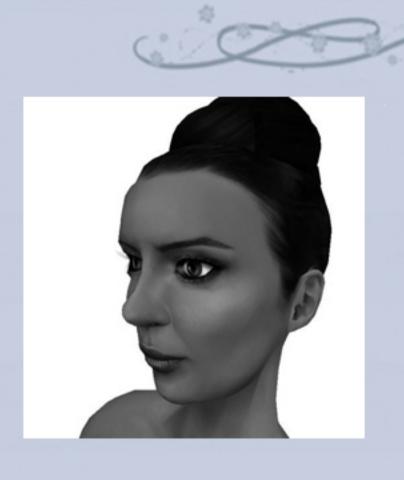
financial manager & stage manager

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.



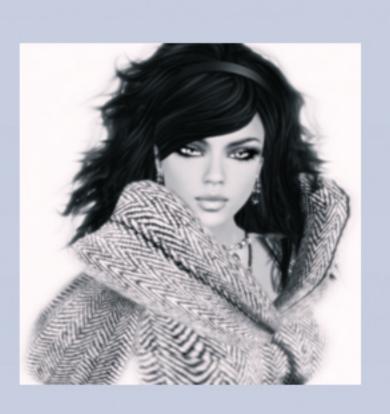
Gershom Wycliffe writer

Ms. Wycliffe has been in Second Life almost four years. A First Life fan of ballet, music, and language, she is watching her 75th Nutcracker this year!



Leko Littlebird set designer, photographer

In both Second Llife 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.



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.



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 two years of hard work, a ton of perseverance, and some fabulously talented and committed people we have brought six ballets to audiences in Second Life and two into First Life as well. Each ballet different from the others, yet they all begin in the same place.

How the Ballet Begins

Every ballet begins with an idea. Part of the beauty of writing the story specifically for Ballet Pixelle is that I am able to utilize the unique aspects of Second Life, the 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 and up, 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 transforms to his younger self and the lovers rise up 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 writing Ballet Pixelle movements with some different animation software programs and have created the majority of our animations over the course of the six ballets. I have used Avimator, Qavimator, Poser and others as a starting point in this process. I now have approximately 350 original animations. When I am choreographing a ballet, I put these animations into gestures, similar to musical phrases in ballet. This way the choreographer and 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 can use at clubs in Second Life. Club dances are simply loops of movement the avatar clicks onto and uses. In Ballet Pixelle rehearsals and performances each dancer runs his or her own animation as though dancing on a real stage. And no poseballs!

How the Music is Played

Music is always composed specifically for Ballet Pixelle's ballets. Sometimes it is played from a recording, sometimes it is played live from London or the U.S. and streamed into our Second Life theatre. In "Shuzenji" the composer wrote lyrics afterwards and sang and played live 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 jete's 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 other choreographers can only dream of. 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 not scripted!

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, size, and skin texture. For some characters we have designed and built our own specialized avatars, for others we have 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 builders and object animators 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

Our home theatre in Quat is where we first debuted. The theatre originally held 20, then 30, then 40 avatars, and 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 similar theatre to our home theatre hosted by IBM in the IBM sims. This theatre stretches across two sims — the audience of 80 is in one and the stage and dancers are in another. Besides reducing lag, and allowing for a larger audience, Security is enabled by simply putting different access restrictions on the stage sim.

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 a space in Second Life and work together live, as though we were really in the same time and place. This intercontinental collaboration would be impossible First Life. 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 Austria, Denmark, East Coast of the U.S., England, Hawai'i, mid-West U.S., Netherlands, Portugal, and the West Coast of the U.S. 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?

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 interconnect. 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!

Thanks

Our sincere thanks to the following designers for their remarkable generosity in helping to costume our dancers:

Antonia Marat of "Artilleri" for supplying us with an extensive selection of her designs. Artilleri mainstore!
:) retro and rockabilly fashions, artilleri (93, 123, 27)

DarkDharma Daguerre of DarkDharma Avatar Isle for the fabulous Aunty Magnolia and Uncle Norman avatars. DarkDharma Avatar Isle, Dacia (231, 32, 23)

Emedea Morgenstern of "Rag Dollz" for the costume worn by "Jane" in Act I.

http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Rag%20Doll z%20Island/134/70/23

To participate, receive announcements, etc., join the in-world Ballet Pixelle group.

Inarra Saarinen, Artistic Director

