



Artistic Director
Tara Ghassemieh

THE WHITE FEATHER

presented by
INTUITV ARTSHIP
and
SANAZ K. SOLTANI

Irvine Barclay Theater 3·22·23

Special Artistic Director's Note

For me, dancing transcends all human barriers.

It is the language of the soul we all have the
potential to speak, and the right to dance is not
for the taking.

To dance is our birthright.

To dance is to know joy.

To dance is to know love.

To dance is to be perfectly free.

Tara Ghassemieh

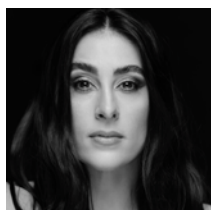


A Message from the Producers

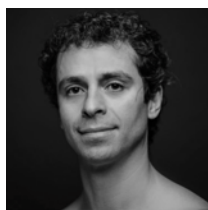
INTUITV ARTSHIP founders Tara Ghassemieh and Vitor Luiz, in partnership with Sanaz K. Soltani, dedicate this inaugural production of *The White Feather* to the current revolution in Iran and fight for "Woman, Life, Freedom". We welcome you this evening and thank you for joining us for an unforgettable experience showcasing art in its purest form. This Nowruz, we wish for a new dawn to be upon us and the citizens of Iran.

Tonight, you will witness the history of art and expression in Iran through the eyes of a child with a shattered dream and those who have fought heroically for basic human rights and the freedom of our land. We will continue the fight for freedom of expression on their behalf and we will be the voice of those who can no longer speak. We honor and salute them.

The White Feather is a Persian ballet tale that follows the inner child who yearns to express themselves freely. Through a child's eyes, we witness the evolution of Iran from its ancient roots to the present day. Act 1 sheds light on the history of Iran's National Ballet and its untimely final curtain and shares the personal story of the unsung heroes of Iran's first revolution and their untimely and brutal deaths. In Act 2, we behold a child's transformation into adulthood under an oppressive regime, and the fire within that sparked a nation's call to freedom, led by women. Follow us on this journey of inspiration and expression as we look forward to a new day for our Iranian brothers and sisters. We leave you with this quote from our Artistic Director, Tara Ghassemieh: "Art is the revolution!"



Tara Ghassemieh



Vitor Luiz



Sanaz K. Soltani



INTUITV ARTSHIP

proudly thanks the Farhang Foundation
for being our cultural sponsor
and for helping celebrate Iran's
rich art and culture with the world



The White Feather

A Persian Ballet Tale

WORLD PREMIERE

3.22.23

Choreography by Tara Ghassemieh and Vitor Luiz

Music by Shahrdad Rohani, with excerpts from

Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake recorded by The Royal Philharmonic,

Lighting design by Lonnie Alcaraz

Projection design & cinematography by John Crawford

Projection content direction by Tara Ghassemieh

Projection content edited by Leandro Glory Demasco Jr.

Costume design by Heather Lerma

Stage manager & production assistant 1, Lyla Falshman

Production assistant 2, Sammie Moore

Libretto/story by Sanaz K. Soltani &

Tara Ghassemieh

Characters in order of appearance

Young Tahereh Ayla Natalia Mohtashami

Mother Sharon Savoy

Scheherazade & King* Tara Ghassemieh & Vitor Luiz

The Director Eduard Sargsyan

Guards Brayden William Page, Dillion Zamora

The Dictator Chad Michael Hall

The General Vitor Luiz

Dancers, all people Paulette Andalon, Nissa Elise Bouranis, Laurence Gonzalez, Chasen Greenwood, Rachel Hutsell, Tara Mohtashami, Victoria Jenkins, Silken Kelly, Amy McMaster, Athena Skiathitis

**Storyteller on the same narrative in the Middle Eastern collection of tales known as "Scheherazade and the One Thousand and One Nights."*

Synopsis

There will be one intermission

Act I

Scene 1- Story Time and A Dream

The Mother prepares for bedtime and reads to Tahereh her favorite book, *Scheherazade and the One Thousand and One Nights*. Tahereh exclaims when she grows up, she has a dream of becoming a dancer. As she drifts off, upon dreaming, she envisions herself as the *Queen Scheherazade*, dancing, telling tales, and healing the King's heart from his madness and agony.

Scene 2- When We Danced

The following day, Tahereh's mom takes her to meet the Director of the Iranian National Ballet during a stage rehearsal of *Swan Lake*. Suddenly, they receive terrible news; an order has been issued to stop dancing immediately. The ballet company is shut down, and dancing becomes prohibited.

Scene 3- The General and An Untimely Death

Indignant with the brutality of the Dictator, the General decides to fight for freedom by attempting to overthrow the newly installed authoritarian regime to save the kingdom. While the freedom fighters plot the attack, the General opens his notebook and finds a hidden letter from Tahereh, his daughter. Meanwhile, the Dictator realizes he must remove all worthy opponents, signs execution orders and sends off his men for an ambush. The General is captured and faces off against the Dictator in an unfair battle.

Act II

Scene 1- 44 Years

As time passes, the newly implemented authoritarian regime oppresses its people. The Dictator's ominous presence spreads. The lack of freedom, expression, and joy continues to weigh heavily on everyone, particularly women. The current government treats its people like puppets who are visibly there but emotionally bare.

Scene 2- Inner Child

Now Tahereh is a grown woman. All of her childhood dreams have been ripped away and she has been forced to mature overnight. Yet, Tahereh digs deep into her heart and soul and is able to acknowledge and heal from her childhood trauma. It is time for her to encounter and reconcile with her inner child, who breathes life back into Tahereh. This empowers her, and she feels a sudden jolt of courage and duty.

Scene 3- Motherland

The Mother, now older and void of the glow she once had, looks upon herself as she examines the heavy toll of the years and loss. Her body is worn down, her face saddened, and she is far from the exuberant young woman she used to be. Her clothes are colorless. Her hair is now white. She must fight to find that woman she once was.

Scene 4- The Swan

Tahereh finds courage, opens her old treasure box for the first time, and finds unexpected, concealed surprises. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Tahereh burns down and emerges as her higher self. She is ready to face anything life has in store for her. She embraces her fate. She is well aware that her powerful movements may have consequences. However, not dancing and remaining quiet is no longer an option.

Scene Finale - *Azadi* (Freedom)

Tahereh is joined by an entire generation of other empowered women in their quest for freedom and humanity that is greater than themselves. They bravely dance in the streets, proudly protesting the oppression forced upon their Motherland. Moved by their pledge, the Dictator's guards and all people awaken and join in and support the women. But, the Dictator decides to strike back as he attempts to stop their dance for freedom...

Vitor Luiz

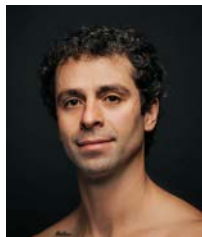
INTUITV ARTSHIP Co- Founder

INTUITVARTSHIP.org

Dance Artist | Choreographer |

Assistant Professor

vitor@intuitvartship.org



Vitor Luiz is a classical ballet dancer from Brazil. At 10 years old he began taking lessons at *Ballet Capell* in the city of Petrópolis, RJ with Catalonian choreographer Victor Navarro and ballet teacher Stella de Mello. In the following years, he completed his study in Rio de Janeiro with the most distinguished ballet teachers at Ballet Dalal Achcar, and joined a selective group who was receiving private lessons with mentor Pedro Kraszczuk. Vitor later received a scholarship for The Royal Ballet School in London.

He began his performing career as an artist with the Birmingham Royal Ballet under Sir David Bintley in the United Kingdom in 2000. Vitor returned to Brazil and joined the Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro Ballet (BTM), the nation's leading ballet company, where he rapidly ascended the ranks and performed leading principal roles. Eventually he was named *Primeiro Bailarino* (Principal Dancer) and became an international guest artist performing in various North and South American countries.

In 2009, he joined the world-renowned San Francisco Ballet as a Principal Dancer and performed lead roles with the company for ten years.

Mr. Luiz's productive professional career in Europe and the Americas allowed an exposure to a vast variety of repertory, dancing well over one hundred classical and contemporary ballets. He is frequently featured in galas and has performed as a guest artist worldwide, including with the English National Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, and others. He received many awards, including an Isadora Duncan Dance Award for Best Ensemble Performance in Possokhov's *Classical Symphony* in 2010.

Choreographer and Educator

In 2019, Vitor Luiz joined as an Assistant Professor the faculty at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) at the Claire Trevor School of the Arts Department of Dance, where he teaches classical ballet, repertory, and partnering. Vitor is enthusiastic about being an artist who is a practitioner-scholar, where he can combine his passions of teaching and dancing.

As an emerging choreographer he combines his classical and contemporary backgrounds influenced by his Brazilian roots. He created new works for UCI's faculty-led performance *Dance Visions* in 2021, 2022 and soon in 2023, for video and stage. Vitor choreographed or co-choreographed, and performed with his wife and partner Tara Ghassemieh, *Sheherazade* and various other collaborations for film and music videos. His most recent work for Atlanta Ballet II premiered on November 26th, 2022, a ballet called *Luna Emotions*.

Vitor Luiz is a member of CID - International Dance Council-Paris, an official partner of UNESCO.

Tara Ghassemieh

INTUITV Co-founder & CEO |

NTUITVARTSHIP.org

Principal Dancer | Choreographer | Educator | Actress

Director | Producer

tara@intuitvartship.org



Tara Ghassemieh is a Persian-American artist, dance advocate, educator and entrepreneur. Her work is informed by her Iranian roots and diverse experience in the performing and visual arts. She interlaces her talents in performing, creating dance for film, stage and teaching through INTUITV ARTSHIP, a production company and foundation she co-founded and heads.

Impelled by a belief in dance as a statement of freedom, a birthright, and an essential form of human expression, Ghassemieh tells stories that celebrate Iranian identity and inspire others to dance. The recent release of *Persian Swan* marked her film directorial debut. The short film introduces her upcoming feature film about the untold story of the Iranian National Ballet.

She is the Artistic Director of INTUITV ARTSHIP'S inaugural stage production, *The White Feather: a Persian ballet tale*.

Ghassemieh began her professional ballet career performing in American Ballet Theater's productions of *Le Corsaire*, *Sleeping Beauty* and other productions at the Metropolitan Opera House while studying at the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School of American Ballet. While at SABT, she trained with Franco DeVita, Susan Jaffe, Raymond Lukens, Martine Van Hamel, Jessica Lang, Clinton Luckett, Gelsey Kirkland and others.

Tara is a Principal Dancer with Golden State Ballet (GSB) in San Diego. She created a featured role in the world premiere of *The Gatekeepers* newly choreographed by Andrea Schermoly; performed *Black Swan Pas de Deux*, George Balanchine's *Valse Fantaisie*, and solos in *The Nutcracker*.

Before joining GBS, she performed principal roles in Festival Ballet Theater's *The Nutcracker*, *Le Corsaire*, *White Swan Pas de Deux*, and *The Firebird* as Princess. She co-choreographed a pas de deux, *Scheherazade*, with her partner on and off stage, Vitor Luiz, performing at the Barclay Theater and the Segerstrom Music Hall at the 30th Annual International Gala of the Stars. Tara also performed the roles of Mirtha in *Giselle* alongside Gillian Murphy and Cory Stearns: Lilac Fairy in *Sleeping Beauty* and Mercedes in *Don Quixote* alongside Marcelo Gomes.

Other featured performances and collaborations include lead dancer in Florence and the Machine music video *Spectrum*, directed by David LaChapelle; award-winning British composer Oliver Davis' film *Narcissus and Echo* for his debut album *SOLACE*, and several Off Broadway productions.

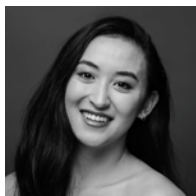
Her acting credits include *The Rescuers* by Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Michael King and lead ballet dancer in the Walt Disney film *Step Up* directed by Anne Fletcher. Tara also appeared on broadcast television series' *Law and Order SVU*, *CSI*, and *Gossip Girl*.

Ghassemieh has been a guest teacher and recurring renowned jury member in dance competitions and conventions in over 30 states over the past 10 years.

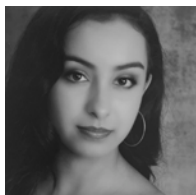
As a teen, Mrs. Ghassemieh launched Tata's Dancewear, a brand popular among dancers and sold by major dance supply chains and online retailers for eight years.

Tara Ghassemieh lives in Southern California with her husband and three children.

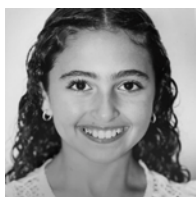
CAST



Amy McMaster is from San Diego and has been dancing since the age of three. Her ballet education includes Southern California Ballet, BalletMet, Marin Dance Theatre, Ballet West, and the University of Utah School of Dance. Amy is a two-time member of the Cecchetti USA team at the Cecchetti International Classical Ballet competition. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Ballet Performance from the University of Utah in 2019. Her professional career began with BalletNext in New York City in 2019, and then she returned home to San Diego to dance with California Ballet for the 2019/2020 season, before joining Golden State Ballet in 2021..



Athena Skiathitis began dancing as a student of Southland Ballet under Salwa Riskala, where she performed lead roles in productions such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Nutcracker*, *Coppélia*, and more. She's had the honor of attending some of the most prestigious intensive programs, such as San Francisco Ballet and Houston Ballet where she was awarded a full scholarship. Athena is proud to continue her dance education at UC Irvine, where she hopes to graduate with a fine arts degree next year.



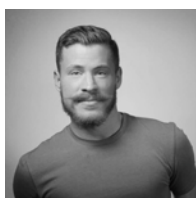
Ayla Natalia Mohtashami, is an 11 year old 5th grader, who has been dancing competitively at West Coast School of the Arts since she was only 2 1/2 years old. She has placed in the top 5 overall in some of the nation's most prestigious dance competitions such as: showstoppers, KAR, Nuvo, Mark of Excellence, and Hall of Fame. This is Ayla's first time acting while performing on stage. She is so excited to be part of this incredible production in support of dance for Iran. Her dream is to inspire girls and boys globally to freely express themselves through the art of dance.



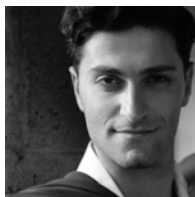
Brayden Page is a current student at the University of California, Irvine, pursuing a BFA in Dance. Since the age of five he has trained in multiple styles of dance including tap, hip hop, jazz, and ballet. He has studied with many teachers such as Diane Diefenderfer, Tong Wang, Vitor Luiz, Gennadi Saveliev, and Lawrence Rosenberg. He is currently a company member of The Anaheim Ballet. Brayden has been involved in many productions including *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and various musicals. Brayden has also performed at YAGP, SoCal Ballet, and the Katherine's Club at the Nixon Library.



Chad Michael Hall is choreographer, performer, director, filmmaker an Associate Professor of Dance at the University of California, Irvine. After earning an MFA in Choreography from Ohio State University in 2004, Hall moved to Los Angeles to tour internationally with Diavolo/Architecture in Motion. Since 2006, Hall has worked as an independent choreographer, receiving numerous residencies and commissions from universities, professional dance companies and dance institutes across the U.S. and internationally. Founder of MULTIPLEX DANCE in 2013 and creator of the West Hollywood Dance Festival in 2015, Hall's creative activity often manifests at the intersection of corporeality and virtuality through implementation of digital technology and mobile devices. His fascinations with the dancer/camera relationship, film language and editing techniques increasingly influence his creative work and inspire his trajectory as an artist and educator.

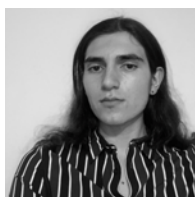


Chasen Greenwood is a Dancer, singer, actor and choreographer. He has worked with Lady Gaga's choreographer Richy Jackson, and Director Neal Brennan for an XBOX Super Bowl commercial. He has been featured in *Dancer Magazine* as "one to watch," following a nationwide tour as soloist with State Street Ballet. His choreography won "Best Young Choreographer" at Regional America Southwest. Chasen began his career performing with Leann Rimes, and in the musical *Casper* (national tour), after training on full scholarship with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Houston Ballet, and Ballet Austin. Chasen performed in the West Coast premiere and East Coast cast of *Newsies*. His most recent project was with National Geographic's director Roger Fishman.

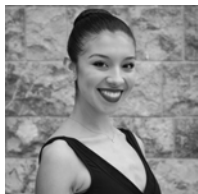


Eduard Sargsyan was born and raised in Yerevan, Armenia where he began dancing at age 7. Following his graduation from Yerevan State Choreographic College, he served in the Armenian special military dance ensemble “Sardarabad” as a solo performer for 2 years before beginning his 10 year career as a principal ballet dancer with the Armenian National Opera and Ballet Theatre. He then joined the Israel Ballet Company for 3 years. In 2014, Eduard fulfilled his lifelong dream of moving to the United States and began his ballroom dance career at the Fred Astaire Dance Studio. During this time he won several dance competitions in the Ballroom Theatre Arts and Cabaret divisions. In 2017 he became the CEO of LA

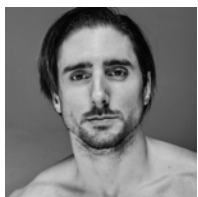
Imperial Dance Studios, and continues to teach and choreograph. As a freelance artist, Eduard performs with international dance companies such as Shushi Dance Ensemble NY, Ani Hamazgain Ensemble LA and West Coast Ballet Company LA. Eduard’s prolific career producing many dance events and participating in over 100 different productions has afforded him the opportunity to work with and study under many legendary ballet masters and choreographers such as Maya Plisetskaya, Vladimir Vasilev, Yuri Grigorievich, Vilen Galstyan, Ido Tadmor, Berta Yampolski, Itzik Galili, Dwight Roden, Andrei Tremaine, Michael Chapman, and Bruno Colins. One of the highlights of his career has been receiving the Excellence in Dance Arts Award from the City of Torrance and LA County in 2021. He is grateful to have found his passion in life and looks forward to teaching and inspiring the next generation.



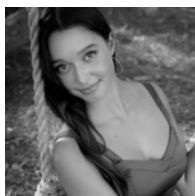
Dillon Zamora started dancing at 13 and trained in the Cecchetti ballet method. He performed at YAGP and California Dance Classics placing first in duets and qualifying for finals in ensembles. He is a BFA candidate at the University of California, Irvine for both Dance Choreography and Dance Performance. While at UCI, Dillon received several awards and performed in dance pieces by Lindsay Gilmour, Chad Michael Hall, Cyrian Reed, and was selected to perform in Lar Lubovitch’s piece *Cryptoglyph* originally premiered with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. Recently, Dillon performed at the inaugural Carmel Dance Festival, where he performed an original piece by Alex Ketley among others.



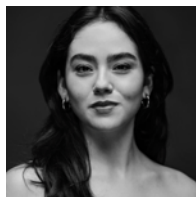
Isabella Finn began dancing at age four, trained in many dance genres, especially the Russian Vaganova method of ballet. Her mentors include Inland Pacific Ballet Academy’s Jill Voznick, Dmitri and Jennifer Kulev, Westlake School of Performing Arts with Viktor Kabaniev, and the University of California, Irvine with Vitor Luiz. Her training resumé also includes premiere ballet institutions such as the Royal Ballet School at White Lodge, San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theater, and Master Ballet Academy. She’s performed corp de ballet, soloist, and principal roles in productions like *The Nutcracker*, *Gisele*, *La Sylphide*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *La Bayadere* and others.



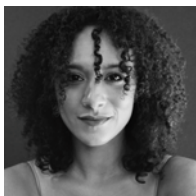
Laurence Gonzalez began ballet training at age 9 and graduated from the Cuban National Ballet School at 18. He began his professional career at Laura Alonso Ballet in Havana, Cuba where he danced in full length productions (i.e. *The Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Dracula*, *Swan Lake*, *Le Corsaire*), performing principal and corps de ballet roles. Various pas de deux include *Spartacus*, *Don Quixote*, *Diana and Acteon*, *White Swan (Swan Lake)*, and others. Laurence has performed as a lead dancer with the San Diego Opera (*Maria de Buenos Aires*, *Carmen*, *Great Scott*). Other international and domestic appearances include: *Rock the Ballet* by Sweetbird Productions, and guest performances with California Ballet.



Nissa Bouranis began her dance training at the age of 3 from her mom, who was also a dancer, in her home of Ventura County, California. She is currently studying at the Claire Trevor School of the Arts at the University of California, Irvine and is a recipient of the William J. Gillespie Foundation Scholarship. She has worked with artists such as Vitor Luiz and Tong Wang and has attended summer intensives such as Pacific Northwest Ballet, School of American Ballet, American Ballet Theater, and Houston Ballet.



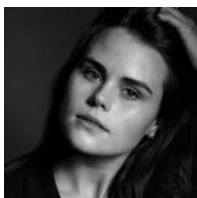
Born in San Diego California and raised in Tijuana BC, Mexico, **Paulette Andalon** began dancing at age 4 training at the Escuela de Danza Gloria Campobello under the direction of Margarita Robles. She continued training at Marycarmen Profesionales en Danza under the direction of Maria del Carmen Padron, and later at North County Academy of Dance and Lynch Dance Institute in California. Paulette attended training intensives at Cuban National Ballet, American Ballet Theater, Paris Marais Dance School, Ballet West, and Dutch National Ballet. In 2019 she joined the pre-professional program at Golden State Ballet Academy under the direction of Raul and Cindy Salamanca where she had the opportunity to participate as a Trainee in the Golden State Ballet Company performing in the *Nutcracker* and in *Valse Fantasie* set by John Clifford. Paulette was promoted to Apprentice.



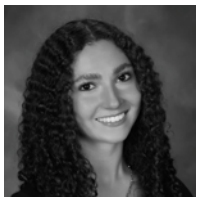
Born in Houston Texas, **Rachel Hutsell** joined New York City Ballet in 2015 where she danced featured roles choreographed by George Balanchine and Justin Peck. In 2018 she was a part of the documentary *Ballet Now*, Directed by Steven Cantor, and in 2019 she was the dance double for “Anita” in Steven Spielberg’s *West Side Story*. She has been highlighted in articles by Women’s Wear Daily and Dance Spirit, as well as the cover feature of *Pointe Magazine*’s June/July 2018 issue. In 2021 she began performing in Southern California, where she originated principal roles with Ballet Project Orange County.



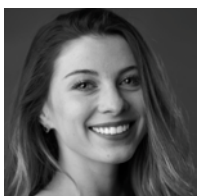
Sharon Savoy trained at the School of American Ballet. She danced with the New Jersey Ballet, Eglevsky Ballet, Princeton Ballet, and the New World Ballet. Her love of pas de deux led her to adagio/exhibition dance. She won her first World Championship at Madison Square Garden. She’s a 4X Exhibition Dance Champion, Blackpool, England—considered the Wimbledon of ballroom dance, a Star Search winner and a 7X U.S. Open Cabaret Champion. Ms. Savoy has performed at the Kennedy Center, the Royal Albert Hall, Sydney Olympics, and in Hollywood movies. In 2013, she won “Best global female dancer” at the Huading Awards in China. She is a published author—her books revolve around the obsession, passion, and price it takes to dance. She teaches at the ABT Gillespie School in Costa Mesa.



Silken Kelly began her training at the Academy of Colorado Ballet. She attended summer intensives at the Harid Conservatory and American Ballet Theatre. As a full-scholarship student, she attended the School of American Ballet, Houston Ballet, and Ballet West. She joined the Houston Ballet’s second company and later the main company, touring nationally and internationally. After relocating to New York in 2015, Silken joined Dance Theatre of Harlem for a season; performed with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Cleveland Ballet, and other project based companies. She also danced with Sweetbird Production’s *Rock the Ballet*, touring Europe. Silken founded Contingent Ballet, through which she created an original dance film and worked with Canon Camera. As an actress, her credits include supporting roles in a Hallmark movie and Hulu mini series.



Tara Mohtashami is a 17 year old senior at Mater Dei High School and has been dancing competitively at West Coast School of the Arts since she was 7 years old. While she has been trained in all forms of dance, she especially enjoys contemporary lyrical. Her future goals include attending a university which is still to be decided and double majoring in dance and psychology. Above all, Tara strives to fulfill the highest expression of herself each and every day.



Victoria Jenkins is a San Diego native who began ballet at the age of 5. She studied at California Ballet until she was 15 then received a scholarship to attend the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School in Winnipeg, Canada. She joined the Royal Winnipeg Ballet company at 18 and enjoyed working with many different choreographers and touring the United States and Canada. She relocated back to San Diego at 20 and joined the California Ballet and later Golden State Ballet. Notable roles include Nikiya *La Bayadere*, *White Swan Pas de Deux*, *Kitri Don Quixote*, *Aurora Sleeping Beauty*, and Sugarplum Grand pas from the *Nutcracker*.

INTUITV ARTSHIP

Tara Ghassemieh, Co-founder & CEO

Vitor Luiz, Co-founder

The *INTUITV ARTSHIP* company and foundation's mission is to create an art center which will proudly encompass a full-scale dance program with live theatre and screen productions exploring the heart and soul of the human experience through innovative and inspiring storytelling. This collaborative artistic space is intended to enrich and elevate the community with opportunities to create and view performing art. Our focus is on serving local and international communities and we endeavor to offer numerous outreach opportunities, endless forms of art programs and a true safe haven to explore the arts in all its forms.

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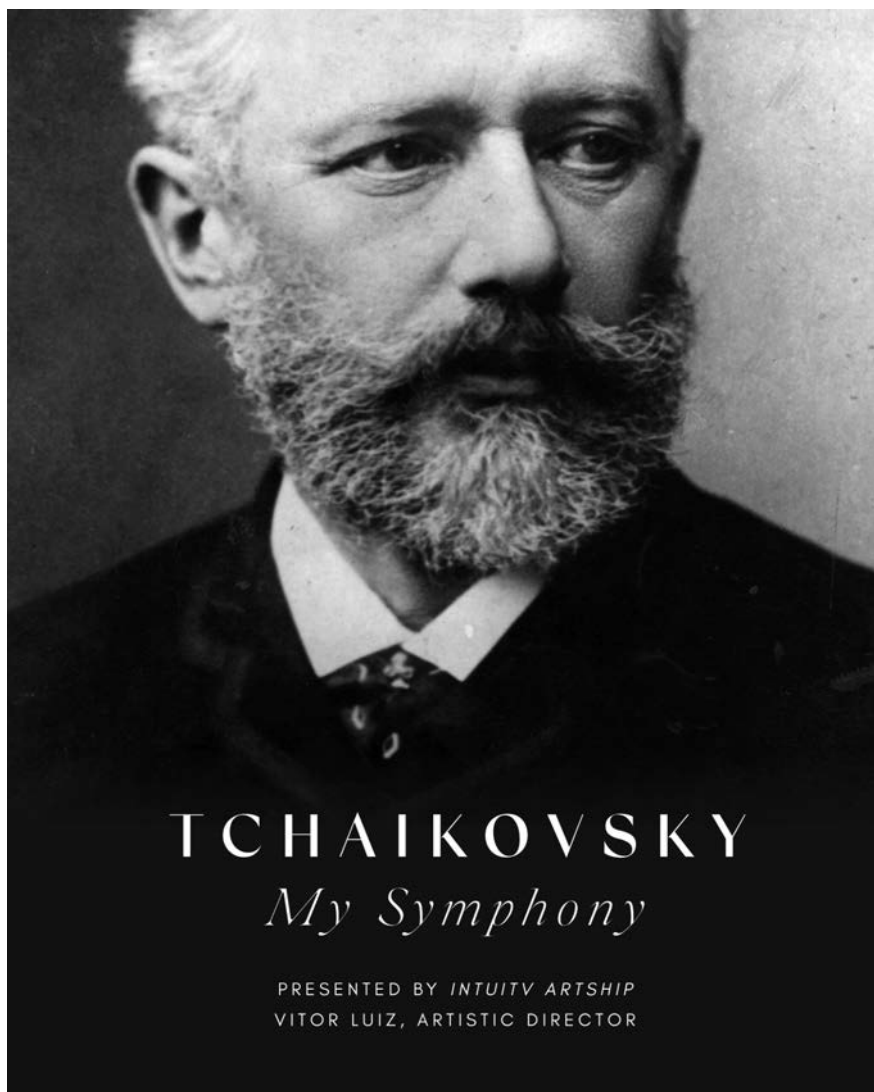
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My Symphony

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VITOR LUIZ, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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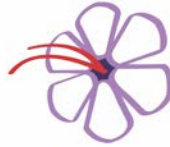
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Sima Soltani D.P.M.

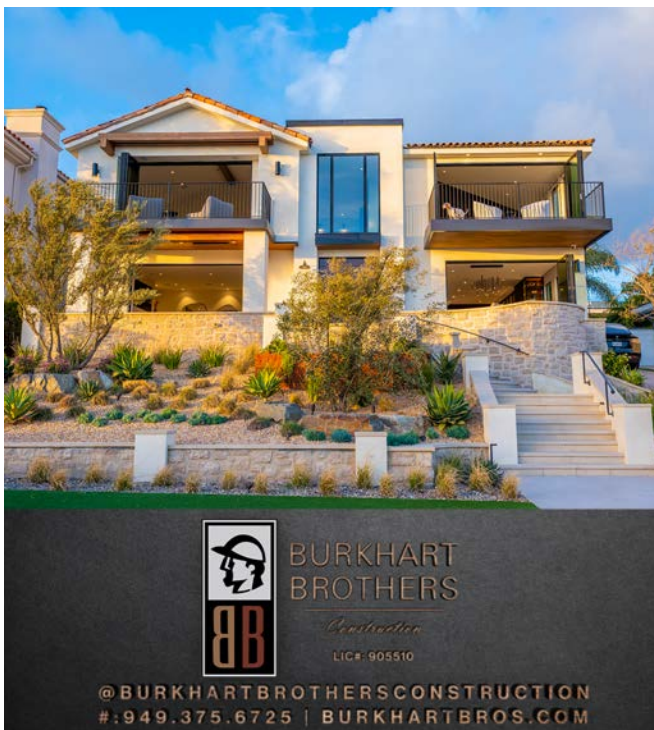
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Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Raul Salamanca
Advantage Colorgraphics (generous print of programs)
Leila Esfandiari (Haft-Sin and reception set up)
Monika Lazar
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Rakhshan & Dahlia Foroutan for the TRIBUTE SONG -The White Feather

with **vocals** by Sarah Khatami,
Rakhshan and Dahlia Foroutan, and Simon Sadri
and **lyrics** by Sanaz K. Soltani and Dahlia Foroutan
Tribute Video by: Sanaz K. Soltani and Leandro Glory Demasco Jr.



رحمت خلیفہ سولتانی
رحمت خلیفہ سولتانی

Colonel Rahmat Khalifeh-Soltani
Circa 1961