

# BALLET SAN JOSE

S I L I C O N V A L L E Y

## PRESS RELEASE

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Four Bay Area Choreographers Receive Prestigious Fellowships Awards  
Three Glass & Ceramic Artists Also Recognized

San Jose, CA, March 1, 2006 – Dennis Nahat, the Founding/Artistic Director of Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley heads the list of four influential, Bay Area choreographers to receive Arts Council Silicon Valley's Artist Fellowship Grants for contributions to the field of Performing Arts (Choreography). Three well-known glass and ceramics artists were also recognized in the field of Visual Arts (Ceramics & Glass). Arts Council Silicon Valley annually awards Artist Fellowships in rotating categories to recognize local professional working artists and to enable them to continue to pursue their creative work.

All seven artists were selected by a notable panel of experienced judges based upon artistic quality and originality of work, community impact during the past three years within Santa Clara County and professional development by demonstrating continued exploration of the art form by the applicant.

Arts Council Silicon Valley is the only funding agency south of San Francisco that awards artists unrestricted grants for career accomplishments. On March 16th, 2006 from 6-8PM the Arts Council, in partnership with the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara, will honor these seven recipients at an exclusive evening reception at the Triton Museum. This date will mark the beginning of a two month exhibit for all visual arts recipients and will provide an opportunity for the choreographers to present some insight into their craft. A total of \$24,000 was awarded to the artists below.

#### Artist Fellows:

##### Performing Artists (Choreography)

Dennis Nahat, San Jose

Maria De La Rosa, Santa Clara

Gary Masters, San Jose

Bih Tau Sung, Sunnyvale

##### Visual Artists (Ceramics & Glass)

Susan Longini, Fremont

Una Mjurka, San Jose

Stan Welsh, Santa Cruz

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"I am honored to be a part of an organization that recognizes individual artists for career accomplishments," said Joyce Iwasaki, President, Board of Trustees, Arts Council Silicon Valley. "These seven individuals are all well-deserving of the Fellowship Awards and we are privileged to be able to assist them in their creative pursuit."

#### About Arts Council Silicon Valley

Now in its 24th year, Arts Council Silicon Valley is an independent, nonprofit arts agency dedicated to providing funding and advocacy support, and fundraising and marketing services to the region's arts organizations and artists. As the official state/local partner with the California Arts Council and the County of Santa Clara, Arts Council Silicon Valley is now the largest nonprofit arts council in the state. Over the past 13 years, the Arts Council has distributed nearly \$8 million to local arts and cultural organizations, individual artists, schools, and community groups.

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#### Choreographer Artist Bios

Dennis Nahat, San Jose – Dennis Nahat is the Founding/Artistic Director of Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley (formerly San Jose/Cleveland Ballet) for the past 35 years. After majoring in Dance and minoring in Music on full scholarship at Julliard, Dennis danced professionally for the Joffrey Ballet and later as principal dancer for the American Ballet Theatre working with choreographers such as Agnes de Mille and George Ballanchine. His extensive career as a choreographer includes major works for American Ballet Theatre, Atlanta Ballet, The Royal Swedish Ballet, and the London Festival Ballet and Ballet Nuevo Mundo de Caracas, as well as choreographing several Broadway shows including the Tony award-winning musical version of Two Gentlemen of Verona and choreographing ballet sequences in the motion picture The Turning Point. In addition, Dennis has choreographed for the NY Shakespeare Festival, San Francisco Opera, NY City Opera, Lenox Arts Center, and the Seattle Opera.

Quote: "I am proud to receive such an honor and acknowledgement of my work. This confirmation inspires me to continue making innovative and creative ballets. This grant will be applied toward future ballets that I am creating for the next couple of seasons at Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley. In receiving funds to support my choreographic work, I can incorporate the elements I need to make a premium ballet. " – Dennis Nahat

Maria de la Rosa, Santa Clara – Maria de la Rosa earned both her BA and MA from Stanford University. For 20 years she has devoted her talents to the performance and production of dance in the Folklorico traditions of Mexico. Her works have been performed at the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival in 1999 and 2002. Featured in 2002 in the San Jose Mercury News as "Champion of the Arts", Maria has taught Folklorico dance extensively in San Jose regional schools, has served as dance consultant for San Jose Ballet, is Programs Director for Mexican Heritage Plaza, and, as Assistant Director of Los Lupenos, continues to expand folk traditions with contemporary dance forms.

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Quote: "I was completely overwhelmed when the discussion was finished. This award is a tremendous validation for me, my art form and my fellow dancers — especially considering the incredible artists with whom I shared this process of application and review of our portfolios. I was proud to be in the same pool with these artists. After 15 years of struggling for resources for my art form, it's hard not to feel second-class and under appreciated as an artist. I feel the award is a stamp of "first class art" for our dance genre and a positive statement about the work that Arts Council Silicon Valley does and the depth of knowledge of the panelists who see artistic quality and community impact in an art form that is not based in western traditions of ballet and modern dance."

"I definitely plan on more field research opportunities as well as continued learning and collaboration with other artists (both in my art form and in others) to inform and round out my current work in my dance form. This will allow me to expand the horizons of my artwork—test its limits of creativity and challenge it (and me) to retain its integrity as a traditional art while creating new works." – Maria De La Rosa

Gary Masters, San Jose – Gary Masters received his BFA from Julliard. He has received two Choreography Fellowships from National Endowment for the Arts. In 1994, Gary came to San Jose as Artistic and Administrative Director of the Limon West Dance Project and has since become an associate professor and Artistic Director of the Dance Theater at San Jose State University. His extensive career includes choreography of works with professional companies and universities throughout the country, including North Carolina School for the Arts, Harvard Summer Dance Center, Dance Kaleidoscope (Indiana), and Path Dance Company (Baltimore). In addition to his work at San Jose State, Gary has contributed to the South Bay community as choreographer and dance coach for Opera San Jose, choreographed extensively for Limon West as is a founder and co-artistic director of sjDANCEco.

Quote: "I was honored to be one of the recipients of this year's grant and especially delighted to be in the company with three incredible artists who have contributed so much to the cultural fabric of our region. They have made this community a more vibrant and wonderful place to live and work for us all. This award will allow me time to work on ideas for a new creation to be premiered on sjDANCEco's October 2006 program." – Gary Masters

Bih Tau Sung, Sunnyvale – Bih Tau Sung is originally from Taiwan where she received her degree in Dance and Music from the University of Chinese Culture and founded the Cloud Gate Dance Theater, Taiwan's first professional modern dance company. She earned her MA in Theatre/Arts, Dance Emphasis, from San Jose State University.

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As founder and artistic director of Dancing Sun Foundation, San Jose, since 1999, Bih Tau has taught over 500 children and adults. Her breadth of choreography includes reconstructions of classical ballets, original works based on Chinese and Taiwanese folk traditions and innovative contemporary works of modern dance and ballet coupled with traditional Asian sensibilities. She continues to contribute her talents to Cloud Gate Dance Theater, presenting extensively throughout Asia and Europe as well as the United States and Canada.

Quote: "It's an honor to be selected among with the other great choreographers. It's a great gift to know this will encourage me to continue my dance creations. In this community and in these times, this grant of support is invaluable and will allow Dancing Sun Foundation to continue to pursue greater excellence our annual productions. It will help our tight budget for fiscal year 2005-06 cycle and our upcoming production: "Solace: My Dear, Fear Not For You Are Home Now," on April 22nd." – Bih Tau Sung

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