

Pia Russo – Professional CV

Ballet Mistress · Classical Ballet Pedagogue · School Principal

Professional contacts

Website: www.piarusso.com

Video portfolio: vimeo.com/piarusso

Profile

Trained as a dancer in Reggio Emilia under **Liliana Cosi and Marinel Stefanescu**, and as a teacher of **Classical–Academic Technique** with **Anna Maria Prina** at the Ballet School of **Teatro alla Scala in Milan**, I have over forty years of professional experience across **Italy, Europe, the United States, Asia and South Africa**.

I first worked as a professional dancer and later as a **ballet mistress**, teacher and director of training programmes, combining the rigour of classical ballet tradition with a strong pedagogical and organisational focus.

I have served as **School Principal** of the **Tulsa Ballet Center for Dance Education** (USA), taught at the **Ballet School of Teatro di San Carlo** in Naples, and collaborated as ballet mistress with several Italian opera houses and international institutions.

Alongside daily studio and stage work, I pursue **pedagogical research** focused in particular on the training of young dancers in early adolescence, which led to the essay *La danza che forma. Il corpo pensante del preadolescente* (“Dance that Shapes. The Thinking Body of the Pre-Adolescent”, forthcoming).

Leadership and coordination roles

Since 2022 – Founder and Director, “Percorso Danza” – Rome / Bracciano (Italy)

Pre-professional training programme for small selected groups of talented students, designed to guide young dancers towards entry into international academies and companies.

- Individual planning of each student’s pathway, in dialogue with families and teachers.
- Integrated focus on technique, repertoire, mental preparation and bodily awareness.
- Recent results include admissions to the **Postgraduate Course of Teatro dell’Opera di Roma**, the **5th year of Accademia Teatro alla Scala**, and the engagement of a former student in the corps de ballet of **Joburg Ballet** (South Africa).

2017–2019 – Teacher, Ballet School of Teatro di San Carlo – Naples (Italy)

- Teaching of classical–academic technique, pointe work and repertoire in 1st, 3rd and 4th year classes.
- Teaching of character dance in intermediate and advanced levels.
- Staging of repertoire excerpts for end-of-year performances.

- Direct knowledge of the Ballet School's organisation and of the daily interaction between the Ballet Company and the training activity.

2013–2016 – School Principal, Tulsa Ballet Center for Dance Education – Tulsa (Oklahoma, USA)

- Artistic, pedagogical and organisational direction of a school with about **330 students, 12 teachers** and **6 fully equipped studios**.
- Curriculum design for all levels (pre-professional and recreational) and definition of technical and artistic standards.
- Timetabling, organisation of auditions and **placement** pathways for students.
- Coordination of school performances and productions in collaboration with the main company (including titles such as *The Nutcracker* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).
- Structured work with families, administrative offices and the Marketing/Development department, with direct experience of **fundraising** and relationships with donors.
- Several students trained during this period later joined companies such as **Tulsa Ballet, Sarasota Ballet, Atlanta Ballet and BalletMet**, and took part in productions such as *Romeo and Juliet* at the Arena di Verona (with Sergei Polunin as Tybalt).

1996–2002 – Director of Professional Training Courses and Co-funded Projects – Fabula Saltica Company / Teatro Sociale di Rovigo – Veneto Region (Italy)

- Design and management of **professional advanced training courses** for dancers, co-funded by regional public funds.
- Drafting of training projects, administrative management and reporting.
- Coordination of teaching staff and tutoring of dancers entering the professional field.
- These programmes facilitated the professional placement of several dancers in Italian companies and opera houses.

Ballet Mistress and Guest Teacher

(selected engagements)

Work as **ballet mistress**, teaching daily company class, leading rehearsals and staging productions, with:

- **Fondazione Arena di Verona** – Ballet Mistress (2004–2011)
- **Teatro dell'Opera di Roma** – Ballet Mistress (2010)
- **Fondazione Teatro Massimo di Palermo** – Ballet Mistress (2009)
- **Balletto di Roma** – Collaborations with the Company (2009) and with School + Company (2020–2022)
- **Balletto del Sud** – Ballet Mistress (2005–2012)
- **Balletto di Milano** – Ballet Mistress (2007)
- **Fabula Saltica – Teatro Sociale di Rovigo** – Ballet Mistress (2002–2004)

These experiences strengthened a unified vision of **stage practice**, transmission of **repertoire**, and **academic training**.

International teaching and workshops

(selected)

- **Conservatorio Profesional de Danza de Burgos** (Spain, 2016/17) – classical technique and repertoire.
 - **Balet Konservatorij Maribor** (Slovenia, 2023) – workshop on classical–academic progressions.
 - **Valencia Endanza Summer Intensive** (Spain, 2019 and 2021) – classical technique and repertoire.
 - **Hartt School – University of Hartford** (USA, 2017) – workshops in classical technique and repertoire.
 - **Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima Winter Intensives** (Japan, 2018–2019) – classical technique and repertoire.
 - **Shenzhen – Summer programmes in China** (2023) – work alongside teachers of the **China National Ballet Academy**.
 - **Joburg Ballet** (South Africa, 2024) – guest ballet mistress for Company and Academy.
-

Projects and pedagogical research

“Hub Danza” Project – Three-year model for a public professional ballet school – Author
Model of organisation for a public ballet school, developed from experience in academies, schools and companies in Italy and abroad.

- Structure of courses in **introductory biennium, intermediate four-year cycle, and three-year advanced professional cycle** (7th, 8th year + postgraduate/perfezionamento).
- Merit-based tuition-free access to the upper levels.
- Economic model combining own income (tuition fees, summer courses, teacher training) with targeted public co-funding, without creating new permanent structural costs for the institution adopting it.
- Three-year roadmap designed to bring the school into a position to apply for **AFAM**-type accreditation and to support international partnerships.

Essay “La danza che forma. Il corpo pensante del preadolescente” – Author (2025, forthcoming)

Essay devoted to the training of dancers in early adolescence, focusing on the relationship between **body, mind and identity**.

It brings together classical academic tradition with contemporary studies in **neuroscience** and **embodiment**.

Publication is planned in multiple languages (Italian, English, Spanish, Chinese).

Education

- **Diploma in Classical–Academic Technique Teaching**
Ballet School of **Teatro alla Scala**, Milan
- **Professional Dancer Diploma – Cosi–Stefanescu School**, Reggio Emilia
- **Classical High School Diploma – Liceo E.Q. Visconti**, Rome

- University studies in **Performing Arts (DAMS)**
University of Bologna (programme not completed)
-

Skills

Languages

- Italian – native speaker
- English – professional working proficiency (several years of work in the United States and in international contexts)

Organisational and managerial skills

- Planning of multi-year training programmes.
- Management of teaching teams and support staff.
- Experience in reporting and managing co-funded projects and in collaboration with administrative offices.

Communication skills

- Ongoing communication with families, students, artistic and administrative staff.
- Public presentation of projects, training plans and artistic activities.

Digital skills

- Use of digital tools for teaching, communication, archiving and sharing of videos, documents and work plans.