

# Meet The Dance Faculty



## Gillian Bourke

Gillian is a company dancer with StrikeTime Dance and has choreographed for Hope College, RMHS Orchestis and Vibe Dance Company. She holds a degree in dance education and kinesiology from Hope College. She has been studying dance since the age of 3 and excited to share her passion with dancers of all ages.



## Amy Braheny

Amy has her Bachelors degree in Dance from the University of Iowa. She has studied with the Berkshire Ballet Theatre, The Rodriguez Dance Theatre and more. She has choreographed for annual company performances, community education workshops, recitals and has instructed master classes in ballet, pointe and modern dance!



## Susan Cohen

Susan has been teaching dance for over 10 years in the Chicagoland area. She has taught ballet, pre-pointe and pointe classes, along with creative movement and preschool dance curriculum. Susan's choreography has been seen on many competition stages throughout the years, and she is thrilled to be sharing her experience and love with the dance families at the Expressions Performing Arts Academy!



## Unna Fernandez

Unna started dancing at the age of 3 in the Philippines. She has studied ballet, jazz, hip hop, hula and ballroom. Unna has performed professionally with the hip hop dance team Chicago Onyx Dance Alliance (CODA). She continues to perform professionally in the Chicagoland area and is excited to work with the dancers at our Expressions Performing Arts Academy!



## Jennifer Hicks

Miss Jennie has trained at Dorothy's Dancing Unlimited, Dena Marie's studio, Lou Conte Dance Company, and Hubbard Street Dance Company. She has been a member of our dance faculty since 2005 and served as a director of our award-winning Vibe Dance Company for over 8 years, where her choreography has received numerous awards.



## Kirsten Markham

Kirsten has been teaching dance for over 25 years in the Chicagoland area. She received her dance training through Ruth Page and Gus Giordano in addition to receiving her degree in Early Childhood Education. She choreographed a dance team for 10 years with North Shore Dance and Drama and was a company member of the Barefoot Hawaiian dance troupe.



## Carla Ricchio

Carla has been with the Expressions Performing Arts Academy dance studio since 2002. She has over 30 years of dance training and performing. Carla attended several master classes with Randy Duncan and attended dance classes at Gus Giordano's for years. Carla enforces a fun, positive and serious learning experience for her dancers.



## Alyssa Sugisawa

Alyssa has studied dance for over 20 years, including favorite genres of jazz, lyrical, and ballet. She has been teaching professionally for over 14 years and joined our Expressions Performing Arts Academy in 2012. She began working with Vibe Dance Company in 2014 and has won many awards, including "Excellence in Choreography" from the Power of Dance competition. Alyssa received her BFA from North Central College and strives to build her knowledge of dance.



## Heather Tomaino

Heather has studied many forms of dance since childhood. She received her degree at Texas Christian University, where she continued her education in dance. Heather has taught dance at many studios in the Chicagoland area, including dance schools in Itasca, Schaumburg and Palatine. She continues her dance education, attending numerous master classes in multiple techniques and enjoys sharing her dance knowledge.



## Ashley Valencia

Ashley grew up dancing in Centennial, CO at Centerstage Starz Theatre and Dance Studio. She received her BFA in Dance from Stephens College in Columbia, MO, studying ballet, modern, jazz, tap, flamenco, Russian character, West African and choreography. Ashley has danced with Damsels, Matter Dance Company, Chicago Verge Dance Theatre and studied with Chicago Tap Theatre



## Lexie Van Skyock

Alexia has danced since age 6 through Jenny's Dance Centre and received her Associate of Arts from the College of Lake County. She holds a B.A. in Dance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, studying modern, jazz, hip hop, improvisation and collaboration, ballet, and Umfundalai. Alexia has evolved this passion into her love of teaching, and enjoys sharing her excitement for movement in both dance and fitness environments.



## Maggie Walsh

Maggie was a member of the Bonnie Lindholm Dance Company where she studied and performed throughout the Chicagoland area. She has choreographed and performed with several school dance teams and currently directs and choreographs the dance program at the school she grew up in. Maggie is thrilled to have the opportunity to share her love of dance with the next generation!