

Sara Miot

Your ballet family remembers...





Sara Miot, a tribute from those who cherish your memory

It is with love and gratitude that I present this memory book to Sara's family. This project has reconnected me with so many people from the past who shared my relationship with Sara, allowing me to relive some wonderful memories. I first met Sara as a student/dancer when I took her class in her beautiful Henry Street studio, and I thank Anne for bringing Sara into the SBC/UBC family back in the late 1980's. Sara became a colleague and friend, and in many ways, she was like a sister to me. She was gentle but tough, patient yet demanding. She had insight, kindness, strength and gave inspiration. It was a privilege and honor to know her, work with her and share in the brilliance of her passion and creativity. Her memory lives on in all of us, and that is her greatest gift.

Scarlett

Sara enriched and was a part of so many lives of those around her by sharing her talent, artistry, kindness and good spirit. How many weekends and nights was she with us side by side creating, leading, coaching, teaching and building a family of friends much like a small community. I have so many memories over the more than 30 years of knowing Sara but a few stand out for me. I recall a gathering over 25 years ago, when we first began to create A Christmas Carol. Peter Hall, Zack, Sara, Scarlett and I were downstairs in our old house with a tape recorder, not so good microphone and a book Sara had chosen from which to extract the various passages we have used on stage over the years. How did she choose the words out of that book??

I recall how proud she was during the many radio and newspaper interviews we drew her into over the years to expound on her creations, describing the project at hand while weaving in her own life's story on and off the stage. She gave so much for the good of all. Her spirit will live on.

Sonny

I'll never forget Sara; I knew her as my massage therapist for many years first. She would put me back together every week after wrecking my body being a Dental Hygienist. Then I became one of the costume crew for "A Christmas Carol". After that we developed a comfortable relationship creating more costumes for ACC and Festival. I learned so much from Sara, lessons I'll carry with me for a lifetime.

Till we meet again, Jane Hansell

I first met Sara in the 1980's I think. I was always impressed with her vision and talent. She was one of the easiest people to work with and design for. Her attitude was always "Let's try it and see" whenever I proposed design choices or changes to Christmas Carol. One time during Christmas Carol, I had injured my hand and had gone to my doctor a few times only to be told there's nothing wrong. I happened to mention it in passing. She took one look and manipulated my hand while sitting in the dressing room discussing the show. Within seconds the pain and swelling was gone.

Sara never failed to support any of the dancers or crew and was always gracious and courteous to everyone. I will miss her terribly.

Zack

For well over 20 years, it has been my great pleasure to have known and worked with Sara as a performer in her beloved adaptation of A Christmas Carol. Sara had a special talent for working with non-professional actors. With her smile, patience and infinite wisdom as a professional dancer/performer, she taught us to be our best. When I was offered the role of Mr. Scrooge, Sara gave me the courage to give it a try. It proved to be a revelation for me as she taught me to go deep inside myself to a place I never knew I had. Thank you, Sara, for your trust in me and teaching me to trust myself. You may be physically gone from us now but you most certainly will live on in our hearts and minds. And every time there is a new production of A Christmas Carol, we all know you'll be sitting out there in the center of the theater taking notes.

RIP.

Your friend,

Bob Gomez

I admired Sara and became very fond of her during the years that my daughter Julie was a student at SBC and I was President of the Board of UBC. Sara had a very kind, patient demeanor. She was an excellent teacher and role model for her students. She expected and taught them to strive for the very best that they could give and she got just that. Sara will be sorely missed by all the lives she has touched over the years.

Peggy Connors

I first remember seeing Sara in her role as founder and producer back in the days when the still running Choreographers' Concert was The Woodstock Choreographers' Concert, and my daughter, Syelle, was a young dancer performing in someone's new, cutting edge piece.

I no longer remember who that choreographer was, but I have been blessed since then, to have gotten to know, work with, study from, meditate with, get hands-on healing from, and dance on stage with, the renowned and amazing Sara Miot!

Both my daughters went on to study with Sara at the Saugerties Ballet Center, performing in the annual Spring Dance Festival, and even more notably in A Christmas Carol, in which I too, was fortunate enough to have landed a couple of roles over the years. In fact, I remember clearly being part of the creation of the very first ever Street Scene, the first year A Christmas Carol was presented, not even yet completed, but already full of the magnificent promise it would later fulfill and ultimately surpass.

As an instructor during many of the same years as Sara at SBC, one of my greatest joys has been watching my very young students move up the ranks, year after year in the roles of A Christmas Carol; from Running Girls to Cratchet kids, to Sprites, Ghosts, and everything in-between. What joy and artistic opportunity this annual production has provided the dancers at SBC! And what a special, heart-warming magic, always and unfailingly, has the show bestowed on its spellbound audiences throughout the years. How ironic it is to be thinking of the show as something in the past, at the same moment we must do so also, of Sara herself. Surely we will see it performed again, and many times. Yet for so many of us it is such a part of Sara, it almost makes sense that the Spirit of all the 'Christmas Carols Past' would quietly go missing at the Christmas of her passing, in order to accompany her somehow, at least on part of her journey, to return when the time is right, with her blessings eternally bestowed on all future performers and audiences.

There is one more special memory of Sara that lives in my heart. It is of the year she decided to return to performing herself, and she invited me and our dear friend, the brilliant Julie Manna, to dance with her! We performed at The Colony Café in Woodstock, each of us given by our choreographer, (Sara), moments of personal movement expression, before swirling back again and again into our trio of three wild women with flashing eyes – scarves – drama – dancing for Woodstock, for ourselves, and for each other in that wordless profundity that is dance. Sara, thank you. Thank you so very much.

Celeste Graves (late 1980's - 2019)

She was a wonderful teacher and director/choreographer. I loved her classes and learned so much. I will always remember her, one of the bright lights in my life.

Edna Blanchfield (late 80's - 2012)

Having Sara choreograph for you was exciting and empowering. She could always see your greatest strengths and unique beauty, and bring it to the stage. She was a true artist and a loving healer, and her presence in my life as a teenager was nothing short of a blessing.

Morgan Early 90's

Sara was a very significant person in my life and the reason I chose the career path I did. Through ballet, gardening and massage therapy she taught me how to truly connect with my body and soul, changing the course of my life. I will never forget her smile, her touch and her love. She will live on through all of us, as she gave a part of herself to all who were lucky enough to be in her life.

Rebecca Plant-Heinlien (early 1990's-early 2000's)

I first met Sara around 1990 when she came to work with the Saugerties Ballet Center. Through the years, I was involved in many of her Festival pieces as well as "A Christmas Carol". I'll always be grateful for everything Sara taught me, her positive attitude, and the depth of experience and knowledge that she offered everyone. She was a real professional...how blessed we all were to have her with us.

One of my fondest memories of Sara involved her cats. I used to go to her house for massage therapy appointments, and while I waited, one of her cats would immediately jump into my lap and go to sleep. I guess Sara assumed I would be annoyed, but it was actually the opposite - I loved animals and didn't have any of my own, so I was happy to share my lap with her cat. Anyway, Sara thought it was the funniest thing, and we always had a good chuckle over her friendly little kitty.

Holly Gross (1990-2015)

We first met Sara when we, Liz, Laura & Sarah Bulka started at Saugerties Ballet Center in 1992. Her Thursday night dance class was something we earned our way into as we each advanced through the ballet levels. Sara was always kind, cheerful and gave beneficial corrections. We all greatly improved our dance technique after attending her classes. We grew up down the road from her (on Stoll rRd.) and waved daily as we played and jumped on our trampoline. We finally convinced her to jump with us one summer afternoon too. Over a 10 year timeframe, we spent many hours in class and rehearsal with Sara. A Christmas Carol left amazing memories engraved into our childhood. Seeing Sara's smile at the end of a show was always a moment we looked forward to. The after party at the diner with Sara, Scarlett, Sonny, Bill, Zack and all us fellow teenage dance mates were highlights of our childhood. Although a move to Az ended our dancing at SBC, our memories of Sara still remain strong even 20yrs later. Sara was well loved and will be remembered as a special part of our dance years.

With love, The Bulka Sisters (1992-2001)

I have such wonderful memories & was impacted very much by her. She gave me the most wonderful first massage of my life & of course her classes & a Christmas Carol! - what a gift she gave to so many.

Kris (Kramer) Aria (early 1990's-early 2000's)

So many great memories of Christmas Carol and best massages and her kindness.

Love, Leslie and Clayton Horsey (early 1990's through 2000's)

Sara Miot was an amazing role model for me. As a young person who loved dance, I always appreciated that Sara was one of the few teachers I had who was both kind and a great teacher. She could get our company to dance detailed and exact choreography without being mean. I danced in Caravan and several years of "A Christmas Carol." Sara showed me that dancers should understand the way their bodies worked. My memoires of Sara are of a teacher who was both supportive and strong. Now, I am a school teacher and it is because of teachers like Sara that I hope to inspire a new generation.

Chandeen (Wardell) Santos (1991-1995)

I first met Sara as a member of Ulster Ballet Company when I was 9 years old, and from there went on to be her student, not only learning ballet and choreography, but learning life lessons as well. She was tough as nails and commanded a strong work ethic. Once able to look past her exterior however, her passion for her art and students shone through. Trying to single out memories is quite a hard task to endure as she was part of some of the best memories I have growing up, whether it be the countless rehearsal hours putting together A Christmas Carol, technique correction/ critique or exposure to Balanchine stories. One hot and sticky summer day 17 years ago, she came by the studio. I was choreographing a piece to "Scarborough Fair" for another dancer. Much to my amazement, she stopped and watched. She told me I found my "niche". A woman I admired, and always wanted to prove myself to, liked something I created and took the time to tell me. I haven't stopped creating since, and for that I will always be thankful.

Andrea "Annie" Cornish 1994-2004

I was lucky enough to be in the first "A Christmas Carol" and continued to dance for Sara until I graduated high school. I also spent three times a week having her workout out my muscles and heal injuries. During my last year with Ulster Ballet Sara choreographed a solo for me that showed just how well she knew me, my body and my interests. We laughed a lot together. She taught me not just how to dance but how to take care of yourself and your body. She will be missed.

Eliza Heppner (1995-2002)

I will remember Sara, not only for her extraordinary talent and gifts, but also for her inner strength, compassion and presence. She was truly a Light in this world, that reached so many. The testament is in all who were touched by her, enriching their lives. I know she inspired me. She was taking my ballet class for a while in her 70's., and performed here in Woodstock. That really impressed me. There were no limits on continuing to dance for as long as you were able. Sara and I had several philosophic conversations about life. She was a kindred soul and I feel blessed to have known and shared with her.

Peace.... Judith Ore, Teacher SBC

She was so amazing. It truly was such a blessing knowing her.

Mariana (Barese) Spencer (1995-1999)

Rest In Peace Sara. We will always remember the dance opportunities and your healing hands. Thank you!

Kim Funk (1995 to 2015)

Here are a few things that I instantly think of when I think about Sara. Thursday night ballet class. How "strict" they were but it the best way. I learned so much about movement, alignment and ballet from her. There was one moment in one class that she had me demonstrate a grand port da bra (a very slowwww 8 count) and I don't know why but it stuck out so clearly in my mind thinking about breath, timing and my dreaded rib cage that liked to pop out. Christmas Carol rehearsals, so many Sundays! I would work so hard to get good feedback and valued her constructive criticism so much. Growing up through the performance allowed me to see her dedication and happiness when the show always came together at the end. Lastly, I'll never forget the dance she choreographed with myself, Justine, Sage and Amy. I remember we were so excited to be able to work privately with her. The thought process behind her choreography was so special and I will never forget those moments.

Maleda (Funk) Herrera (1995-2015)

An important lesson Sara taught me that I try to teach my own students is to "listen to your body". Sara never forced turn out or extensions on me because she taught that you should use the body you were given. Something that I will really miss is being in the studio with her and listening to new music for a piece. She always picked complicated works that were so incredibly difficult to count but that's what made it fun and interesting. I can picture her smiling and laughing with me while we try to figure out the counts. I will miss her terribly and hope to keep her memory alive through all the lessons she has taught me.

With love and gratitude, Justine (former student and friend, 1995-2017)

I was very fortunate to have known Sara on many levels. As my ballet teacher she always gifted us with so much more than just ballet. It was movement and how the body worked. As a massage therapist she helped me work through many injuries and further my education in anatomy. The time I spent sitting with Sara during Christmas Carol rehearsals was a privilege and a blessing. I was granted the gift of her artistry and vision for the show she choreographed as well as getting to know her on a different level as a person and mother/grandmother. She will have a lasting impact on me and I hope to keep her memory alive through her work.

Sarah (Hansell) Dernison, (1996-2017)

I wish I could have one more rehearsal with Sara. I would dig deep inside myself and find a way to go beyond what I thought I was capable of, because she was watching. I would dance with all the strength and passion and love that she inspired in me.

With Gratitude and Grace,

Julie "Greed" Manna (1997-2008)

She was such a beautiful person as well as a great mentor. I will always remember rehearsals and class with her. To this day, I always play the Chieftains party scene music around Christmas. Brings me back to those days with Sara and everyone in the studio.

Gabriel Smith (1997-2002)

It was my pleasure to be in Sara's Christmas Carol and a few festivals for a few years back in the early 2000s. Dancing her choreography was delightful as her passion for dance was wonderfully clear. God bless you and thank you, Sara.

Rose Ann Serpico

I enjoyed her ballet classes on Thursday evening! One of my favorite teachers. I will never forget her.

Amanda (Ashmore) Mercado (late 90's)

My favorite memory (or memories) of Sara was when she would choreograph for the Festival of Dance. I have fond memories of the way that she would create movement - creating a step and working it over and over to shape it into what she was imagining (or feeling). It was like she was lost in the movement! One fun one in particular was when we were all birds. She was a beautiful soul.

Britney (Tappen) Privett (2000-2008)

I will always cherish Sara's leadership during my time in A Christmas Carol, she was an amazing teacher. Sending love to everyone who is grieving 🍷🌹

Tricia Anderson, (2000-2009)

It was my valued privilege to work and know Sara during my 15 years of involvement with the Christmas Carol production. She always warmly acknowledged when I got things right, and clear and encouraging when I needed to bring something else. She was present, clear, inspiring. I miss her.

Phillip Levine

"nephew fred/marley's ghost" (2002-2014)

Sara was an amazing woman! She was very compassionate and a wonderful role model! I was honored to have the privilege of learning from Sara for 10 years. Sara impacted my life in so many ways! She encouraged me when I thought I wasn't good enough or couldn't do something. She always pushed me to strive to be a better dancer. I'll always keep the Christmas Carol memories close to my heart and all the of the times I worked with Sara outside of the studio! Without Sara, I would not have the love for dance that I do today. I will miss her tremendously.

Marie-Grace Allan (2003-2013)

Sara taught me to always hold my head high and how to feel the music when I'm dancing.

Stephanie Baldelli, former student (2004-2008)

Sara was a wonderful teacher- was very gracious and majestic and also firm. Her classes were the perfect balance of discipline and beauty. ❤️ I'm grateful I had that experience with her.

Chimay Posavev, (2004-2007)

One memory that I always thought was special was about the reverence we perform at the close of each class. Sara said it was not only a way of thanking your teacher for that particular class, but also acknowledging everyone who had brought ballet to us, all the teachers and dancers of the past and present. Such a thoughtful and beautiful sentiment, especially at this time.

Elizabeth Crocker (2007-2015)

She was such a kind soul.

Shanti Singer (2009-2011)

I was so encouraged and blessed by having her as a dance teacher both in class, and in Christmas Carol. She would celebrate when I would make progress, and I was always elated for the rest of the day and sometimes week! A wonderful woman, a wonderful teacher, and she's very much loved and missed ❤️

Emily Camp (2010-2015)

Sara touched the lives of so many and left such a legacy. Every single person who had the opportunity to see or dance her choreography knows this. For me, her creation of "A Christmas Carol" really shaped me into the dancer and person that I am today. Being able to be a part of her choreography is something that I will cherish forever.

Meghan Colligan (2011-2016)

Sara, thank you so much for your teaching, your kindness, and your patience that you gave to me, a holiday gift. I must say, tongue in cheek, that I would not be the Scrooge I am today without your guidance.

As Old Joe in 2012 you gave me as much sympathy as guidance, but when I was launched into the role of Scrooge in 2014, I felt your true devotion both to ballet and to this story you so dearly loved. I remember one very specific incident when you shared your strength with me. I made a very significant blunder, disrupting the beautiful Past Ghost solo. You did not stop the dance, but let it continue to the end. In notes, you simply said "I let you go because I wanted to see what would happen." To you, your Christmas Carol was a living, flowing, ever changing performance. Within all the rigor there was room for change to blossom. Of course, my flop wilted quickly to nothing. Most importantly, you showed me that in your intense concentration on what was happening right NOW, you were still flexible to change your meticulous choreography.

I do owe much thanks to your family members who have touched my life. To Anne, your kindness and gentle guidance carried me through the perilous journey of learning and through the fear of first performances, indeed for several years. Paris, the grace and power you showed on stage I saw again as you swung the hammer on red hot iron at the Ashokan Blacksmith meeting. And Harry, thank you so much for all your devotion to this family project.

Tom Foote (2012-2016)

I will forever be grateful to Sara for the joy that her storytelling brought to my family each year. Rest peacefully.

Anna Carbone (2013-2015)

The first time she ever taught me, I was this scared little girl amongst the older dancers in the advanced level. She saw something in me and took me under her wing, constantly correcting me, making me feel like I belonged in the class. She was the first person to believe I could dance in advanced roles in her ballet "A Christmas Carol." She saw my potential and begged to have me perform as a musician when I was just twelve. She believed in me and saw herself in me, and for that I am forever grateful.

Asia Gross (2014-2016)

