

Shaunda Arsenie-Mearns is proud to say that her dancing career started with Boyan Ukrainian Dance Association at the age of eight. Raised in Saskatoon, SK, she participated in many sporting activities including being team captain and MVP of the volleyball team. She was also involved in the arts as both a singer and musician, and was the recipient of the Senior Arts Award in 2005.

Although she enjoyed all of these activities, dancing was her passion. She danced with Boyan and Vesnianka Academy of Ukrainian Dance, and participated in many Ukrainian Dance Camps and competitions until the age of 16 when she was asked to dance for Yevshan Ukrainian Folk Ballet Ensemble. Under the direction of Vitali Sorokotaguine, Shaunda had the opportunity to perform for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Saskatchewan's Centennial Celebration (2005), participate in a Cuban-Canadian Cultural exchange in Havana, Cuba (2004/2005), and in the International Folk Festival in Las Vegas, NV (2005). She also had the opportunity to share the stage with many talented performers in Yevshan's productions of *Nich pered Rizdrom* (2003) and *45th Anniversary: Friends of Yevshan* (2005).

Shaunda spent a year in Brisbane, Australia after being chosen to represent the College of Kinesiology on a Student Exchange in 2007/2008. Even though she was away from the Ukrainian dance scene, she took ballet and contemporary dance classes to fill the void when she wasn't meeting new friends, seeing the sights or basking in the sunshine. She learned many new and valuable skills that challenged her as a dancer and now is excited to share with her students.

When she returned from Australia, she auditioned for Pavlychenko Folklorique Ensemble (PFE) where she became, and still is, an active cast member and soloist. It is here under the artistic direction of Serhij Koroliuk, where she became as passionate about choreography as she is about dancing. In 2009, Shaunda had the opportunity to perform in Chicago IL, Whippany NJ, Pittsburgh PA, Montreal Que and Toronto, Ont. with Pavlychenko and violin virtuoso Vasyl Papadiuk as part of their *Nostalgia* tour. In 2012, she again took the stage with PFE and Lastiwka Choir and Orchestra as grandstand performers at the Canadian National Ukrainian Festival in Dauphin, Man.

In 2013, Shaunda was able to fulfill a life-long dream, and travelled to Ukraine to perform with PFE and Lastiwka in their production *Witness the Legacy*. She had the opportunity to not only dance for, but to participate in workshops with some of the best Ukrainian dancers in the world- including the world re-nowned Virsky Company. She was able to share so many special experiences that developed a deeper love of her Ukrainian culture and inspired a stronger bond with her dance family and Ukrainian dance in general. To be a part of such passion and pride for culture, music, and dance is a very rare, and special thing, and it has helped shape her into a better instructor, choreographer and dancer.

Shaunda holds both a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology and a Master of Physical Therapy degree from the University of Saskatchewan and is currently working at a private physiotherapy clinic in Saskatoon. Shaunda enjoys working with individuals of all ages, but particularly likes working with young athletes to improve their function in their respective activities. She takes continuing education courses that not only help her as a physiotherapist, but as a dance instructor and feels very fortunate that she can combine her knowledge of the body with her knowledge of dance to improve the experience for her students.

Boyan has a very special place in Shaunda's heart, and she is thrilled to see how the group has grown and come to thrive over the past 15 years she has been a part of the instructing crew. During her time as an instructor and choreographer, Shaunda has attended many dance instructor workshops in Saskatchewan and Alberta and this past summer she was fortunate enough to participate in the Cobblestone Freeway Instructor Workshop Tour to Ukraine. She has had the opportunity to dance for and learn from many great instructors in North America and Ukraine and is excited to pass on her knowledge to her students, and prospective instructors. She has taught students between the ages of 5 and 65 and has experience tailoring the classroom and choreography for varying levels of ability. Shaunda is also the director of Boyan on Tour (BOT), an extension of Boyan Ukrainian Dance Association that was originally directed with Matthew Petrow, Bailey Petrow and Paul Kodak. BOT travelled to Whippany NJ, Redding CT and New York, NY with their production *Fantazia* in August 2013, and then to Costa Rica with *Podorozh* in August 2015. BOT continues to grow and has set its sights on a European Tour in summer 2018.

Shaunda welcomes all new and returning dancers, and is looking forward to another wonderful year of Boyan Dance!