

THE ART OF THE MATTER

THESE THREE GENTS ARGUABLY HAVE THE COOLEST JOBS IN THE VALLEY: EXPOSING RESIDENTS TO THE BEST THE ART WORLD HAS TO OFFER. HAILING FROM PHOENIX ART MUSEUM, BALLET ARIZONA AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MUSEUM, MEET SOME OF THE VALLEY'S TOP CURATORS AND ART DIRECTORS.

*Story by Joanna Brathwaite, Ashley R. Carlson and Leslie K. Hughes
Photographed by Thomas Ingersoll*



Music for a Multitude

BORN WITH A PASSION FOR MUSIC, Colin Pearson was thrust into melody and harmony from a young age. “I don’t remember not playing an instrument. Everyone in my family played music, and I grew up in a household where concertos and classical music were the norm.” Pearson serves as the curator for Asia, Oceania and the Middle East for the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM).

His discovery of Asian music blossomed when he wore out his Beatles tapes and became curious about Indian artists like Ravi Shankar. After completing his master’s in Ethnomusicology in 2006, he joined an Arabic-themed orchestra called MESTO in Los Angeles for a time, which led him to become fascinated with Middle Eastern music.

His frequent visits to Southeast Asia fueled his love for Asian culture even more. Pearson lived in Thailand several times, even meeting his wife there, and claims the country as his second home.

His involvement in music led him to MIM in 2009, and he hasn’t looked back since. Through daily research and local community outreach, he has obtained a considerable amount of Asian instruments for the museum from sources within the

United States. Pearson has managed to find many performers from various immigrant communities in the Valley to perform for events, participate in workshops, and contribute to cultural displays throughout the museum. His passion for teaching his community about musical cultures is what has driven him to continue to create platforms where the Valley can come together on common ground. “I’ve always believed that the world is connected.

Music is so important to human culture, and I love having the opportunity to show people the vast scope of the world and how all cultures are interconnected.” —**Joanna Brathwaite**



The “Doctor” of Ballet

ALTHOUGH NOT A DOCTOR OF PSYCHIATRY, IB ANDERSEN’S JOB NECESSITATES THAT HE ACT AS SUCH every day. Andersen describes his work as having “a knack for reading people to see how to push them.” In order to become a true ballet dancer, “it’s not enough to just have talent. You have to have the stamina, the mental capacity. The ultimate, you need to be an artist, which is rare.” And we are lucky enough to have that true, rare artistic talent in the form of Ballet Arizona’s artistic director, Mr. Andersen himself.

Born in Copenhagen, Andersen joined the Royal Danish Ballet School at the impressionable age of seven. Practicing six days a week, Andersen danced his way through the Royal Danish Ballet School at the age of 16 and into the New York City Ballet. He hung his ballet shoes to rest in 1990 at the age of 35, but Andersen wasn’t ready to retire from life. His internal artist needed another venue for creativity; thus, Andersen began pursuing his love for painting that his dancing had never allowed time for. The striking desert landscape of Arizona, foreign to Andersen, lured him here. He found himself more entranced with Phoenix than expected, so when the position for artistic director at Ballet Arizona opened, Andersen took it to ensure a long-term stay in the Valley.

The past 14 years at Ballet Arizona has seen Andersen grow the company immensely, producing shows that leave attendees in awe. From Copenhagen to Phoenix, Andersen has shared his talent with many and is one of few who have truly mastered, as Andersen called it, the “universal language of ballet.” —*Leslie K. Hughes*

A Man Who Spent Half His Life in a Museum

JAMES “JIM” BALLINGER’S 32-YEAR TENURE AS ART DIRECTOR FOR THE PHOENIX ART MUSEUM would suggest he’s always known what career to pursue, but that isn’t actually the case. A self-proclaimed “scattered student,” Ballinger studied numerous majors before enrolling in Art History. After receiving his master’s degree, Ballinger was offered the curator position at the Phoenix Art Museum in 1974 and was promoted eight years later to art director. “You instantly are in charge of everything...It was [learning] the nuances of how to build relationships with donors [and] board members...”

Daily job duties of the position can differ dramatically but include traveling to acquire exhibitions, attending events and fundraisers, and overseeing the museum’s budget. When asked to pick his favorite exhibit over the years, Ballinger likens it to a parent trying to choose their favorite child—though he mentions his pride regarding the current Hollywood Costume exhibition (which ends in July).

Ballinger announced his retirement in April of this year. He hopes that his successor will continue to incorporate technology into the museum’s exhibits to make them both relevant and interesting to this and future generations.

He says the most important lesson he’s learned in the field is this: “Never, ever underestimate the power and intellect of people...The world is full of great ideas.” Ballinger’s passion for not only art, but its creators, is a testament to the success of the Phoenix Art Museum in the last four decades of his tenure there. —**Ashley R. Carlson**

