



The Chicago
Academy for the Arts

ALUMNI

Artist. Leader. Academy Grad.





“I feel like it put me ten years ahead of everyone else that I knew.”

Photo from [instagram.com/tranterjustin](https://www.instagram.com/tranterjustin)



JUSTIN TRANTER

MUSICAL THEATRE, CLASS OF 1998

A prolific musician and songwriter with the band **Semi Precious Weapons**, Justin Tranter now has seen great success writing hits for some of the music industry's most notable pop stars. Tranter most recently penned Justin Bieber's "Sorry," Gwen Stefani's "Used to Love You," and Fall Out Boy's "Centuries." Around The Academy, Justin is revered for founding our **Annual AIDS Benefit**, a student-run variety show with proceeds donated to supporting AIDS research and families affected by the disease.



CECILY STRONG

THEATRE, CLASS OF 2002

In 2012, Cecily Strong was added to the all-star cast at *Saturday Night Live* and began hosting the segment *Weekend Update*. Her success on the show landed her a gig hosting the White House Correspondents' Dinner in 2015. The breakout star can be seen in the films *The Bronze*, *Staten Island Summer*, and the new *Ghostbusters*.

Photo from NBC





Photo from Broadwayworld.com

“ There are moments from my senior year at The Academy that changed my life.”



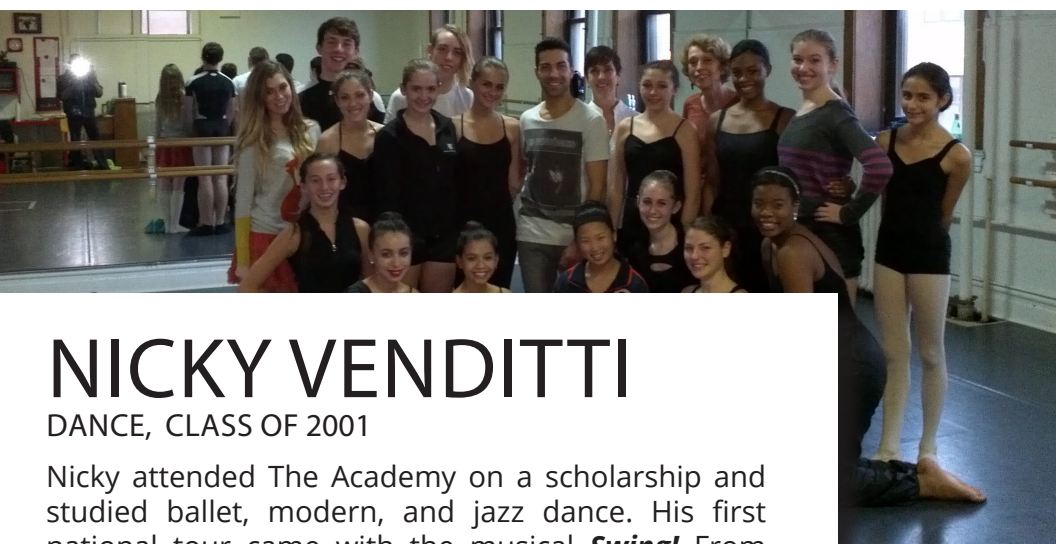
JOSE RAMOS

MUSICAL THEATRE, CLASS OF 2011

Jose Ramos graduated from the Musical Theatre department of The Academy in 2011. He recently landed a dual role as John Laurens and Phillip Hamilton in the current Chicago production of *Hamilton*. After graduating from The Academy, Jose studied at CAP21 in New York.



“ I continue to reap the benefits of the exceptional guidance given to me from my teachers, the lifelong friendships that I acquired, and the overall acceptance that I encountered while at The Academy.”



NICKY VENDITTI

DANCE, CLASS OF 2001

Nicky attended The Academy on a scholarship and studied ballet, modern, and jazz dance. His first national tour came with the musical ***Swing!*** From there Nicky went on to land dream roles in ***A Chorus Line*** and ***Contact***. Recently, his time has been spent with the Broadway hit ***Wicked*** where he served as dance captain for two years. In addition, he has provided choreography for the Off Broadway musical ***Trip of Love***.



“I learned that it was OK to be different, to be an individual.”

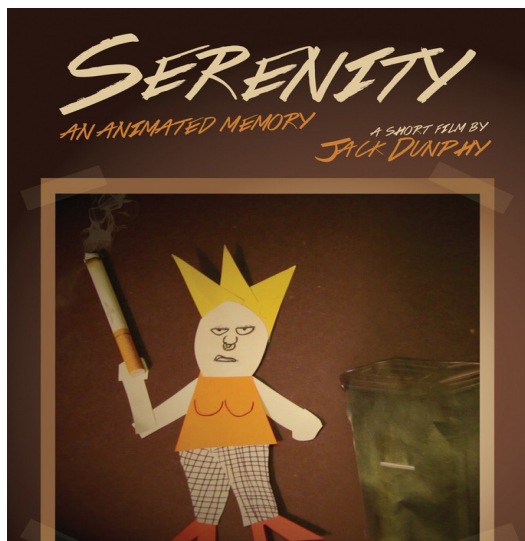
CRAIG HALL

DANCE, CLASS OF 1997

Craig Hall joined the New York City Ballet in 2000 and since has had featured dance roles in ***Apollo, Episodes, The Four Temperaments, and The Nutcracker***. In addition, he has been featured in the films ***Center Stage*** and ***NY Export: Opus Jazz***. Craig Hall performed with City Ballet at Lincoln Center for the last time in May of 2016. He now serves as the company's Ballet Master.



“The Academy pushes its students intellectually and even spiritually. I was given the space I needed to fall in love with thought.”



JACK DUNPHY

MEDIA ARTS, CLASS OF 2011

Jack Dunphy is a filmmaker and animator based in Brooklyn. He has been included in the Sundance Film Festival three times, once for his short film **SERENITY** (2015) once for his short film **CHEKHOV** (2016) and once for Caveh Zahedi's short film **BOB DYLAN HATES ME** (2016) which he animated. He starred in the feature film **ASSHOLES** (Dir. Peter Vack) and co-directed the feature film, **THE PERVERT** with Nathan Silver, who he also co-wrote the feature film **STINKING HEAVEN** with.





“This place, this sanctuary, was and still is an integral part of me.”

RENA BUTLER

DANCE, CLASS OF 2007

Rena Butler has been a featured dancer in *Dance Magazine*, *The Dance Enthusiast*, *FORMA Magazine*, and *Refinery 29*. She currently dances for Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and has had her choreographic work featured in the **Joffrey Ballet School**. Previously, she danced with Abraham. In.Motion, David Dofrman Dance, Mettin Movement, and the Luna Negra Dance Theatre.



“ At The Academy, I learned that performance, putting ideas into action, is what really matters.”



Photo from westfallonline.com

CHRIS WESTFALL

THEATRE, CLASS OF 1984

Chris Westfall embodies the comprehensive and diverse value of the Academy experience. Author of *The NEW Elevator Pitch* and a US National Elevator Pitch Champion, Chris has coached clients on *Shark Tank*, helped entrepreneurs raise millions from investors, and successfully rebranded companies, products, and services around the world. He lives in Houston, Texas with his wife and two children and has used his influence to be an avid supporter of the visual and performing arts.



MICHAEL FERRIS

VISUAL ARTS, CLASS OF 1987

Michael Ferris has made a career in sculpture working with reclaimed wood and a self-invented wood overlay technique. Following The Academy he received his BFA from Kansas City Art Institute and MFA from Indiana University. His work has been featured in the Elmhurst Art Museum, The Bronx Museum, and the Queens Museum of Art, as well as reviewed by The New York Times and The Chicago Tribune. Michael teaches ceramics at the Arturo A. Schomburg Satellite Academy in the Bronx.

“ It is because of [the faculty’s] dedication, and the influence of The Academy as a whole, that I am the artist I am today.”



Photo by Carl Timpono for BFA.com



“ [The Academy is] a uniquely nurturing environment within which students felt entirely at ease to be themselves.”



NATHAN LAUBE

MUSIC, CLASS OF 2004

Nathan Laube is an accomplished organist and Assistant Professor of Organ at the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Most recently, Nathan performed on the 2016 **Grammy Award Winner** for Best Classical Compendium **Grand Concerto**, composed by Stephen Paulus. Nathan has also been featured on American Public Media's weekly program "Pipedreams" and regularly performs around the world.



Luminarts Speech Contest, 2015

PREPARING FUTURE LEADERS IN THE ARTS AND LIFE.

QUICK FACTS

- The Academy is among the top-ranked private high schools and is the **#1** arts high school in Illinois (Niche, 2017).
- The 42 students comprising the Class of 2017 collectively earned over **\$9 million** in college scholarships.
- Over the past five years, students have scored an ACT Composite average of 24.7, nearly **19% higher** than the Illinois average.
- Over **70%** of our college acceptances between 2010 and 2017 were to institutions ranked in the "Top 300 Colleges and Universities in America" by Forbes Magazine.
- About **50%** of Academy students commute from outside the City of Chicago.
- Students participate in more than **100 productions** throughout the course of the school year, including concerts, plays, readings, screenings, recordings, and exhibitions.
- About **2/3** of Academy graduates go on to careers in the arts, while **1/3** pursue the sciences, the humanities, business, and more.



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