

Biography: Stephen Hook

Stephen began taking ballet at age nine and by age thirteen was mentored by teacher and Director Joseph Giacobbe, of *Delta Festival Ballet of New Orleans*. He fell in love with ballet while dancing one of his first performances that starred guest artist Patricia McBride and Edward Villella of *New York City Ballet*.

In 1974 Stephen moved to San Diego. Within a short time he began studying with Erling Sunde former Ballet Master of the Royal Ballet. He later became the protégé of Stanley Holden former principal of the Royal Ballet.

In 1977, American Ballet Theater (ABT) came to Los Angeles to film *The Turning Point*. Stephen not only landed a small part in the movie, he was observed by ABT's Artistic Director Lucia Chase. Ms. Chase then offered Stephen a contract to join ABT mid-season at the Metropolitan Opera House.

During Stephen's tenure with the American Ballet Theatre, he completed nine national and one Asian tour. He performed various roles in the following great classic ballets: *Coppelia*, *Giselle*, *La Sylphides*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*. Stephen also had the privilege to work with, and be featured in, Mikhail Baryshnikov's *Cinderella*, *Don Quixote*, *Nutcracker* and *Raymonda* along with other Great Russian artists like George Balanchine in *La Sonnambula*, *Theme and Variations*, and *Prodigal Son*, and with Prima Ballerina Natalie Makarova in her full length restaging of Marius Petipa's *La Bayadere*.

While with the ABT company, Stephen also worked under many of contemporary ballet's living legends of choreography in the following productions: *Rodeo*, Agnes de Milles, choreographer; *Billy the Kid*, Eugene Loring, choreographer; *Les Noces*, Jerome Robbins, choreographer; *Voluntaries* and *Contradances*, choreographed by Glen Tetley. Antony Tudor featured Stephen in his ballets: *Jardin aux Lilac*, *Shadow play*, and *Undertow*. Other roles of note include: Sir Kenneth Macmillan's in his staging of *Romeo & Juliet*, and as an original cast member role in the world premier of *The Wild Boys* starring Baryshnikov and Makarova.

Stephen is a published Artist and appears in Susan Au's book; *Ballet and Modern Dance* and on DVD with Kultur International Films. Mikhail Baryshnikov personally featured Stephen as a Toreador in his production of *Don Quixote*, filmed live at Lincoln Center from the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. Stephen also appears in Anthoy Tudor's timeless classic "*Jardin Aux Lilas*" filmed live at San Francisco from the War Memorial Opera House, California. See Stephen's Gallery, www.kultur.com and www.balletmasters.org

While living and performing in N.Y.C., Stephen also had the pleasure to study ballet with Maggie Black, Elizabeth Carroll, David Howard and Stanley Williams and many other world renowned ballet teachers.

For over 20 years, Stephen enjoyed an illustrious career performing ballet professionally throughout the US, Japan, Mexico and the former Soviet Union.

In the new millennium, Stephen returned to college and in 2005, Palomar College awarded him with a Professorship of Dance. Palomar College is one of San Diego's largest educational facilities, located in San Marcos, California. For five and a half years, Stephen was Palomar College's Ballet Master lecturing in Choreography, Dance History, and all levels of Classical Ballet. During these years, Stephen always tried to give back what was given to him.

In 2006, Stephen arranged a guest appearance of his childhood teacher and Mentor *Mr. Stanley Holden*. *Mr. Holden* taught a Master Ballet class and lectured on his 25 year career in dance as a Principal Dancer with the Royal Ballet in London, England. Stephen also continues to build his relationship with American Ballet Theatre (ABT), bringing another touch of the professional dance world to Palomar College. As an ABT certified instructor, Stephen applied ABT's National Training Curriculum guidelines to his lectures and classes. ABT warmly reciprocated, inviting Stephen's students to observe ABT's dress rehearsals and performances. Allowing the students to view these classic ballets first hand, further educates the students. During his tenure at Palomar College, Stephen's students have enjoyed ABT's *Giselle*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Sylvia* and *Swan Lake* performed live at the Orange County Performing Art Center as well as Dorothy Chandler Pavilion from the Los Angeles.

Always searching for new ways to stay current in the ever changing world of dance, Stephen visited and taught at the Chengdu Art Center in Sichuan, China, the Shanghai Ballet School in Shanghai, China, as well as the University of California at Davis, USA.

In 2009, during the economic depression, teacher's experienced their hours being cut all across America. Stephen was forced to make a difficult decision. The world was changing and Stephen knew he had to change with it. Stephen decided to visit Asia and look for new opportunities. Stephen's fascination with Asia began in 1984 when he first visited Japan as a young artist. For seven joyous weeks, Stephen toured Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka and experienced Japanese culture while performing with American Ballet Theatre. During this incredible journey, Stephen fell in love with Japan and knew in his heart that one day he would live in the "Land of the Rising Sun". Twenty five years later, Stephen's dream finally came true. While vacationing in Japan to experience *Hanami* (cherry blossom season), Stephen was offered a job teaching English in Japan. While living in Gifu, Japan, Stephen *Sensei* (teacher) taught conversation English at Hop, Step, Jump Language School, to all ages of children and adults.

In the fall of 2010, while visiting China to experience the Shanghai Expo, Stephen was offered a teaching position with Web International English School. Web International is one of China's largest English schools with over 60 training centers all over China. During Spring Festival, *Chinese Year of the Rabbit*, Stephen relocated to Shanghai and began his sabbatical studying Mandarin and teaching conversation English. Stephen is based at Web International's flagship location in downtown Shanghai. He has joined a team of international language teachers, teaching conversation as well as business English. Stephen Laoshi (teacher) is honored to teach at such a prestigious school and loves his new life in China.