

Date

Mallory Ramage SAMPLE



Dear Mallory Ramage SAMPLE,

Our actions and their results don't always follow a straightforward path. I think all of us who have lived through this tumultuous year can agree to that! But when I put aside the general craziness of 2020 and reflect on the years I spent at Interlochen, I'm just filled with gratitude for the ways small acts of kindness ripple out to have huge and unexpected effects in a person's life.

I'm currently a dancer at Ballet West in Salt Lake City after dancing with Boston Ballet last year. Unlike most professional dancers, I didn't start ballet until I was 13. Ballet found me through musical theatre. Starting ballet that late, I had a lot of extra work to do. It was my first love, and since your first love is the one you always fall hardest for, I was willing to push myself.

Just before my freshman year of high school, an alumni of Interlochen happened to guest teach at the ballet school where I was dancing and recommended Interlochen to me. That chance encounter coupled with the generous scholarship I was offered through the Interlochen Annual Fund offered a gateway to an experience that I am so lucky, so fortunate, so grateful to have had.

There is a direct line from your Annual Fund gifts to me as a young black man now dancing in a professional ballet company. I'm shattering glass ceilings and taking strides in places where others were never offered room. I'm helping this art form live into the future and make very needed progress. ***Do you know your generosity can have that kind of effect?*** It's astounding to me! Your renewed gift of \$200 has such power to impact an earnest young artist's life right now, and that impact will ripple out as they leave Interlochen adaptable, skilled, and ready to pursue their purpose.

Your continued gifts for a young artist's learning and education give them a gateway to a bigger world. It's not an exaggeration to say that going to Interlochen is the reason I've been able to fulfill my dream of dancing professionally. And I couldn't have gone without my scholarship.

The parts of Interlochen that made a deep impression and stand out the most are my dance teacher Joseph Morrissey, my academic teachers, and the friendships I hold dear in my heart. Mr. Morrissey saw the potential for a professional career within me and gave me the high caliber training and performance experience I'd need to meet my goal. At Interlochen, I got to dance

roles that my colleagues in Boston Ballet and Ballet West haven't even performed yet. By believing in me, he helped me believe in myself.

This year has been difficult. I can't change that, but what I can do is keep pushing forward. ***I'm ready to be a positive force in the world. Please join me again this year.*** You can be the gateway for another young artist striving to get to Interlochen by renewing your gift of \$200 today. Make no mistake: *your gift matters and it is needed.*

It is my hope that anyone who wants to come to Interlochen for Camp or Academy has the same chance you and I both did to go. They should get to feel believed in, too. Those special moments made my universe stand still, and have fueled my resolve and my gratitude. I know from my own experience that through your generosity, another Interlochen student will grow to be a groundbreaking leader in a world that needs new ideas and creative problem solvers.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Austin Dabney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Austin Dabney
Interlochen Arts Academy '19

P.S. You can help a young artist feel believed in, surrounded by inspiring faculty and good friends. Your renewed gift of \$200 today will ensure that no matter their background, an eager young artist can make their way to Interlochen. Once here, I can tell you from personal experience that they will gain the creative confidence and skills to forge ahead in the world and pursue their purpose.