

# Mark Vanek

Dancer – Chef  
Wolf Trap Teaching Artist



Mark Vanek, born in Omaha, Nebraska, studied dance at Arizona State University and was an active performer with University Dance Theatre. He also trained with Ririe-Woodbury and Rudy Perez. While at ASU, he worked with Don Redlich and received a scholarship to study with Hayna Holm at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. Mark also received a scholarship to study in New York, at the Martha Graham's School of Dance.

Mark's dance career flourished as he became one of the original dancers for Arizona based modern dance company, Desert Dance Theatre. Additionally, he performed with A Ludwig Dance Theatre.

In 1983, Mark and his wife and dance partner, Diane McNeal Hunt, formed MarDi Duet Dance Company. They performed and toured throughout Arizona and Mexico. Their signature works featured the original masks of international artist, Zarco Guerrero. Through their collaborations with Zarco, MarDi became a featured presence, as "Las Calacas Encantadas" (*The Enchanted Skeletons*), in Dia de los Muertos Festivals throughout Arizona. Mark and Diane were commissioned to choreograph and perform, Dido & Anais with the Arizona Bach Madrigal Society. During the Opening Night performance, Almeda and Jackson Berkey of Mannheim Steamroller, were in the audience. After the

show, the Berkeys extended an invitation for MarDi to perform Dido & Anais with their choral group, "Soli Deo Gloria Cantorum". While dancing together Mark and Diane also raised two sons, JJ and Adam.

Since 1987, Mark has been working creatively as a Teaching Artist with the national program, Wolf Trap Early Learning through the Arts. Mark's talents also extends to the culinary arts as the Chef for ASU Hillel, since 1980. He is the Chef and Owner of his catering company, "Dancing Chef Catering" and in September 2020, launched a brand new specialty business, "Kosher Smokin' BBQ"!

Mark says of his creative fire, "My passion as an artist now includes art you can sink your teeth into!"

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