



## BOSTON BALLET KEEPS PRODUCTIONS RUNNING GRACEFULLY WITH BEHIND-THE-SCENES HELP FROM SHORETEL VOICE SYSTEM

### Objective:

Boston Ballet needed a phone system that could keep up with employees and dancers constantly moving among the office, School and theater to help them communicate with each other and parents, particularly during productions. Additionally, it hoped to reduce the burden on IT staff for making changes, while reducing maintenance and support costs, which consumed a significant amount of its annual budget.

### Solution:

As an IP telephony system, ShoreTel significantly eases management for Boston Ballet's IT staff; offers multiple easy-to-use features that enhance communication among employees, parents and patrons; reduces Boston Ballet's line and maintenance costs; and offers unprecedented reliability through its distributed architecture.

### Results:

IT staff can make system changes on its own, in minutes. In total, ease of management and reduced line costs with the ShoreTel system save Boston Ballet \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually and helps productions go off more smoothly in the public's eyes and behind the curtain.

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**– Michael Kernochan**  
IT Coordinator

Now in its 41st season, Boston Ballet has built an international reputation for its dancing and its education and outreach programs. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen, the Company garners outstanding reviews and its annual production of *The Nutcracker* is one of the most beloved in the world. Boston Ballet School is the largest in North America, serving over 2,000 students in three locations. The Boston Ballet Center for Dance Education produces a range of education and outreach programs, including *Citydance*, which has brought the joy of dance and movement into Boston public school classrooms for 14 years.

Behind the School and every performance, a staff of about 120 handles everything from ticket sales to marketing to costume design. Ensuring that the School and ballet company run smoothly, especially during *The Nutcracker*, depends on seamless communication with ballet patrons, and among staff, dancers, teachers and parents. Boston Ballet's phone system is a critical part of its behind-the-scenes efforts and its service to the public.

A few years ago, its phone system offered little flexibility for routing calls, managing voice mail and adding extensions as the Company's needs changed throughout the year, particularly during productions. Moreover, the outdated system consumed a significant part of its annual budget, requiring ongoing costs for maintenance and support from outside vendors.



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## CRITICAL FLEXIBILITY WITH IP TELEPHONY

Frustrated, Boston Ballet began looking for another solution. The Company’s longtime network vendor, Guardian Information Technology, introduced the Company to the ShoreTel digital voice communications system. As an IP telephony system, ShoreTel would reduce Boston Ballet’s monthly line charges and recurring maintenance costs by enabling the IT staff to handle changes easily on its own. The browser-based interface would allow the in-house staff to take control of even major moves, adds and changes to the various extensions, rather than relying on outside vendors each time.

The system consists of ShoreGear 60/12 and 120/24 voice switches, which run an embedded, real-time operating system, and one T1 interface unit. The T1 interface allows Boston Ballet to eliminate a significant number of individual POTS lines and consolidate service onto a single, cost-effective and reliable circuit.

At the School, Boston Ballet installed a switch connected to a 512K frame-relay circuit used to carry existing data traffic. There, Boston Ballet was able to eliminate five \$180 per-month OPX lines. With ShoreTel in both locations, Boston Ballet reduced its monthly phone bill by almost 50 percent by cutting the number of lines it needed.

## REDUCING COSTS, COMPLEXITY WITH ADVANCED FEATURES

About 150 staff members and dancers now use the ShoreTel system, with some on phone extensions and others just taking advantage of voice mail capabilities. The Company’s 60 dancers, who do not have individual phones, can dial in anytime, from any location to access their voice mail messages.

With ShoreTel, IT staff easily configured various menus for the box office, ballet company and School, giving callers options to quickly select and get to the right individual’s phone or voice mail. Over time, as staffing has shifted, Boston Ballet has found it no longer needs receptionists, saving at least \$30,000 a year.

ShoreTel’s call handling features let Boston Ballet staff shift calls to ring at another extension, such as an external number or cell phone. Staff who are not in the office call the ShoreTel system remotely to redirect calls to their homes and keep communication flowing. Most of the staff also access voice mail messages on their PCs via integration with Microsoft Outlook. With a unified mailbox, they can retrieve their email and voice mail in a single location, and easily forward messages on to co-workers.

Additional ShoreTel features further enhance the Ballet’s ability to communicate internally and externally. Conferencing enables the CEO to communicate easily with artistic directors and dancers around the country. Staff often tap into ShoreTel’s call history records to find a previous caller’s phone number, if they didn’t happen to record it previously.



## GRACE UNDER PRODUCTION PRESSURE

During productions, advanced features of the ShoreTel phone system allow Boston Ballet to handle an increasing number of calls and extensions, as well as easily forward calls to other phones as the crew moves among the School, offices and theater.

The box office takes advantage of ShoreTel workgroup features to round-robin calls among the staff and ensure that patrons reach the next available customer service representative to purchase tickets. Staff can even round-robin calls across locations, thanks to ShoreTel's distributed architecture. When someone goes to lunch, they simply log out of their extension.

"Workgroups have been infinitely helpful with routing traffic," says Michael Kernochan, IT Coordinator at Boston Ballet. "In the past, it was very rare that a customer would call in and immediately get the person they needed to speak to."

When The Nutcracker season rolls around each year, Boston Ballet easily configures the system with a Nutcracker information hotline. The children's coordinator for the beloved holiday tradition, responsible for managing the 260 young dancers in the show, easily forwards her extension to ring at her office, her cell phone or at the theater. While their children are rehearsing, parents only have to remember one number, instead of the multiple numbers in productions past.

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Likewise, the system supports the School in allowing teachers to route their calls to the theater, and record informative messages for parents on their voice mail, from offsite.

## RESULTS: SAVING \$30,000 TO \$40,000 ANNUALLY

By not having to call in outside help for changes, the ballet company can respond more quickly to user needs while reducing its costs for onsite technical support. ShoreTel's distributed architecture offers exceptional reliability, which is critical during productions. "In my career so far, the ShoreTel phone system is easily the best I've seen. Administration and management of moves, adds and changes is a breeze – all possible from a single graphical user interface," Kernochan said.

Though the large nonprofit operates with a \$20 million annual operating budget, with funding from donations, sponsors and ticket sales, it must continuously keep a close eye on its operational efficiency. In total, the ShoreTel system saves Boston Ballet \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually and

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