

RI Ballet: Meeting Autumn with Grace

As the calendar turns from August to September, many area dancers will be returning to work. While the summer months allow them the opportunity to rest their tired bodies, the fall chill signals the start of a new season, with the next several months brimming with activity.

Leading the way is Providence's resident professional ballet company **Festival Ballet Providence**. Entering their 40th season, artistic director Mihailo "Misha" Djuric is certainly hoping for a less "eventful" fall than last year. About one month prior to the opening of the company's annual holiday production of *The Nutcracker*, Djuric discovered that most of their costumes had been stolen from the company's warehouse. Fortunately, ballet companies from around the country donated some of their own costumes so that the show could go on!

FBP's season opens with *Pippi*, the first of two productions from the company's kid-friendly chatterBOXtheatre dance series. With humor and energy, this ballet wonderfully spins the tale of every child's favorite freckled red-head. Performed in the company's intimate Black Box Theatre, it also marks the return of one of the company's most beloved choreographers, Colleen Cavanaugh.

Then, just in time for Halloween, Chris Van Allsburg's haunting *The Widow's Broom* sweeps into The Vets for a weekend of performances. When a witch's worn-out broom suddenly ends up in a widow's garden, deception and mistrust give way to burning passion. With sets from Eugene Lee, Viktor Plotnikov's mesmerizing choreography works wonderfully with Aleksandra Vrebalov's enchanting original score.

Just before Thanksgiving break, the popular Up Close, On Hope dance series returns highlighted by Djuric's captivating *Magnificat*. Set to the music of JS Bach's cantata, this visually stunning piece combines contemporary movements with Balkan folk dance. This exciting mixed repertoire program, also performed in the Black Box Theatre, will feature several world and RI premieres from a variety of choreographers.



FBP's fall season concludes with the company's annual "gift to the city of Providence" with their elegant production of *The Nutcracker*. With majestic sets, lavish costumes (many of the stolen costumes were returned!), Swarovski crystals and Tchaikovsky's festive holiday score, this ballet serves as the perfect way to ring in the holidays.

For tickets or more information, visit festivalballetprovidence.org

Meanwhile, over in Newport, **Island Moving Company** is simply shifting gears as they prepare to enter the fall portion of their season; they are one of the few companies that performs year-round.

Next up for them is their biennial offering of Open for Dance. This five-day festival focuses on the importance of collaboration between artists and the community. Three choreographers will work with other artists such as chefs, poets and musicians to create site-specific works that will be performed six times during the festival. While the emphasis will be on the artists and Newport's beauty, participation from others in the community is encouraged.

IMC will also present their stunning annual holiday production of *The Newport Nutcracker at Rosecliff*. This one-of-a-kind performance is set entirely within Newport's historic Rosecliff Mansion. Dancers move from room to room, beginning on the iconic marble staircase and finishing in the grand ballroom, while audience members follow along, becoming part of the action! Filled with many surprises and special guests, this is truly a unique experience. These shows do sell out quickly!

For tickets or more information, visit islandmovingco.org

Nestled in the woods of Lincoln, **The State Ballet of Rhode Island** is busy preparing for its remarkable 58th season!

Expect more from their popular Coffee Hours: From Stage to Studio, a behind-the-scenes look at how a production goes from the studio to the stage. Hosted by artistic director Herci Marsden, this interactive event takes place in the company's ballet studio. Ms. Marsden explains how music is selected and choreography is created, culminating in live performances by company dancers. Stay afterward for coffee and dessert.

They will also once again participate in the Gloria Gemma Flames of Hope: A Celebration of Life, the largest WaterFire of the summer and a weekend-long celebration embracing those touched by cancer, as well as anybody who has received news that a friend or loved one has cancer. Featuring a select group of company dancers, the State House steps, bathed in pink lights, becomes center stage as the dancers present their touching interpretation of the *Illuminations of Life*.

SBRI will also present their annual holiday production of **Coppelia**. This charming ballet features traditional folk dancing, colorful costumes and Delibes' feisty score. Watch as an eccentric old doll maker falls in love with one of his life-sized dolls (who comes to life!). Throw in a jealous lover and a snowy happily-ever-after ending, and you have a touching holiday treat for the entire family.

For tickets or more information, visit stateballet.com.

Other fall productions of note:

Heritage Ballet, *The Nutcracker*, November 25 & 26 at The Stadium Theatre. For tickets or more information, visit heritageballet.com

Providence Ballet Theatre, *Twas the Night Before Christmas*, December 15. For tickets or more information, visit providenceballet.com

Moscow Ballet, *Great Russian Nutcracker*, December 4 at the Park Theatre. For tickets or more information, visit parktheatreri.com