

Spring Dancers Are Light on Their Feet

With March comes the promise of spring and warmer weather. But for area dance fans, it also looks to be a month chock full of performances.

Festival Ballet Providence gets things started Friday, March 4, with the second installment of their popular Up Close On Hope, a dance series presented in the company's intimate Black Box Theatre.

Featuring back-to-back world premieres, this program offers rich and passionate storytelling utilizing two distinct styles. *The House of Bernarda Alba*, the newest creation from internationally acclaimed FBP resident choreographer Viktor Plotnikov, "tells the story of a domineering matriarch whose relentless control over her mother and five daughters descends into an explosion of tension, violence and sexual rage." With an original score commissioned by composer Sonya Belousova coupled with Plotnikov's unique choreography, this piece will surely leave audiences mesmerized.

Generally presented as a play, FBP artistic director Mihailo Djuric states, "Many choreographers in Europe take on the challenge of telling this gripping story as a ballet. In fact, I think it is more powerful as a ballet than a stage play. But it is not often seen in the United States in this form, which is why I'm thrilled to see it come to life on our stage." In addition to music and dance, this adaptation will also incorporate film with visual images projected onto a backdrop during the performance.

Completing the twin-bill will be frequent UCOH contributor Gianni de Marco's *Lady of the Camellias*, an emotionally charged number retelling "the story of Marguerite Gautier, a French courtesan and socialite whose illicit romance with Armand Duval spirals into betrayal." Such a piece perfectly suits de Marco's fiery and charismatic style of dance. "It's the kind of drama that audiences crave and I promise it will have you on the edge of your seat," claims Djuric.

The curtain closes on FBP's season the weekend of April 29 - May 1, with *Swan Lake* at The Vets. This performance also marks the "swan song" for beloved principal dancer Mindaugas Bauzys. For years he has been thrilling audiences with his power, grace and technical virtuosity; his departure will leave the spotlight straining for a suitable replacement. *For tickets or additional information, visit festivalballet.com.*

In March, audiences will get to meet RI's newest dance company, Doppelganger Dance Collective, the brainchild of dancers and co-artistic directors Danielle Davidson and Shura Baryshnikov (yes, she is Mikhail's daughter!). This collaboration features only the two dancers working with other artists, choreographers, dancers and composers. Their inaugural performance - *The First Four* — takes place on March 11 and 12 at the Granoff Center for the Creative Arts at Brown University.

Davidson and Baryshnikov first met while taking a Saturday morning technique class. They continued taking classes together, pushing one another to perfect each movement. Possessing similar "fierce physicality and versatile technique," the duo felt they could offer an evening of bold and fresh dance. Baryshnikov explains, "Because of our self-same personalities and the fact that we were already calling one another 'twinsie' on the dance floor ... [we felt] this [was] an incredibly exciting collaboration. Everyone who sees us dance seems to quickly recognize that we are meant to share the stage."

The company's debut performance actually encompasses a weekend of dance and enrichment with a

symposium prior to the dance concert focusing on choreography, the creative process and collaborative partnerships. There will also be a free master class open to the public. As noted in a recent press release, "It is essential that the symposium provide community access to the participating choreographers, as well as offering community benefit through discussion of creative partnerships."

With all that is happening during DDC's opening weekend, the highlight will certainly be Davidson and Baryshnikov. They have commissioned four choreographers to create four original duets. They will also be accompanied by a string quartet led by cellist Adrienne Taylor, a member of Community Music Works and the musical director for this production. *For tickets or additional information, visit doppelgangerdancecollective.com.*

For the better part of a remarkable 56 seasons, The State Ballet of Rhode Island has been performing the timeless classic *Giselle* every couple of years and on certain anniversaries, making it the company's signature ballet. Luckily for ballet aficionados, this is an "on" year with the company presenting the ballet March 18 and 19 at Robert's Hall on the RIC campus.

There are few productions that better tell this heartbreaking story of love, betrayal and forgiveness better than SBRI artistic director Herci Marsden's. Once again, audiences can expect to see Ms. Marsden's well-drilled corps de ballet; her willis will give you the willies!

According to executive director Ana Marsden Fox, "What makes SBRI's *Giselle* unique is that they are welcoming alumni dancers to perform the acting roles in the ballet. Working alongside alumni dancers, the ballet company is forming a strong sense of community in the dance world and keeping people connected to the arts." In many SBRI productions, it is not uncommon for mothers and grandmothers to share the stage with daughters and granddaughters! *For tickets or additional information, visit stateballet.com.*

Island Moving Company, April 23 at The Vets. The Newport based company visits the city for the first time with a program of premieres. Pieces by California's Colin Connor and New York's John Mark Owen join a premiere by legendary dance great Bill Evans and works by Mark Harootian and IMC artistic director Miki Ohlsen. This milestone performance will also feature live music. Then, after touring Kazashstan, the company will move into the Great Friends Meeting House in Newport for their annual production of the Great Friends Dance Festival. *For tickets or additional information, visit islandmovingco.org.*

Fusionworks Dance Company, *Unwrapped - Unlocking the Mystery of Making Dances*, March 4 at Movement Exchange. Narrated by artistic director Deb Meunier, audiences go behind the scenes to see how dances are created from choreographer to dancer to musical selections. "Locally Grown Concert Series," April 2 and 3 at Forman Theatre on the RIC campus. *For tickets or additional information, visit: www.fusionworksdance.org.*

Decadancetheatre, 4, Rhode Island College Performing Arts Series, April 21 at Robert's Hall on the RIC campus. Led by artistic director Jennifer Weber, this international hip-hop company fuses authentic New York hip-hop style with classical music in their critically acclaimed version of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, featuring dancers from Nigeria, Norway, France, Japan and the UK. *For tickets or additional information, visit ric.edu/pfa.*

Moscow Festival Ballet: *Cinderella*, May 6 at the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center, New Bedford. Moscow Festival Ballet brings *Cinderella*, one of ballet's most cherished story ballets, to The

Z stage. Internationally acclaimed dancers, brilliant choreography, magnificent score and stunning costumes bring this timeless rags-to-riches fairy tale to life. *For tickets or additional information, visit zeiterion.org.*

Providence Ballet Theatre, *Hansel and Gretel*, April 8 and 9 at Sapinsley Hall on the RIC campus. This dramatic ballet features collaborations between choreographer, composer and designers, with the talents of local and professional dancers to create an all-new experience for all ages. *For tickets or additional information, visit providenceballet.org.*

Heritage Ballet, *Cinderella*, March 19 and 20 at Stadium Theatre in Woonsocket. *For tickets or additional information, visit heritageballet.com.*