

# Skilled Dancers Perform Up Close on Hope

Festival Ballet Providence kicked off the first installment of their popular Up Close On Hope dance series with a very playful and energetic program highlighting their strengths as a company. But there are also several individual noteworthy performances.

The always enchanting Vilia Putrius mesmerizes with flawless pointe work; FBP's newest company member Boyko Dossev, formerly of Boston Ballet, is simply delightful, displaying remarkable grace and control; Ty Parmenter shines in a twist on an iconic classic; and Tegan Rich leaves the audience wanting more following an extremely animated performance.

The program opens with legendary choreographer George Balanchine's "Allegro Brillante," an extremely demanding piece challenging both the dancers' technical skills and stamina. During breaks in the music, you can hear them breathing and see sweat rolling down their cheeks. This is what makes UCOH so appealing; it gives audiences a unique, "up close" look at dance.

Of the piece, Balanchine famously confessed, "It contains everything I know about the classical ballet in 13 minutes." And, after watching FBP's dancers navigate their way through this number, one truly appreciates Balanchine's admission and the dancers' efforts.

With a total of five couples, with one serving as the primary couple, the dancers first appear as a synchronized group perfectly executing Balanchine's intricate and detailed movements. Then the couples separate with the males performing a series of jumps concluding with several big cabrioles. The females then take center stage with some impressive pointe work before circling the stage tirelessly in pirouette.

As the leading couple, Putirus and Alan Alberto are wonderful. Their long bodies and sharp lines perfectly complement one another. The pas de deux projects both beauty and strength. With him on one knee, she spins toward him and stops, softly pressing her hand against his while lifting her back leg into arabesque. Alberto also expertly guides his partner in a series of supported pirouettes punctuated by her whipping around countless times at a dizzying speed before calmly settling into the final pose.

"Niris," choreographed by retired Boston Ballet principal dancer Yuri Yanowsky, marked the perfect debut for Dossev, highlighting his remarkable grace, making even the most frantic and truncated movements look serene, and control. Accompanied by the always beautiful Kirsten Evans, this ballet starts with them mirroring each other's movements while Lucas Vidal's score builds.

Then the music slows and violins fill the air as the two dancers meet for a tender duet. Dossev slowly turns Evans while she reaches back and places a hand behind his head. Yanowsky populates the piece with a series of fresh and clever lifts, with the two dancers deftly moving from one into the next. "Niris" concludes in a flurry with Dossev holding Evan's foot and spinning her around in a manner much like figure skating's hair raising "death spiral."

Resident choreographer Viktor Pltonikov's "Swan" is a moving reimaging of the iconic "Dying Swan." Made famous by prima ballerina Anna Pavlova, the original version featured a single dancer performing almost entirely en pointe. Plotnikov reinterprets the piece for two dancers who both represent the body and soul of the dying swan.

What emerges is an extremely fluid pas de deux featuring Brenna DiFrancesco and Parmenter with them striking a series of picturesque poses. He affectionately cradles her while she kneels on his outstretched arms. Later, she lay on his back before slowly melting to the floor. With Plotnikov's creative twist on the original, Parmenter once again takes an unorthodox role and makes it his own. His portrayal of the dying swan strikes a poetic note; slowly he flaps his wings before surrendering to death.

Parmenter's "How We Got the Stars" emerges as the program's most curious piece. Set to the spoken word of story teller Valerie Tutson, some of the company's younger dancers ("Stars" in the making?) ably present the dancer/choreographer's "grounded style" focusing on control and expression.

Yanowsky's second offering, "Finale," is a poignant look at relationships set to the emotional vocals of Wilsen. In a wonderfully lyrical number, Marissa Parmenter and Jordan Nelson, another new addition to FBP, nicely depict the ups and downs experienced by most couples. In one instance, he supports her with his head as she leans back into him. Later, she sits on his hip while he slowly sways from side to side. Suddenly the music picks up and the movements become more tumultuous. Then the music softens and the two dancers meet in the center before walking off together.

The final piece marks a departure of sorts for Plotnikov from his more serious works. "Sharps and Flats" is a slapstick look at classical music, classical musicians, a scatter-brained composer and an over-bearing conductor.

With their bodies serving as a variety of musical instruments, dancers, utilizing Plotnikov's familiar quirky style, present a wonderfully bizarre yet visually pleasing look at disharmony. Tegan Rich, wildly waving her baton, attempts to corral the egocentric musicians. In addition to some priceless facial expressions, Rich also manages to squeeze in some pretty nifty dancing.

As the crazy and intrusive composer, Alberto is also very funny pushing his big orange box across the stage, literally trying to impose his will. Such a fun and self-effacing look at art is a reminder to us all that sometimes we just need to take a step back and not take things too seriously.

*FBP's first installment of Up Close On Hope runs through November 12 in the company's intimate Black Box Theatre. For tickets or more information visit [festivalballetprovidence.org](http://festivalballetprovidence.org).*