

Seiskaya Dancers Lock In Another Winner

By Carol Goldberg

Once again Seiskaya Ballet's BESFI (Ballet Education and Scholarship Fund) benefit performance at SUNY Stony Brook's Staller Center for the Arts was a masterful success. Brava, Mme. Valia Seiskaya, for 25 years of molding talented young dancers and giving them glorious opportunities to strut their stuff.

Though the one-act ballet we have come to expect as the curtain rises on Act I was absent this year, there was no absence of excitement as a series of pas de deux, variations and solos gave us entrée into a broad spectrum of classical style and choreography. In the opening "William Tell Pas de Deux," Jennifer Olesuk and partner Cory Stearns ably executed the intricate footwork required of the Bournonville technique while sharing the sense of playfulness implied by the musical context.

The extraordinary elegance of Elizabeth McGrath was seen in a flawlessly performed variation from "La Fille Mal Gardee." In its brevity, the piece was an appetizer portion for this outstanding ballerina; we wanted a full-course meal. McGrath was followed by a most accomplished and fluid duo, Amy Ruggiero and guest artist Elie Lazar, in the "Satanilla Pas de Deux." The two complemented each other remarkably well, a recipe for audience raves, and garner them they did.

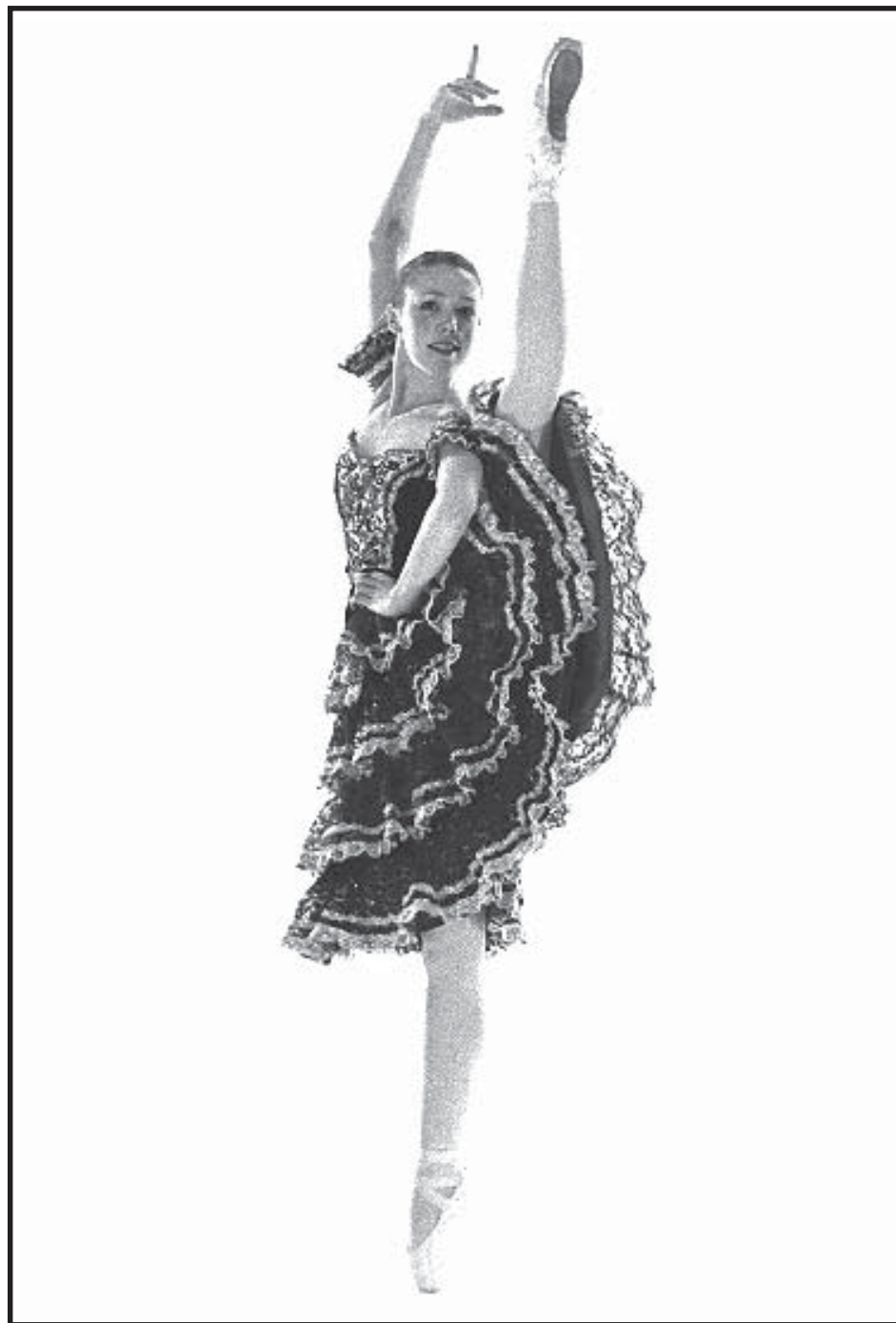
In a burst of energy, Jenny Sweet took center stage, performing the very modern, self-choreographed "Orange Colored Sky." Her exuberance was infectious and her perfor-

mance dazzling, as well as lots of fun. Then, to close Act I, a lovely Meghan Baker danced a wonderfully poetic "Le Corsaire Pas de Deux" with superb pinch hitting guest artist Hagop Kharatian. Adapted on short notice, remarkably none of bravura or grace of this work was lost.

Guest artists Alexandra Bergman, a former Seiskaya principal dancer now with the Tulsa Ballet, opened Act II with a short variation from "Don Quixote." It is always a pleasure to see returning ballerinas on the local stage, and Bergman, a beautiful dancer, did not disappoint. Lazar returned to partner the lovely Andrea Bergeman as Esmeralda in the extraordinary pas de deux of the same name. Together, Bergeman and Lazar exuded a love of dance as well as an understanding of the nuances of this piece — derived from Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* — and the pair lit up the stage. Meghan Baker returned next, a vision in red, and declaring her versatility in a sexy contemporary number called "Sugar Rum Cherry."

The biggest disappointment of the day was one of exclusion, not inclusion, but one that couldn't be helped. Due to an injury, the highly virtuosic "Black Swan Pas de Deux" could not be performed. It would have united the much-awaited McGrath with Kharatian. Inquiries about the previous evening's rendition of the piece, however, prompted rave reviews from people who had been in the audience. "You've never seen anything like it," said one. "It was amazing."

The final act featured a reprise of the very beautiful "Seasons," choreo-



Principal dancer Meghan Baker

graphed by Mme. Seiskaya to the luxurious music of Alexander Glazounov. This delightful ensemble piece was danced most competently, with particularly notable performances from Lauren Menger as Snow, Steven Marshall as Rain and Meredith-Lyn Olivieri as Sun. Carol Goldberg writes about and reviews ballet for a variety of publications on a freelance basis.