

# Dani's Papers

April 27, 2007

## Entertainment In The Hamptons

### *review: seiskaya ballet company at stony brook university*

The Ballet Education and Scholarship Fund is a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to promote ballet education in Suffolk County by providing grants to young aspiring dancers, especially those who would not be able to take lessons without some financial aid. Every year, a gala benefit is staged at the Staller Center at Stony Brook University, where dancers from the renowned Long Island-based Seiskaya Ballet Company come together with a carefully selected group of international professional dancers in a program mainly devoted to some of the major pas des deux of the classic repertoire.

Just looking at the list of this year's selection was enough to make any ballet lover's mouth water. The program started with the ethereal beauty of the Sylvia Pas De Deux, where Danielle Morano was the epitome of a ballerina, with clean lines, great balance and radiance. Her partner was Bulgarian-born Boyko Dossev, who currently dances with the Boston Ballet. The soloist and principal dancers of the Seiskaya Ballet Company are mostly ages fifteen to seventeen, and to put this production into perspective, the program is comprised with dances originally choreographed by masters such as Fokine, Petipa and Bournonville for some of the world's premiere ballerinas. It was a great tribute to all of the dancers that performed with elegance and a correct style, which showed the results of the training that Seiskaya teachers impart with care and dedication. Another observation, after reading the biographies of the dancers, was that these are not just very talented and hard working dancers,

they also have a wide variety of other interests. Some sing or play musical instruments at high levels of achievement, some are math wizards, others are very much involved in community work, all the while, carrying their schoolwork and preparing for college. The regimen produces young people with a character and determination that will stay with them throughout their lives.

Returning to the program, Russian-born Evgueni Tourdiev, who now teaches at the University of South Carolina after dancing with the Columbia City Ballet and the Louisville Ballet, partnered with Stephanie Scutari in the pas de deux from a less-known ballet, *Satanilla*. This was originally choreographed for the legendary Marie Taglioni, and the pair brought out all the emotions of the dance. Featured throughout the evening were the younger dancers, who performed a variety of ethnic-based dance routines with enthusiasm and skill. Returning to the main features, the pas de deux from the Corsaire will always be associated with the incredible virtuosity of a young Nureyev, a hard act to follow. But, the bare-chested David Hovhannisyan, who dances with the Milwaukee Ballet, displayed not only a magnificent physique but also great aerial work and attack as he danced with Liliana Janson, who previously impressed me when she danced in last year's *Nutcracker*. She continues to develop her style, skill and maturity and is only fifteen years old!

Marianna DeMarco, another dancer who I especially liked in the *Nutcracker*, partnered with Boyko Dossev in *La Fille Mal Gardée* and to-

gether they showed a tenderness that worked well. It was a tribute to her training that, when her shoe came loose just before she was due to go into a sequence that finished with a difficult balance, she had the presence of mind to adjust it and not lose the beat or her concentration. This displayed maturity beyond her years.

The one act ballet *Las Damiselas* gave a wonderful opportunity for many performers in the dance. The costumes and settings for the rest of the dances were of the highest professional quality and added greatly to the overall enjoyment of the performances.

The final numbers were showstoppers in their own right. The soft ballon Bournonville technique of Christina Pandolfi, partnered by Evgueni Tourdiev, brought the very popular *Flower Festival at Genzano* to life and the dreamy Chopin music for *Les Sylphides*, danced here by Kristen Troyano and Boyko Dossev. This led into the rousing finale of the *Grand Pas from Paquita*, which showcased the elegance and strong technique of senior principal dancer Kiersten Engel who, partnered by David Hovhannisyan, showed why she already has offers from pre-professional ballet programs at some of the top professional companies.

Altogether, this was a production to savor and congratulations are due to everyone connected with its conception and execution. Hopefully, as a result of these efforts, more scholarships will be available for aspiring dancers.

- Roy Bradbrook