

Grace and beauty at Seiskaya benefit

By **Donna Fennessy**

On April 24 and 25, Seiskaya Ballet held its 25th annual Ballet Education and Scholarship Fund benefit performance at Stony Brook University's Staller Center. The benefit, which included performances from several accomplished guest artists as well as many talented dancers as young as 11, was thoroughly entertaining.

The ensemble was joined by guest artists Tyler Ingram, Elie Lazar and Alexandra Bergman. Even those who are not trained in dance could appreciate the difficulty of the moves and the grace and beauty with which they were performed. Numbers that involved guest artists Tyler Ingram, Alexandra Bergman and principal dancers Meghan Baker and Elizabeth McGrath were very well done.

Numbers were set to classical music composed by Tchaikovsky, Rossini and others. One interesting number, *Sugar Rum Cherry*, was set to a Duke Ellington arrangement of the original Tchaikovsky score. This piece, choreographed by David Bintley and performed by Meghan Baker was a change from other numbers, as it put a jazzy spin on the *Sugar Plum*.

Costumes were traditional and simple, but fitting to the performance. Liz Silver was responsible for the creative use of lighting. Inserting slides into a projector,

different shapes and figures, including seagulls, were cast on the backdrop of the stage. Again, the use of lighting was simple, but fitting. The simplicity of the costumes, lighting and set design allowed the talented and skillful dancers to take center stage.

The last piece, entitled *Seasons*, which tells the story of passing of the four seasons, featured the entire ensemble. Aside from the features of the seasons used when this piece was first performed at the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Madame Seiskaya introduced a few new characters to the performance: sun, rain, sleet, weather, and the bluebird.

Truly amazing was the way performers made complex dance moves seem not only graceful, but effortless. The dancers met the challenge of the demanding choreography which made up most of the numbers, leaving audience members wanting more. Regardless of age, gender or general knowledge of dance, this performance was breathtaking and extremely entertaining. Seiskaya Ballet has produced many talented performers and it is a pleasure to see these dancers return as guest artists. Watching the younger dancers in the ensemble perform, one wonders how many talented stars are waiting to emerge.