

MESSENGER

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Under The Spotlight: BESFI Classics Reign Supreme

Energy pulsed throughout Stony Brook University's Stallier Center as the dancers of Seiskaya Ballet showcased their talents in a most vibrant way. For the Ballet Education and Scholarship Fund, Inc.'s (BESFI) 36th year, a spectrum of colors and music lit up the stage created by a skilled dance company with excellent theatrical support. The performances prove just how important ballet is to the dance world, and on a much larger scale, to culture for culture's sake. Where would we be without ballet? Thankfully, with top-notch classical ballet education still available, we may never have to know.

The performance began in true Seiskaya Ballet fashion with a spirited Character Dance Miniature, as an adorable junior corps adorned in a rainbow of colors twirled with enthusiasm in *Persian*. The lovely Ginamarie Carrero-Sagona followed, serving up Chopin's dreamy score in the whimsical *Les Sylphides Pas de Deux*. Paired with the strong and statuesque Oğulcan Borova, she soared through the air like a wisp of lace in a gentle breeze, providing stark contrast to Guest Dancer Jordan Lang who showcased an edgy side in the contemporary selection - *Unluck*. Lang's dancing is powered by his striking extensions, acrobatic athleticism and gravity-defying leaps. He is a force to be reckoned with, and I felt anything but *unlucky* to witness him dance.

Principal Dancer Alexandra Palma was next, taking her post as the mainstay ballerina as she danced confidently in the *Don Quixote Act I Pas de Deux*.

Partnered by the elegant Nicholas Coppula, Palma showcases a remarkable combination of consistency and dynamism, treating the audience to explosive jetés and her legacy of precise fouettés to end the pas with unmatched bravura. Act I concluded with a Seiskaya classic, *Dance of the Hours*, which beautifully meshes music and movement in timeless harmony. With a synchronous corps de ballet, Day (Jade-Alexis Donnelly), Night (Kristina Diaz) and Time (Danielle Lovetro) bestow their respective roles with the rhythmic qualities of a rich movement symphony. Donnelly's graceful arabesques were in counterpoint to Diaz' dramatic staccato piques and were both balanced by Lovetro's poise and lyricism that wove a bridge between the threesome, leaving the audience anticipating Act II.

BESFI prides itself on featuring highly stylized character pieces among a sea of classical ballet to feature the company's range. This year proved no exception featuring the slick, fiery *Carmen* and the zesty *Colombianas*, which highlighted upcoming sensation Lara Caraianni. In keeping with the flair for the exotic, the majestic Kristina Diaz and returning Guest Artist Borova brought the



Kristina Diaz pairs with guest artist Borova in the exotic *La Bayadere Pas de Deux*.



Danielle Lovetro and guest artist Coppula reprise their partnership in the elegant *Paquita Pas de Deux*.

La Bayadere Pas de Deux to life. A dancer with lovely lines, Diaz has added additional noteworthy polish and finesse. The coda gave her the opportunity to

feature her rapid-fire pirouettes in a most impressive fashion. The *Minkus Pas de Trois* followed, danced by promising youngsters Diana Atoian and Brianna Jimenez with Lang displaying his classical prowess. At only 13 and 12-years-old respectively, Atoian and Jimenez prove that ballet's future is as bright as ever, thanks to Atoian's commanding grasp of classical technique and Jimenez's sculpted legs and beautifully arched feet.

The perfect picture of a ballerina, Principal Dancer Danielle Lovetro graced the stage with sophistication in the *Paquita Pas de Deux*, suitably partnered by Guest Artist Nicholas Coppula. Anchored by her flawless technique, a subtlety of movement that exudes grace along with gorgeous extensions and graceful port de bras, she was a sight to behold. Her maturity was in full bloom for all to see.

The final act concluded the show with a tried-and-

true classic, *Seasons*, which the company first premiered in 1985. Danced

against an unusual backdrop and utilizing vibrant costumes, a wintry mix, a blooming spring, a blazing summer and rapturous autumn were brought to life. Lissome Diana Atoian spiritedly flew in and out of each scene as the Bluebird. With charisma to spare, she danced with a characteristic exactitude that makes her always exciting to behold. First Soloist Ashley Chenery emerged as The Sun with undeniable radiance, sustaining flawless balances with each elegant arabesque. Chenery and Jordan Lang, as Rain, made a delightful pair, exuding a sweet chemistry that flowed throughout the entire ballet.

When you create the classics, there is anything you can't do. Seiskaya Ballet validates that legacy.

Christina Pandolfi is a professional copywriter and editor who has written for several esteemed publications, like *SELF*. She is also an accomplished dancer who attended NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.



Alexandra Palma with guest Nicholas Coppula dance the fiery *Don Quixote Pas de Deux*.



Ginamarie Carrero-Sagona dances opposite guest Oğulcan Borova in the whimsical *Les Sylphides Pas de Deux*.