

# MESSENGER

HEAD OF THE HARBOR, NISSEQUOGUE, VILLAGE OF THE BRANCH, COMMACK, STONY BROOK

Thursday - June 22, 2017

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Subscription \$23.00 per year

Vol. 129 No. 30 • 75¢

## Seiskaya Ballet's BESFI Performance Sparkles with Showmanship

By: Christina Pandolfi

In its 43-year history, Seiskaya Ballet has garnered an impressive collection of awards and accolades; its home base in St. James is adorned in glossy photographs and medals from dancers who've left their unforgettable mark. Some would say that this past achievement is "good enough."

But Seiskaya Ballet isn't interested in "good enough." The company continues to thrive because of its dedication to empowering the next generation of dancers, and this was made abundantly clear at the 38<sup>th</sup> year of the BESFI Spring Showcase at SUNY Stony Brook's Staller Center for the Performing Arts. More noticeable than years past, Seiskaya Ballet demonstrated a polished precision, attacking each piece with commitment that proves the admiration for ballet will only continue to flourish among promising young dancers.

Leading off Act I was Principal Dancer Jenna Lee and Guest Artist Alan Alberto in the whimsical *Le Corsaire Pas De Deux*. A matured Lee approached Drigo's lyrical score with commendable control, offering the audience a more elegant side to her dancing. Alberto matched her thoughtfulness, giving her a solid foundation to execute every framed penché and lift with ease. Gypsy Pas was up next, featuring the talents of the corps de ballet and fresh-faced up-and-comer, Lara Caraiani. Blessed with easy grace and natural facilities, Caraiani showed impressive promise, ably partnered by Max Lippman. First Soloist Amber Donnelly followed with Guest Artist Darren McIntyre in the regal *Paquita Pas De Deux*. A dancer with enviable lines, Donnelly was careful and exacting, complemented by McIntyre's solidity, which lit up their partner work as the music's vibrato resonated on. The charming *Harlequinade Pas De*

*Deux* closed out the act, sweetly danced by Principal Dancer Diana Atoian and beloved Guest Artist, Boyko Dossev. The duo moved together as one unit; Atoian's

strong technique and exuberance illuminating Dossev's incredible fluidity. It was a joy to behold.

Sprinkled with delightful character dance miniatures, like

Siberian and Gypsy Dance, Act II focused on the ethereal, featuring several pas de deux that transported the audience to a different time and place. The lesser-known, exotic *Talisman Pas De Deux*, danced by Jamie Bergold and a returning McIntyre, served to showcase the couple's long limbs and effortless chemistry. But it was the revised old Imperial standard, *Diana and Acteon Pas De Deux* that set the stage on fire with the magical Brianna Jimenez and a returning Dossev. Matched in both physicality and spirit, the pair danced as two halves of an incredible, ever-evolving puzzle. Dossev, the ever-present picture of classical grace, complemented Jimenez's subtlety, drawing the audience in with her command of proper technique and a sparkling *épaulement* that transcends her young age. Watch out, world.

After a brief intermission, Act III kicked things off with the *Swan Lake Pas De Trois*, anchored by a returning Alberto. A true play of opposites, a poised Ava Aubé delivered clean, classic lines with every arabesque, offsetting Graciela Carrero-Sagona's lyrical quality and radiant expression.

Seiskaya Ballet original *Walpurgis Night* ended the showcase on a triumphant note, featuring both the junior and corps de ballet in a most pleasant way. Standouts included the Waltz of the Bacchantes, the dynamic little devils in *Dance of the Satyrs*, and the sensual *Adagio* between the *Bacchus and 1<sup>st</sup> Bacchante*, Max Lippman and Diana Atoian. Once again, Lippman showed his growing strength as a classical partner, executing gravity defying lifts and easy assisted pirouettes that let Atoian shine like the star she is. A throwback to classical dancers from the turn of the century, Atoian is the study of grace and ease, dancing with undeniable fortitude that appears effortless and nonchalant.

It's a joy being able to watch these dancers grow year after year.



*Seiskaya Ballet Principal Diana Atoian as the 1<sup>st</sup> Bacchante was the perfect foil to Max Lippman's Bacchus in the classic Walpurgis Night. The pair executed gravity defying lifts with ease and panache.*

*Effortless chemistry framed Seiskaya's Jamie Bergold and Guest Artist Darren McIntyre in the exotic Talisman Pas de Deux.*



*The stage was set ablaze with the pairing of Brianna Jimenez and Guest Artist Boyko Dossev in a picture of classical grace dancing the Diana and Acteon Pas de Deux.*

*Jenna Lee and Guest Artist Alan Alberto were well matched in the lyrical Le Corsaire Pas de Deux.*



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