



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

Thursday - May 16, 2013

Bringing Home The News Since 1887

Subscription \$23.00 per year

Vol. 125 No. 24 • 75¢

## Ballet Review

## Dulcet Tones, Splashes of Color and Brilliant Dancers Commanded the Stage

By Phillip L. Sciarillo

The cornucopia of ballet that is the annual BESFI Benefit at Stony Brook University's Staller Center for the Arts was a feast for the ears full of familiar classical passages and brimming with colorful costumes and stellar dance performances. Seiskaya Ballet stages the BESFI Benefit annually and has been treating patrons to a collage of ballet pas de deux, character ballet selections and one-act ballets since 1980. This season's program was especially noteworthy because of the emergence of several new talents.

The program opened with the joyful Aurora's Wedding Pas de Deux from Sleeping Beauty featuring Seiskaya Ballet first soloist Alexandra Berti and guest artist the Ajkun Ballet's J. Ryan Carroll. The attractive couple was well-matched with long classical lines melding perfectly with the tender musical strains that ascended into a joyful finale. The partners exhibited grace and musicality. Of particular note was Ms. Berti's solo variation which she executed with verve.

The Harlequinade Pas de Deux featured popular guest artist Boston Ballet's Boyko Dossev and Seiskaya featured soloist Danielle Lovetro. The couple was playful, and she was aptly coy throughout the pas. Dossev was, as usual, a masterful partner and displayed impeccable technique landing all his double tours in fifth position and finishing his gallop turns with a flurry of pirouettes. Lovetro was simply stunning. She exhibited high ballon in her jumps coupled with impressive à la secondes plus a long series of Italian fouettés which were flawlessly executed.

Seiskaya principal dancer Alexandra Palma is rightfully taking her place as Seiskaya Ballet's pre-eminent ballerina. Matched with Milwaukee Ballet principal dancer David Hovhannisyian, the couple was riveting in the Paquita Pas de Deux. Mr. Hovhannisyian's superb elevation in jumps and artful partnering played against Palma's magnificent split jumps, lightning multiple turns and professional demeanor. Interspersed in the variation section of the pas were three solos usually incorporated into the staging of the Paquita Grand Pas. Soloist Lauren Kerr made her mark displaying grace and fluidity. Dancing the "gloves variations," featured soloist Jade Donnelly's suppleness was cap-



Milwaukee Ballet principal dancer David Hovhannisyian and Seiskaya Ballet principal dancer Alexandra Palma were electrifying in the Paquita Pas de Deux.



Marianna Spentzos leapt to prominence as the Street Urchin in Street People.

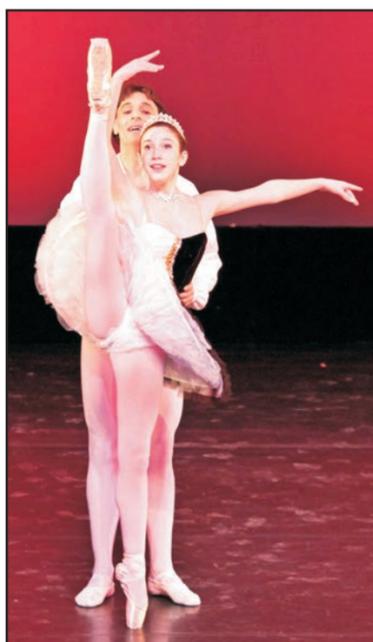
tivating resulting in a spot-on interpretation of this challenging variation. Statuesque Seiskaya featured soloist Julia Kharzeev executed a series of arabesques that accented her classic balletic lines. The pas de deux concluded with an inspiring coda highlighted by Alexandra Palma's rousing single-double-single-double... 32 fouetté exhibition.

In Act II, Mr. Dossev returned to partner Seiskaya principal Anna Craddock. Craddock, one of Seiskaya Ballet's all-time most acclaimed dancers, has been a gold standard by which other dancers are measured. In her final BESFI performance, she did not disappoint. Dossev and Craddock have partnered several times and each time the chemistry and artistry of the pairing grows. Each musical note could be seen and felt. The pathos that was exuded made the Black Swan almost magnetic. As she consorts and beguiles Prince Siegfried, the audience sees glimpses of tenderness and then rejection while she taunts her suitor. The pas was elegant and enthralling eliciting thunderous applause.

The jaunty Flower Festival Pas de Deux is a lighthearted Bournonville choreographed pas that paired Seiskaya featured soloist Ashley Chenery and first soloist Mac Gershfield. The couple meshed nicely yielding a cheerful and sprightly



The Black Swan Pas de Deux was mesmerizing and featured Boston Ballet's Boyko Dossev and Seiskaya Ballet principal Anna Craddock.



Rising star Seiskaya's Danielle Lovetro paired with Boyko Dossev for the whimsical and thoroughly entertaining Harlequinade Pas de Deux.

pas. Chenery's impressive relevé développés, beautifully arched feet and sweet vulnerability played well against Gershfield's swift beats, energetic tours and teenage shyness. The two made an appealing couple.

Mr. Hovhannisyian returned for the Sylvia Pas de Deux opposite Seiskaya principal dancer Alexandra Tsivitis. Ms. Tsivitis is a nicely proportioned dancer with a facility for turns, excellent small and large jumps as well as outstanding musicality. The pas was engrossing from the outset. Her striking blue tutu, clean classical lines, assured stage presence and beaming smile were captivating. It was obvious to all that the couple was having fun dancing together which added another dimension to the pas. It seemed as if they had been dancing together for years. Both dancers executed their solo variations with panache showing off high elevation in jumps and performing several difficult turn sequences. The pas was a fitting conclusion to Act II.

According to the program notes for the one-act ballet, Street People is set to a medley of Saint-Saëns compositions. The ballet "weaves a tale of confrontation, strife, flirtatious encounters and romance based on modern day characters." The Valia Seiskaya choreographed ballet premiered in 1986. The four main characters in the story are portrayed by Alexandra Palma as the Policewoman, guest artist Billy Blanken of the Ajkun Ballet as the Policeman, Alexandra Tsivitis as the Librarian and Seiskaya Ballet featured soloist Marianna Spentzos as the Street Urchin.

The choreography for Street People incorporates a variety of styles ranging from pure classical to contemporary and effectively utilizes touches of mime. The ballet is fast paced, and the poignant ending is touching. Ms. Palma was again at her best. Her turns, including a quadruple pirouette and ending fouetté flourish were breath-taking. Alexandra Tsivitis has extraordinary leg extensions which she displayed several times in her pas with Billy Blanken. It was, however, the Street Urchin around whom the story revolves who stole the show. The lithesome and leggy Ms. Spentzos danced her way into the audience's heart. The Street Urchin role was a coming of age for her. Her nicely elevated split jumps, secure turns, impeccable facilities, cherubic looks and an ability to stay in character won everyone over. The ballet was a tour de force with additional outstanding performances by featured soloists Alyson Miller as the Governess and Jade Donnelly as the Skull Gang Leader.

Two character dances, Tarantella and Siberian, were staged by Character Rehearsal Mistress Nicole DiFiore. The numbers had the audience stamping their feet and clapping to the folk rhythms. It was great fun to watch such young dancers perform in unison. Bravo!

Nothing But Water was a contemporary solo variation danced by Alexandra Palma that showed the breadth of her dance talents and the extent of her dynamic athleticism that has been heretofore seldom displayed. Ms. Palma danced with a remarkable intensity that was simply stunning.

Kudos to Costume Mistress Sue DiFiore and her staff for their professionalism in costuming the production. Lighting Director Elizabeth Silver's selection of projected backgrounds and the effective lighting of Street People also added production value. Let me close with a final well done to all the dancers and a fond farewell to Anna Craddock and Alexandra Tsivitis who are headed to college this fall.