

Ballet Beat

A Newsletter from For Art's Sake



June, 2010
Vol. 13 No. 1

Midsummer Magic Marks NYCB's SPAC Season

The New York City Ballet's 45th summer season at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, July 6-17, brings back some of the world's greatest dances and dancers while also looking boldly to the future. The magic includes three performances of George Balanchine's 1962 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, (July 7, 8M, 10M), his brilliant translation into ballet of Shakespeare's world of mixed-up lovers and mischievous fairies.



Midsummer opened SPAC as its inaugural event on July 8, 1966, and immediately proved the perfect ballet for the venue's woodland setting. The magical materials of Shakespeare's great comedy blend with Felix Mendelssohn's famous music and Balanchine's choreography in an enchanted work of startling clarity. A fight between Oberon, the King of the Fairies, and Titania, the Queen, turns everything upside down. Oberon's tricky lieutenant, Puck, delights in extending the confusion to two human couples, whose affections suddenly change without explanation. It takes a little sympathetic fairy magic to match the lovers properly again.

The ballet's comic highpoint, the pas de deux for Titania and Bottom, the working stiff transformed with an ass's head, makes us laugh while expressing some truths about the crazy lengths to which love can drive us. Act 2, the wedding entertainment, includes Mendelssohn's grand march and a pas de deux that encapsulates the love and trust that all the couples have found for

themselves. The perfect ballet for young and old—two of the performances are matinees—*Midsummer* will delight both experienced balletgoers and dance novices.

A different kind of magic will fill the Ballet Gala, July 10. For the first time, the Gala features two Saratoga premieres, a program of entirely new ballets, one each by Alexei Ratmansky and Christopher Wheeldon, two of today's major choreographers and both NYCB fan favorites.

Ratmansky's *Namouna*, A Grand Divertissement, takes lush, romantic music by Edouard Lalo from his 1882 ballet *Namouna*, to whip up a modern homage to the swoony excesses of nineteenth-century ballet. Its solo for NYCB principal Sara Mearns, by all accounts, is a showstopper. Wheeldon's ballet, *Estancia*, which has not premiered in New York at this writing, uses a cowboy-flavored score by the Argentine composer Alberto Ginester, originally commissioned by NYCB co-founder Lincoln Kirstein for a never-completed number for *Ballet Caravan*, one of NYCB's predecessor companies.

For those who can never get enough Balanchine, the two weeks bring six more of his works besides *Midsummer*. His shorter fairytale ballet to Ravel, *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* (July 14, 17M), presents Hans Christian Andersen's toy soldier in love with the toy ballerina in a charming and poignant pas de deux, and *Who Cares?* (July 6, 8), Balanchine's rousing show-biz dazzler, sets the company spinning, hoofing, and high-kicking to some of Gershwin's greatest songs. Two ballets to classic French music, *La Source* to Delibes (July 8, 15), the composer of *Coppélia*, and *Walpurgisnacht Ballet* to music from Gounod's *Faust* (July 14, 17M, 17), show Balanchine's pastoral and nightmare sides, respectively.

SPAC also will welcome back two of Balanchine's supreme achievements:

Divertimento No. 15, his only surviving ballet to Mozart (July 9, 15M, 17), pits five ballerinas against each other in the most elegantly sumptuous dance competition you will ever see, while *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* (July 15, 17M, 17) one of the pinnacles of Balanchine's stripped-down modern style, frames two heartbreaking pas de deux with ingenious and energetic dancing for soloists and the corps. Those middle movements will break your heart, and the finale will heal it with a big smile.

Samuel Barber's lyrical violin concerto shows up as well as Stravinsky's, in one of Peter Martins's best ballets. *Barber Violin Concerto* (July 6, 9, 15M) features a swoony opening movement that shifts into a hectic, athletic conclusion. This idea of a two-part study in contrasts also marks Christopher Wheeldon's much-loved *After the Rain* (July 15, 17M), which concludes with a soaring pas de deux to Arvo Pärt's minimalist piano-violin duo. Another crowd-pleaser, Ulysses Dove's flashy *Red Angels*, returns after a long absence (July 6, 9, 15M).

NYCB will also perform four terrific ballets by that most American of choreographers, the great Jerome Robbins, including the season's curtain-raiser, *Fancy Free* (July 6, 8). Robbins's first venture into choreography, it irresistibly depicts three sailors on shore leave looking for love and adventure to Leonard Bernstein's jazzy music, and later became the basis for Robbins's first Broadway show, *On the Town*. Another of Robbins's all-American dances, N. Y. Export: *Opus Jazz* (July 13, 16), transforms the teenaged energy of West Side Story into a plotless ballet, to a Robert Prince score, that captures the verve of America's youth. A film about the ballet, produced by NYCB soloists Ellen Bar and Sean Suozzi and beautifully shot in locations all around New York, recently drew raves on PBS.

Finally, the season brings two of Robbins's great Chopin ballets. *In the Night* (July 13, 16), which features three

couples dancing to some of the gorgeous piano nocturnes, will make you swoon with delight—it's one of Robbins's great, subtle romantic works. And *The Concert* (July 13, 16) gives us the flip side of Robbins's relationship with Chopin as he presents the fantasies of an audience at a piano recital. The funniest ballet ever made, it has so many things going wrong in it—one section is affectionately known as "The Mistake Ballet"—that it may make you laugh helplessly. And when the frustrated husband who dreams of running off with the excitable young woman suddenly sprouts butterfly wings—but enough! Go see for yourself!

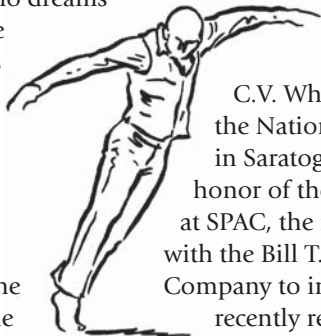
As mentioned, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a wonderful way to introduce children—or even yourself—to ballet, but kids will also enjoy the sailors romping in *Fancy Free*, the Broadway razzle of *Who Cares?*, the wistful charm of *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, and the hilarious antics of *The Concert*. But feel free to experiment, too—the whole family might well be enchanted by the sublime *Divertimento No. 15*, excited by N. Y. Export, and thrilled by *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. The great thing about watching the New York City Ballet is how you'll fall in love with dances—and dancers—when you least expect it.

Jay Rogoff

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company to visit SPAC and National Museum of Dance

We all have our favorites but the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company has made a case for itself as one the most well established yet cutting edge companies in operation. Starting in the early eighties, BTJ/AZDC made an immediate splash in the dance world with its diverse themes, collaborations and perhaps most exciting of all – bodies. This is a company as rich in color, age, race, size and training as it is in content and choreography. Jones, and late partner Zane, worked in solos and duets prior to forming the company. The company has performed all over the world and maintains itself as one of the

crowns jewels of American dance. One of the reasons they have continued to be so successful and so inventive is their consistent collaboration with other artists of different backgrounds. Bill T. Jones and his company are particularly aware of the value in producing recorded dance works and documentaries. They have produced and collaborated on several different dvds and television programs, furthering their reach as dance artists as well as furthering the prevalence and quality of dance videography.



Bill T. Jones was the 2007 inductee to the C.V. Whitney Hall of Fame at the National Museum of Dance in Saratoga Springs, New York. In honor of their upcoming performance at SPAC, the museum will be working with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company to install a display within the recently renovated C.V. Whitney Hall of Fame. This will include costumes, video and text from the company, along side Jones' induction plaque. The display can be seen in the Hall of Fame through the end of the summer season. The National Museum of Dance is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm. www.dancemuseum.org, or call, 518-584-2225, for more information.

On July 23rd, Jones will be giving a lecture at the National Museum of Dance to introduce the company's performance of *Fondly Do We Hope... Fervently Do We Pray* at SPAC the following week. The lecture will be held from 6:30-7:30pm and is highly recommended prior to viewing the piece. Advanced reservations are required to attend this event. With the purchase of a performance ticket, admission is free but there is a \$5 admission fee for the general public [contact SPAC box offices for details]. Jones is well known as a strong and intriguing speaker: this will be an event not to be missed.

Fondly Do We Hope... Fervently Do We Pray is one of the newest works shown by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. It is inspired by Abraham Lincoln and

honors the president's recent bicentennial. The visuals [including costumery, set design and multi-media] are brilliant and bold in whites, greys and black with surprising splashes of gem tones here and there. Incredibly powerful, moving, thoughtful...this is a piece that truly offers an emotional share to the viewer. The performance is on July 28th at 8pm. To get tickets or additional information go to www.spac.org.

Whether a first time viewer of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company or a loyal follower through their 25 year lifespan, this summer will be a wonderful opportunity for everyone to experience this company through performance, lecture and multi media exhibition.

Sarah Hall-Weaver

Four Choreographers, Four American Composers

One of the New York City Ballet programs to be performed this summer at SPAC is the one fittingly titled "All American" which features four ballets by four choreographers set to music by four American composers.

2010 marks the 20th anniversary of Leonard Bernstein's death. Bernstein was known as a great composer and a great conductor and in honor of this important anniversary, it seemed fitting to pay him tribute and write about American music. Jerome Robbins choreographed several ballets to Bernstein's music including *West Side Story Suite* (which is essentially excerpts from the musical *West Side Story*, also choreographed by Robbins) and *Fancy Free* which will be performed at SPAC this summer.

Fancy Free tells the story of three sailors out for a night on the town. Bernstein's music drives the narrative and the characterization: each sailor has his own character demonstrated by both the music and the choreography. This is especially obvious in three virtuosic solos, one performed by each sailor. Without giving too much of the story away, repeated musical themes accompany similar sections of the story that are also reflected



in the choreography.

It's interesting to note that while *West Side Story* was distilled by Robbins into the ballet *West Side Story Suite*, *Fancy Free* was the inspiration and basis of the musical *On the Town*, also with music by Bernstein and choreography by Robbins.

Who Cares? features the music of another prominent American composer, George Gershwin. The choreography is set to orchestrated versions of some of Gershwin's most well-known and loved songs including *Strike Up the Band*, *Embraceable You*, and *I Got Rhythm*. Although the songs in *Who Cares?* are recognizable, the versions used may not be. The orchestrations by Hershby Kay retain the jazzy flavor of Gershwin's music through catchy rhythms, especially in the piano solos in the final section, *I Got Rhythm*. Balanchine's witty choreography echoes these rhythms providing unison and interplay among the dancers.

A third ballet performed to music by an American composer is *Ulysses Dove's Red Angels*. *Red Angels* is set to Richard Einhorn's work, *Maxwell's Demon*, a piece for electric violin. The title of the piece is actually a reference to physics, the concept of a perpetual motion machine in particular, an obvious reference upon hearing the piece.

Rhythmically and tempo-wise, the lyrical choreography provides an interesting contrast with the percussive sound and perpetual motion of the violin. The ballet also effectively uses silence, again contrasting with the frenzied music.

Peter Martins's ballet *Barber Violin Concerto* will also be performed at SPAC this summer. As the name suggests, the work is choreographed to Samuel Barber's beautiful violin concerto. The ballet features two couples; initially one ballet couple and one modern dance couple. The stately first movement features all four dancers; each is characterized by unique choreography in relation to the music. The lyrical second movement and frenzied third movement play with the relationships between the dancers offering hints of a story.

The concerto is characterized by Barber's haunting harmonies and long melodic lines. While there are many recordings of the *Barber Violin Concerto*, in honor of Leonard Bernstein, I feel the need to mention one in particular. In

1964, violinist Isaac Stern recorded the concerto with the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Bernstein. The recording is definitely worth a listen.

The four composers featured are all American and they all lived and worked in the 20th century (though Einhorn is a 21st century composer as well). Their music accompanying these four ballets offers narrative, jazz, lyrical melodies and harmonies, and unusual rhythms. As George Gershwin's brother Ira once wrote, who could ask for anything more?



Alisa Forman

Farewell to Maurice Kaplow

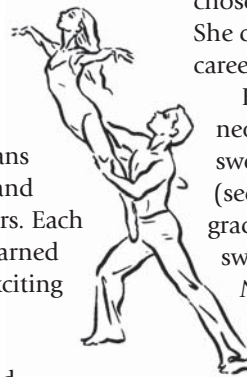
In addition to the farewells of several long time NYCB dancers, the Spring 2010 season saw the final performance of New York City Ballet's Principal Conductor, Maurice Kaplow. Kaplow first conducted the New York City Ballet Orchestra in 1990, joining the company's music staff in 1991. Maestro Kaplow conducted his final performance on June 24. Truly respected by the members of the orchestra, his presence on the podium will be missed.

Alisa Forman

Big shoes to be filled at NYCB

Four successive Sundays in June 2010 contributed to a bittersweet month for NYCB as the company and its legions of fans bid farewell to four beloved and long-tenured principal dancers. Each member of this quartet has earned a happy retirement and an exciting next step with an astounding combined ninety-eight years of service to the company, and countless hours of pleasure for those who watched. We Saratoga balletomanes wish Godspeed to four bright lights. We will miss you all so very much!

Yvonne Borree joined NYCB in 1987 and gave her final performance on June 6, 2010. Yvonne's vast repertoire included roles in ballets of all of the



major choreographers at NYCB and was particularly known for her interpretation of the Balanchine/Stravinsky "Duo Concertante". Her piquant charm was shown in soubrette roles such as Swanhilda (*Coppelia*), Doll (*Steadfast Tin Soldier*) and Columbine (*Harlequinade*).

Philip Neal also joined NYCB in 1987 and gave his final performance on June 13, 2010. Philip is unforgettable as a tender, steady and attentive partner in ballets such as *Serenade*, *Chaconne* and all the Cavalier roles. He always placed his ballerina front and center. Of course Philip jumped directly into the spotlight himself when he was given the opportunity to show his talent as a hooper in *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* and *Who Cares?*

Albert Evans became a member of NYCB in 1988 and retired from dancing on June 20, 2010. Ulysses Dove made a role in the stunning *Red Angels* on him. Albert could dance the hero (*Nutcracker Cavalier*), the villain (*Swan Lake Van Rothbart*) or the comic relief (*Midsummer Night's Dream Puck*) with aplomb, and is so memorable dancing in the Phlegmatic section of the masterpiece *Four Temperaments*.

Darci Kistler is a NYCB legend and has been a Saratoga favorite ever since she burst onto the ballet scene in 1980 as a teenaged member of the corps de ballet. Two years later she was a principal dancer and she has the distinction to be the last dancer who was personally chosen by the master George Balanchine. She concluded her astonishing thirty year career as a dancer on June 27, 2010.

Her repertoire ranged from the neoclassical austerity of Agon to the sweeping lyricism of *Symphony in C* (second movement) and from the grace and dignity of *Mozartiana* to the sweetness of Titania (*Midsummer Night's Dream*) and then to the utter evil of the Siren (*Prodigal Son*). Throughout all Darci wore her heart on her sleeve, demonstrating to all her total commitment to herself, her art and her audience.

From our hearts to yours, thank you to these dedicated and gifted artists who have graced our SPAC stage for decades.

Rhona Koretzky-Forman

Dance With the Dancers: NYCB Sampler Series

Every July, members of New York City Ballet return to Total Body Trifecta Fitness Studio to teach a series of movement classes inspired by the choreography NYCB will perform at SPAC.

This summer is no exception as NYCB principal dancer Jonathan Stafford kicks off the *Dance with the Dancers* series on Monday, July 5th from 7-8pm at the studio located at 61 Lawrence Street in Saratoga Springs. Mr. Stafford has chosen *Fancy Free* as his inspiration with music by Leonard Bernstein. Principal dancer Jenifer Ringer, who has been a part of the series since 1999, will teach on Mondays, July 12 and 19 from 7-8pm. She has chosen *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as her inspiration with music by Mendelssohn. All Monday night classes will be preceded by a 30 minute New York City Ballet Workout technique class taught by certified NYCBWO instructor Mary Anne Fantauzzi from 6:25-6:55pm at no extra cost to NYCB Sampler Series participants. In addition to Mr. Stafford and Ms. Ringer, corps de ballet dancer Andrew Scordato will teach a combination technique and movement class on Saturday, July 10th from 10-11am using music composed by Gershwin for the ballet *Who Cares?*

The cost of the series for non-Trifecta members is \$20 per single class or all four classes for \$75. Space is limited to 15 people per class. To register, please mail a check payable to Total Body Trifecta, 61 Lawrence Street, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Include your name, email address, phone number and dates of classes you wish to attend. For more information, please call Mary Anne Fantauzzi at 518-581-8025 or email her at totbttri@aol.com.

Mary Anne Fantauzzi

"Total Body Tots Program" Makes Dance Come Alive!

Children ages 4-7 can explore the two story ballets of New York City Ballet coming to SPAC this summer on Tuesdays from 10:30-11:30. *Story, Dance & Play: Ballet* will feature *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on July 6th. Children will become fairies, dance with a donkey, and frolic through the forest. On July 13th,

the ballet *Steadfast Tin Soldier* will allow children to make a soldier's hat, design a tin heart and dance like a paper doll. A third class called *Don't Stop: Hip Hop!* on July 20th from 10:30-11:30 will allow children to explore simple hip hop and modern dance combinations. All three classes will be taught by Nicole Kadar and Mary Anne Fantauzzi. The classes will be limited to 12 participants. The cost is 3 classes for \$25 or \$10 per class. For more information, please call Fantauzzi at 518-581-8025 or email her at totbttri@aol.com.

Mary Anne Fantauzzi

NY Export: Opus Jazz The Film

Choreographed in the late 1950's by Jerome Robbins to the music of Robert Prince, the ballet *N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz* was revived by New York City Ballet in 2005. Its message of youth experiencing longing, restlessness, loneliness, love and rejection are still relevant 45 years later. So relevant, two NYCB soloists, Ellen Bar and Sean Suozzi, felt compelled to transform this ballet into a 46 minute film that captured the same raw emotions of the teens but set it in the urban NYC of today. Street clothes and sneakers gave it a contemporary look. Each of the five movements took the dancers to various parts of the city: Chelsea's High Line pre-renovation, McClarren Pool, Coney Island and several locations in Brooklyn. Its premiere at the 2010 South by Southwest Film Festival earned its creators the Emerging Visions Audience Award and its PBS debut on March 24, 2010 was watched by over 300,000 viewers.

SPAC is proud to announce two pre-performance talks with one of the film's creators, Ellen Bar, on Tuesday, July 13th and Friday, July 16th at 7pm in the Gold Room of the Hall of Springs. Admission is \$5 with the purchase of a ticket to that evening's performance. Space is limited and these talks often sell out. To purchase tickets, visit www.spac.org/calendar/pre-performance-talks.

Mary Anne Fantauzzi



Ballet Beat

is written and published by the members of **For Art's Sake**

Founded in 1998 to raise public awareness of New York City Ballet. To learn more about our events and activities, call Rhona Koretzky-Forman at 587-7023.

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Distribution by volunteers of
For Art's Sake.

Funding for this issue of Ballet Beat

is graciously contributed by:

Lyrical Ballad Bookstore

John and Jan DeMarco, proprietors
7 Phila St., Saratoga Springs, NY
518-584-8779

Saratoga Dance, Etc.

Leslie Roy-Heck, owner
53 Church St., Saratoga Springs, NY
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Thank You everyone.



In Memoriam
Mae G. Banner

