

MESSENGER

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

Thursday - April 21, 2011

Bringing Home The News Since 1887

Subscription \$23.00 per year

Vol. 123 No. 23 • 75¢

—Entertainment News—

DANCE REVIEW

Bravura Dancing and Virtuosity at the Staller Center

Story By Michelle Isabelle

In what has become a treasured Long Island Spring tradition, The Seiskaya Ballet Company of St. James presented its annual dance performance to benefit The Ballet Education & Scholarship Fund (BESFI) at the Staller Center last weekend. World renowned male guest artists Oğulcan Borova (*principal, Cincinnati Ballet*), Matthew Prescott (*Morphoses the Wheeldon Company*), and Joel Prouty (*Boston Ballet, 'Hank' in "Come Fly Away" on Broadway*) partnered the pre-professional students from the Seiskaya Ballet Academy in a dazzling display of artistry and virtuosity.

In the *Don Quixote pas de deux* the feisty Mr. Borova unleashed a series of whipping, gravity-defying tours en l'air partnering principal Anna Craddock. As Kitri, Ms. Craddock delivered a dramatic and flirtatious portrayal with punctuated phrasing, extraordinary balanced positions, and lightning fast fouetté and pirouette turns. Later in the program Ms. Craddock kept to the Spanish theme with a fiery modern interpretation of Bizet's *Carmen*, again showcasing her sharp attack and speed.

The *Paquita pas de deux* proved to be a perfect platform to highlight the technical agility and mature artistry



Alexandra Palma and Matthew Prescott were perfectly suited for the romantic *La Bayadère pas de deux*.

of principal Alexis Lucena. Partnered Mr. Borova, who again performed a thrilling series of turns, Ms. Lucena was the vision of a ballerina in a series of difficult lifts, and beautifully executed footwork, pirouettes, and arabesques. Like Ms. Craddock, she also showed the audience another dimension of her talent with a sultry, jazzy contemporary solo. She reminded me of a young

Dorothy Lamour – very glamorous.

Featured soloist Isabelle Stark, known for her radiance and stage presence, lit up the theater in the *Diana and Acteon pas de deux*. Partnered by Matthew Prescott, a tall and elegant dancer, Ms. Stark was able to exhibit the full range of her perfect balletic proportions, with long leg extensions and graceful upper body and arm placement throughout the piece. Mr. Prescott's strength and athleticism was also evident in his partnering of featured soloist Alexandra Palma in the romantic *La Bayadère pas de deux*. Ms. Palma conveyed confidence and demonstrated a bright quality in her leaps, turns and balancés.

Guest artist Joel Prouty had plenty of opportunity to show off his command of beats, in the *Giselle ant pas de deux* partnering featured Nicole DiFiore then again in *William Tell* partnering featured soloist Mikhaïla Whiteman. Ms. DiFiore is a petite and elegant dancer as Giselle, she synch with Mr. Prouty with an energetic light and



Mikhaïla Whiteman teamed with Joel Prouty to execute successive intricate beat combinations in the *William Tell pas de deux*.

White-Fiore charming and, kept in Prouty's genetic featur-springy turning jumps. To the delightful score of Rossini, Ms. Whiteman projected a sweet innocence while executing a very difficult series of intricate footwork. Both were well suited to Mr. Prouty as a partner.

The finale of the evening was *Mask*, a comic ballet choreographed by Valia Seiskaya, reminiscent of the story of Cinderella. A young Prince, played and danced with aplomb by featured soloist Justin Meyers, is asked by the King and Queen to select from five aptly named maid-



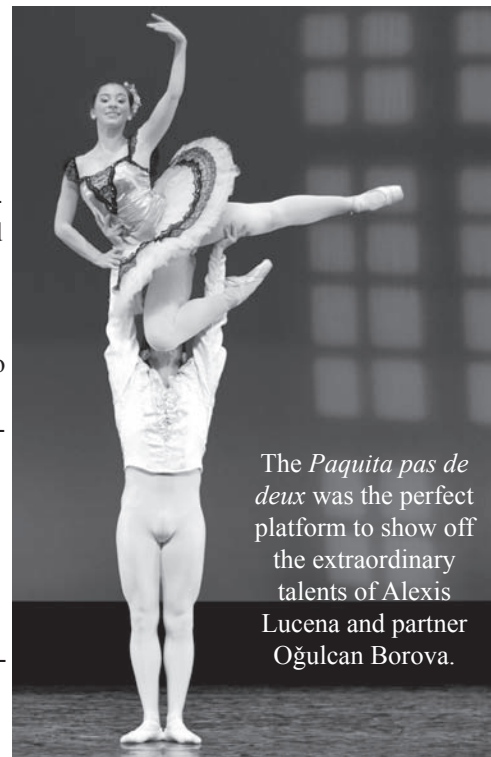
Joel Prouty was cast opposite Nicole DiFiore in the jaunty *Giselle Peasant pas de deux*.



The *Diana and Acteon pas de deux* featured the exquisitely match pair of Isabelle Stark and Matthew Prescott.

ens – “Snobbish”, “Voluptuous”, “Sleepy”, “Topsy” and “Ditzy”. Each dancer embodied the qualities of the character they danced, but featured soloist Alexandra Tsivitis gave a stellar performance as “Topsy”, comic and graceful at once, and supremely entertaining. Not easy. His sister, the Princess, superbly played by the agile and sparrow-like Danielle Lovetro, calls on her Gypsy to find more suitable partners. Of the five selected he chooses the beautiful and self-assured Alexis Lucena, who captivated the audience once again with her technical feats and allure.

The curtain call featured departing principal dancer Alexis Lucena saying her good-byes to the audience and Mme. Seiskaya. Accepted to numerous prestigious college dance programs, she will be focusing on contemporary dance at SUNY Purchase in the Fall.



The *Paquita pas de deux* was the perfect platform to show off the extraordinary talents of Alexis Lucena and partner Oğulcan Borova.

Michelle Isabelle is a professional freelance writer who has written several reviews and articles about ballet.