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Taking a Trip to Pluto and Beyond

BY HEATHER SHOENING

Boulder Ballet is taking a wild ride to new horizons, and you should join them.

It’s a beautiful blend of science reaching for Pluto, and humans—dancers—reaching and expanding.

—ANA CLAIRE
Boulder Ballet artistic director

The following week Combs presented a fresh idea to the artistic director, Ana Claire. Within the context of its outreach programs, the ballet blends arts and science on a small scale, but what if they could bring it to a greater audience?

And with this, a new concept for the Boulder Ballet winter show achieved liftoff.

Shooting for the Stars

Boulder Ballet’s “New Horizons” will make its debut in February 2019. This production is designed to celebrate the accomplishments of the many Boulder scientists and engineers of New Horizons space mission through dance. In 2015, New Horizons captured the first close-up images of Pluto, and on Jan. 1, 2019, will do a close flyby of a Kuiper Belt object nicknamed Ultima Thule.

The winter production is always contemporary or modern, and this year will be particularly intriguing with the second act of the production being entirely devoted to the celebration of this mission. The production as a whole will include images of Pluto captured by New Horizons, as well as costumes with integrated light sensors to truly harness the gravity of this accomplishment.

“‘It’s a testament to the strength and drive of humans to not be satisfied, to keep reaching and striving—the mystery and beauty of outer space,’ said Claire. ‘It’s a beautiful blend of science reaching for Pluto, and humans—dancers—reaching and expanding.’

Ballet Theater?

If you’ve never attended the ballet, “New Horizons” is a great way for you to throw your own hat in the ring. It’s not your typical story ballet, like ‘The Nutcracker’ or ‘Giselle’ or ‘Swan Lake.’ It’s a contemporary ballet, meaning the movements, the music, the costumes are very different from what the classics may bring to mind.

In the first act, one of the pieces will be choreographed by associate artistic director Lance Hardin and Amy Earnest. A costume with integrated light sensors will create a stunning light show set to the backdrop of original electronic music composed by Michael Shulze, teaching associate professor at the Lamont School of Music at DU. Another piece, choreographed by company dancer and Boulder native Ryland Early, was an audience favorite at Boulder Ballet’s fall production, “FACES.”

‘This type of ballet is much more accessible to people, including younger audiences,’” said Claire. ‘‘The storyline hints at ideas, and the audience is free to interpret in different ways.’’

The second act will be an opportunity for the company dancers to interpret as well. In a classical ballet, the choreography is ‘‘set on the company,” meaning all of the movements are developed by the choreographer and the company dancers must perform them exactly—no room for deviation or interpretation. However, for ‘‘New Horizons,’’ the choreography will be ‘‘created on the company,” meaning the choreographers, Ana Claire and Claire Davison, a Boulder-trained dancer now with American Ballet Theatre in New York, will provide the framework for the movements and allow each dancer a latitude of interpretation for his or her part during the choreographic process.

‘‘As artists, we are presenting ideas to you—friends, family, strangers—in a space where all interpretations are valued,’’ Hardin said. ‘‘This is a celebration of dance that is bigger than ourselves. We look forward to participating in your ideas.’’

GET READY FOR LIFTOFF

Friday, Feb. 22, 2019 @ 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 23, 2019 @ 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 24, 2019 @ 2 p.m.
Gordon Commons Theatre – The Dairy Arts Center
2560 Walnut St., Boulder

For tickets, more information and to learn about the ballet’s outreach programs, visit www.boulderballet.org

Wasser | Spring 2018-19

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