Festival Ballet’s ‘Up Close On Hope’ dazzles

Review by
DON FOWLER

Ballet is alive and well at Providence’s 825 Hope St., home of Festival Ballet Providence and its Up Close On Hope” Black Box Theatre.

Their spring program offers seven dances, two world premieres and three company premieres that are performed “up close,” where you can nearly reach out and touch the dancers. With seven pieces to chose from, if you don’t like one just wait a few minutes in the under two-hour program for the next offering. Fortunately, I liked every one.

Artistic Director Mihailo Djuric introduces the program and invites you to join him for wine and hors d’oeuvres during a brief intermission. There seemed to be a running theme of love in the air, as four of the dances centered around two people with traditional and modern approaches set to music by Caccini, Vidal, Debussy and Verdi. The showstopper is set to Ravel’s “Bolero” and is the most innovative, erotic, yet tasteful, dance number I have ever seen.

As the lights come up, Brenna Di Francesco, one of the few American dancers in the company, hailing from Seekonk, Massachusetts, is lying on a bed, deep in a dreamlike state. All of a sudden, pairs of arms and legs appear from the bed and five men embrace and dance with her. The athleticism, grace and choreography will dazzle you and leave you breathless.

The program closes with a piece titled “Five Movements, Three Repeats, which involves four fabulous dancers working together and solo. I’m not sure about the connections, but I loved the precise dancing. “Up Close On Hope” is an event for dance aficionados, and it is also a wonderful way to introduce young people or those people who “don’t like ballet” even though they have never seen it. A mixture of the traditional and the modern shows the incredible talent and athleticism of Festival’s talented troupe.

Call 353-1129 or go online at festivalballetprovidence.org to make your reservations for Friday, April 12, Saturday, April 13 or Sunday, April 14.