Festival Ballet Providence puts new works in spotlight

By Channing Gray
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Popular Up Close on Hope series returns for two weekends.

A couple of things about Festival Ballet Providence’s popular Up Close on Hope series:

It takes place in a modest black-box space in the company’s home on Providence’s East Side, so you can’t get much closer to the action.

And it tends to showcase new work, so new that Festival Ballet’s longtime artistic director, Mihailo Djuric, said just the other day that a couple of choreographers are still hard at work on their offerings, including a five-minute creation by Ty Parmenter that uses video projections to track the movement of the dancers.

In all, the program, which takes place this weekend and next, includes two world premieres, several local premieres and a couple of pieces in the company’s repertoire that have not been seen for some time, said Djuric.

But even the older selections will feature new dancers, who’ll bring a “fresh energy to the roles,” he said.

Among the highlights is famed choreographer Christopher Wheeldon’s “Five Movements, Three Repeats.” The piece, written for former New York City Ballet star Wendy Whelan, juxtaposes classical and contemporary dancers — one a barefoot woman, the other a ballerina in pointe shoes.

Even though the weekend’s works are new, there are some familiar faces among the choreographers, including Boston-based Gianni Di Marco, who has taken his inspiration for his new ballet from Ravel’s pulsing “Bolero.” Also look for Festival Ballet veteran Jennifer Ricci, known for her sensuality and dramatic flair.
Dance fans who enjoyed Yury Yanowsky’s “Smoke and Mirrors,” which turned up on Festival Ballet’s February program at Veterans Memorial Auditorium, will get to check out his work “The Sun Sleeps.”

The company will also be dusting off Djuric’s “Valse Fresco,” set to the music of Tchaikovsky. It was performed last year at the artistic director’s 20th anniversary party.

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If you go ...

What: “Up Close on Hope”

Where: Festival Ballet Providence, 825 Hope St., Providence.

When: 8 p.m. Friday, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, 6 p.m. Sunday. Also, April 12-14.

Tickets: $50

Information: (401) 353-1129, festivalballetprovidence.org