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The 'Fuzion' of emotion and movement

AREA'S FIRST MODERN DANCE TROUPE PERFORMS

BY KAREN MAMONE

"Bodies on stage do not lie," she tells her dancers.

The mission of Fuzion Dance Artists, the area's first professional contemporary dance company, one of its founders said, is simply a sharing of the human experience through movement.

Leymis Bolanos-Wilmott has choreographed seven of the eight pieces which will be performed at the company's first major local performance March 30-31 at the Historic Asolo Theatre.

While their specific themes are often intentionally ambiguous, their mood and emotional impact is unmistakable, whether the joy-

"Black Nativity" for The Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe.

In August 2005, she was one of six choreographers selected nationally to participate in the Choreography Lab at Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival. In 2002, she received the Dance Magazine award for Southeast Best Choreographer for "Aftermath."

She has also been Choreographer Assistant to Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, artistic director and founder of Urban Bush Women.

Bolanos-Wilmott was the first in the state to receive a certificate in Dance and Healing from the University of Florida and a Master of Fine Arts in Performance/Choreography



the Stage" film festival. She has a

of a dance inspired by the tragedy of 9-11; or the languid mystery of a piece choreographed by co-founder Rachael Inman that uses an aerial swing, "By a Thread."

Bolanos-Wilmott and Inman began performing as a duet in 2002, but the 10-person company in its present form – eight women and two males – has only been together since June.

While this is their first area presentation, Fuzion has already performed in Miami and Chicago, at the Alvin Ailey Theatre in New York, and at the Kennedy Center, where the award-winning "Aftermath," precipitated by the World Trade Center bombings, was unveiled.

Bolanos-Wilmott came to Sarasota as Academic Program Coordinator for FSUdanceSARASOTA. When money for the program dried up, she stayed on, teaching Modern Dance at Booker High School's Sarasota Visual and Performing Arts and co-founding and co-directing Fuzion Dance Artists.

A seasoned dancer and choreographer who also performs with the People's Touring Project, Elizabeth Higgins Dance Theatre, and Millicent M. Johnnie and Dancers, she has been commissioned to choreograph pieces at Saint Petersburg Community College, Florida Community College of Jacksonville and New College of Florida, as well as "Burt William's" Story and

Throughout her creative endeavors, she said, she has continued to be inspired "by the human spirit and the strength of mankind to surpass circumstance."

One critic called her choreography "soulful, moody, ebullient and explosive."

Rachael Inman, co-artistic director of Fuzion Dance Artists, is also the ballet director at Birmingham Dance Theatre. She is currently exploring the new genre

of Aerial Dance through her choreographic work; she feels her investigation and interest in "flying" reflects a common curiosity in humankind.

Inman has also worked within the new field of dance technology and has produced an aerial video-dance that was selected for the 2003 "Dance Beyond

from USC and has worked closely with some formidable instructors and performers, including Suzanne Farrell, Balanchine's muse; Terry Sendgraff, pioneer of Aerial Dance; and Yosury Sharif, founder of the Oriental Academy.

A new mother who is on maternity leave from the company, Inman is also collaborating with licensed therapist Melea Stephens to develop a dance therapy curriculum that deals with mind-body issues while employing movement material originating from Middle Eastern technique to celebrate the feminine body, mind and spirit.

There will be performances at 8 p.m. both nights, and a matinee at 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 31. Tickets are

Top: "Jet Girls" in performance Left: "Aftermath" in performance Bottom: "Fuzion" in performance

\$20-\$25 for adults and \$10-\$15 for students. Call the box office at 360-7399.

Locally, the company has made public appearances at events such as the Sarasota Arts Awards and Arts Day. Its educational outreach program, which is extensive, includes a range of classes from Afro-Modern, Yagalatis to Contact Improvisation for all ages and levels. The company is passionate about involving the community in education-related workshops such as "The Red Tent," a multi-generational experience celebrating the feminine spirit through dance, dialogue and a non-traditional approach.

"The word about Fuzion Dance Artists is spreading quickly," said Dr. Nelson Neal, Fuzion Board of Directors President. "More people are contacting us now to find out how they can be involved in the company's success. It's exciting to discover that Sarasota has so many fans of contemporary dance."

Company member Tim Murray during a rehearsal.

PHOTO BY FRANK TUCCARONE

on our radar

▼ FRI., MARCH 30

'IS THAT ALL THERE IS?' A tribute to Peggy Lee with Mindy Simmons, presented by the Sarasota Jazz Club, Bayfront Community Center, 803 N. Tamiami Tr. Benefits scholarship fund. Tickets \$10, or half-price for members, 316-9207.

STUDENT SHOW - Annual Student Exhibition through April 30 at Longboat Key Center for the Arts, at 6860 Longboat Dr. S. Call 383-2345.

▼ SAT., MARCH 31

JACOBITES UPRISING, a pipe and drum band to stir the Celtic spirit, at 3 p.m. at Van Wezel. Tickets are \$15-\$35, call 953-3368.

▼ SUN., APRIL 1

NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC OF RUSSIA, 8 p.m. at the Van Wezel, part of the Great Orchestras series. Call 953-3368.

M GALLERY OF FINE ART, opening of new exhibit showcasing works by watercolorist Ellen Kaiden, "Flowers and Food." At 16 S. Palm Ave. Call 954-8774.

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