

AB Ignites the Stage with *The Firebird*

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One of Ballet's greatest partnerships was born almost 100 years ago in Paris. Sergei Diaghilev, the brilliant visionary taskmaster of the Ballets Russes, decided to produce an original work with music composed exclusively for his company. He wanted a score that would retell the Russian folktale of a prince who, with the help of a mystical creature, frees a princess from an evil sorcerer. Diaghilev's artistic intention in his productions was to distill the Russian tradition for his audiences who had become, "sickly sentimentalists fainting away to the sounds of Mendelssohn lieder." Diaghilev's first choice of composer was slow to begin work, so Diaghilev selected the relatively unknown 28-year-old Igor Stravinsky to produce the score for *The Firebird*. The fruit of Diaghilev and Stravinsky's work was a vibrant and forceful ballet with a dynamic score that launched Stravinsky's international career.

St. Louis audiences will have a rare opportunity to see *The Firebird* in March when the Alexandra Ballet breathes new life into this Russian folktale for its MainStage production March 17 & 18 at the Touhill Performing Arts Center.

This breathtaking new performance features choreography by master teacher Marek Cholewa, a graduate of the Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia, and opulent costumes created specifically for this production by award-winning costumer Jude Bonnot. Audiences should prepare to be wowed and captivated.



Agatha Schmank & Marek Cholewa



Agatha Schmank & Sergey Sergiev

Recently, Mr. Cholewa and the company dancers braved four days of ominous weather forecasts and intermittent power outages at the studio while they worked on the choreography. Mr. Cholewa's quiet and firm guidance allayed the dancers' weather-related fears and allowed them to express his vision of the ballet. In his energetic and intricate interpretation of the ballet, Cholewa fuses modern and traditional ballet techniques. In line with the tradition of *The Firebird*, Cholewa encouraged the monsters and Kotschei's Retinue to shirk the beauty of traditional ballet and appear monstrous.

Guest artists include Sergey Sergiev and Sean Strycker. Mr. Sergiev, a native of Sofia, Bulgaria, dances the role of Prince Ivan. Awarded the third prize at the Bulgarian National Ballet Competition and a 2000 guest artist at the 19th Varna International Ballet Competition Super Gala performance, Sergiev has danced with the National Ballet of Bulgaria, Ballet Internationale, and presently with the Indiana Ballet Company. Sean Strycker, who portrays Kotschei, appeared in Alexandra Ballet's 2006 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the role of Nick Bottom, and is currently a junior at Butler University. Alexandra Ballet's own Agatha Schmank and Aimee Chastain dance the two lead female roles, with Miss Schmank in the role of the Firebird and Miss Chastain as the lead Princess.

Months of preparation have gone into the costuming. Ms. Bonnot's traditional Russian folk designs, heavily encrusted with thousands of seed pearls, crystals, and gold braid, recall the glory days of the Tsar and Tsarina's palaces.

(Continued on Page 2)

Alexandra Ballet is Funded in Party By:



**Young People's Performance of
The Firebird**

**March 15, 9:30 am and 12:30 pm
Blanche M. Touhill PAC
Free of Charge**

Alexandra Ballet is proud to provide area teachers and their students the most comprehensive free one-day fine arts initiative in our region. Classes are invited to attend a performance of *The Firebird*, a one-act story ballet based on the Russian folktale of a Prince who frees a Princess from a wicked sorcerer with the help of a mystical creature who is part bird, part woman. All participating classes receive an educational workbook in advance of the program to prepare the students for their theatre experience. Alexandra Ballet faculty introduces students to dancers' roles in costume, and there is an interactive presentation "What's Going on Back There?" presented by Stage Manager Tim Hubbard before the program begins. Interested teachers should call 314-469-6222 or online at alexandraballet@msn.com

**The Firebird
Public Performances**

**March 17, 7:30 pm
March 18, 2:00 pm
Blanche M. Touhill PAC
Tickets: \$25 - \$40
Touhill Box Office: 314-516-4949**

The Firebird was first premiered by Ballet Russes in 1910, and has not been presented in St. Louis for over 40 years. Based on the Russian folktale of the same name, *The Firebird* features guest artist Sergey Sergiev in the role of Prince Ivan. Completing this program are *Napoli*, a 19th century Bournonville ballet, *de l'innocense*, choreographed by eminent American choreographer Alan Hinline, and the vibrant and colorful *Moldavian Suite*. Please join the dancers of Alexandra Ballet for this exciting adventure through the centuries of dance!

**Regional Dance America
National Festival
April 23- 29
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

AB's First Company will be traveling to Pittsburgh to participate in Regional Dance America's National Dance Festival. This is only the second time in RDA's fifty-year history that all member companies will participate in a single festival. The talented dancers from Alexandra Ballet will be among nearly two thousand pre-professional dancers and dance professionals in attendance at this Festival, and will participate in master classes taught by teachers at the top of their fields, auditions, and evening performances. 

The radiant firebird, a mystical creature part bird, part woman, becomes real in Ms. Bonnot's design. Nearly 100 individually embroidered and hand-colored silk feathers, each unique, comprise the plumage of the Firebird's spectacular tutu. The stage will be a tapestry of movement and light.



Aimee Chastain & Sean Stryker

Box Office at 314-516-4949.

In addition to this one-act ballet, the Company will perform *Napoli*, *de l'innocense*, and *Moldavian Suite*. Alexandra Ballet's own CiCi Houston staged the third act of *Napoli*, a 19th century August Bournonville ballet set to the music of Helsted and Paulli. One of the 21st century's most respected American Choreographers, Alan Hinline, choreographed *de l'innocense*. *Moldavian Suite*, a blood-pumping character piece completes this study of the evolution of ballet through the centurier in this MainStage presentation.

Public performances are set for Saturday, March 17, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 18, at 2:00 p.m. To purchase tickets, call the Touhill



Aimee Chastain & Sergey Sergiev



In Memoriam
Alexandra Ballet grieves the passing of

Betty Wyn

Loyal Supporter of the Arts in St. Louis
~You will always have a seat at our performances~

Alexandra Ballet once again plays host to St. Louis students for two performances of *The Firebird* at the Blanche M. Touhill PAC on Thursday, March 15, 2007. These Young People's Performances have become one of the largest fine arts initiatives in St. Louis, and the only one to offer such a complete and comprehensive program completely free of charge to all area students.



Each component of this program has been carefully planned with the intent to reach young people who

might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience the thrill of a live performance. Teachers receive an invitation to attend in September, register their class for either a morning or afternoon performance, and are then sent an Alexandra Ballet Educational Booklet. This booklet, developed by Laura Stockman, PhD., LCSW, contains grade-level appropriate information on ballet history and terminology, a synopsis (libretto) of the ballet, information on the composer, choreographer, costumes, scenery, and more, all of which applies to the Missouri, Illinois, and National Standards of Education.



The booklet serves a dual purpose; first, to educate and prepare the student for their experience, and secondly, to motivate them to learn more about this exciting and challenging art form.



When buses arrive at the Touhill PAC on the day of the Young People's Performances, hundreds of children pour into the theater to experience first-hand what live theater is all about. These performances include the same production value found in the public performances the following weekend, with stunning sets, costumes, music and lighting.

In addition to the ballet and the AB Educational Booklet, students are treated to a pre-performance demonstration entitled, "What's Going On Back There?" presented by Stage Manager Tim Hubbard. Hubbard, who has worked with the Grammy Foundation's Leonard Bernstein Center for Learning, gives the students an entertaining glimpse into the backstage activities of a fine arts performance, and explains the stage manager's role in pulling it all together. Alexandra Ballet is proud and honored to welcome Hubbard to St. Louis once again this year.

That these free performances touch children and change lives is evident to all who experience them, and Alexandra Ballet is proud to be a leader in this endeavor as part of our mission to educate, elevate, and enrich our community through the art of dance.

Seats are still available for the afternoon performance of *The Firebird*. If you would like to bring your group of students to this free program, please call the Alexandra Ballet office at 314-469-6222, or email us at alexandraballet@msn.com for more information. Encourage your students to turn off the electronics and turn on their imaginations! 

AB's Winter Rep Warms St. Louis

Jo Lucas



Pas de Quatre

choreographer and friend, Dace Dindonis, in the process.

Ms. Dindonis was a prolific, award-winning choreographer who created more than 85 works during her twenty-year career. Throughout her career, she staged several ballets and smaller works for AB, including *Harlequinade*, *Coppélia*, and *Aubade*.

The Winter Rep Program is offered to the public each winter to demonstrate the versatility of Alexandra Ballet, while raising the resources necessary to continue the student scholarship fund. This scholarship program enables qualified students in the St. Louis region the opportunity to study and train at the Alexandra School of Ballet, the official school of Alexandra Ballet. The school is located in Chesterfield.

The afternoon began with the lovely historical ballet, *Pas de Quatre*, which was set on four members of the First Company by Zhanna Dubrovskaya of Chicago's Salt Creek Ballet. The four dancers, bathed in pink and adorned with roses, charmed the audience with their

It was a frigid afternoon on Sunday, February 4, at the Missouri History Museum Theater in Forest Park with wind chill temperatures hovering around zero. Despite the cold, the talented and versatile dancers of Alexandra Ballet bestowed thoughts of spring and warmed the hearts of those in attendance, while honoring the memory of gifted teacher,

portrayals of four of ballet's most notable ballerinas of the Romantic era; Taglioni, Grisi, Cerrito, and Grahn.

The feeling of being in a spring garden continued with the serene and beautiful *Papillons*, choreographed by AB's own CiCi Houston. Performed by the members of the Junior Company, this piece is a lovely portrayal of emerging butterflies set to Robert Schumann's piano concertos. We look forward to more from this talented group of young dancers.



de l'innocence

After a short intermission, AB continued to warm the audience with *de l'innocence*, choreographed by Alan Hiline, resident choreographer for Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet. An American treasure, Hiline has received many awards for his choreography, including an unprecedented eight National Choreography Awards from Regional Dance America, and enjoys a growing reputation for his modern approach in developing his classically oriented works. *de l'innocence* is an example of this approach, and featured two guest artists, Kevin Wiltz and Andrea Lucas of Butler Ballet.



Moldavian Suite

Finally, the AB apprentices created their own heatwave with *Moldavian Suite*, a blood-pumping piece choreographed by Sergey Kozadayev, Artistic Director of Chicago's Salt Creek Ballet. With AB's four young gentlemen demonstrating their bravura technique and the whirling ladies bedecked in vibrant ribbons of color, this crowd-pleasing number showed the strength of the Company's training in character dance. 

Get the Training You Deserve
at
Alexandra School of Ballet
Official School of Alexandra Ballet

Edited by Lisa Howe

Program	Level	Dates	Faculty
Summer Intensive	Intermediate II - Advanced This program is intended for the serious dance student with a focus on ballet. Curriculum includes: Ballet, Pointe, Variations, Pas de Deux and Character	Week I June 4-8	Petrus Bosman Former Principal, Royal Ballet Kennet Oberly Former Stuttgart Ballet, Boston Ballet
		Week II June 11-15	Marek Cholewa Professor of Dance, Butler University Rosanna Ruffo Adjunct Professor, Butler University Kennet Oberly Former Stuttgart Ballet, Boston Ballet
Young Dancer's Workshop	Beginner II - Intermediate I Curriculum includes: Ballet, Character Repertoire and Ballet Appreciation Dancers will study AB's featured ballet: <i>Coppélia</i>	Week I June 18-22	Alexandra Zaharias Artistic Director-Alexandra Ballet Norma Gabriel Ballet Mistress, Alexandra Ballet
		Week II June 25-29	CiCi Houston Ballet Mistress, Alexandra Ballet
Summer School	All Levels Ballet, Pointe and Variations	July 5-31	Alexandra Zaharias Artistic Director, Alexandra Ballet CiCi Houston Ballet Mistress, Alexandra Ballet

REGISTRATION BEGINS MARCH 1, 2007
CALL TO REGISTER FOR AN EXCITING SUMMER OF DANCE!
314-469-6222

Thank You to the Following Angels...

As we approach the end of a spectacular season, we reflect on the wonderful generosity of our friends and families. Here are just a few of those who have gone out of their way to assist us recently:

- David and Rise Davis, who donated a 12 foot Christmas tree for next season's productions of *The Nutcracker*
- The Briggs family for their donation of storage supplies for The Nutcracker props
- Paul Maasen for donating and installing new lights
- David Goen for his beautiful graphic design work on our poster, ads, and program book for *The Firebird*
- Laura Stockman for her outstanding job with the Young People's Performances, including the development and distribution of the Alexandra Ballet Educational Booklet
- Carrie Earnhart, who facilitated the printing of the educational booklets for the Young People's Performances with FedEx/Kinkos
- Juliet Chayat and Priti Shastri for assisting the Company with bookkeeping duties. 

Help AB Send a Chaperone to Festival

AB is seeking \$3,000 in donations in order to provide transportation, lodging, and kit fees for three chaperones to accompany AB dancers to the Regional Dance America National Festival in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania April 23-29, 2007

Parents, patrons, and friends are asked to consider donating to this cause in order to insure our dancers the safest and most effective environment to attend classes, auditions, and performances during this week-long experience of a lifetime (see more about this festival on 'And for Our Next Performance')

Yes, I want to help send a Chaperone to Festival
Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation in the amount of \$ _____

My company will match this contribution in the amount of \$ _____.
A matching gift form from my company is enclosed.

Employer: _____

Payment Information:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check or money order enclosed, payable to Alexandra Ballet	
<input type="checkbox"/> My employer has a matching gift program. The application is enclosed with my gift.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Charge to my _____ Visa _____ MasterCard	
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Expiration Date _____	
Name (as it appears on credit card) _____	Signature _____

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Please return this form to: Alexandra Ballet • Attn: Fundraising Committee • 68E Four Seasons Center • Chesterfield, MO 63017
314-469-6222 • alexandra@alexandraballet.com • www.alexandraballet.com



SpotLight On... Marek Cholewa

Donnagail Carr

If you peeked into the Alexandra Ballet studio recently during an intensive rehearsal weekend, you would see:

- a) a Fulbright Scholar
- b) a former Dance Advisor to the Panamanian Ministry of Culture
- c) an International Honorary Citizen of New Orleans
- d) all of the above

Choreographer Marek Cholewa is all of the above and more. Returning to Alexandra Ballet this season to choreograph its highly anticipated MainStage production of *The Firebird*, Cholewa brings a wealth of experience with companies around the world and special insights gained through almost 20 years collaboration with AB to this very unique and challenging work.

A native of Poland, Cholewa studied with the National Institute of Ballet in Poznań (Poland) and was a soloist with the National Ballet of Poland before obtaining his master's degree from The Rimsky-Korsakov Music State Conservatory in St. Petersburg (Russia) as Répétiteur/Choreographer in 1982.

Cholewa served as the Dance Advisor for the Latin American Dance Chapter to the Panamanian Ministry of Culture from 1983 to 1985. In 1984 he was co-founder of Patronato Pro-Ballet Nacional, an organization to promote ballet in Panama. He was Artistic Director for the organization for the following four years. He served as Assistant Artistic Director/Master Teacher/Répétiteur/Choreographer of the National Ballet of Panama.

In his current position of Associate Professor of Dance at Butler University, Cholewa has produced several original works, including the "*The Messiah*," a Ballet-Oratorio in two acts first presented in

1992 by Butler Ballet in collaboration with Butler University Chorale and members of the Butler Symphony. He received a Butler University Fellowship to bring the complete Vaganova Syllabus of Russian Ballet Technique to the Dance Department. In 2002 – 2003 he received a Fulbright Fellowship to return to his native country to study traditional Polish dancing. His areas of special expertise are the full Vaganova Syllabus, nineteenth century ballet repertoire, the entire Petipa repertoire and Slavic character dance.



Marek Cholewa

In his many years of collaboration with Alexandra Ballet, Cholewa has reconstructed and restaged several of the company's memorable classical ballets: *Les Sylphides*, *Giselle*, *Swan Lake Act II*, *Le Jardin Animée* (from *Le Cosaire*), *La Fille Mal Gardée*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and many others.

The Vaganova master, though, is likely to surprise those who think of him only as a classical traditionalist. Of the choreography for his staging of *The Firebird*, Mr. Cholewa assured the dancers "this is unlike anything you've done before; this will stretch you as a dancer and an artist."

Tickets for *The Firebird* are on sale now
Call the Touhill Box Office at 314-516-4949 today!

KFUO Classic99's

Friday Morning with the Arts

FRIDAY, MARCH 16

Featuring an hour of music and interviews with Artistic Director Alexandra Zaharias & Ballet Mistress CiCi Houston on the subject of Stravinsky and *The Firebird*

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alexandra ballet®

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Where Are They Now?

AB Alumni Update

Lindsay Chichester, (class of '80's) stopped in to visit with Miss A in January. She is now living in Washington D.C., and is a Federal Prosecutor for the Department of Justice dealing with immigration.

Jennifer Deckert (90's) sends word that, after an exciting season of performing with Roxey Ballet in New Jersey (for whom she danced several lead roles and performed in Boston, NYC, and Philadelphia), she decided to accept an offer to become Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of Wyoming. In addition to her teaching duties which make her "truly happy," she still takes classes every day, and performed the role of Snow Queen in their production of *The Nutcracker*.

Louise Nadeau ('80's) sent holiday greetings to Miss A with the news of her exciting work with PNB and artistic director Peter Boal this season. She danced the lead recently in Peter Martin's *Valse Triste* to rave reviews. Dance critic R.M. Campbell wrote of her performance, "Louis Nadeau and Jeffrey Stanton danced with beauty and long line Nadeau is one of PNB's most gifted dancers, not so much in her bravura, but in the way she fills out a phrase and the attention she pays to the music."

Rachel Peppin ('80's), married Robert Parker, principal dancer with Birmingham Royal Ballet, in London last July. The couple plans to move to the US this summer after Parker's retirement from BRB, where Rachel will continue her career in Pilates training and Robert will pursue a career in aviation.

Mikayla Richards ('03), who is now attending college in California, stopped in to the studios in January to wish happy holidays to Miss A, and was invited to observe rehearsals of *The Firebird*.

Sarah Stockman ('06) attained Top Twelve in the Youth American Grand Prix Regional semi-finals this January in Philadelphia. Sarah, who now attends The Rock School in Pennsylvania, competed in the Women's Senior Division in Classical Dance, and attained a score of 93.4%--great work, Sarah!