



For 24 years, Diablo Ballet has been bringing the wonderful and beautiful world of dance to audiences. And as the new season is about to start, audiences will again see what thousands of others have enjoyed over the years: incredible, athletic, mesmerizing dancers performing in both classical ballets that have been around for decades and new, innovative contemporary works that excite and thrill ballet lovers of all ages.

A Swingin' Holiday

As it has for the past six years, Diablo Ballet debuts its current season and kicks off the festive holiday months all at the same time, with the annual favorite, *A Swingin' Holiday*.

A Swingin' Holiday' was created in 2012 by Sean Kelly, formerly a principal dancer with the Houston Ballet, then a dancer/dance captain in several Broadway musicals and currently the Associate Choreographer/Resident Director of the first national tour of *An American in Paris*.

In an interview with Sean back in 2012, when he was just beginning to create *A Swingin' Holiday*, he expressed his excitement and hopes for this new dance. "I hope to include my classical background and using the beautiful classical training of the dancers, as well as melding a lot of the Broadway experience I've been involved with...take great music such as that played by Duke Ellington and use the swing style of movement combined with classical ballet...It should be great fun and include a lot of collaborative group energy." It appears he succeeded!



A Swingin' Holiday has been called "a wonderful fusion of styles (ballet, jive, social dance, jazz...)" by heatherdance.com; it has also been referred to by criticaldance.org as "a new holiday tradition." The ballet is set to the exhilarating music of the 30's and 40's, with holiday favorites by legends Glenn Miller, Nat "King" Cole, and Wynton Marsalis, in addition to Ellington, as well as jazzy renditions of

Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker Suite." This upbeat music is performed by the sixteen-piece Diablo Ballet Swing Orchestra under the Musical Direction of Greg Sudmeier.

Last month, Sean Kelly took time from his busy schedule in San Francisco while with the touring company of the Tony-winning Broadway musical *An American in Paris* and trekked out to Diablo Ballet's Walnut Creek studio to introduce and teach a new section – the March from “The Nutcracker,” set to a swing arrangement -- for this sixth annual performance. Diablo Ballet's Artistic Director, Lauren Jonas, was thrilled that he was able to do this. “It was so sweet of him to come out and create a new dance for us,” she exclaimed. “He had it all worked out and notated when he walked into the studio.”



As criticaladance.org wrote, “The holidays are about memory and nostalgia; those favorite tunes, childhood dreams, family traditions...the holiday mood is amped up with impressive swing flips and aerials...*A Swingin' Holiday*, with its cheerfulness and sweetness...” is the perfect way to kick off the holiday season.

Valse Fantaisie

Also included in the program is the classic masterpiece, *Valse Fantaisie* by George Balanchine, originally created for the New York City Ballet and set to a beautiful score by Mikhail Glinka. Called “a small gem,” in a New York Times review, *Valse Fantaisie*, the reviewer noted, is a “windswept pattern of pure dancing, attuned to the joyfulness of its waltz rhythms...With its dancers who never stop moving and who constantly run or leap in and out with great swiftness, *Valse Fantaisie* seems suddenly to distill the essence of Balanchine's style: speed and momentum.”



Marina Eglevsky, a famous dancer in her own right who grew up backstage at the New York City Ballet and knew Balanchine quite well, is staging this ballet, as she did when Diablo Ballet first performed it in 1995.

Marina is the daughter of the famous dancer, Andre Eglevsky, who spent seven years dancing under Balanchine at the New York City Ballet. But according to Marina, her father and Balanchine were far more than simply colleagues, or dancer/choreographer. “They were very close friends,” Marina said. In fact, when her father could no longer dance following a heart attack, Balanchine gave him a plethora of ideas. “Mr. Balanchine [as Marina refers to him] suggested my dad start his own company, open his own school, teach with

Balanchine at his school." When Andre Eglevsky took Balanchine up on his suggestions and opened the Eglevsky Ballet Company in New York, "Mr. Balanchine sent kids from his school, dancers from his company and even gave my father ballets to perform," Marina said.

Often times, when her father was asked to stage a Balanchine ballet, Marina went with him and learned the art of staging. "Dancing and staging are very different," Marina explained. When Balanchine passed away in 1983, Marina was asked by his Trust to stage some of his ballets, with *Valse Fantaisie* being one of them.



When asked to describe *Valse Fantaisie*, Marina's love for this ballet is apparent. "It's abstract with a lot of beautiful, lyrical dancing," Marina stated. "It's very typical of the type of dancing Mr. Balanchine loved: continual movement with no breaks." Marina explained that Balanchine didn't like breaking up the dancing, so he wanted bows only at the end of a dance, not in the middle. She continued describing this ballet: "It's a beautiful piece. The music is wonderful and, of course, his choreography is beautiful."



According to allmusic.com, *Valse Fantaisie in B minor*, composed by Glinka, exists in three versions: "the initial piano version from 1839, the small orchestra version of 1845, and the large orchestra version of the score written shortly before the composer's death in 1856. The formal outlines of the work are essentially the same in all three versions -- a quiet start, an accelerating development, and an ecstatic conclusion -- but the scope of the work grew larger as scoring grew richer. [Glinka](#) originally entitled the work *Valse* when it was a piano piece. As the work became larger and more opulent in its first version for orchestra, he called it *Valse-Fantaisie*, and as the work's tempo increased in the second version for orchestra, he called it *Valse-Scherzo*. As with nearly all of Glinka's larger orchestral works, the themes and orchestration are of crucial significance in the development of the piece; that is, Glinka does not so much develop the softly descending initial theme as he repeats it in ever-more-shimmering and voluptuous orchestral colors. The result is one of his most beguiling and enchanting larger orchestral works."

Marina said Balanchine "loved this music so much, he actually choreographed it four times and, if I remember correctly, wanted to do it again because he loved working with it. The first time he choreographed it, he didn't like the result and canned it. I don't think anyone knows that. So this version, which premiered in 1953, is actually the second one he created. Another version was done sometime between this one and the 60's, but I don't think many people know it." The final version premiered in 1967. Two of the 4 versions are the ballets still performed today, although, as both Marina and Lauren Jonas noted, this one – which is danced by 3 women and 1 man -- is typically performed less frequently. The more frequently danced version has 5 couples. "They're totally different ballets," Marina stated. "It's the same music but because he loved it so much, Balanchine created different choreography."

No One Does It Like You

Resident Choreographer Robert Dekkers was described on culturevulture.net as a man with “an expansive personality, a broad smile and a million-plus ideas in his head.” One of those “ideas” -- *No One Does It Like You*, originally created in 2009 for Arizona’s NovaBallet, will make its Diablo Ballet premier at this season opener. Robert said he created it for himself and Raychel Weiner, a dancer he worked with frequently. “It was a last minute addition to the program,” he noted. With time available in the NovaBallet program, Robert was asked if he could develop a duet. “I had been listening to an indie rock band, Department of Eagle, and was super motivated by their music.”



Robert describes this touching duet as romantic. “It’s about love, relationships, a slice of life. There’s a ladder, as if perhaps the couple had been painting the house that day. They go through what might be an argument, then on to a conversation and then to rekindling their love for one another. Basically, it’s about love.”

This is only the third time *No One Does It Like You* will be performed and the first time it will be performed by Diablo Ballet dancers. “It’s fun to see other dancers make it their own,” Robert said.



Many dance aficionados may be surprised to see one program featuring both ballet and swing dancing, let alone one ballet showcasing both. After all, these two dance forms are just about as different as night and day:

- Ballet originated in Renaissance Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries and was developed in France, Russia and England. Swing dancing began in the 1920's when the Black community in Harlem, NY used African dance moves to create the Lindy Hop to contemporary jazz sounds.

- Ballet, typically performed by companies, is centered on the dancer. It is a more individualistic art form. Swing, which is one of many dance forms that fall under the umbrella of Ballroom Dancing, is always performed by couples.
- Ballet is all about the art and requires considerable discipline in the way dancers train for years to develop their abilities. Swing, while it absolutely has its own defined steps, is far more improvisational and stylistically flexible.
- Ballet is most often performed to classical music; Swing is performed to modern music, such as jazz and the big band sound.
- Ballet is typically a performance dance, revealing a story and performed in theaters and concert halls. Swing is far more social and danced in nightclubs, parties and dance halls.
- Ballet dancers typically have upright posture, with arms lifted upward and feet raised on toes; Swing dancers move all parts of the body in an exaggerated manner and typically flatten their feet.
- According to ehow.com, "One similarity between the two forms of dance is their popularity. Both attract enthusiastic participants and are practiced worldwide. Furthermore, the skills of ballet and ballroom dancers are similar in some ways. In order to be successful, both require highly developed senses of timing and rhythm, as well as the kinesthetic awareness that allows them to keep track of the movements of other dancers."

Join us for our next program

Harmonious Beauty

**February 2 at 8pm
February 3 at 2pm and 8pm
*Del Valle Theatre***

The second program of our season features the romantic Ballroom Pas de Deux from *A Cinderella Story* by Val Caniparoli, set to the music of Richard Rodgers. Also featured, the exciting world premiere by former Netherlands Dans Theatre ballerina Danielle Rowe; the award winning film *Libera*, by Walter Yamazaki, brought back by popular demand after premiering last year at the Ballet's 23rd Anniversary Performance; and the exotic *Milieu* by Robert Dekkers, set to a live performance of a commissioned score by Daniel Berkman. After the performance the audience is invited to stay for a Q & A with the dancers and choreographers, followed by a dessert and coffee reception.

For information, call (925) 943-1775 or visit diabloballet.org

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