

SWAN LAKE

LOS ANGELES BALLET

Thordal Christensen & Colleen Neary *Artistic Directors*

2011/2012 Season





Press Release | February 2012

LOS ANGELES BALLET TO DEBUT *Swan Lake*

VENUES TO INCLUDE CARPENTER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER IN LONG BEACH AND VALLEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER IN NORTHRIDGE

(Los Angeles, CA) – Los Angeles Ballet [LAB] Artistic Directors Thordal Christensen and Colleen Neary are pleased to present the company's fifth full-length production, *Swan Lake*, to an expanded line-up of venues. New venues include Carpenter Performing Arts Center in Long Beach and Valley Performing Arts Center in Northridge in addition to Royce Hall at UCLA, Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center and Alex Theatre in Glendale.

Choreographed by Artistic Directors Thordal Christensen and Colleen Neary after the traditional revival credited to Petipa and Ivanov, LAB's *Swan Lake* will feature Principal dancers Allynne Noelle and Allyssa Bross in the dual role of Odette/Odile at alternate performances. LAB Principal dancers Christopher Revels and Kenta Shimizu will dance the role of Prince Siegfried, also at alternate performances. Guest dancer Akimitsu Yahata, principal dancer with the New National Ballet of Japan, will dance the role of the Jester at select performances. Additionally, the ballet will feature the full company, as well as students from Los Angeles Ballet School.

"With its magnificent Tchaikovsky score, *Swan Lake* enjoys a rich history and is considered one of the quintessential full length ballets," says Christensen. "*Swan Lake* provides a wonderful showcase for our entire company, particularly our Principal Dancers Allynne Noelle and Allyssa Bross," adds Neary.

We are bringing this masterpiece a poetic quality that will tell this love story with tenderness and passion, through the music and our choreography," says Neary, adding, "[Thordal and I] have a deep relationship with this ballet, from our experience of dancing the leading roles together, which was an important part in our performing careers."

The story of Odette, a princess transformed into a swan by an evil sorcerer's curse, *Swan Lake* was not well received when it originally premiered. It was not until the Petipa/Ivanov revival which has served as the basis for most subsequent interpretations that it became so popular, most recently serving as the basis for the film *Black Swan*.

LAB is currently in its sixth season. This May, LAB will be back with its much-anticipated and innovative **NextWaveLA**, featuring four World Premieres by distinguished California based choreographers Kitty McNamee, Sonya Tayeh, Stacey Tookey and Josie Walsh. LAB continues to build a repertoire that underscores the creative leadership of its artistic directors, presenting timeless classics as well as innovative choreography from today's contemporary artists.

Performances of *Swan Lake* will take place at venues across Los Angeles County from March 3 to March 31. Tickets range in price from \$24 - \$95.

For more information, please visit www.losangelesballet.org or call 310.998.7782.

****MARCH 2012 PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE****

REDONDO BEACH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

ROYCE HALL, UCLA, 340 Royce Dr. Los Angeles, CA 90095
Saturday, March 3, 2012 @ 7:30pm
Sunday, March 4, 2012 @ 2:00pm

REDONDO BEACH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

1935 Manhattan Beach Blvd., Redondo Beach, CA 90278
Saturday, March 10, 2012 @ 7:30pm

ALEX THEATRE, GLENDALE

216 North Brand Blvd., Glendale, CA 91203
Saturday, March 17, 2012 @ 7:30pm

CARPENTER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

6200 East Atherton St., Long Beach, CA 90815
Saturday, March 24, 2012 @ 7:30pm

VALLEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge, CA 91330
Saturday, March 31, 2012 @ 7:30pm

****Performances subject to change**

About the Artistic Directors

Thordal Christensen is the Founding co-Artistic Director for Los Angeles Ballet. The world of dance claims Mr. Christensen as one of its most respected citizens. Mr. Christensen danced with the Royal Danish Ballet, New York City Ballet and Pacific Northwest Ballet in major roles in the classical and modern repertoire. He was appointed artistic director of the Royal Danish Ballet and the Royal Danish Ballet School in 1999. During his leadership he advanced the company repertoire and school to new levels. In 2002, Mr. Christensen was appointed Knight of Dannebrog by Her Majesty Margrethe II.

Colleen Neary is the Founding co-Artistic Director for Los Angeles Ballet. Ms. Neary danced as a soloist from 1969 to 1979 with New York City Ballet under the direction of George Balanchine. She had numerous roles created for her by George Balanchine, Peter Martins, Jacques d'Amboise and others.

She was invited in 1979 to be Ballet Mistress and Choreographic Assistant for the Zurich Ballet. During this period she also staged Rudolf Nureyev's *Don Quixote* and *Manfred* for La Scala de Milan, Zurich Ballet and Vienna State Opera. In 1984 she was invited to be Principal Guest Artist and company teacher for Maurice Béjart's *Ballet du XXIème Siècle* where he created several roles for her. In 1986 she was invited to join Pacific Northwest Ballet as Principal Dancer. In 1992 she joined The Royal Danish Ballet as Ballet Mistress and company teacher. By 1999 she became First Ballet Mistress in charge of productions, a position she held until 2002.

Ms. Neary is a member of the George Balanchine Trust and has staged many of his ballets, including *Agon*, *The Four Temperaments*, *Theme and Variations*, *Rubies*, *Serenade*, *Tarantella*, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, *Divertimento no.15*, *Piano Concerto no. 2*, *Concerto Barocco*, *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux*, and *Symphony in C*, for leading companies around the world.

Since co-founding Los Angeles Ballet in 2006, Ms. Neary and Mr. Christensen have worked continuously to advance the company to one of the nation's most prestigious ballet companies by staging and choreographing increasingly difficult works, from the Balanchine repertoire, and classics such as **La Sylphide**, **The Nutcracker**, **Giselle**, and now *Swan Lake*.

About Los Angeles Ballet

Launched in 2006 by Co-Artistic Directors Thordal Christensen and Colleen Neary and Executive Director Julie Whittaker, Los Angeles Ballet enjoyed a successful first season, focused on capturing the creative aesthetic unique to Southern California. Los Angeles Ballet is committed to bringing world-class dance to audiences throughout the region by performing at venues in many different communities. Through 6 seasons touring LA County, presenting both classical and contemporary works, LAB has made great dance accessible to the Southern California community and provided Los Angeles with a company to call its own.

The Company, a not-for-profit arts organization, makes its professional home at Los Angeles Ballet Center in Los Angeles, which also houses Los Angeles Ballet School.

Ticket Information:

310-998-7782; <http://www.losangelesballet.org>

Media Contact:

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MPRM Communications
323-933-3399 ext. 4218
eshaikh@mprm.com

SWAN LAKE SYNOPSIS



Allyssa Bross & Christopher Revels
Photo: Reed Hutchinson

ACT I

It is Prince Siegfried's 21st birthday celebration. The prince arrives at the palace courtyards to find royal families and townspeople dancing and celebrating, and young ladies anxiously seeking his attention. During the celebration, Siegfried's mother gives him a crossbow and informs him that because he is coming of age, his marriage will be quickly arranged. Aware of his future responsibilities, he takes his crossbow and makes haste to the woods with his hunting companions.

ACT II

Prince Siegfried finds himself a peaceful spot by an enchanted lake with his companions, where swans gently float across its surface. He sees a beautiful swan with a crown upon her head, and orders his companions to leave so he can be alone. Her name is Odette, the Swan Queen. She tells the young prince that an evil sorcerer, Von Rothbart, has turned her and the other maidens into swans. The lake was formed by the tears of their parents' weeping for their lost daughters. Odette tells him the only way the spell can be broken is if a man, pure in heart, pledges his love to her. Von Rothbart takes Odette from Prince Siegfried's embrace and commands all of the swans to dance upon the lake and shore to evade the prince. Siegfried is left all alone on the shore of Swan Lake.

ACT III

The next day at the formal celebration in the Royal Hall, Prince Siegfried is presented with many prospective princesses. Although the princesses are worthy of his attention, he cannot stop thinking about Odette. His mother commands him to choose a bride, but he cannot. While the prince is thinking about his mother's command, trumpets announce the arrival of Von Rothbart. He brings his daughter, Odile, upon whom he has cast a spell to appear as Odette. The prince is captivated by her beauty as he dances with the imposter. Unbeknownst to Prince Siegfried, the true Odette is watching him from a window. The prince soon confesses his love to Odile, thinking she is Odette. In horror Odette flees into the night. Prince Siegfried sees the real Odette fleeing from the window and realizes his mistake. Upon his realization, Von Rothbart reveals to the prince the true identity of his daughter Odile. Prince Siegfried rushes to find Odette.

ACT IV

Odette has fled to the lake and joined the rest of the swans in grief. Prince Siegfried finds them gathered at the shore consoling each other. He explains to Odette the trickery of Von Rothbart and she grants him her forgiveness. It isn't long before Von Rothbart reappears. Von Rothbart tells the prince he must not marry Odette. A fight quickly follows. Rothbart is killed by the love between Odette and the prince, but Odette must return to the lake to join the other swans, as the spell is not broken.

The prince is left in the forest heartbroken.

THE ORIGINS OF SWAN LAKE

THE EARLY HISTORY of *Swan Lake* is as steeped in myth as the story itself. *Swan Lake* was first performed in Moscow at the Bolshoi Theatre on 20 February 1877. Legend characterizes the performance as a disaster. The choreographer Julius Reisinger apparently had no sympathy for the music, butchered the score and invited dancers to add their own routines to tunes of their choosing. Press reviews from the time state that the music was baffling, the story confused and the lead dancer, Pelagia Karpakova, hopeless. *Swan Lake* must still have worked its magic on those early audiences, though, as fresh productions with better choreography were mounted by a new ballet master, Joseph Hansen, in 1879 and 1882. Forty-one performances were presented over a period of six years. *Swan Lake* was performed by the Moscow Ballet until the early 1880s, when the company's budget was slashed and it could no longer afford to continue the expensive production.

The original complete *Swan Lake* ballet seems to have disappeared, however excerpts continued to be performed across Europe. Hansen staged a lakeside scene with new music in London in 1884, and Tchaikovsky conducted a performance of the second act in Prague in 1888 (in his diary he describes the experience as "a moment of absolute happiness"). After Tchaikovsky died in 1893, the Maryinsky Theatre of St Petersburg presented a memorial concert where a new version of the second act, choreographed by the Maryinsky's assistant ballet master, Lev Ivanov, was presented. The performance was such a success that the theatre decided to revive the entire ballet. Tchaikovsky's other ballets, *The Nutcracker* and *The Sleeping Beauty* were massively popular in St Petersburg, and plans were already in place to mount a new *Swan Lake* long before he died.

The composer's brother, Modeste Tchaikovsky, streamlined the *Swan Lake* story for the new production, and simplified the mime. The score was cut and rearranged by the conductor Riccardo Drigo. The Maryinsky's ballet master, Marius Petipa, 76 at the time and feeling unwell, shared choreographic duties with Ivanov. Petipa created the bright, festive first and third acts, Ivanov the lyrical, dramatic second and fourth acts which focus on the Swan Queen, Odile.

The first performance of the new production of *Swan Lake* was scheduled for late 1894, but due to the death of Tsar Alexander III was delayed until 15 January, 1895. Just as in its first performances, critics were unhappy, but the public took the ballet to heart. Today *Swan Lake* is considered a masterpiece of classical ballet repertoire, and is adored by audiences around the world.

Article Reference: www.rohedswanlake.org.uk



Bolshoi Theatre Restored 2011



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky



Corps de ballet listening to Ballet Master
during a rehearsal of *Swan Lake*
Photo: Alfred Eisenstaedt 1930

LOS ANGELES BALLET ARTISTIC DIRECTORS



THORDAL CHRISTENSEN *Artistic Director*

Principal Dancer - Royal Danish Ballet, New York City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet; Artistic Director - Royal Danish Ballet, The Royal Danish Ballet School. In 2002 Christensen was appointed Knight of Dannenbrog by her Majesty Margrethe II of Denmark.



COLLEEN NEARY *Artistic Director*

Principal Dancer - New York City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet; Ballet Mistress / Choreographic Assistant - Zurich Ballet; Principal Guest Artist and Company Teacher - Maurice Béjart Ballet du XXième Siecle; First Ballet Mistress in Charge of Production - Royal Danish Ballet. Ms. Neary is a Répétiteur for The George Balanchine Trust.



Rehearsing Swan Lake
Clockwise:
Nicolas De La Vega and Colleen Neary
Dance of the Cygnets
Allyssa Bross
Photos: Dan Rib

PERFORMING IN SWAN LAKE

PRINCIPAL DANCERS



ALLYSSA BROSS

HOMETOWN: Charlotte, North Carolina

SCHOOLS: North Carolina Dance Theatre, School of American Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



ALLYNNE NOELLE

HOMETOWN: Huntington Beach, California

COMPANIES: National Ballet of Canada, Miami City Ballet, Inland Pacific Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



CHRISTOPHER REVELS

HOMETOWN: Ocoee, Florida

SCHOOLS: School of American Ballet, Orlando Ballet School

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



KENTA SHIMIZU

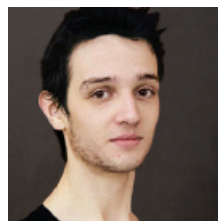
HOMETOWN: Gifu Prefecture, Japan

SCHOOLS: Soda Ballet School Osaka, Royal Ballet School

COMPANIES: K - Ballet, Miami City Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 3rd Season

COMPANY DANCERS

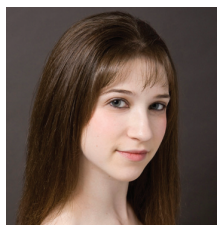


VINCENT ADAMS

HOMETOWN: North Hollywood, California

SCHOOLS: Los Angeles Ballet Academy, The Harid Conservatory, The Washington School of Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 1st Season



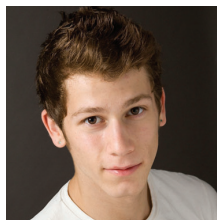
DINA BILOFSKY

HOMETOWN: Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania

SCHOOLS: School of American Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Allegheny Ballet Company

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season

PERFORMING IN SWAN LAKE *continued*

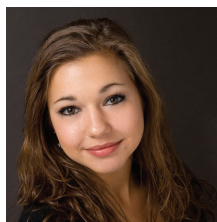


BRANDON BINKLY

HOMETOWN: Burbank, California

SCHOOLS: Los Angeles County High School for the Arts,
San Francisco Ballet School, Los Angeles Ballet Academy

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 1st Season



KIMBERLY BLEICH

HOMETOWN: Cary, Illinois

SCHOOLS: North Carolina School of the Arts, Houston Ballet,
School of American Ballet, American Ballet Theatre

COMPANIES: Joffrey Ballet, Luna Negra Dance Theater,
DanceWorks Chicago

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 1st Season

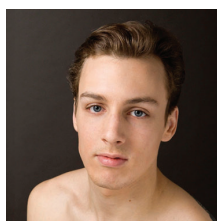


BIANCA BULLE

HOMETOWN: Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia

SCHOOLS: Ransley Ballet and Dance Centre,
School of American Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 1st Season



ALEXANDER CASTILLO

HOMETOWN: Bayside, New York

SCHOOLS: Ballet Academy East, Boston Ballet,
School of American Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season

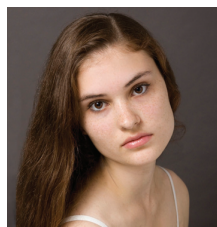


JULIA CINQUEMANI

HOMETOWN: Dallas, Texas

SCHOOLS: Dallas Ballet Center, Pacific Northwest Ballet,
School of American Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season

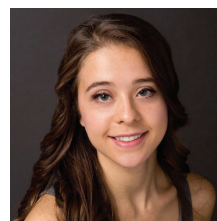


KATHERINE COWGILL

HOMETOWN: Minneapolis, Minnesota

SCHOOLS: Minnesota Dance Theater, School of American Ballet,
Pacific Northwest Ballet, Boston Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



ARIEL DERBY

HOMETOWN: Akron, Ohio

SCHOOLS: Pacific Northwest Ballet School, Joffrey Ballet School
COMPANIES: The Suzanne Farrell Ballet

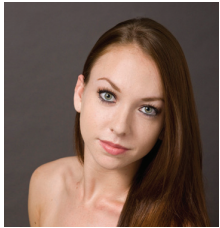
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 1st Season

PERFORMING IN SWAN LAKE *continued*



ADAM FABAC

HOMETOWN: Annapolis, Maryland
SCHOOLS: Pacific Northwest Ballet, Baltimore School
for the Arts, School of American Ballet, Miami City Ballet
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



MOLLY FLIPPEN

HOMETOWN: Camarillo, California
SCHOOLS: All American Ballet School, Rock School
for Dance Education
COMPANIES: Pennsylvania Ballet
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



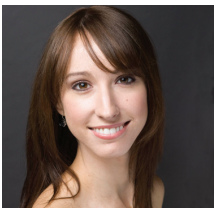
ALEXANDER GREGORY FORCK

HOMETOWN: O'Fallon, Missouri
SCHOOLS: Saint Louis Ballet School, School of American Ballet
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 4th Season



KATRINA GOULD

HOMETOWN: Westport, Connecticut
SCHOOLS: School of American Ballet, Ballet Etudes
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 3rd Season



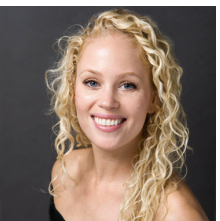
KATE HIGHSTRETE

HOMETOWN: Huntington Beach, California
SCHOOLS: North Carolina School of the Arts,
School of American Ballet, Lines, San Francisco Ballet
COMPANIES: Saint Louis Ballet
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 3rd Season



CHELSEA PAIGE JOHNSTON

HOMETOWN: Carlsbad, California
SCHOOLS: San Elijo Dance and Music Academy,
Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School, UC Irvine
COMPANIES: Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Milwaukee Ballet II
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 4th Season



BRITTA LAZENGA

HOMETOWN: Minneapolis, Minnesota
SCHOOLS: Harid Conservatory, Ballet Arts Minnesota
COMPANIES: The Joffrey Ballet
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 3rd Season

PERFORMING IN SWAN LAKE *continued*



ZHENG HUA LI

HOMETOWN: Shen Yang, China
SCHOOLS: Shen Yang Arts Academy
COMPANIES: Guangzhou Ballet
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 3rd Season



CHRISTOPHER CHARLES MCDANIEL

HOMETOWN: New York, New York
SCHOOLS: Dance Theatre of Harlem, Ballet Academy East,
BOSTON BALLET
COMPANIES: Dance Theatre of Harlem Ensemble,
Dances Patrelle
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



KATHERINE REVELS

HOMETOWN: Ocoee, Florida
SCHOOLS: Orlando Ballet School, School of American Ballet,
Pacific Northwest Ballet School
COMPANIES: Orlando Ballet Second Company
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



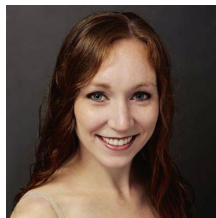
FAITH SCORE

HOMETOWN: New York, New York
SCHOOLS: School of American Ballet, Joffrey Ballet School,
Ballet Academy East
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



CHLOE SHERMAN

HOMETOWN: New York, New York
SCHOOLS: Ballet Academy East, School of American Ballet
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 1st Season



KELLY ANN SLOAN

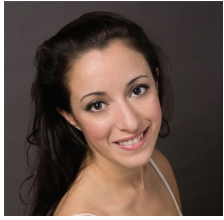
HOMETOWN: Bayonne, New Jersey
SCHOOLS: New Jersey Ballet School, American Ballet
Theatre School, Indiana University
COMPANIES: Cincinnati Ballet, National Choreographers Initiative
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 6th Season



NICOLAS DE LA VEGA

HOMETOWN: Hoboken, New Jersey
SCHOOLS: Miami City Ballet School, School of American Ballet,
Joffrey Ballet School
COMPANIES: North Carolina Dance Theatre
LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season

PERFORMING IN SWAN LAKE *continued*



ISABEL VONDERMUHLL

HOMETOWN: New York, New York

SCHOOLS: School of American Ballet, Vassar College

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



ELIZABETH WALKER

HOMETOWN: New York, New York

SCHOOLS: JKO School at American Ballet Theatre,
Harvard University

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 2nd Season



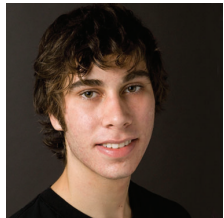
LAURA ANNE WALLACE

HOMETOWN: Seattle, Washington

SCHOOLS: Pacific Northwest Ballet School, School of American
Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, Royal Danish Ballet

COMPANIES: Pacific Northwest Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 1st Season



BENJAMIN WINEGAR

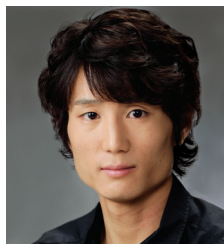
HOMETOWN: Grand Rapids, Michigan

SCHOOLS: Grand Rapids Ballet School, School of American Ballet

COMPANIES: Grand Rapids Ballet

LOS ANGELES BALLET: 1st Season

GUEST ARTIST



AKIMITSU YAHATA

HOMETOWN: Tokyo, Japan

SCHOOLS: Kiyoko Ishii Ballet Studio, New National Theatre

COMPANIES: New National Theatre

CHARACTER ARTIST



COLLEEN NEARY

Artistic Director, Los Angeles Ballet

COMPANIES: Béjart Ballet du XXIème Siècle, New York City
Ballet, Zurich Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet

Los Angeles Times

ARTS & CULTURE | *December 5, 2010*

Commentary:

Los Angeles Ballet on upswing in its fifth year

By Lewis Segal, Special to the Los Angeles Times

Despite a rocky arts landscape, Los Angeles Ballet has managed to not only survive but also prosper. What's needed now is more attention from the local community to this admirable, and creative, company.

Congratulations are in order — and maybe a sigh of relief. With its “Nutcracker” performances this weekend at the Alex Theatre in Glendale (plus repeats through the month in two other Southland venues), Los Angeles Ballet entered its fifth season as a resident professional company. Season 5 and counting: not exactly a golden anniversary but definitely a hard-won benchmark.

It's been a turbulent demi-decade for all arts organizations, one in which long-established companies such as Orange County's Ballet Pacifica vanished from the landscape. And that was before the recession took its toll in radically diminished institutional and governmental funding for the arts.

But Los Angeles Ballet hasn't merely survived for five seasons; it's increased the operating budget some 80%, from \$900,000 in 2006-07 to \$1,624,000 in 2010-11. And there are other signs of growth: increased ticket sales (up 12% last season), a new school and company center in West Los Angeles, a reconstituted board of directors, expanded support staff and audience development activities.

So celebration is justified, but not complacency. After all, John Clifford's attempt at a company of the same name in the 1970s existed for more than 10 years before it folded: a casualty of consistently under-rehearsed dancing, relentlessly mediocre home-grown choreography and the erosion of its support base.

In contrast, the dancing in the new, millennial Los Angeles Ballet has always been meticulously professional and the new choreography varied and often exciting — though you can't really measure the quality of any company from its “Nutcracker.” Clifford, however, had a knack for making his troupe seem omnipresent, a major player in local dance, while the excellences of the new company have achieved little impact or even visibility on the L.A. arts scene.



Los Angeles Ballet Artistic Directors Colleen Neary, left, and her husband, Thordal Christensen, at the Los Angeles Ballet Studios. (Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times)

Yes, it appeared as a guest on the popular “So You Think You Can Dance” reality show. And it publicized its “Nutcracker” by offering tickets on the Groupon discount site. But such innovations produced no buzz in the local community. And if you looked at the winners of the annual Lester Horton Dance Awards — an index of peer-group recognition in Southland dance — you'd scarcely know Los Angeles Ballet existed.

Yet season after season, the company gives admirable performances of challenging neoclassical masterworks by George Balanchine, staged by co-artistic director Colleen Neary. The rep this March includes two highly accessible Balanchine staples: “Raymonda Variations” and “Western Symphony,” the first a tribute to the choreographer's imperial Russian heritage, the second an expression of his enjoyment of the cowboy culture in his adopted homeland.

But Balanchine isn't the company's sole choreographic asset.

Indeed, co-artistic director Thordal Christensen's 2009 staging of August Bournonville's full-length “La Sylphide” easily outclassed the badly deteriorated American Ballet Theatre version and the crude approximation by the Bolshoi Ballet. The company's first attempt at a genuine 19th century story ballet, it proved conclusively that Los Angeles Ballet can switch styles with no loss of authority.

On the schedule for May: “Giselle,” another foray into the Romantic era, which Christensen previously staged for the Royal Danish Ballet.

Creative partners

A husband-and-wife team, Christensen and Neary danced, respectively, in Bournonville's and Balanchine's home

Wisely, they quickly abandoned the notion of making Los Angeles Ballet a backup ensemble for guest stars, a practice that sells tickets but generates no company loyalty. However, their very brief repertory seasons (typically four performances) leave dancers little time to develop a personal spin on roles — to own them by an individual interpretation. So the performances often look strongly cast, coached and executed but not indelible.

Worse, the directors have divided those seasons into weekend engagements in Westwood, Glendale, Redondo Beach and sometimes Santa Monica, which requires everyone to remain rehearsed at maximum firepower for nearly a month with only a performance or two in each venue as payoff.

The concept of touring greater L.A. is sound in terms of audience development, for virtually every poll says that the public doesn't want to travel more than half an hour to cultural events. But the strain on the dancers has caused Los Angeles Ballet to lose some of its most distinctive soloists to companies with longer seasons. And high-profile principals are a major reason that people keep coming back to ballet.

Christensen and Neary have also had to contend with the very daunting conditions of sustaining art in Southern California — a place famed for welcoming every kind of creative expression without supporting anything for long. As far as ballet is concerned, the Los Angeles audience is highly isolated, almost never seeing the reigning international stars and classical companies that appear regularly down the 405 on the well-subsidized dance series at the Orange County Performing Arts Center.

As a result, American Ballet Theatre has become the sole standard-bearer for the ballet audience in L.A., though, ironically, the company's reputation in New York largely depends on those very same international stars who are seldom booked for its engagements at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

As the insular, old-guard ballet audience here ages and shrinks, only ABT and ABT offshoots turn up regularly on the Music Center's classical lineup — and then only for split weeks — while widely acclaimed (and arguably better) companies such as San Francisco Ballet are increasingly unseen or undersold. So where does that leave the newbies?

With a clean slate, that's where. To survive, Christensen and Neary must build an audience from scratch — not just for Los Angeles Ballet but for the art in general — an audience that knows what it's seeing and will still be around by the time the company celebrates its next five-year benchmark.

In the works

In February, the directors are scheduled to present a plan for the future to their board. A draft of that plan reveals projected budget increases that should reach \$2,460,848 by the 2015-16 season.

"Swan Lake" is penciled in for Season 6 or 7, and the recently inaugurated Choreographic Workshop — in which local dance-makers created works for the company — will become an annual event.

A season of five productions instead of the current three will expand the dancers' 24-week period of employment. Additional venues (Pasadena? Northridge? Orange County?) are also under consideration. But live music is not on the horizon, according to executive director Julie Whittaker (much too costly), and all this hoped-for growth will take place in an economy that experts warn may languish through the company's 10th anniversary and beyond.

Caution is warranted, but so is pride. A company founded with the highest possible standards at the worst possible time is not only news, it's inspiring. Christensen and Neary took a chance on Los Angeles and produced the kind of art that helps us get through times like these.

Isn't it high time that Los Angeles stops ignoring the evidence and takes a chance on them?

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CULTURE MONSTER

Los Angeles Times

December 5, 2010

Institutions are living beings with their own distinct energies and auras. Watching one appear, grow, stumble, recover and mature can be a fascinating spectacle.

I don't know anyone personally at Los Angeles Ballet, but when I was asked to write a five-year retrospective on the company, I found myself producing more of an advocacy piece than I had intended.

That surprised me.

I first watched Los Angeles Ballet as staff dance critic at The Times, reviewing its inaugural performances. But before that I reported on its formation and initial plans, along with those of two other ballet companies that failed to get off the ground.

I watch it now as a civilian, not uncritically but with an investment in years. In a way, I am part of its history. That doesn't make what I have to say important, but it is informed by seeing what a lot of other companies were dancing in the Southland during the same five years and balancing their achievements against those of this struggling, can-do local entity.

-- Lewis Segal

A HISTORY OF LOS ANGELES BALLET

Los Angeles Ballet (LAB) was created with the mission of passionately pursuing innovation and creativity in performances while preserving the best choreographic work of the past and becoming the impetus for the best choreography yet to come. Los Angeles Ballet is an exciting arts organization and the “place to be” for the most talented dancers, choreographers, musicians, composers, artists, designers, staff and volunteers.

SEASON ONE

FALL/WINTER 2006 (10 PERFORMANCES)

- Anjelica Huston hosted Los Angeles Ballet’s Arts for the Arts Fundraiser at Bergamot Station in Santa Monica on November 9, 2006.
- Inaugural performance of *The Nutcracker* at The Wilshire Theater in Beverly Hills on December 2. Performances ran December 2-31, 2006. LAB also performed at the Alex Theatre and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
 - o “Los Angeles Ballet also seems a good fit with the city. A needed addition to the local dance scene, the youthful dance group (the average age is in the mid 20s), promises to go where others before have failed.” - Los Angeles Times, Victoria Looseleaf.

SPRING 2007 (4 PERFORMANCES)

- *New Beginnings* performed March 15-31, 2007 at the Alex Theatre, UCLA’s Freud Playhouse, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
 - o “[LAB] is so well put together for a startup enterprise that no one need complain again about the ballet desert here.” - LA City Beat, Donna Perlmutter.

SUMMER 2007 (4 PERFORMANCES)

- *An Evening of Balanchine* performed May 24-June 2, 2007 at the Alex Theatre, UCLA’s Freud Playhouse, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
 - o “They’ve proved that they can give Los Angeles a classical company worth supporting in its growth from an underfunded 31-dancer ensemble offering sporadic performances to the kind of large-scale, year-round institutions that are the source of local pride in cities such as Houston, Boston, Seattle, Miami and San Francisco. They’ve done their job and so have the dancers. The rest is up to Los Angeles itself.” - Los Angeles Times, Lewis Segal.
 - o “They are becoming an ensemble. The program of three masterworks was ambitious, and cried out far more depth in the upper rank dancers.” - Orange County Register, Laura Bleiberg.

SEASON TWO

FALL/WINTER 2007 (8 PERFORMANCES)

- Hosted fundraiser, *2nd Annual Art for the Arts* Fundraiser/ Art Auction, on November 8, 2007 at Bergamot Station in Santa Monica.
- *The Nutcracker* performed November 29-December 30, 2007 at the Alex Theatre, UCLA’s Freud Playhouse, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
 - o “A year of working together, though, has made a difference for these dancers, and they have developed confidence and cohesion.” - Orange Country Register, Laura Bleiberg.

SPRING 2008 (4 PERFORMANCES)

- *Spring Repertoire* performed celebrated works of George Balanchine and a World Premiere by Los Angeles Ballet’s Melissa Barak February 22-March 15, 2008 at the Alex Theatre, UCLA’s Freud Playhouse, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
 - o “Launched nearly two years ago, the Los Angeles Ballet reflects the independent spirit of this region while honoring the dance heritage of its co-founders.” - Los Angeles Daily News, Vicki Smith Paluch.
 - o “The complicated layers [in *Lost in Translation*] and patterns [Melissa Barak] knitted for the all female ensemble continuously surprised this viewer, and then delighted with each succeeding revelation.” - Orange County Register, Laura Bleiberg.

SUMMER 2008 (5 PERFORMANCES)

- *Summer* Repertoire included the legendary George Balanchine, Danish romanticist August Bournonville, distinguished Southern California artist Jennifer Backhaus and American visionary Lar Lubovitch. Los Angeles Ballet premiered *The Evangelist*, a spiritual duet choreographed by Lar Lubovitch, originally created for artistic directors Colleen Neary and Thordal Christensen when they were dancers with Pacific Northwest Ballet, with music by Charles Ives, performed April 25 - May 24, 2008 at the Alex Theatre, UCLA's Freud Playhouse, the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center, and for the first time, the Barclay Theatre in Irvine.

- o "Barak, whether chest-thumping or beseeching with outstretched arms, brought ferocious life to the 1920s character, creating an electrifying chemistry with her cringing, quaking convert." - Los Angeles Times, Victoria Looseleaf.

SEASON THREE

FALL/WINTER 2008 (8 PERFORMANCES)

- *The Nutcracker* performed December 12-28, 2008 at the Alex Theatre, Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center, and Royce Hall.

- o "As Clara, the 16 year old Lilit Hogganian, with the company since its inception, continues to blossom. Displaying grace and confidence beyond her years, Hogganian makes us believe in magic. So too does Melissa Barak, who, as Marie, combines a delicate vulnerability with dramatic hauteur and elegant line most can only imagine... Also a standout is the toy boy: Guest artist Sergey Kheylik remains a scene-stealing Cossack Doll, dosing off armless cartwheels and high flying split-leg jumps." - Los Angeles Times, Victoria Looseleaf.

SPRING 2009 (4 PERFORMANCES)

- *Director's Choice* performed Balanchine's Violin Concerto and Prodigal Son for the first time during this program. Also, featured a World Premiere choreographed by Southern California native Jennifer Backhaus. Performed March 7-21, 2009 at the Alex Theatre, the Broad Stage, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.

- o "*Prodigal* requires an oversized acting style of another era, yet the L.A. Ballet dancers managed it and the dance's quirky athleticism flawlessly... Corina Gill was a shining light of newfound strength and complexity. Her continued growth and onstage joy were infectious." - Los Angeles Times, Laura Bleiberg.

SUMMER 2009 (4 PERFORMANCES)

- *La Sylphide* performed May 16-30, 2006 at the Alex Theatre, UCLA's Freud Playhouse, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.

- o "A handsome, compact dancer, Tovar had the strength and style to execute Bournonville's demanding foot beats with speed and clarity." - Los Angeles Times, Chris Pasles.

SEASON FOUR

FALL/WINTER 2009 (9 PERFORMANCES)

- *The Nutcracker* performed December 19-27, 2009 at the Alex Theatre, Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center, and Royce Hall.

- o "Thanks to marvelous casting, Los Angeles Ballet's version of the classic is a sweet tale of first, innocent love... The dance-heavy second act is where L.A. Ballet shines, which is to be expected from the city's only fully professional classical company. And the sincere dancers do not disappoint." - Los Angeles Times, Laura Bleiberg.

SPRING 2010 (4 PERFORMANCES)

- *Balanchine: see the music, hear the dance* performed Los Angeles Ballet premieres of *Kammermusik No. 2* and *Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 2*, and the return of *Serenade*. Performed February 20 - March 6, 2010 at the Alex Theatre, UCLA's Freud Playhouse, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.

Season Four continued

- o "Lead ballerina Monica Pelfrey twinkled like her tiara. Her solos impressed with breathless balances and a melodic flow that suggested an orchestra was following her. With lifted torso and chin, she dared us to take our eyes off of her." - Los Angeles Times, Laura Bleiberg.

SUMMER 2010 (4 PERFORMANCES)

- *New Wave LA* involved four contemporary World Premieres from guest choreographers Sonya Tayeh, Mandy Moore, and Travis Wall, from the hit FOX show "So You Think You Can Dance", and Josie Walsh. Performed May 15 - May 30, 2010 at the Alex Theatre, The Broad Stage, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
- o "The best part of 'New Wave LA' was watching how the dancers tore up the stage. Tall and elegant Zheng Hua Li transformed himself into a rat. Tyler Burkett whipped through rhythmically perfect pirouettes; Johnston mugged at the audience and unfurled her leg in sweeping extensions. The dancers' commitment never wavered, and that was saying a whole lot." - Los Angeles Times, Laura Bleiberg.
- o "Los Angeles Ballet continues to dial up the heat." - Los Angeles Times, Victoria Looseleaf.

SEASON FIVE

FALL/WINTER 2010 (9 PERFORMANCES)

- *The Nutcracker* performed December 4-26, 2010 at the Alex Theatre, Royce Hall, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
- o "The dancing in the new, millennial Los Angeles Ballet has always been meticulously professional and the new choreography varied and often exciting...Los Angeles Ballet hasn't merely survived for five seasons; it's increased the operating budget some 80%, from \$900,000 in 2006-07 to \$1,624,000 in 2010-11. And there are other signs of growth: increased ticket sales (up 12% last season), a new school and company center in West Los Angeles, a reconstituted board of directors, expanded support staff and audience development activities." - Los Angeles Times, 5-year feature by Lewis Segal.

SPRING 2011 (4 PERFORMANCES)

- *Celebration: Raymonda Variations* (Balanchine), World Premiere of *My Greatest Fear* by Sonya Tayeh, and *Western Symphony* (Balanchine) performed March 5 - 20, 2011 at the Alex Theatre, UCLA's Freud Playhouse, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
- o "Authoritative partnering made for some lovely tableaux, with Chehon Wespi-Tschopp handily spinning Grace McLoughlin overheard, creating a Ferris wheel effect then echoed by other couples. Tyler Burkett also delivered a buoyant solo filled with leaps and arched back anxiety, while Ben Pilat's lighting went from graveyard grim to heavenly amber." - Los Angeles Times, Victoria Looseleaf.

SUMMER 2011 (5 PERFORMANCES)

- *Giselle* performed May 14-29, 2011 at the Alex Theatre, UCLA's Freud Playhouse, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
- o "Los Angeles Ballet gave a credible, even moving, performance of 'Giselle' on Saturday at the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center...With this touchstone Romantic ballet, LAB closes its fifth season with a stronger than ever claim for community support." - Los Angeles Times, Chris Pasles.

SEASON SIX

FALL/WINTER 2011 (9 PERFORMANCES)

- *The Nutcracker* performed December 3-24, 2011 at the Alex Theatre, Royce Hall, and the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.
- o "Continuing to establish itself as a spirited and sophisticated -- if itinerant -- ballet company, Los Angeles Ballet opened its 2011-12 season over the weekend at the Alex Theatre in Glendale with a memorable cast for its distinctive inspired *The Nutcracker*." - Los Angeles Times, Jean Lenihan.

SPRING 2012 (6 PERFORMANCES)

- *Swan Lake* to be performed March 3-31, 2012 at Royce Hall, Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center, the Alex Theatre, and for the first time, Carpenter Performing Arts Center and Valley Performing Arts Center.

SUMMER 2012 (5 PERFORMANCES)

- *NextWaveLA* will feature 4 contemporary World Premieres from guest choreographers Kitty McNamee, Sonya Tayeh, Stacey Tookey and Josie Walsh. Performances May 12-27, 2012 at Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center, the Alex Theatre, and The Broad Stage.

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*Allynne Noelle in Swan Lake; Photocomposition: Reed Hutchinson & Catherine Kanner
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