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THE REBEL YELL

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Dancers flower in Sulich retrospective

by Hal de Becker

Continuing their 20th anniversary season, Nevada Dance Theatre recently presented a retrospective of the works of Vassili Sulich the company's founder, Artistic Director and principal choreographer. With more than 50 ballets to his credit, it could not have been an easy task for this prolific artist to select just eight of them for presentation.

Those familiar with Sulich's ballets might have preferred other selections than some of those presented. But, overall, the program was well designed, and representative of his oeuvre.

Samuel Barber's "Adagio For Strings" was compellingly visualized in "La Barre." What might have been treated as a

banal series of ballet exercises was, in Sulich's hands, an inspirational exercise of the dancer's souls. Speaking through the choreography, his seven dancers expressed that physical and spiritual freedom attainable only through discipline.

All the dancers were excellent, but Ana Noa's performance had a particularly riveting quality. A new ending, when the adult dancers withdrew from the barre to make way for the aspiring youngsters, added a poignant dimension to this already moving work.

Two very different dance duets were presented: "Afternoon of a Faun," and "Los Niños." "Faun" was a light piece, reminiscent of the hey-day of the Hollywood musical. Clarice Geissel was tastefully seduc-

tive, and smoothly supported by Peter Pawlyshyn.

The music for "Los Niños" was by the unique 20th century composer George Crumb. Alone, this music could be difficult for some audiences, but Sulich's artistic focus, conviction, and exploration of a vast range of possibilities for the dancer's bodies actually enhanced musical accessibility.

His dancer's were Holly Mauro and Phillip Krauter. They not only looked and danced marvelously together, they also shared a rare artistic sensitivity. Sulich has set at least four ballets to Crumb's music and in each instance the result has been a choreographic treasure.

"Walls in the Horizon," a worthy balletic plea for love and peace, to music by Bartok, seemed at times overlong and

overstated. Nevertheless, Sulich's ability to capture musical essence in movement was secure, especially when society, faceless and decadent, attempted to separate the young lovers.

Also on the program were excerpts from Carmen, Slavonic and Hungarian Dances (both splendidly costumed by David Heuvel), and Greek Songs. In the latter, as in "Walls," Doug Smoak showed special promise with the developing lyricism of his dancing.

The company's level of dancing, artistically and technically, has never been higher. Under the guidance of Sulich and Associate Artistic Director-Ballet Master Loius Godfrey, the dancers have made impressive leaps forward. Just one example is Svyetlana Epi-

fanova who has begun to display the polish and musicality expected from an artist possessing her immense gifts.

In an excerpt from "Cinderella" she was even more radiant than the glittering costumes of Jose Luis Vinas. With a turn of her head, or a flash of her smile she illuminated the stage and did so without sacrificing clean lines and footwork. She was ably partnered by Samuel Abramian.

Sulich is deservedly proud of his troupe of accomplished dancers, and Nevadans too can take pride in this nationally acclaimed company which, thanks to his dedication and direction, has survived, grown and flowered in the desert for 20 years.

Opus Dancers continue in Las Vegas tradition

The initial phase of the Opus Dance Ensemble began nearly eight years ago with local showroom production show dancers who wished to add another dimension to their talents. Today, the group is still composed of "strip" dancers, but their semiannual presentation has found a permanent new home, the spacious Tiffany Showroom of the Tropicana Hotel.

The troupe's spring concert, Opus XII, is scheduled at 2 p.m. on Sunday. An additional show is planned for May 3.

Executive artistic director for Opus XII is choreographer, dancer and co-founder of Opus, McGarry Caven.

The all-new program will feature original ballet and jazz numbers by Caven as well as guest choreographers, Ralph Perkins and Melissa Cochran.

The first number on the program, titled "Divisions," is a neo-classical ballet danced to the music of composer Benjamin Britton.

A contrasting work will be Caven's contemporary ballet based on Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*, set in steamy New Orleans.

Guest choreographer Cochran is a graduate of the UNLV Dance Department



The Opus Dance Ensemble will present their spring concert this weekend.

where she now teaches. She makes her Opus debut with "Finally Unleashed," a high energy number featuring hip-hop street jazz. Perkins will present his original number "The Kick Inside" which ex-

plores the many dimensions of love, set to the music of singer/songwriter Kate Bush.

Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. Call 732-9646 for ticket information or booth reservations.



Award-winning pianist Emanuel Ax will play Ham Hall Friday.

Ax brings 20th century focus to Ham Hall

The career of pianist Emanuel Ax has encompassed many prizes, recordings and performances with major symphony orchestras. Ax will perform at 8 p.m. Friday at Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall as part of the Charles Vanda Master Series.

Ax has recorded more than 20 albums and has performed with the likes of Isaac Stern and Yo-Yo Ma. Ax won the first International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv in 1975 and has since won the Michaels Award of Young Concert Artists and the Avery Fisher prize.

His orchestral engage-

ments include appearances with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Boston Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony and the Detroit Symphony.

Recently, Ax has focused his attention toward the music of 20th century composers, performing works of Sir Michael Tippett, Hans Werner Henze, Andre Previn, Aaron Copland and Arnold Schoenberg.

A graduate of Columbia University, Ax resides in New York City with his wife, pianist Yoko Nozaki.

Tickets are \$19 and \$26 and are available at the Performing Arts Center Box Office.