



BWW Review: New York Theatre Ballet presents CHILDREN'S DANCE ON A SHOESTRING

By Holly Kerr
May 20, 2016



One of New York City's cultural treasures, the New York Theatre Ballet, presented *Children's Dance on a Shoestring* on May 6th and May 7th, 2016, at New York Theatre Ballet's intimate E. 10th street studio inside St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery. This was a delightful weekend of student dancers and their original choreography.

Children's Dance on a Shoestring is supported generously by Macy's, Inc., and, in part, with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

The program was performed, choreographed, managed, and produced entirely by students from New York Theatre Ballet's Ballet School New York. Original choreography was presented along with classical repertory from *Sleeping Beauty* (Fairies' Variations), *Flower Festival in*

Genzano (Male Variation) and *Esmeralda* (Female Variation). The objective of the program was to teach students the work involved if they were to become a future director of a dance program. In addition to creating an outlet to share their passion and creativity for dance (and vocal and theatrical arts), each student was assigned a level of responsibility in an area of production; costumes, lighting board, music, and props. A committee of students ages 13 to 17 oversaw the entire production. The show included all levels of students and highlighted their individual talents and the dance technique they have acquired as students

of Ballet School New York. It was refreshing to see children allowed to be free to use their organic creativity, along with their solid grasp of ballet technique, before they are taught generic "how-to-do" choreography given in some college dance courses.

New York Theatre Ballet is not only creating beautiful dancers for the professional dance arena but future stage managers, lighting directors, costumers, and dance directors and, most importantly, a new generation of choreographers.

Themes near and dear to the students' hearts, cultural heritages, interests, and religions were explored and lovingly rendered.

The show opened with a lush solo with a Latin flair, "Really Red," choreographed by Coco Monroe. It was danced with panache and a glowing lyricism by Giulia Faria. Ms. Faria, who possesses long and lovely ballet lines in addition to an ample ballet technique, also admirably danced the Female Variation from *Esmeralda*.

The *Blue Fan*, an evocative and wistful solo was choreographed and beautifully danced by Rebecca Seow. Ms. Seow wore a traditional Chinese dance costume, set the piece to music by Chen Yue, and combined Chinese fan dance with ballet technique.

The stories of two Jewish heroines were explored in *Miriam*, choreographed and danced by Lily Eugenia Rudd, and *Anne Frank*, choreographed and danced by Jennifer Levine. Both young ladies conveyed exemplary acting and dancing skills in their interpretations. These two pieces were developed in the 2015 New York Theatre Ballet summer dance program and were part of New York Theatre Ballet's Page to Stage program, one of New York Theatre Ballet's contributions to LIFT Community Services.

Vocal talents were exhibited by Sophia Orlando in "God Help the Outcasts" and Izzy Hanson-Johnston in "Before It's Over."

"Harmony" was a lovely and lyrical duet choreographed and danced by Isabelle Fuki and Kanon Sugino.

The smallest students shone in their group dances "Waltz in White" and "Spring March." In the latter, the girls' adorable double pink hair bows were reminiscent of the hairstyles of the young students of The Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet (Maryinsky Ballet) of Saint Petersburg. Kudos to all the choreographers (Ms. Faria, Ms. Seow, Ms. Hanson-Johnston, Ms. Fuki, Ms. Sugino and Philomena Wills) of these two dances for their intricate patterns and dynamic groupings. It is not an easy choreographic task to manage a large and very young *corps de ballet*, but the mission was accomplished with a delightful and organized outcome.

Oscar Saltalamacchia made original use of familiar Beethoven music to evoke a Greek mythological hero in his solo "Perseus."

These were just some of the many highlights; all of the young performers deserve great credit for a highly professional, polished, and entertaining hour-long dance program. New

York Theatre Ballet, founded in 1978 by artistic director Diana Byer, continues to enrich dance education with its groundbreaking and unique approach to live performance for children, building future audiences for dance for many years to come.