

“IN PROCESS” WITH CAROLYN DORFMAN DANCE

-- December 08, 2015

There is something really special that can happen when talented and eager student dancers join their professional counterparts on stage. I recently saw this in action with American Repertory Ballet’s “The Nutcracker” at McCarter Theatre in Princeton, which incorporates students from the company’s Princeton Ballet School throughout the production.

But I’m not here to talk about “The Nutcracker.” Instead, let me tell you about Carolyn Dorfman Dance’s upcoming “In Process” concert on Wednesday, December 9 at 7:00 p.m., taking place at The Academy for Performing Arts (APA) at Union County Vocational School’s 125-seat Black Box Theater in Scotch Plains. This is the sixth annual edition of this concert, which features junior dancers from the APA.



The performance will be narrated by Carolyn Dorfman herself and the student dancers will join the company to perform an excerpt of Carolyn Dorfman’s 2015 premiere “WAVES.” The professional dancers will also present “Under My Skin.” If that wasn’t enough (and if you find yourself dying to learn more about what you just saw on stage), the evening concludes with a lively audience talkback session.



If you missed the world premiere of “WAVES” in March of 2015 at NJPAC, here’s your chance to catch it again (well, some if it at least – you’ll be seeing an excerpt here). “WAVES” features live performance by virtuosic musicians (including a cellist, a “multi-instrumentalist and human beat boxer” and a recorder player) alongside the Carolyn Dorfman Dance company members. Choreographed by Carolyn Dorfman, this piece uses an eclectic and unusual grouping of artists, their instruments, sounds and vocals to create new and visceral movement connections (or, ahem, WAVES) between the dancers, the music and the dance. The APA students are learning “WAVES” as part of the Carolyn Dorfman Dance residency (more about that later) – performing part of that work here in December and the fuller work in their spring concert.

But wait, there’s more to Wednesday evening! On top of the inspiring performance of new dance from the company and students and the talkback, there will be an award presentation, too. An award of appreciation will be given to the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Union County Cultural and Heritage Programs Advisory Board for their five-year support of the “In Process” performance, which has been made possible through the HEART (History, Education, Arts Reaching Thousands) Grant.

I bet you’re wondering about those student performers, huh? Well, I’m so glad you asked! The students attend the Union County Academy for Performing Arts, which is a four-year, full-time high school that seeks to turn out top-notch artists in dance and theater, while also giving them a rigorous academic education. (Before the eighth-grade hopefuls can even audition for the high school, they first must qualify academically. And instead of the usual senior year high school experience, the students spend that year taking a full load of freshman classes at Kean University.)

From my point of view, the best part, really, is that guest artist residencies and partnerships are a core part of the program. So while what you're seeing on Wednesday is a one-night-only performance, it's not a one-night-only experience for the students and the dance professionals. Instead, it's the public's chance to catch a glimpse of the relationships and learning built over the course of the residency. The 2015-2016 residency, which runs from September to April, includes 16 sessions (of four hours each) between the dancers and the company.



Sharing art and process is the hallmark of the company and Artistic Director Carolyn Dorfman has built a company legacy known internationally for bold athleticism and dramatic nuance, while making dance education a major priority in its mission.

And this isn't just a one-off thing for Carolyn Dorfman Dance, either. Since 2006, Carolyn Dorfman has been an artistic advisor to the Union County Vocational School in the planning for the APA, which began in 2008. Since the opening of the school, Carolyn Dorfman and Associate Artistic Director Jacqueline Dumas Albert have been artists-in-residence at APA, and have both taught master classes and set the company's repertory on APA dance students.



Carolyn Dorfman's close relationship with the students doesn't end with the school year or graduation, either. Several of the APA dancers have attended the company's summer intensive (NJ SummerDance), and have been guest performers in Dorfman's work, "Interior Designs."

As you can probably guess, due in part to this spectacular opportunity, dance enrollment has increased so much that APA has added additional classes. Dorfman is dedicated to helping the school continue to expand, training new dancers and cultivating an awareness of and love for dance in Union County.

We often take for granted the work that goes into putting on a performance. But in this case, the performance is as much about the process as the product. And your evening will be all the richer for knowing that.



Oh, and I don't mean to freak you out or anything, but you'd better hurry and buy your tickets. The venue for this one-night-only performance only seats 125 and the concert usually sells out!

The Details

Carolyn Dorfman Dance performs its "In Process" concert on Wednesday, December 9, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at The Academy for Performing Arts at Union County Vocational School's Black Box Theater. The venue is located at 1776 Raritan Road in Scotch Plains, NJ. All tickets are \$12 and available for purchase at <https://cddapa15.eventbrite.com>. For more information about Carolyn Dorfman Dance, visit <http://carolyndorfman.dance>.