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Local Arts

Free Flow Dance Theatre celebrates more than 25 years with gala event

Free Flow Dance Theatre Company hosts Reunite! — their 25th/27th anniversary gala Nov. 18-20, 8 p.m. nightly, with a 2 p.m. Sunday matinee.

Jocelyn Bennett • Saskatoon StarPhoenix

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From back left: Rachel Saufert, Philip McDermott, Taylor Zeller, Maggie Lucas, Shannon Pybus and Aiyana Ruel rehearse for Free Flow Dance Theatre's upcoming 25th anniversary gala performance in Saskatoon, Nov. 10, 2022. PHOTO BY MATT SMITH /Saskatoon StarPhoenix

Free Flow Dance Theatre Company has had to get creative with its performances since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

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This ad will end in 14

“We moved outside for almost two years ... We were fortunate to be able to find our way, wander through the maze of the new world and find our way to the theatre again,” artistic director Jackie Latendresse said.

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Along with the outdoor performances — which included huddling around a fire pit on colder November evenings last year — came the inevitable delay of the dance company’s 25th anniversary celebration.

Two years later, the company will present its Better Late Than Never 25th/27th Anniversary Gala — Reunite! at The Refinery this weekend.

“We are all very excited to be bringing the show — finally — to the people,” Latendresse said.

She noted there aren’t a lot of opportunities to experience contemporary dance in Saskatchewan, and she hopes that encourages people to attend the gala.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

“We want people to feel like they’ve been able to go and see something unusual, unique, moving, riveting and something that they feel has, in some way, helped transform their lives for the better.”

The event features new choreography created by the dance company and by guest artists from across Canada.

“We have always focused on Canadian content. So this is obviously a very strong Canadian show,” Latendresse said.

Guest artists include Canadian Dance Hall of Fame inductee Danny Grossman and his longtime collaborator Eddie Kastrau, York University Dance Department professor Terrill Maguire and Brazilian-Canadian artist Newton Moraes.



Terrill Maguire's *Resurgence* is one of four short works in Free Flow Dance Theatre Company's 25th/27th anniversary gala, Nov. 18-20. PHOTO BY KEN GREENHORN /Supplied photo

Four short works will be shown in the first half, including the premiere of Moraes's *Mulhers*, an exploration of women and their resilience.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

"It's quite a touching and humorous piece, which is a lot of fun for our audiences. Newton is a wonderful storyteller through movement and gesture, so it's a very heartwarming and moving piece," Latendresse said.

The other short works include a quintet depicting the various relationships between women, a solo work exploring meaningful intersecting moments in two lives and a duet presenting a tumultuous, yet loving relationship between a man and a woman.

The gala's second half presents the full-length featured work, created by Latendresse and Grossman, who was her mentor for 15 years.

"It's a very exciting process for me to be involved in and I feel very honoured to be creating a work with this senior Canadian dance artist," Latendresse said.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

“Danny has basically come out of retirement to create this fairly large, significant piece of work with me and we’re super excited.”

Earth: The Womb of Life (A Pantomime for Our Time) is a commentary on the state of our planet and our relationships to it and to each other, she said. It’s also a multidisciplinary work, featuring a soundtrack and a visual display created by Kastrau.

Latendresse said the gala presentation is a culmination of all the strong points the dance company has been developing in its 27 years.

“We’re known for innovative and edgy and exciting work that is very theatrical. All of these pieces tell a story. All of the pieces are bringing people on a journey through movement and gesture.”



From left: Shannon Pybus, Taylor Zeller, Aiyana Ruel and Rachel Saufert rehearse for Free Flow Dance Theatre Company's 25th anniversary gala performance. PHOTO BY MATT SMITH /Saskatoon StarPhoenix

After seeing how much more accessible online performances can be for the audience, Latendresse said she would like to present more hybrid performances and workshops in the future.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

“There’s just so many more doors that are opened when you have that (online) offering. But there’s just something magical about live performances as well ... I think finding a nice way to hybridize the best of both of those worlds is the future of performing arts.”

Free Flow Dance Theatre Company’s gala takes place at The Refinery nightly at 8 p.m. Friday to Sunday, with a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday. Tickets are available through a tiered pricing system at ontheboards.ca.

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