



ON POINTE] SAINT LOUIS BALLET by stephanie wallace]

ST. LOUIS IS HOME TO ITS FAIR SHARE OF CULTURAL GEMS, and the Saint Louis Ballet, with its world-renowned director and accomplished dancers, is among the most impressive. As the only professional, resident ballet company in the region, it enriches the local arts scene through its classical and contemporary productions and support of dancers and other artists.

“Our goal is to further establish St. Louis as a hub of culture in the Midwest,” says managing director Valerie Miller. She says this means offering innovative performances like the ballet’s February program, Love Stories. Since 2014, it has used Valentine’s Day as inspiration to showcase contemporary ballets from a range of artists, themed around love. This year’s production will feature live vocalists and musicians. “It’s an exciting collaboration between music and dancing, which only enhances the experience,” says Gen Horiuchi, executive and artistic director. The show will include a piece choreographed by Horiuchi set to the music of local composer Barbara Harbach.

This year, the ballet gets the opportunity to perform at The Grandel Theatre. “It will be our first time in Grand Center, which is really exciting,” says board member Laurie Lock. The theater’s intimate size makes for an engaging experience that Horiuchi says brings the audience closer to the dancers. The second installment of the company’s GO! series will be held at the ‘all-inclusive’ space March 2 and 3. “Before the performance, people can have dinner and listen to jazz at The Dark Room,” Miller says. “It’s a very holistic experience; there even will be a ballet-themed menu and cocktails!” The evening will conclude in the lobby where guests can mingle and talk with the dancers.

The Saint Louis Ballet also performs classical productions

like Cinderella, which will close the current season in April. “We want to maintain and pay respect to the tradition of classical ballet while also fostering and recognizing it as an innovative art form,” Miller says. “We are committed to giving a platform to young, emerging choreographers.”

The ballet is invested in reaching everyone in St. Louis. To help meet that goal, it launched Pointe to Succeed, a community outreach program that introduces children to ballet. The free program was recently introduced at St. Louis Catholic Academy, an elementary school in North St. Louis. “Learning about ballet and attending performances is new for our students, and we are excited to give them the experience,” principal Sandra Morton says. It is important to the ballet that all children have the chance to engage with dance as both audience members and participants. “Dance might be someone’s passion or lifeline,” Lock says. “We want to make sure all children have access and the chance to be immersed in the art form.”

As a nonprofit, the ballet relies on fundraising to make its performances and outreach possible. “There is a whole cultural economy behind what we do, supporting and promoting dancers, choreographers, musicians and composers,” Miller says. Its major fundraiser, the Cinderella Ball, is April 7 in The Coronado’s newly renovated ballroom. “It’s always a fabulous night,” says Lock, who is co-chair for the event. The evening will feature an excerpt from the ballet’s production of Cinderella, a live auction, dinner and cocktails. “I think the highlight is getting to dance with the performers at the end of the night,” Lock says. “It’s a unique evening. People will have a lot of fun and get to see the Saint Louis Ballet in action.” 🍷

THE SAINT LOUIS BALLET IS THE ONLY PROFESSIONAL, RESIDENT BALLET COMPANY IN ST. LOUIS. ITS FUNDRAISING GALA, THE CINDERELLA BALL, IS APRIL 7 AT THE CORONADO AND IS SPONSORED BY CENTENE, EMERSON AND PLNK STL. PICTURED ON THE COVER: SAINT LOUIS BALLET DANCER LORI WILSON. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 636.537.1998 OR VISIT STLOUISBALLET.ORG.