UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

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Andrea Estrada

‘The Timeless Role of Art’

Santa Barbara Dance Theater (SBDT) has a reputation for range and excellence, and both will be on display when the professional dance company in residence at UC Santa Barbara presents “NOW/EVER/MORE” May 4 and 5 at the Lobero Theatre in Santa Barbara.

The concert, which begins at 8 p.m., will feature diverse premieres by critically acclaimed choreographers: Guests Andrea Giselle Schermoly and David Maurice and Christopher Pilafian, SBDT’s artistic director.

“This program speaks to the timeless role of art,” said Pilafian. ”Choreographers draw upon the raw materials of inspiration, observation, empathy, resonance and passion to reveal what was invisible. ‘NOW/EVER/MORE’ carves out a discrete time and space in which we reflect on the challenges and beauties of this grand collaborative project — being human.”

Guest choreographer Schermoly’s new work, “Hers,” is characterized by a highly wrought physical vocabulary whose expressionism teases out distinct yet related facets of humanity. With SBDT, she draws original, mature performances from dancers Nikki Pfeiffer, Nicole Powell and Christina Sanchez, set to a score by Belgian composer Wim Mertens.

“Were It Not for Shadows,” the new work by guest choreographer Maurice, draws on cultural ritual, societal norms and romantic notions as forces that impose limits on the sense of self. Maurice and SBDT’s dancers explore conflicts between concepts of

“I,” “we” and “they.”

Pilafian’s “Mystique,” which originally premiered in January, will be presented anew. This work for nine women, he said, is inspired by his deep appreciation of the many female friends, teachers, partners, choreographers, artistic directors and colleagues who have influenced him throughout his life.

The choreography is set to a score by composer Will Thomas, with Mary Heebner’s artwork transmuted into scenic imagery by designer Michael Klaers and costumes hand-painted by Ingrid Luna.

In Pilafian’s newest piece, “Chamber Fantasy,” features three dancers and is set to music by composer Georg Frideric Handel.

Other performances include a work by famed dance artist Jane Dudley, a contemporary of legendary dance modernist (and onetime Santa Barbara High School student) Martha Graham. A dancer in Graham’s company in the 1930s and 40s, Dudley created the powerful “Cante Flamenco” as a choreographic response to the Spanish Civil War. She first performed it in 1944. As staged for SBDT by UCSB senior dance lecturer Nancy Colahan, Dudley’s piece will be performed by Christina Sanchez, a SBDT company member and an alumna of the Alvin Ailey Dance Company.

Ticket and additional information about “NOW/EVER/MORE” can be found at www.sbdancetheater.org. Questions can be directed to Cindy Elster at elster@cox.net.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.