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"Dance on Film" Festival Explores the Magic of Movement on the Big Screen

By Lou Fancher



Lauren Jonas Photo provided

The Diablo Ballet and Lafayette Library and Learning Center's second annual "Dance on Film" series leapt into action June 6 with "Brigadoon," but there's still time to hop into the behind-the-scene and on-the-screens action later this summer with "Singing in the Rain" and "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers," two more favorites of Diablo Ballet artistic director and show co-host Lauren Jonas.

Jonas grew up with New Yorker parents who were "always first in line" when new Broadway musicals and films premiered. Singing along with recordings, swinging through ballet barres inspired by classic combinations of dance, music and film, Jonas' future as a dancer was shaped as much by the movies' lyrical qualities as it was by plies.

"I adore these films and I am excited to share them with people who also love them," Jonas says.

The history of dance is packed with great partnerships and this series has multiple pas de deux (a dance for two). There's the LLC and Walnut Creek-based Diablo Ballet, teaming up to present the films and talks. And in addition to the fantastic on screen duos, Jonas will promenade through the pre-film discussions with Beau Behan, movie critic and host of Beau's Flicks & Nix.

"We'll be speaking independently," Jonas says. "My focus will be on the choreography, a discussion of the artistic form and unique requirements of film dancing verses stage performances."

Dance on film affords a degree of control not available to live, onstage performers, but often, there are tradeoffs. The amount of space may be limited; the floor's surface less than ideal; costuming can be visually stunning, but awkward - even dangerous - to pirouette in; and the ability to do multiple takes means a dancer's body suffers considerable wear and tear. And then there are all the artistic personalities and Hollywood producers to please.

But anyone who's heard Jonas speak before knows she has an internal "I love anything that moves" clock, so expect her intros to be upbeat. And Behan brings the same energy, plus a lengthy resume and thousands of hours devoted to watching and studying films.

"It's so rare that we are able to talk about dance and its influence on major media like film," Jonas explains. "I will be discussing the imprint these films made on me as a dancer, artistic director, and (as a) human being."

Although you'll have missed Jonas' in-depth perusal of "Brigadoon," you don't have to give up learning more about Gene Kelly's magic with a lamppost, umbrella and water in "Singing in the Rain," on July 10, or the four New York City Ballet principal dancers adding astounding virtuosity to "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" on Aug. 15.

For more information, call (925) 943-1775, ext. 2, or (925) 385-2280, or email Dan@DiabloBallet.org.

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