

International Theater in Town for Chekhov Fest

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Christopher Marney and Kerry Biggin in Matthew Bourne's dance piece "Cinderella," which opens June 28.

It must be a marriage made in heaven — Moscow and the Chekhov International Theater Festival. Because even in this, the festival's 10th official running, it still is capable of creating a program that includes something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue.

What comprises blue may depend on how you see things.

It might be Matthew Bourne's "Cinderella," a production of the New Adventures Company of London that opens two weeks of performances on June 28. This dance piece by the popular choreographer is washed in deep blues by lighting designer Neil Austin. Or it might be Pere Arquillue's dramatization of Samuel Beckett's story "First Love" for the Greece 2010 Festival of Barcelona. This tale about a man's debilitating relationship with a prostitute plays June 22

to 24. Both shows play at the Mossoviet Theater, which is this year's primary festival venue.

Two of the festival's 17 productions involving foreign companies "borrow" casts from other countries.

Declan Donnellan's "The Tempest," which opened to raves in London in the spring, is another in a long line of collaborations between the British director and a Russian acting company. Featuring Igor Yasulovich as the displaced and disconsolate Prospero, "Tempest" opened Wednesday and performs Thursday and twice on Friday.

In a similar vein, but with different components, we are promised a piece called "Town. History" directed by Vladimir Pankov of Moscow's SounDrama Studio and acted by the company of Studio Six, a New York troupe consisting of actors who studied in Moscow. This piece collating stories by Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin and Irving Washington plays July 15 to 17 at the Meyerhold Center.

As for old and new — that's easy. In addition to Bourne, who wowed Moscow repeatedly in bygone years, the festival brings back several friends from the past.

Renowned Italian director Romeo Castellucci, who first visited Moscow during the festival's fourth running in 2001, unveils his "J Project. On the Concept of the Face, Regarding the Son of God" at the Teatrium Na Serpukhovke, where it runs from Saturday to Tuesday. "J Project," according to the director, is an attempt to look beyond the surface of a portrait of Jesus Christ.

Other artists making return visits during the two-month-long festival, which closes July 31, include the Canadian master Robert Lepage and the French visual wizard Phillipe Genty.

Genty, working with partner Mary Underwood as always, shows "Voyageurs Immobiles" from Sunday to June 5. This dreamlike work filled with unexpected and provocative images features eight performers on a journey to explore their inner worlds.

Lepage, working as an actor with Sylvie Guillem and Russel Maliphant, occupies center stage from June 9 to 11 in "Eonnagata." This is a treatment of a true spy story from the 18th century that touches on questions of identity and sexuality.

This year the festival officially focuses on Spain and Italy, although one could say the schedule's main thrust is dance.

The National Dance Theater of Spain brings two evenings of short ballets — "Gnawa," "Arcangelo" and "Flockwork" from July 13 to 16, and "Noodles" and "White Darkness" from July 19 to 23.

Maria Pages of Madrid shows "Autorretrato," a flamenco-based piece that the creator suggests is something of a self-portrait in movement. It opens a full week of performances on June 18.

Two major dance troupes from the United States will put in appearances.

Moses Pendleton's Momix Dance Company offers up "Botanica," a loose interpretation of the rhythms of the four seasons in New England at the Teatrium Na Serpukhovke from July 10 to

14. Momix has established a reputation as a group that combines dance and physical theater in a visually arresting way.

Surely the performance of the Merce Cunningham dance company will be a festival highlight. The company is set to disband this year, following the death of its founder in 2009. As such, the performances of “Biped,” “Xover” and “Rainforest” from June 14 to 16 will mark one of the last times these productions will be seen anywhere.

Each of the pieces involved provides a brief glimpse at the company’s history. “Rainforest” is an 18-minute piece that premiered in 1968 with sets by Andy Warhol, while “Biped” has been in the company’s repertoire since 1999. “Xover” opened in 2007 and is something of a tribute to the great American composer John Cage, who was Cunningham’s lifelong partner.

The Chekhov International Theater Festival runs to July 31. Performances are at the Mossoviet Theater unless otherwise noted. Follow The Moscow Times listings for details, or go to www.chekhov.fest.ru. Box office: 223-9650, 223-9651.

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