

Mariinsky Soloist Vishneva Dances at Stanislavsky

By [Raymond Stults](#)

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Vishneva returns to Moscow with a three-part show that includes a piece choreographed by Martha Graham. **Alexander Gulyaev**

Every appearance in Moscow by Mariinsky Theater prima ballerina Diana Vishneva is bound to be an event of great allure to the city's ballet-going public. And the new program she brings to the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theater this week, titled "Diana Vishneva: Dialogues," should prove no exception.

Like the ballerina's previous program, "Diana Vishneva: Beauty in Motion," which received a sensational reception in Moscow and elsewhere three years ago, "Dialogues," is a three-part show. But unlike its predecessor, which consisted entirely of works specially created by a trio of choreographers, the new program includes just one premiere, a ballet appropriately titled "Dialogue," by Hamburg-based American choreographer John Neumeier. For the rest, Vishneva has reached back more than six decades to a work called "Errand Into the Maze" by legendary American Martha Graham and completes the program with "Subject to Change,"

created in 2003 by the noted English-Spanish husband-and-wife team of Paul Lightfoot and Sol Leon for the Netherlands Dance Theater.

Vishneva was born in Leningrad and, like nearly all Mariinsky dancers, trained there at the Vaganova Academy, where she was said to have received the highest marks ever recorded at the school. Joining the Mariinsky immediately after graduation in 1995, she found herself just a year later rising to the rank of soloist and, rather astonishingly for a dancer so young and inexperienced, honored with a prestigious Benois de la Danse award for her performance as Kitri in the Marius Petipa classic "Don Quixote."

Vishneva's international career as a guest soloist began in 2001 and has included appearances with the Bavarian State Ballet in Munich, the Berlin State Ballet, the Paris Opera Ballet and the La Scala Ballet in Milan. Since 2003, she has been a regular guest star of the American Ballet Theater during its annual spring-summer seasons at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

At the Mariinsky, Vishneva has danced every major classical role and in numerous works of a modern vintage. In 2001, her exuberant performance there in the "Rubies" segment of George Balanchine's "Jewels" earned her a Golden Mask award. A second Golden Mask came her way in 2009 for "Beauty in Motion."

Moscow most recently saw Vishneva in the title role of Alexei Ratmansky's "Anna Karenina" during a visit by the Mariinsky last spring and in a rare gala evening appearance in September at the Kremlin Palace Theater.

Five years ago, the Bolshoi Theater engaged Vishneva as a "principal guest artist." But the engagement proved to be short-lived after a storm of objections by the theater's leading ballerinas to her encroaching on their territory. This season, however, the Bolshoi is giving it another try. Early next year, she is due to appear there in Ratmansky's "Lost Illusions," which premiered last April, and later on, her schedule permitting, in the theater's upcoming production of "Jewels."

Judging by reports from St. Petersburg, where it premiered late last month, "Dialogues" looks to be another superb opportunity for Vishneva to display her extraordinary strength, refinement and versatility as a dancer.

"Errand Into the Maze," choreographed by Martha Graham in 1947 to a score by Gian Carlo Menotti and with decor by famed Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi, takes its inspiration from the Greek myth concerning the venture by Theseus into the labyrinth of King Midas of Crete to slay the monstrous half-man, half-beast Minotaur. In this case, however, it is a woman who undertakes the feat, with the Minotaur seeming to represent her own hidden fears. Dancing together with Vishneva will be Ben Schultz, a member of the Martha Graham Dance Company, which the great dancer and choreographer founded in 1926.

"Dialogues" is a duet in Neumeier's familiar neoclassical style, set to "Variations on a Theme of Chopin" by the rather unfairly neglected 20th-century Spanish composer Federico Mompou. Partnering Vishneva will be Brazilian-born Thiago Bordin from the choreographer's own Hamburg Ballet, with noted contemporary music specialist Alexei Goribol accompanying them on stage at the piano.

“Subject to Change” was created in memory of a young friend of choreographers Lightfoot and Leon who had recently died of an incurable disease. Its music is the slow movement of Franz Schubert’s “Death and the Maiden” string quartet as orchestrated by Gustav Mahler. Taking part in the ballet will be Bolshoi lead soloist Andrei Merkurjev and several dancers from the Mariinsky.

“Diana Vishneva: Dialogues” (Diana Vishneva: Dialogi) plays Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich–Danchenko Musical Theater, 17 Ulitsa Bolshaya Dmitrovka. Metro Pushkinskaya. 629–2835. www.stanmus.ru

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