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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Polyakov, Paris Ballet and Pina's Assistant on Screen

By Katherine Lawrence Mansfield

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Five dance movies will be shown on Saturday and Sunday at Aktovy Zal.

Interpreting one art through another is never easy, and filtering dance — that most temporal of arts — through the prism of a camera can be particularly tricky.

This weekend, however, offers everyone the chance to see some of the best dance films currently available as the French Embassy and the French Institute, together with the International Centre for Dance and Performance, present the "Weekend of French Dance Videos" at Aktovy Zal.

The program includes the work of five well-known directors, each offering a rare glimpse into the hidden world of dance creation and production.

"I believe that dance today opens so many different doors that it's easy to find something you like," said Christine Laumond, the attache for film and mass communication at the French

Embassy, and the creator of the weekend. "The strict boundaries between classical, modern, contemporary dance ... are becoming more and more blurred."

Each of the films offers a unique choreographic and cinematic style, beginning Saturday with Olivier Assayas' dynamic film "Eldorado Preljocai" that follows the choreographic process of French dancer and contemporary dance choreographer Angelin Preljocai.

That is followed by Frederick Wiseman's sumptuous and full-bodied "La Danse — Le Ballet de l'Opera de Paris," the widely acclaimed look at the Paris Opera Ballet. Sunday starts with an intimate portrait of Genya Polyakov, the former Bolshoi dancer in Vladimir Kara's "Genya Polyakov: maitre de ballet, choreographe" followed by Regis Obadia's "Dominique Mercy danse Pina Bausch," an intensely intimate homage to Dominique Mercy, assistant to Pina Bausch for 35 years.

Wim Wender's film, "Pina" a 3D movie that looked at Bausch, one of the greatest choreographers of the 20th century, was a big success around the world and showed how dance films can have success on the big screen, Obadia said in a phone interview. "There has been a certain snowball effect around Pina, a certain democratization of her work ... a real interest has developed around dance," he said.

The weekend ends with Claire Denis' exploration of modern dance choreographer Mathilde Monnier in her film "Towards Mathilde."

Given the rich history of both ballet and cinema in Russia, Laumond said she has wanted to screen a series of dance videos since her arrival in Russia two years ago. She put it off until this year so that the event would coincide with the reopening of the Bolshoi.

Whether a dance lover, a film fanatic, or a Francophile, the "Weekend of French Dance Videos" promises to be a visually engaging event. All films are shown in French with Russian subtitles.

"Weekend of French Dance Videos" plays Saturday and Sunday. Aktovy Zal. 18 Perevedenovsky Pereulok. Metro Baumanskaya. (499) 265-3926. www.aktzal.ru

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