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Mariinsky Ballet Fest To Draw Dance Stars

By Galina Stolyarova

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ST. PETERSBURG — Dance talent from the▣Bolshoi Theater, London's Royal Ballet, New York City Ballet, the▣Wiener Staatsoper, Het Nationale Ballet and the▣Bejart Ballet Lausanne will join the Mariinsky Theater's top soloists at the 12th International Mariinsky Ballet Festival.

The festivities kick off March 22 with a revival of Roland Petit's poignant 1946 masterpiece "Le Jeune Homme et la Mort."

The event, launched by the Mariinsky's artistic director Valery Gergiev in 2001 as a counterweight to the maestro's other brainchild, the Stars of the White Nights festival that runs every year from mid-May through mid-July, assembles a pantheon of ballet stars from the world's finest ballet companies.

The same evening as the Petit ballet will see a performance of George Balanchine's ballet "The Prodigal Son" set to music by Sergei Prokofiev and originally created for Diaghilev's Saisons

Russes in 1929, when it was performed by Teresa Reichlen and Daniel Ulbricht, soloists with the New York City Ballet.

The festival offers rare opportunities to see Western ballet stars in classical Russian ballets as well as in their signature roles in works by foreign choreographers.

Covent Garden's Alina Cojocaru and Johan Kobborg, who made their debut at the Mariinsky during the ballet festival in 2003, have since become regulars at the festival and have attended it almost every year since then.

This year, Cojocaru will appear alongside Kobborg in Bournonville's "La Sylphide" on March 25 in a not-to-be-missed performance.

Representing the Bolshoi Theater, Svetlana Zakharova and Alexander Volchkov will join Anastasia Matvienko in "La Bayadere" on March 24.

The festival will reach its apogee with performances by the world-renowned Bejart Ballet Lausanne on March 27 and 28. The company, founded by the late legendary 20th-century choreographer Maurice Bejart, is now directed by Gil Roman. The ballet troupe will bring four of the ballet-master's works to St. Petersburg, including "Bolero," "Ce que l'amour me dit," "Cantate 51" and the pas de deux of Helene and Euphorion from the ballet "Notre Faust," as well as Roman's ballet "La ou sont les oiseaux."

Viktoria Tereshkina and Alexander Sergeyev will appear in Angelin Preljocaj's ballet "Le Parc" (March 26); Diana Vishneva will take to the stage in a ballet evening featuring "Errand into the Maze" by Martha Graham, "Subject to Change" by Paul Lightfoot and "Pierrot Lunaire" by Alexei Ratmansky (March 30); and Lopatkina and Andrei Yermakov will perform Ratmansky's ballet "Anna Karenina" on March 31.

The festival ends on April 1 with a gala performance featuring the festival's guest stars.

For the program, visit www.mariinsky.ru

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