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Folk Dances From a Worldly Ensemble

By Jordan Bryant

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Costumed dancers perform in the Moiseyev Ballet's pieces, often inspired by folk dances from around the world.

If variety is what you want in your weekly dose of cultural entertainment then look no further than the Igor Moiseyev Ballet. Where else can one find gypsies, gauchos, sailors and Jewish wedding guests all in the same room?

"For folk dance in Russia, no one can match the Moiseyev ensemble," said Kerim Seifilayevich Kerimov, a bassoonist in the Moiseyev Ballet Orchestra. "An organization of this quality, at this level ... there is no second."

Last Tuesday night, the ensemble capped off its September series with a performance entitled "Jewish Suite: The Family Joys," a name taken from the one-act ballet that provided the stunning finale to the evening's program. Developed by Moiseyev after a visit to Israel, this dance features grand entrances by a wedding party, celebratory acrobatics around bottles of wine, and a rapturous culminating chorus of Hava Negila.

However, the Jewish Suite is only one of many dances in the Moiseyev repertoire with a foreign flair. The choreographed vignettes that made up the night's performance also included traditional pieces from Argentina, Spain and Moldova, each with its own unique composition of color and movement.

Kerimov said Igor Moiseyev (1906-2007) often drew inspiration from the traditional dances of other countries, either painstakingly studying them from afar or actually going to see them for himself. Even from a balcony seat, the results of his work were evident: From the beautiful red and whites of the Russian dance "Summer," to the vibrant blues and greens of the "Gypsy Dance," the only thing more stunning than the costumes was the choreography itself.

Although the Igor Moiseyev Ballet prides itself on being the world's premiere professional folk dance company, the dancers themselves have all the classical ballet chops that one would expect to find at the Bolshoi Theater. Gestures were often grand, yet impossibly graceful, every bit as lithe as they were lively.

With its boldness and authenticity, the Moiseyev ensemble makes a modern adaptation on tradition look like a production passed down through the ages.

The next opportunity to see The Igor Moiseyev Ballet is on Oct. 14. For a full list of concerts and events please visit moiseyev.ru*.*

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