

THE DAILY GAZETTE

On Exhibit: Three Saratoga venues to put the spotlight on dance

Indiana Nash | June 1, 2022



“EyeSpace” (2007), by Merce Cunningham, as performed by his dance company, Miami, Florida, 2007. (Photo by Mikhail Baryshnikov)

SARATOGA SPRINGS – Summer in Saratoga Springs isn’t complete without dancers lighting up the stage at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. This year, dance can also be found elsewhere on SPAC’s campus and in a different form.

As part of a three-venue collaboration called “Dance Around Town,” SPAC is hosting an exhibit featuring sizable photographs by dancer, choreographer, actor and photographer Mikhail Baryshnikov. Opening Sunday at The Pines and titled “Merce My Way,” the exhibit pays homage to the late Merce Cunningham, a choreographer who was at the forefront of modern dance for decades.

In Baryshnikov's photos, the limbs of the dancers are blurred, capturing a sense of graceful movement and the vibrant colors of their costumes. The exhibit includes images of several of Cunningham's works, including "eyeSpace" and "Crises," as performed by his dance company. Baryshnikov describes his project as his "humble attempt to see, measure, and understand the work of one of the greatest choreographers of our time."

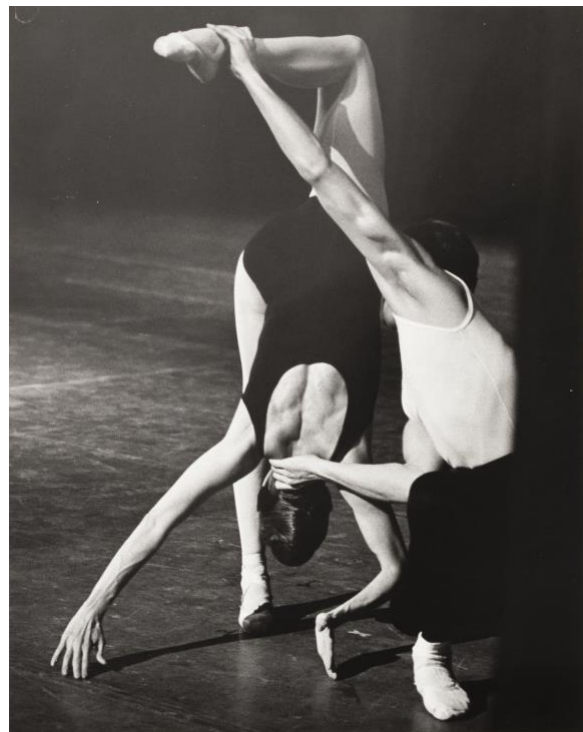
"[Baryshnikov] talks about how he hates dance photography because dance photography is by nature capturing a still moment of something that's active and lively," said Christopher Shiley, vice president of programming at SPAC. "So he really wanted . . . to try to find a way to show you the movement that's happening on stage."

The exhibit is an ideal fit for SPAC, especially this summer with the full return of its classical season. It's the second exhibit that's been featured at The Pines. Last year SPAC worked with The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery to present a series of psychedelic rock posters and this year they wanted to bring a visual arts element back.

"We were looking for something that was vivid and vibrant and really captured your eyes when you walked in and brought a lot of life and energy to the space," Shiley said.

Baryshnikov's photos certainly do that. "Merce My Way" will be on view during select times throughout the summer and into October.

Beyond its campus, SPAC has collaborated with Saratoga Arts and the Tang to present two other dance-focused exhibits.



Carolyn George, *Allegra Kent and Bart Cook*, "Episodes," choreography by George Balanchine, c. 1970s, gelatin silver print, Tang Teaching Museum collection, gift of Robert Tracy '77, 1986.171

Opening Saturday at the Tang Teaching Museum is "Robert Tracy on Dance." Robert Tracy was a dancer, critic, author, educator and partner of legendary ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev. Tracy studied dance and classics at Skidmore College and later donated his archive of dance photographs to the school.

The exhibit includes research photographs from his first book, "Balanchine's Ballerinas: Conversations with the Muses," in which he interviewed ballet stars like Alexandra Danilova, Violette Verdy, Suzanne Farrell and Melissa Hayden, who was Tracy's teacher at Skidmore

College, with dance photography from Costas Cacaroukas, Steven Caras, Fred Fehl, Carolyn George, George Platt Lynes and Martha Swope.

Starting June 18, Saratoga Arts will host “Ageless Dancers” by Betti Franceschi, an exhibit inspired by the retired ballerinas at a New York City Ballet gala in Paris. As Franceschi states, “the ageless artist in each of those grand dames, and those who have followed, must be recorded and honored.” Through her work, Franceschi challenges the culture of ageism in America.

“Saratoga is internationally acclaimed for its role as a presenter of dance and as a storyteller preserving the history of the art form. We look forward to honoring that tradition, while also expanding upon the city’s cultural footprint through more widely accessible exhibitions that celebrate dance and its many forms,” Elizabeth Sobol, the president and CEO of SPAC said in a statement.

Here’s a look at the “Dance Around Town: A Photographic Celebration” exhibit schedule:

“Merce My Way”

Location: The Pines at SPAC

Viewing Times: June 5 (2-5 p.m.); June 6-9 (Noon-5 p.m.); June 17-19 (Noon-5 p.m.)

The collection will also be available for viewing to all ticket holders of SPAC’s classical programming. Additional viewing times will be announced.

“Ageless Dancers”

Location: Saratoga Arts

Dates: June 18 – August 13

Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. and Saturday Noon–4 p.m.

“Robert Tracy on Dance”

Location: The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery

Dates: June 4 – August 21

Hours: Thursday Noon–9 p.m., Friday, Saturday and Sunday Noon–5 p.m.

All three exhibitions will be available to view at no cost. For more information visit spac.org.