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DANCING .FESTIVAL TURNS 5

Companies from Chicago and elsewhere set for free shows in August

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It seemed like a somewhat crazy yet wholly inspired notion five years ago. The idea, devised by choreographer Lar Lubovitch and dancer Jay Franke, was to put on a free, one-night-only dance festival on the stage of the Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park.

The event would feature a smorgasbord of ballet and contemporary dance performances by some of the finest companies on the national and international scene, and also would focus attention on this city as a fast-growing center of dance.

From the first leap, the Chicago Dancing Festival proved to be a monumental hit, attracting many thousands of dance lovers as well as others who became converts to the art. In the ensuing years the festival has expanded, with the original Saturday night gala in the park now prefaced by a week of indoor programs.

This summer's fifth anniversary festival will run Aug. 22-27.

The "Celebration of Dance" (7:30 p.m. Aug. 27, Pritzker Pavilion) will include the Joffrey Ballet in Balanchine's "Stravinsky Violin Concerto"; Ballet West in Jiri Kylian's "Sinfonietta"; Martha Graham Dance Company in "Diversion of Angels"; Paul Taylor Dance Company in "Esplenade"; New York City Ballet guest artists Gonzalo Garcia and Tiler Peck in Balanchine's "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux;" and River North Dance Chicago in "9-Person Precision Ball Passing."

The earlier indoor programs have themes: "Moderns" (7:30 p.m. Aug. 23, Harris Theater, 205 E. Randolph, with a noon matinee the next day), "MCA Moves" (6 and 8 p.m. Aug. 24, Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago), "Masters" (7:30 p.m. Aug. 25, Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress), "Dance Films" (10 a.m.-6 p.m. Aug. 26, Claudia Cassidy Theatre in the Chicago Cultural Center, 77 E. Randolph) and "Muses" (6 p.m. Aug. 26, MCA).

For details on those programs and information about obtaining free tickets for the indoor events, visit www.chicagodancingfestival.com.

NOTE: An opening-night fund-raising gala featuring performances by dancers from the Joffrey Ballet, Hubbard Street, Martha Graham Dance Company and others (plus a cocktail reception) is slated for Aug. 22 at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Tickets are \$250 (312-520-2210).



Ballet West will perform Jiri Kylian's "Sinfonietta" as part of the "Celebration of Dance," Aug. 27 at the Pritzker Pavilion.