



The Star-Ledger

Nimbus is a cloud whose vision is clear

Friday, June 08, 2007

ROBERT JOHNSON

Nimbus Dance Works

Where: Grace Church Van Vorst, 39 Erie St., Jersey City

When: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with a matinee at 2 on Saturday

How much: \$15. Call (201) 377-0718.

Choreographer Samuel Pott has his head in the clouds.

Yes, he's tall. Anyone who has seen Pott dance knows this man has a lot of leverage. But Pott has stratospheric ambitions for Nimbus Dance Works, the company he began to pull together three years ago in Jersey City.

This weekend, Nimbus Dance Works returns to Grace Church Van Vorst, where a three-month residency has allowed it to develop "Love Is Worse Than Sickness," a collaboration with Sandy Harper's JCity Theater. The program also will feature "Memo," a hymn to Jersey City, incorporating community members and supported with historical images from the Jersey City Museum and the Jersey City Public Library.

"Nimbus has a double meaning," says Pott, explaining how he chose his company's name. "Nimbus is a rain cloud, which means it brings fertility to the land. It also refers to an aura or energy that surrounds a being or an object."

Pott, who left his job with American Repertory Ballet in New Brunswick last year, hopes this company moniker will have a silver lining.

"While there is a lot of really interesting work being done at ARB, I wanted to chart my own path," says Pott, 31. "I'm still performing at peak level, but I'm also looking out. A dancer's life is a short one, and not everybody can stay in the field. I wanted to position myself in a way that would allow me to stay involved and continue to grow on more levels than just as a performer."

The choreographer, who was raised in New York City, graduated with a dance degree from the University of California at Berkeley, where he trained with former Martha Graham stars David Wood and Marnie Thomas. He danced with Oakland Ballet, Bay Area choreographer Yannis Adoniou and the Savage Jazz Dance Company before returning to the East Coast. He also trained extensively in yoga and the Feldenkrais Method.

"I like to approach dance from the standpoint of finding solid mechanics within the movement, and using the skeleton in a way that is mechanically sound," he says.

Pott, who has danced as The Moor in José Limón's "The Moor's Pavane," and who created the role of the Beast in ARB's "Beauty and the Beast," also relishes juicy, dramatic parts.

He invited the JCity Theater to collaborate on the current project after meeting Harper, its artistic director, at Grace Van Vorst. The theater company will present two 10-minute plays: "Courting Prometheus" by Charles Forbes, which depicts the aftermath of a romantic fling in an office, and Cathy Celesia's "Anything for You," in which two women discuss having a lesbian affair. In "Love Is Worse Than Sickness," these works, directed by Kellis Carroll, alternate with illustrative dances set to a variety of music, with interludes by Blues singer Texas Gladden.

"I'm a big fan of dance, so it wasn't a problem for me to jump on board," says Harper. "It expands the possibility of a 10-minute play." Speaking of Pott's choreography, she adds, "Of course I'm grabbing stuff from what he's doing. Not that we're dancing, but just to get a sense of our bodies."

The movement in "Memo," performed to live music, is based on the recollections of a large group of Jersey City residents, including senior citizens, who will interact with Nimbus' dancers. During the show, audience members also will have a chance to contribute their memories to the performance.

"I wanted to find ways of bringing dance to a wider range of people," says Pott. "We want to present dance that people find valuable."

Robert Johnson may be reached at rjohnson@starledger.com.

© 2007 The Star Ledger

© 2007 NJ.com All Rights Reserved.