



slocity arts

Cowboy Up

By Candice Conti

Ballet Theatre San Luis Obispo presents its third annual spring performance featuring Aaron Copland's *Rodeo* along with a few original productions and a world premiere.

Under the artistic direction of Ballet Theater San Luis Obispo founder Theresa Slobodnik, the mixed bill will headline Copland's classic American cowboy ballet as well as three pieces created by Slobodnik: *Levez le Rideau*, *Damien of Molokai* and *Wali Sangara*.

"This is going to be a really high end performance," Slobodnik says. "There is something for everyone. There are colorful athletic dance movements, slapstick comedy, romance and drama."

Starting off the show will be *Levez le Rideau* (French for "raising the curtain"), a ballet that depicts the entire process of bringing a professional performance to the stage. The narrative, told through dance, offers a look behind the scenes to see the artistic director's vision and the numerous rehearsals, as well as showing what it takes to find funding, cast the right dancers and pick out appropriate costumes.

"It's an original piece that was conceived by Theresa," says Blair London, assistant director and dancer. "It tells a story that we thought needed to be told. It's a really fun piece with a lot of humor to it."

Following *Levez le Rideau* will be the innovative creation *Wali Sangara*, which translates to "the strong spirit is free." The recital is set to original music composed and played live by the world music ensemble Calinambe. Five male dancers and nine women will perform the dance routine.

"It is completely different from the first ballet," Slobodnik says. "It is very primal, physical and very powerful. The music has a very strong primal element to it."

The world premiere of *Damien of Molokai*, a tale based on the real life story of Father Damien, the "leper priest," will be the third stage production. This show is set to Frederic Balazs' "Sonata for Piano," accompanied live by local pianist Torsten Juul-Borre. The piece tells the compelling story of a Catholic priest who devoted his life to the lepers on Molokai and ultimately died for them after he himself was infected with the contagious disease.

"This is a very dramatic ballet," London says. "We are telling our story through subtle movements, through body language, through intentions more than grand gestures."

Culminating the performance will be Copland's western ballet *Rodeo*. It's a comical story about a cowgirl who wants to be one of the cowboys, but can't quit make it. Set in the 1930s, *Rodeo* features Copland's music along with some original choreography by Slobodnik, authentic western wardrobes and sets fashioned to look like an authentic ranch.

The ballet will take place at the Cal Poly Performing Arts Center (PAC) starting on April 25 and ending on April 27. Performances will

be held on Saturday night at 7 p.m. and on Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$18 to \$43, and can be purchased at www.pacslo.org or by calling 756-2787. A special youth outreach presentation will take place on Friday, from 10 to 11 a.m.; Ballet Theatre San Luis Obispo will perform *Rodeo* and *Levez le Rideau*, and tickets will be discounted to \$6. For more information on the youth performance, contact Blair London at 440-1439 or purchase tickets at the Cohan Center door. ♣



Photo by Barry Goyette



Entertain in Style

LET US HELP YOU TRANSFORM YOUR HOME INTO THE PERFECT PLACE TO ENTERTAIN.

From contemporary to traditional, our showrooms are filled with designs that can start a room or add a finishing touch. For over 30 years our mission has been to present well-priced quality furnishings that enhance both your lifestyle and your home.

A&R FURNITURE
AND INTERIORS

SAN LUIS OBISPO 1301 Broad St. at Pacific & Broad 805.784.0100 { Open 7 days a week } PASO ROBLES 839 12th St. across from the park 805.238.7585