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## It Takes a Village...

*Cincinnati Ballet taps local talent for its season opener*

By Julie Mullins



Current times call for convergence: of collaborations, of community, especially local community. For the first time, Cincinnati Ballet's annual repertory showcase *New Works* focuses on homegrown talent to provide fresh choreography and music. We're encouraged to buy local, so why not tap in-town talent?

Four of the five works on the bill come from local choreographers and are set to local music. An opening night fundraiser performance brings bonuses: musical acts Jake Speed & The Freddie's, Over the Rhine and Peter Adams will perform live to accompany the dancers.

"In the first place, I think that we do have a really rich local music scene," Cincinnati Ballet CEO and Artistic Director Victoria Morgan says. "My thought was 'Let's create a theme which is about the talent and the skills of the people who are here in our community.'"

For starters, Morgan paired up former Cincinnati Ballet dancer Joy Jovet — whom she calls "the most Balanchine-esque" choreographer she knows — with the music of Folk group

Jake Speed & The Freddie's. Having seen "amazing musicality and patterns" in Jovet's choreography for the Ballet's

Otto M. Budig Academy, Morgan brought her on board.

Another Budig Academy instructor, Heather Britt, is also making her Cincinnati Ballet choreographic debut. Britt stays busy: She teaches at NKU's Department of Theater and Dance and is owner/artistic director of the hugely popular dance workout program, Rhythm & Motion Cincinnati. Fittingly, group dynamics and a strong sense of community permeate Britt's "All Too Wonderful."

"(People) are pulling out of the group, and you're learning a little bit about their life story, and then they're pulled back into the group," she explains. The group not only offers support, but also represents the shared, collective human experience of struggles and celebrations.

"Who knows what's coming next, but we welcome it," she says. "At the end of the piece, I want to say, 'What's next? Bring it on!'"

Involving a cast of 19, Britt's sweeping work was created to an original score by local Indie Pop musician Peter Adams. Not yet knowing what stories would unfold through her choreography, she asked Adams to compose music to represent a range of emotions: ups and downs, sensual moments, aggressive moments.

Explaining how integral the music became, she says, "The music really told me the story; it told me what the relationships were. His music really dances on its own — like, I knew a lift (belongs) there; it was so obvious! That made my life a lot easier."

Speaking of Britt's ability to inspire, Morgan says, "I think so much of choreographing is about creating a comfort zone so the dancers feel like they can make fools out of themselves and they can try things that they wouldn't have thought of trying before."

Enter Exhale Dance Tribe's founding artistic directors Missy Lay Zimmer and Andrew Hubbard, Broadway vets who have choreographed works to Over the Rhine songs "Professional Daydreamers" and "Ohio."

If you've ever seen the young dynamo dancers of Exhale ... well, let's just say Zimmer and Hubbard's choreography is as stylistically divergent from ballet as you can imagine. The duo's inimitable fusion of contemporary and jazz spawns a highly idiosyncratic style that demands different ways of working *and* moving.

In addition to this year's *New Works* newcomers, the program includes world premiers from the Ballet's Associate Artistic Director Devon Carney, presenting a lush, brooding pas de deux to the music of Peter Frampton, plus the return of celebrated Italian contemporary choreographer Luca Veggetti, offering clean complexity melded with technical prowess.

"Obviously, we have a lot of national and international talent coming in, and in the past with most of our *New Works*, it certainly has been that," Morgan says. "I think that's important, and you need that influence and stimulation, but I also love the idea of growing and grooming and developing the craft of the talent that is here."

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**CINCINNATI BALLET'S NEW WORKS will be performed in Cincinnati Ballet's Mickey Jarson Kaplan Performance Studio Thursday through Sept. 20. Buy tickets, check out performance times and get venue details [here](#).**

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