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SAO PAULO BALLET COMPANY PERFORMS TWO PIECES BY JIRI KYLIAN

BY ORI J. LENKINSKI / FEBRUARY 23, 2017 19:27

Kylian's birthday bash.



Sao Paulo Ballet Company. (photo credit: ILIAN AGUIAR)



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Recently, over lunch, a group of friends and I discussed birthday etiquette. In regard to social media, acknowledging a birthday can be quite nuanced. To post a photo, a little message, to send a private note or simply to wait until you can congratulate the person face to face... these options comprise a tricky landscape to navigate in the world of celebrating the birthdays of friends and family. "I only post if it's someone I really care about but don't get to see often," said one friend. "I never do it. It seems fake," said another.

On his 70th birthday, Jiri Kylian will not have to check his wall to know if he is cared about or if the day has been noticed by anyone because the international dance world will be in the midst of widespread celebrations.

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As one of the most frequently commissioned choreographers, Kylian will have his 70th marked by retrospectives performed by many of the companies he has worked with over the years. Next month, for example, the Sao Paulo Ballet Company will open its 2017 world tour in Israel with a tribute to Kylian's dances. The program will consist of two works: *Petite Mort* and *Indigo Rose*.

Kylian was born and raised in the Czech Republic. He began dancing at the age of nine in Prague, and at 21 was invited to join legendary choreographer John Cranko at the Ballet Stuttgart. Kylian began choreographing while a member of the company, creating many works for the troupe. In 1976, following Cranko's death, Kylian relocated to The Netherlands, where he took up the reins as artistic director of Nederlands Dance Theater. The company thrived under his tutelage, becoming one of the most successful dance ensembles in the world. In addition to running the main company, Kylian established NDTII, the young company. In the subsequent years, a number of European companies followed suit, founding their own young companies.

In 1991, Kylian premiered *Petite Mort*. In the original program notes, Kylian wrote, "*Petite Mort* is a poetic and strangely significant way of describing the ecstasy of sexual intercourse. In French and in some other languages, this sensation is described as 'small death.' And it may be so that in the moment of pleasure (or in the moment of potentially creating a new life), we are reminded of the fact that our lives are of a relatively short duration and that death is never too far from us."

Following the first performance of *Petite Mort* at the Salzburg Festival, the piece went on to be a great success and one of Kylian's calling cards. The piece weaves together deft movement with wit, humor and keen observation of human behavior.

The second piece to be performed by Sao Paulo Ballet Company was created seven years after *Petite Mort*.

Indigo Rose was presented as a celebration of the 20th anniversary of NDTII. The choreography is an explosion of energy, youth and light.

Kylian commented that his drive to create *Indigo Rose* emerged from a long absence from working with the young dancers. The piece highlights Kylian's virtuosic ability to extract from young dancers, to push them beyond their known abilities and to flood the stage with possibility.

Although the dancers of Sao Paulo Ballet Company are not the first to perform these works, they embody the choreography as if they were. To Kylian's dynamic European lines, these performers bring touches of a warmer climate. This performance is an ideal way to celebrate Kylian's birthday in that it not only highlights his artistry but also marks the expansive capabilities of his work to bridge cultures, nations and backgrounds.

Sao Paulo Ballet Company will perform on March 1, 2, 3 and 4 at the Herzliya Performing Arts Center (www.hoh-herzliya.co.il); March 6 in Kibbutz Yagur (www.yadal.co.il); and March 7 at the Jerusalem Theatre (www.jerusalem-theatre.co.il).



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