CLEVELAND BALLET

INSIGHTS FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: TIMOUR BOURTASENKOV SHARES HIS THOUGHTS ON THE SEASON AHEAD



THIS YEAR'S REPERTOIRE RANGES FROM HAUNTING AND DRAMATIC WORKS TO TIMELESS CLASSICS. WHAT ELEMENTS CONNECT THESE PRODUCTIONS, AND WHAT DO YOU HOPE AUDIENCES TAKE AWAY FROM THE SEASON AS A WHOLE?

This season shows the versatility of Cleveland Ballet – from classic story ballets like *The Nutcracker* and *Cinderella* to neoclassical and contemporary works such as *Code of Silence*, the repertoire is designed to give audiences many different experiences. We are also bringing back *Dracula*, which has become a favorite, and adding a production of Handel's *Messiah*. Each ballet has its own style and character, but together they create a season that feels balanced and engaging.

My hope is that audiences leave with great memories from each performance, take advantage of the events we offer surrounding a performance, and appreciate how inclusive the art form of ballet can be for anyone to watch.

CLEVELAND BALLET CONTINUES TO GROW ITS PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITY. HOW DO YOU ENVISION THIS SEASON CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUDIENCES TO FEEL CONNECTED TO THE COMPANY—BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE THEATER?

We are Cleveland's Ballet and that means we reach deep into the community to make ballet accessible and available throughout the year. While Playhouse Square is our main stage home, we actively seek opportunities to perform and collaborate with other arts organizations such as The Cleveland Orchestra, Cleveland Museum of Art, BlueWater Chamber Orchestra, Cleveland Chamber Choir, Cleveland Institute of Music, M.U.S.i.C. Stars in the Classics, and that's just naming a few. These partnerships allow us to bring ballet into new contexts and reach Clevelanders who might not attend a traditional performance.

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AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, YOU HAVE A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE FROM THE START OF REHEARSAL ALL THE WAY THROUGH TO THE PERFORMANCE. WHAT UPCOMING MOMENTS ARE YOU MOST EXCITED FOR AUDIENCES TO SEE COME ALIVE ON STAGE?

Rehearsals can be long and demanding, stretching over many hours, days, and weeks. But within that process, you see the dancers grow, the details sharpen, and the vision come to life. The final dress rehearsal is always a special moment for me — it's when the last adjustments are made and everything clicks. That is when I can see how all the hard work will translate to the stage.

For the dancers, staff, and myself, it's an exhilarating time where the energy builds and the excitement for the audience begins. Nothing is more fulfilling than stepping into the theater on performance day and knowing we are ready to share something of quality and beauty with the community.

HOW DO YOU THINK CLEVELAND AUDIENCES ARE UNIQUE COMPARED TO OTHER CITIES WHERE YOU'VE PERFORMED AND WORKED?

Cleveland audiences are very engaged and responsive. They listen closely, they applaud strongly, and they aren't shy about showing their appreciation. That kind of reaction gives energy back to the dancers and makes the performance feel more alive. In some cities, audiences are more reserved, but in Cleveland people are open and enthusiastic which makes a big difference on stage. It creates a strong connection between the company and the community. That relationship is one of the reasons why it is exciting to work here.

***DRACULA* IS BACK THIS OCTOBER! CAN RETURNING AUDIENCES MEMBERS EXPECT ANYTHING NEW WITHIN THE PRODUCTION, AND WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE PERFORMANCE?**

We decided to bring *Dracula* back because it was very well received last season, and we think Cleveland wants to experience it again. This year, the program will also include *Code of Silence*, a contemporary ballet by choreographer Lynne Taylor-Corbett, who passed away earlier this year. At the same time, audiences will see some updates to *Dracula* with new sets and costumes that add to the production. My favorite part of *Dracula* is the mood it creates—it is dark, dramatic, and theatrical. It keeps the audience engaged from start to finish. I think both new and returning audiences will notice something fresh this time.