

The Washington Post

Spring preview — Dance: Hot acts, plus old favorites

January 27, 2012

By Sarah Kaufman

Welcome to good times: In the realm of dance, your spring is going to heat up early and stay hot. Or at least tingly warm. There's the brand new: Company E, a repertory troupe making a foray into Israeli choreography. There's the new-to-Washington: Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet. And the big new production: Washington Ballet's world premiere of "Alice (in Wonderland)." Plus returning favorites: San Francisco's Margaret Jenkins, the masters of slowness Eiko and Koma, tapper Savion Glover, as well as local lights Dana Tai Soon Burgess and Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh, reviving a little-known Anna Sokolow work. And that's just a teaser. What follows are some of the more dramatic contours in a season running deep and wide.



Most anticipated: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, under Artistic Director Robert Battle (Feb. 7-12 at the Kennedy Center Opera House). Battle takes over from Judith Jamison, the longtime director and friend of the late Ailey. The new guy — youngish (39), likable — never knew the founder nor danced with the company he now leads. Perfect for a fresh start. And Battle, better known as a choreographer, has novel things in store: the troupe's first assay of a Paul Taylor work ("Arden Court"), dances by other well-respected artists such as Ohad Naharin and Ulysses Dove, and two by the new director himself.

Most surprising: "Necessary Weather," with Dana Reitz, Sara Rudner and Jennifer Tipton (March 24-25 at American Dance Institute). Surprise No. 1: Reitz and Rudner are dancers in their 60s. No. 2: They've been widely hailed as superlative in this piece they created in 1994. No. 3: The big star here is the light; Tipton, in her 70s, is widely considered the dance world's finest lighting designer. No surprise: Maturity shines.

Best threads: France's Ballet Preljocaj brings its contemporary "Blanche Neige" ("Snow White") with costumes by haute-couture designer Jean Paul Gaultier, creator of Madonna's cone bra and other fetish-inspired outfits. Apparently, nudity makes an appearance. (March 30-April 1 at Kennedy Center Eisenhower Theater.)

Best box of chocolates: New York City Ballet's mix of works (April 3-8 at Kennedy Center Opera House). Variety and virtuosity, with works by Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Alexei Ratmansky, Peter Martins and Christopher Wheeldon's newest, "Les Carillons," which has just had its world premiere in New York.

Most perilous: Local choreographer Lucy Bowen McCauley takes on Stravinsky's monumental "Le Sacre du Printemps" ("The Rite of Spring"). (March 1-2, Kennedy Center Terrace Theater, alongside other works by Bowen McCauley and Eric Hampton.) Many have gone there, few have succeeded.

This world premiere features live four-hand piano accompaniment. Brava for that, and for the bravery.

Secret tip: The much talked-about Kyle Abraham, a regular at leading summer dance festivals and New York modern-dance venues, performs here at last (May 5-6 at Dance Place). It's a good time to see a hot talent on an upswing.

In "The Radio Show," Abraham explores Alzheimer's and the loss of a beloved radio station, drawing on his youth in Pittsburgh.