

# VailDaily

Vail International Dance Festival community programs encourage everyone to dance



From the streets to the schools to the stage, the Vail International Dance Festival is more than just a series of performances. It's a rhythm and beat that winds through the community, creating a choreography that encourages everyone to dance.

A performance is composed of several key elements: the performers, the audience and the show. However, the Vail International Dance Festival takes that idea and extends it, designing an experience that lasts not minutes or hours but resonates well after the music has stopped and the dancers have retired for the evening.

Through its community-outreach programs, the festival takes the show off the stage and into the streets, schools and psyche of the Vail Valley, ensuring that the beat goes on.

## **FROM THE SCHOOLS**

In 2007, festival artistic director Damian Woetzel brought Celebrate the Beat to Eagle County. Created in 2000, Celebrate the Beat is a nonprofit organization that

brings music and dance into schools, helping students realize their potential. Now, almost 10 years later, the program services more than 725 students ages 6 to 13, from first through eighth grade at schools around the valley, including Avon, Red Hill, June Creek, Red Sandstone and Brush Creek elementary schools; Homestake Peak School; and Berry Creek Middle School.

The teaching artists are professional dancers and choreographers, such as Ron “Prime Tyme” Myles. Myles is no stranger to teaching — when he was at home in Memphis, he taught dance in elementary schools.

“I feel like it’s important because once you have a chance to work with kids, it opens up the kids’ minds,” Myles said. “Every time I get to work with Celebrate the Beat, we get to create something that is cool for the kids to do, to learn, but we also open up the excitement to perform in front of people.”

This year’s outreach program, Pop Hop, took place Monday, Aug. 1, through Friday, Aug. 5. Free and open to children ages 9 to 14, the culmination of the week was the students’ performance at the Vail International Dance Festival on Friday evening.

Myles said that though some kids might be afraid to dance in front of people, or are afraid to express themselves, Celebrate the Beat inspires them and helps them move beyond the shyness. By the end of the week, the students’ performance is like a party on the stage.

While Celebrate the Beat starts kids moving, the Dance Festival’s Master Classes help propel those students who want to learn from the professionals. A series of 13 classes, the Master Class Series is taught by world-class dancers and companies, including festival artist-in-residence Isabella Boylston, Carla Korbes, Tiler Peck, the Dance Theatre of Harlem and the Paul Taylor Dance Company, to name a few.



Isabella Boylston, left, artist-in-residence for the Vail International Dance Festival and principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre, is one of the instructors for the festival's Master Class Series.

Seventeen-year-old Hannah Geisman has participated in the Master Classes for the past four years. A former student of the Vail

Valley Academy of Dance in Edwards, Geisman now dances with the Colorado Ballet in Denver. She said the Master Classes gave her an experience that most often happens in bigger cities.

“It’s great to have famous dancers, and my idols, come and teach,” Geisman said. “Just from one class, I’ll learn a lot of stuff. It might be one correction and I’ll take that with me. Like, Isabella Boylston taught me to have my arm in this position in a pirouette.”

Geisman has been dancing for 13 years, and while the Colorado Ballet has opened up more opportunities, she still gets a thrill from the Master Classes.



Special to the DailyDance for \$20.16 comes to the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater in Vail at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 9. Tiler Peck, principal dancer with the New York City Ballet, will be part of the performance, which offers pavilion seating for \$20.16 and lawn seats for \$10.

“It’s really cool to be in the same room with someone who has gone to the next level as a professional dancer, who is really recognized in the dance world,” Geisman said. “Just to see them do a tendu, or just walking on the floor ... it’s just amazing to see them walking around. It’s really inspiring.”

## TO THE STREETS

The party doesn’t stick to the stage. During the two weeks of the Vail International Dance

Festival, performers take to the street for free performances around Vail.

“It’s so important for the festival to reach beyond the stage, bringing dance into people’s daily lives,” Woetzel said. “Through programs like Dancing in the Streets, we make it so that there is always the possibility of an extraordinary artistic experience in an unexpected location.”

From the Vail Farmer’s Market & Art Show to the base of the mountain, performances seem to spring up organically. And while the audience certainly enjoys the show, the performers also relish the opportunity to leave the stage and, in some cases, go back to their roots.

Myles specializes in a style of dance called Memphis Jookin’, which is a street dance; it follows that he’ll be performing on the streets of Vail as part of the Dancing in the Streets series.

Myles said he enjoys Dancing in the Streets because he can attract a crowd and have people stop and see what he does. Vail is a welcoming location, he said.



The Vail International Dance Festival presents Dancing in the Streets: Memphis Jookin' with Lil Buck and Ron "Prime Tyme" Myles, left, at 2 p.m. Friday, Aug. 12, at Mountain Plaza in Vail. The show is free.

"In Vail, I can easily attract a nice crowd and wow them with the things they've never seen before," Myles said. "In my hometown (of Memphis), you can attract a crowd, but it's not as exciting as it is in Vail because they see it often. You can still wow some people, but it's more exciting when you see their faces and it's something that they've never seen before."

## **FIND THE STEPS**

From the streets to the schools to the stage, the Vail International Dance Festival is more than just a series of performances. It's a rhythm and beat that winds through the community, creating a choreography that encourages everyone to dance — even if it's just a few toe taps.

"I feel everybody has some groove in them," Myles said. "Dance lives through everyone."

Get out there and find your steps.



Robert Fairchild will be part of the Vail International Dance Festival's Dance for \$20.16 performance, which offers pavilion seating for \$20.16 and lawn seats for \$10. The show is on Tuesday, Aug. 9.