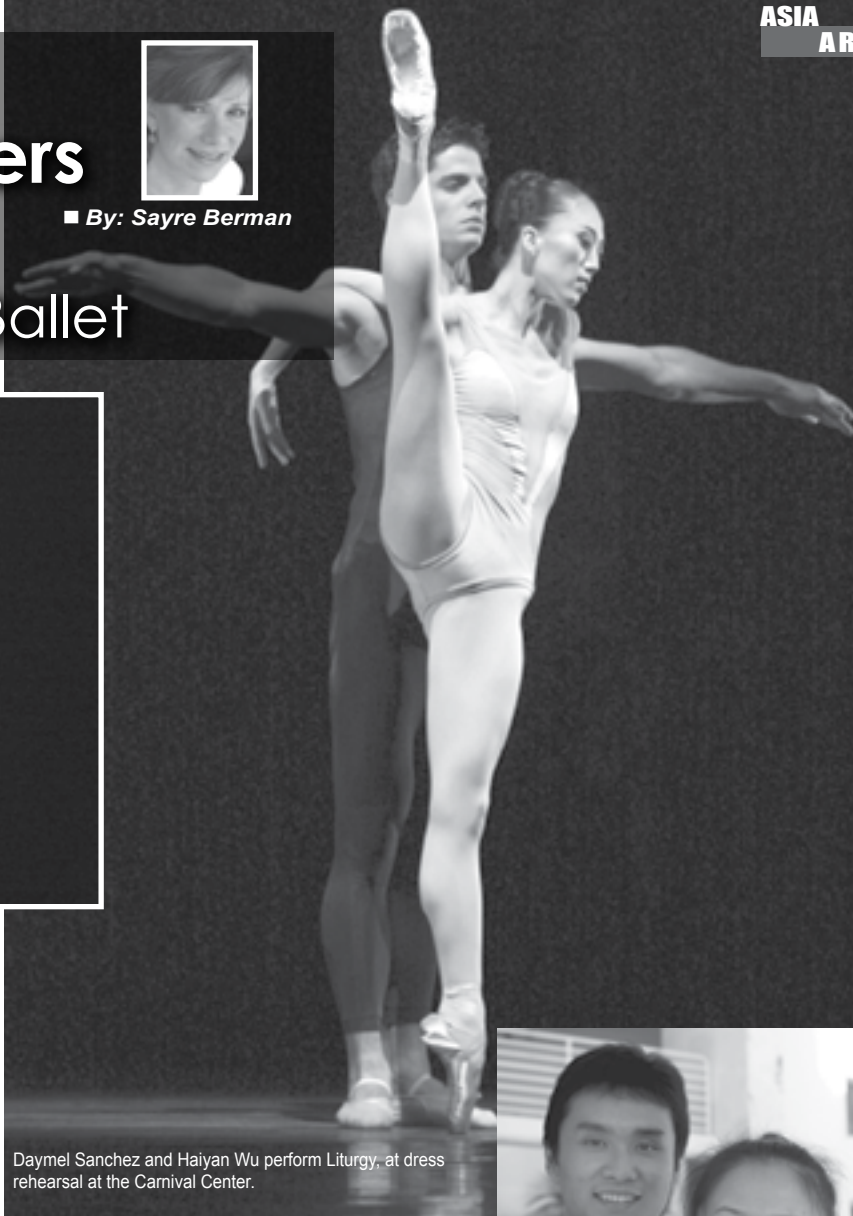


Three Exciting Chinese Dancers

Grace the Stage at the Miami City Ballet



■ By: Sayre Berman



Daymel Sanchez and Haiyan Wu perform Liturgy, at dress rehearsal at the Carnival Center.

► Yang Zou and Haiyan Wu



Amidst the cacophony of sound and sight that characterizes South Florida in the millennium... too many people, too much traffic, too much construction... there is an oasis of beauty and grace that provides refuge from the surrounding dissonance... it is the Miami City Ballet.

Miami City Ballet founded in 1985

In 1985 Edward Villella, the first American-born male star of the acclaimed New York City Ballet, together with Miami arts advocates, founded the Miami City Ballet (MCB). In 1986 Mr. Villella held auditions in anticipation of finding 18 to 20 qualified dancers. Under the personal supervision of Mr. Villella the company has since grown to 52 dancers and has emerged as one of the nation's most highly regarded dance companies. In 1993 the MCB added a dance school which now has more than 400 students ranging in age from five to young adult (pre-professional). Villella and company have a repertoire of nearly 100 ballets including the works of acclaimed choreographers Marius Petipa, Jerome Robbins, Twyla Tharp, Christopher Wheeldon and, of course, George Balanchine. The company also performs Mr. Villella's own creations. A Contemporary Dance Series has recently been added to the season's performances.

At 70 years old, Mr. Villella teaches dance class every day and attends every performance. Additionally, he carefully chooses each

new member of the company. The length of one's legs at the MCB is far less important than a candidate's level of talent...his or her speed and agility. Paramount though, is one's musicality... "the ability to speak to us musically"... an innate sense of the relation between music and movement.

Global members have three Chinese Dancers

Company members come from all over globe...South America, Germany, France, Australia, Belgium and the US. Three of the MCB dancers are Chinese, two of whom were born in China, one born in Canada. All three of these Asian artists are hugely talented and give breathtaking performances.

Alex Wong was born in Canada. When he was a very young boy, around four or five years old, his parents asked him if he wanted to take dance lessons. He responded with an emphatic "NO." Dancing, he said, was for girls! But shortly thereafter his parents took him

to a dance show and after that experience Alex was hooked. He was enrolled in dance class. At seven years old he was excelling in jazz and tap dance and at the age of 10 began ballet lessons. He attended the Goh Ballet Academy, a Vancouver, British Columbia based dance school founded by former National Ballet of China principal dancers Choo Chiat Goh and Lin Yee Goh.

International Dance Competition

In 2004, at the age of 17, Alex won 1st Prize at the Prix De Lausanne, a prestigious international dance competition in Switzerland. For his prize, a scholarship to the dance company of his choice, Alex selected the American Ballet Theater Studio Company in New York City where he danced for one year. Alex now begins his second season with the Miami City Ballet.

You can view archived webcasts of Alex's prize winning performances by visiting www.prixdelausanne.org/e/live/videos.php#2004. This season at the MCB he has demonstrated his outstanding dance prowess with roles in Don Quixote as well as the Nutcracker in which he danced a scene-stealingly brilliant Toy Soldier and Candy Cane. He can be seen in Program II when he dances in Twyla Tharp's hauntingly hypnotic In the Upper Room.

Dance at the Guangzhou Ballet

Yang Zou is another talented Chinese member of the MCB corps. Originally from Hunan Province, Zou began dance training when he was 11 years old. He trained at the Xing Hai College of Music and Dance and the Guangzhou Culture and Art School. He danced professionally with the Guangzhou Ballet. Zou had the opportunity to meet one of the MCB principal dancers during a competition in China at which time he was introduced to Mr. Villella. Zou joined the MCB as a soloist in 2005.

Senior Gold Medalist

Haiyan Wu, another recent addition to the Miami City Ballet comes from Beijing. In 2002 Haiyan was the senior gold medalist at the international ballet competition held in Jackson, Mississippi.

As a very young child, Haiyan's mother and father exposed her to music and dance. She had voice lessons, piano lessons and dance lessons. By the time Haiyan was seven years old she knew that it was dance that she wanted to devote her energies to. When Haiyan was 10 years old she auditioned at the esteemed Beijing



Alex Wong performs in The Upper Room during dress rehearsal at the Carnival Center.



Haiyan Wu does some work on her new ballet slippers during a break from classes.



Yang Zou works on technique during class at the Miami Beach studio of the Miami City Ballet.

Dance Academy...she was not accepted. With the encouragement and support of her parents, Haiyan kept practicing, honing her skills. One year later, she successfully auditioned for the Academy and began to study there. From 1996 to 2003 Haiyan danced with the National Ballet of China. She then sent the Miami City Ballet a letter of interest along with other pertinent information and was delighted to discover that Mr. Villella remembered her from the Jackson, Mississippi event the year earlier. The Miami City Ballet wasted no time in offering her a contract to dance and Haiyan has been with them as a principal dancer since 2003.

Artistry and Athleticism

Whatever motivates these three lovely dancers to excel in their craft, one thing is clear...all three possess musicality. Each of them will speak of that innate sense of music and rhythm and can remember, even as young children before any formal dance training, feeling the music. Each one can conceptualize the story behind any ballet that they are performing and translate that story into body movement. Haiyan, a wisp of a young woman, displays a positively elegant execution of every move she makes. Alex and Zou are fabulously exciting dancers. Both deliver the demanding artistry and athleticism that has become the cornerstone of the strong male dancer. Watching them perform is nearly as captivating as watching the master, himself, during his years at the New York City Ballet.

Haiyan is performing Program II's Liturgy, a pas de deux that was choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon for the New York City Ballet in 2003. Both Haiyan and Zou will be performing principal roles in Program III in Raymonda Variations by Balanchine, with music by Alexander Glazounov and Program IV, Giselle, choreographed after Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot, music by Adolphe Adam.

Check www.miamicityballet.org for additional information as well as performance dates, times and ticket sales.

This article is contributed by **The United Chinese News of Florida**. The United Chinese News of Florida has served Chinese American in Florida for almost six years. This free weekly newspaper is distributed at Miami, Orlando, Tampa, and Jacksonville. This bilingual column is the new feature they have recently added. For comments or more article idea, please email to ucnfla@bellsouth.net.