

TALLAHASSEE BALLET
Jorge Arceo will be dancing in Tallahassee Ballet's "Evening" performance on Friday and Saturday.

LEAP OF LOVE

LIVE MUSIC INSPIRES TALLAHASSEE BALLET'S JORGE ARCEO

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COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

Jorge Arceo, principal dancer with The Tallahassee Ballet, moves through and is moved by music. In his own musical collection, he listens to a little of everything but is particularly enamored with jazz and R&B. Arceo says that with jazz, it's the trumpet and piano solos that catch his ear, while he's touched more personally by the beautiful voices of rhythm and blues singers.

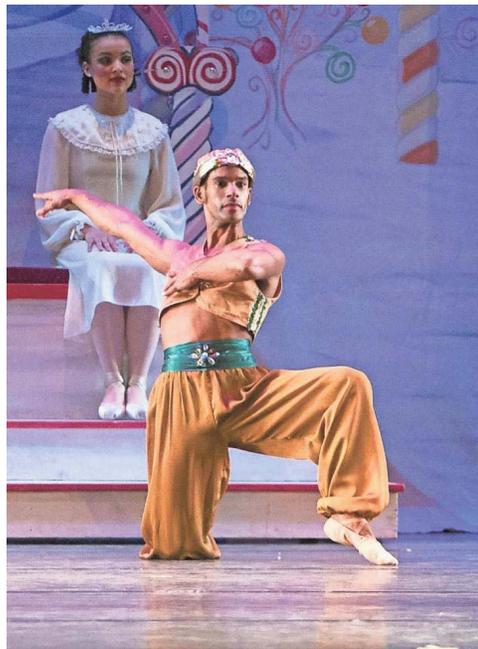
Though he doesn't choreograph to these tunes, he used to compose routines to Latin tracks back in his Zumba teaching days at Gold's Gym. Influenced by his Cuban roots and ballet training, Arceo says that these various infusions of different musical styles and movements all coalesce in his body. Regardless of genre, he always enjoys these intersections in the two art forms, making one of his favorite events of the season The Tallahassee Ballet's annual Evening of Music & Dance performance, which will take place on Sept. 8 and 10.

"I love working with live music," says Arceo. "It's just different to hear music playing right there next to you. To be on the stage and have musicians play for you is like the climax, and I love it."

As a young dancer in Havana, Cuba, Arceo looked up to music and dance icon Michael Jackson, and confesses he would have jumped at the chance to don a white suit and join the "Smooth Criminal" music video set. As for his other heroes, he cites Mikhail Baryshnikov and Carlos Acosta as his two favorite professional ballet dancers because of the impact they left on the field.

"They're great artists and I would always look up to them growing up," says Arceo. "In their time they took ballet to another level, and it wasn't just the speed that they made on jumps and turns. When they got onstage it was their presence, and that's what got my eyes on both of them."

That same artistry and expression are what propelled Arceo into The National Ballet School of Cuba in spite of doubts that his "tight" body would chal-



Tallahassee Ballet dancer Jorge Arceo: "Dancing is a way to relieve stress, and it creates a sense of discipline and character."



lenge his ability to succeed in ballet. Starting his training at age 9, Arceo never imagined where dance could take him when he first attended Escuela Provincial de Ballet and was mentored by Cuban dancer Narciso Medina. By age 19 was called upon to join his dream company, Contemporary Dance of Cuba.

The company toured in Italy, Hungary, Germany, and England, as well as in the United States. Arceo moved up the ranks and in three years was promoted

to the position of soloist. From there, he auditioned and performed with the Cuban Classical Ballet of Miami, Las Vegas' Rio Hotel show "ND'S FUEGO," the Pasadena Dance Theater, the City of Angels Ballet, and the California Riverside Ballet, before settling in Tallahassee where he now calls The Tallahassee Ballet his "one big family" and home.

One of his favorite performances from past seasons was when guest artist Christopher Huggins set his choreography "Chaos" on the company. Arceo appreciated the demanding movement that asked them to step outside of classical ballet and into more contemporary steps that challenged the

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Arceo

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entire body. Out of the many roles Arceo has played onstage however, he says the Spanish ballets like "Don Quijote" and "Paquita" that continue to capture his spirit.

"I think it's the masculinity of the male characters," remarks Arceo. "It's not like the princes in classical ballets who are more delicate. In the Spanish ballets, they're more like the matador and I love those roles."

Though exercises at the barre have never been his favorite, Arceo comes alive for the leaps and turns that are a hallmark of center and across the floor work in a ballet class. For classes, he prepares by warming up his mind and body and keeps a smile on his face even through the most difficult combinations.

"Dancing is a way to relieve stress, and it creates a sense of discipline and character," says Arceo. "Especially in ballet when you have to work so hard and be attentive, not just in class, but at home by taking care of your body."

Before a performance, Arceo makes sure to stay well rested, and focuses on



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Jorge Arceo, principal dancer with The Tallahassee Ballet, which is presenting its Evening of Music & Dance starting Friday.

rehearsing full out and with feeling so that he may replicate every move ex-

If you go

What: An Evening of Music & Dance

When: 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 8, and 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 10

Where: Opperman Music Hall, 114 N Copeland St.

Cost: Tickets range from \$10-48

Contact: For more information, call 850-224-6917 or visit <https://tallahasseeballet.org/performance/evening-of-music-and-dance/>.

actly the same onstage.

"You do your best every time so when you're onstage it's just natural and there's no surprises," explains Arceo. "During a performance I want everything to go perfect, which doesn't happen all the time. You have to do a lot of mental preparation, so when everything doesn't go accordingly you won't have a breakdown onstage and will handle it professionally."

Arceo is expecting something special this year from An Evening of Music & Dance as it will bring original works from four choreographers to Opperman Music Hall this fall. The cross-disciplinary performance has been around for over 25 years, and Arceo says The Tallahassee Ballet's Artistic Director, Tyrone Brooks, is always looking for novel ways to ex-

periment with expectations by introducing newer neoclassical and contemporary works.

After three weeks of rehearsals with recordings, Arceo anticipates the week where the dancers and musicians will play and move together, acclimating to one another and staying alert to moments of improvisation and adaptation. Standing in the wings ready to take the stage, Arceo says he always murmurs a prayer of gratitude — his mind wanders to his mother, "a fighter" who raised him and his three brothers, as well as to his roots where he first took flight.

"One thing I've learned as a dancer is to not take anything for granted," states Arceo. "I wake up and I'm thankful for all the things that I love — my family, being in this country, having the things I never dreamt of when I was back in Cuba — and that's what inspires me. If you have something in your life that you cherish and you love it, give yourself into it, and don't leave anything for later."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).