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A New Debut--Corella as PAB Artistic Director

by Kat Sullivan

Personnel changes swept through Pennsylvania Ballet beginning in April when Artistic Director Roy Kaiser announced that he would be stepping down from his position after 19 years. Coincidentally, Executive Director Michael Scolamiero revealed just weeks later that he had accepted the executive directorship of Miami City Ballet, igniting a search for the new creative lead of PAB.

In July, the board of the company publicized its selection. Spanish native and former American Ballet Theatre principal Ángel Corella will be PAB's new artistic director. Unlike earlier PAB directors, Corella, as a dancer of ABT lineage, has not made Balanchine technique or repertoire his prime focus. Though he has pledged to maintain the Balanchine heritage in the company, he is expected to enliven PAB by drawing in new choreographers to create more contemporary works.

Though classically trained, Corella has also appeared in works by Christopher Wheeldon and Twyla Tharp, amongst others. In a video of Stanton Welch's *We Got It Good*, Corella trifles with the audience, at once inviting them with a smirk to come play with him before feverishly tapping out an intricate foot pattern. He launches into series of *jetés* that roll through the air. The peak comes when Corella executes six Italian *fouettés* followed by a few extra turns (I lost count) with impossible control, accuracy, and, dare I say, pizzazz. Though he has been a resplendent performer in the classics, it is clear Corella will not shy away from the bold or the new.

Other notable personnel changes include the hiring of new ballet masters. Zachary Hench, still dancing with the company as a principal, and Julie Diana, who retired this past spring, will both serve in the role. The Pennsylvania Ballet board has appointed David Gray as interim executive director, a position he will hold through July 2015.

If Corella's artistic direction is anything like his pirouettes, then the Pennsylvania Ballet repertoire is in for a sharp but steady turn around.

By Kat J. Sullivan

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