

Society for the Performing Arts
Presents
VIRSKY
UKRAINIAN NATIONAL DANCE COMPANY
OFFICIAL TOUR OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE
AND FINE ARTS OF UKRAINE

Friday, October 2 at 8 p.m.
Jones Hall

The Program

UKRAINE, MY UKRAINE!

Choreography by Myroslav Vantukh, National Artist of Ukraine; Music composed by S. Ponomariov, Honored Artist of Ukraine, and Oleksandr Popov, Artist; Performed by the Company

In their tradition, bread and salt on an embroidered towel is a symbol of the sincerity and kindness of the Ukrainian people. This is a greeting dance encompassing the vast and diverse regions of Ukraine. Each region has its own local flavor, its own dialect through dance—here, all these wonderful flavors are united into a single dance just as the various flowers in a garland.

POVZUNETS (COSSACK PLAYFUL DANCE)

Choreography by Pavlo Virsky, founder of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company;
Music composed by Abram Khelemsky; Performed by male group of soloists of the Company

One of the more popular and well-known dances for spectators, *Povzunets* is a light-hearted jaunt that demonstrates the technical ability of the performers. The ingenuity, joy, bravery, and free-spiritedness of the Zaporizhia Cossacks is highly valued by the Ukrainian people, and their song evokes feelings of audacity, courage, and abandon.

KMIL (HOP)

Choreography by Pavlo Virsky, founder of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company;
Music composed by Iakov Lapinskii; Performed by the Company

Performed in folk traditions, the *Kmil* is a choreographic performance of boys walking in the evening. Accompanied by Ukrainian folk music “Oh Khmil, My Khmil,” the merrymaking also evokes male staidness and respect. The evening is enhanced by the appearance of a female soloist, who demonstrates incredulous skill. She invites the other women to join with the men in performing this traditional dance. Colorful costumes and traditional music coalesce in this ancient Ukrainian dance.

HOPAK (UKRANIAN FOLK DANCE) from the opera, Taras Bulba

Choreography by K Sergeev; Music composed by V. Solovyov-Sedoy;
Performed by the Company

Great Ukrainian Hero Taras Bulba fought against Polish nobility with the help of his son Ostop. *Hopak* performed by Ostop symbolizes strength, courage, and the kind hearts of the Ukrainian Cossack. As Ostop skillfully performs this expressive and light dance, he shares with us the invincible spirit of Ukraine.

KOZACHOK

Performed by female dancers of the Company

A very happy dance, full of delicate, lyrical scenes. As a whole, it is a bright and dynamic narration about Ukrainian women. The lively costumes, beautiful music, and intricate choreography are sure to please audience members.

KYIV FELLOWS

Choreography by Pavlo Virsky, founder of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company;
Music composed by V. Rozhdestvensky; Performed by the Company

This dance showcases youth in competition, and is accompanied by comedy and satire. It celebrates the shrewdness and vigor, as well as the boastfulness and arrogance often associated with youth. The competition is filled with passion. This dance is typically Ukrainian, but known in other countries as well.

VERBICHENKA (LITTLE WILLOW)

Choreography by S. Segel, People's Artist of Ukraine; Music composed by A. Mukiiia;
Performed by female dancers of the company

Verbichenka is a female dance-allegory. In the words of a Ukrainian song: "The willow near the water is like a song, like fate." The curtain is raised. A beautiful image appears on the stage, reproducing the willow—girls with weeping willow branches bending over the water. A lyrical round dance begins, exhibiting female gracefulness and plasticity of movement. The wind begins to rustle, developing into a storm that bends the willow trees to the ground. Nevertheless, the willow fights back to stand and finally weathers the storm. Silence. Then the sun emerges, as the dance ends cheerfully, with life continuing on.

ZAPOROZHTSI (NATIONAL UKRAINIAN DANCE OF COSSACKS)

Choreography by Pavlo Virsky, founder of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company; Music composed by Iaklov Lapinskii; Performed by male dancers of the company

This dance mimics the warfare rituals of the Zaporizhia warrior-host and "Hetmen" (military commander) Bohdan Khmel'nitsky. The legendary Zaporizhian Cossacks, vigorous defenders of their country and heroes from Ukraine's ancient past, partake in a soldier game before the audience. Equipped in their Cossack uniforms complete with weapons dating from the 12th century, the dancers perform their routine to music that evokes a distinct military romanticism.

Intermission

THE CARPATHIANS

Choreography by Pavlo Virsky, founder of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company;
Traditional music of Ukraine; Performed by the Company

Called by a trembita (a long wooden horn used by the locals of the Carpathian Mountains) after a long workday, the youth gather at a polonima (a plateau in the mountains, usually covered with thick grass where livestock graze) to sing and dance. The dance describes various regions of Carpathia—Gutsulshyna, Bukonya, Zaccarpattia—each region having its own costumes, character, rites and customs, songs and dances. It is an ethnographic illustration, comprised of three main parts: a song of the mountains, a song of the water, and a song of the sun. The composition is a bright and dynamic representation of the Carpathian people.

PODOLIANOCHKA (GIRL FROM THE PODILLA REGION)

Choreography by Pavlo Virsky, founder of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company;
Music composed by Igor Ivaschenko; Performed by two members of the Company

This is a choreographic image full of subtle lyricism. It speaks of spring and the pure love between two young people. The tender musical accompaniment complements this graceful dance.

GIPSY DANCE

Performed by the Company

The classical dance of Bess Arabian gypsies. The gypsies camp is comprised of happy music and passionate dances performed by young men and girls. It is a competition amongst the gypsies, with one group trying to win victory over the other group. The scene changes with a similar competition among the young gypsy girls.

SHEVCHYKY (SHOEMAKERS)

Choreography by Myroslav Vantukh, National Artist of Ukraine; Music composed by Georgy Zavhorodnii, People's Artist of Ukraine; Performed by the Company

This dance speaks of an ancient profession of humanity, that of the shoemaker. While teaching his apprentice how to make shoes, the senior shoemaker also teaches him to adopt a joyful and respectful attitude toward the profession and towards one's elders.

PRECARPATHIAN DANCE "THE BELLS"

Choreography by A. Bondarev, Honorary Artist of Ukraine; Staging by I. Kolesnikov; Music composed by H. Redko; Performed by the Company

This is a lyrical dance exemplifying pure and true love. Two young people in love start dancing. They are overwhelmed with feelings; their small bells tinkle like tiny strings of the soul. They invite young boys and girls who also hold small bells to join with them. It is an ancient tradition of the Precarpathian region, and a hymn to purity and beauty.

MORIAKY (SAILORS)

Choreography by Pavlo Virsky, founder of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company; Music composed by Iaklov Lapinskii; Performed by male dancers of the Company

With great pride in their heritage, the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet are the pride and hope of an independent Ukraine. The vivacity and ingenuity of the sailors can captivate us. Their dashing appearance on the stage can remind us of the fresh wind. This dance tells the story of "Peter Pipeclay"; it's about the energetic and fickle beauty of the sea, and Peter's abiding love for it. In *Sailors*, the dance churns like the foam of the hollow sea, unwinding headily like a maelstrom that sprays showers all around. Then, all of a sudden, we share in a quiet chat on the ships deck with the crew responding in unison to each cue. The crew then erupts into a merry dance that evokes ideas of endurance and durability.

CHUMACK JOY

Choreography by Pavlo Virsky, founder of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company; Musical arrangement by Igor Ivashchenko; Performed by male dancers of the Company

This is a choreographic picture from the past of the Ukrainian people. It is a humorous piece, but at the same time sensitive in nature, depicting the adventures of four poor men, whose poverty forced them to migrate to the southern part of the country to make a living (such people were referred to as *Chumacks*). The long and difficult journey taught them to appreciate the small tokens of life, such as receiving a new pair of shoes.

Admirable at first sight, this dance is even more impressive when watched several times, as the choreography is interwoven with a mastery of drama.

HOPAK (UKRAINIAN FOLK DANCE)

Choreography by Pavlo Virsky, founder of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company; music composed by Boris Yarovynsky, People's Artist of Ukraine. Performed by the Company

From time in memoriam, no Ukrainian program would be complete without the "Hopping Dance" (*Hopak*). With almost every dance step being accompanied by a "Hop," this dance eventually came to be known as the "Hopak." This dance is comprised of numerous bravura solo performances and breathtaking feats, with spectacular, dynamic, and intricate choreographic formations of the company. The female

dancers are adorned with the most beautiful blouses, skirts, chaplets, necklaces, and colorful headbands, which are representative of the great culture of Ukraine. With its incredible choreography, the *Hopak* is the quintessential Ukrainian art form, and is a fitting way in which to end this spectacular program.

The program is subject out change without notice.

VIRSKY UKRAINIAN NATIONAL DANCE COMPANY

The renowned folk dance ensemble named after Pavlo Virsky is famous for its bright colors, the unity of content and form, and the vivid embodiment of its stage concept. This magnificent artistic group has embraced the beauty of its native Ukraine, the wisdom of its people as well as the folk tradition of humor and optimism.

Each and every performance is a romantic, elevated, passionate, and exciting show. The ensemble's diverse performances presenting the exquisite charm of Ukrainian folk dancing and the wealth of its traditions have been warmly received by audiences all over the world. The history of the ensemble goes back to 1937 when Pavlo Virsky and Mykola Bolotov, well-known Ukrainian ballet-masters, brought together a group of folk dancers.

From 1955 to 1975, Pavlo Virsky led the ensemble. It was under his guidance that the ensemble matured into a highly professional dance company whose art has won the hearts of countless reviewers and the general public around the world.

Proceeding from the folk traditions, Pavlo Virsky created such choreographic compositions as *We're from Ukraine*, *The Sailors*, *The Dolls*, *We Remember*, and *The Funny Zaporizhia Cossack Dance Povzunets*. Full of soft humor is *The Stepp Wagoner's Delight* and *Under the Cherry Tree*; while *A Girl from Podillya* is soft and romantic; and *The Weeping Willow* is sad.

Myroslav Vantukh, Pavlo Virsky's disciple and great expert in folk traditions and ethnography, has been in charge of the ensemble since 1980. His main objective and continuing creative quest is the careful preservation and development of folk choreographic art. First class performance and expressiveness of the dancers, exquisite moves and the bright palette of costumes, the wealth of tunes and completeness of the choreographic plot are among characteristic features of the new numbers such as *The Carpathians*, *The Tambourine Dance*, *The Young Years*, *In Peace and Harmony*, and *The Russian Suite*, which are part of the ensemble's repertoire.

In 1962, Pavlo Virsky created a children's two-year choreographic studio; in 1992, Vantukh turned the studio into a choreographic school for children that later became a source of talented young performers for the ensemble.

The ensemble has toured all over the world including Austria, England, Argentina, Bulgaria, Brazil, Belgium, Venezuela, Greece, Ecuador, Italy, India, Spain, Canada, Columbia, China, Cuba, Korea, Mexico, Mongolia, Germany, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, the United States of America, Hungary, France, Czech Republic, Chile, and Switzerland.

The foreign press is unanimous about the high artistic and professional qualities of the company.

It may seem that the peak of accomplishment and professionalism has been reached, but the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company under the direction of Myroslav Vantukh is creating new dances, is full of surprises and delight, and is letting people of the world learn more about the wonderful land of Ukraine.

MYROSLAV VANTUKH, Artistic Director

Myroslav Vantukh became artistic director of the Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company in 1980. A disciple of Pavlo Virsky, he considers himself a choreographic ethnographer and is a recognized expert on Ukrainian folk culture. His primary goal is the careful preservation and development of folk dancing as choreographic art. In this spirit, he has created *The Carpathians*, *Tambourine Dance*, *The*

Young Years, In Peace and Harmony and the *Russian Suite*, all of which are part of the company's repertory. In 1962, Pavlo Virsky founded a two-year choreographic training course, which Myroslav Vantukh was able to consolidate as a choreographic school for children in 1992: The Ballet School of the Ukrainian National Dance Company.

PAVLO VIRSKY

Pavlo Virsky's first efforts at founding a folk dance company came in 1937 and were rewarded in 1940, when his group was recognized as Ukraine's Song and Dance Company and which today carries his name: Virsky – The Ukrainian National Dance Company. Virsky was trained as a ballet dancer and performed as a soloist with a number of theaters in the old Soviet Union, where he also staged classical ballets such as Marius Petipa's *Swan Lake*, *Don Quixote*, and *Raymonda*. Like his colleague Mikola Bolotov, he was fascinated by folk dancing, which he believed portrayed a people's culture and soul. During World War II his company performed for the soldiers on the front line. The group received recognition in connection with the Decade of Ukrainian Art and Literature in Moscow in 1951. As a choreographer, Virsky created a number of the dances including *Povzunetz*, *Khmil*, *Under The Cherry Tree*, *Zaparozhtsy*, *The Needle Women*, *Sailors' Dance*, and *Hopak*, and was awarded many honors prior to his death in 1975.

UKRAINE

As an independent state Ukraine first appeared on the world map in 1991, but its history dates back to the Ninth Century A.D., when one of the largest and most powerful states of medieval Europe was founded under the name of Kyivska Rus.

Ukraine is situated in Eastern Europe. With an area of 603,700 km, it is the second largest country on the continent. With 51 million inhabitants, it is sixth in population; 73% are Ukrainians and 22% are ethnic Russians.

The country borders on Russia, Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and the Black Sea. It is characterized as an agricultural nation with flat, fertile plains; 15% is covered by forest and towards the West one finds the Carpathian Mountains.