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Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company: The right moves, plus music

Dance » Ririe-Woodbury and Danish ensemble FIGURA collaborate for performance.

By Alicia Greenleigh
The Salt Lake Tribune

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Choreography and music go together like chocolate and peanut butter. So, it goes without saying that a performance featuring live music and modern dance would be a magical combination.

For Ririe-Woodbury's new concert, "Gravity," audiences get just that when Danish musical group FIGURA Ensemble performs live accompaniment on stage for the dancers. Following the collaboration, musicians and dancers will perform numbers separately.

"Music is similar to movement because you can come to it from any background," said R-W artistic director Charlotte Boye-Christensen, who is also from Copenhagen, Denmark.

On the bill is Boye-Christensen's new work set to FIGURA's original score, both of which are titled "Gravity."

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Prentice Whitlow, left, holding Erin Lehua Brown, and T.... (Leah Hogsten / The Salt Lake Tribune)



Andrea Dispenziere in **Ririe** Woodbury Dance Company's upcoming production of "Gravity," featuring work by artistic director Charlotte Boye-Christensen, performed live by Danish musicians. (Leah Hogsten / The Salt Lake Tribune)

She will also restage last year's "Interiors."

The **ensemble** will perform works by New York composer Derek Dermal and Icelandic composer Steingrímur Rohloff .

The special concert is the brainchild of composer Jens Horsving, who wanted to create a piece of music specifically for Boye-Christensen to choreograph. The pair also collaborated three years ago on **Ririe**-Woodbury's "Anatomy," as well as for several other performances in Copenhagen.

Horsving, who has been working on "Gravity" for about a year, said he wrote the score with dancers' body movements in mind.

"I wanted to couple dancers with live musicians, and I thought it would be nice to get inspiration from gravity and

momentum, black holes and [the idea of bodies] naturally falling to the floor," Horsving said. "That's the starting point [for both musicians and dancers] so we have a common theme."

Boye-Christensen divided the work into six parts, really embracing the physics of gravity's weight, rotation and push-pull into the choreography. She also toyed with the idea of push-pull in relationships.

The idea of creating dance based around a piece of music was a little daunting, she said, especially because she only got the complete score about three weeks ago while the company was still on tour.

"For this process, the music really informed my work," she said. "But this is a wonderful opportunity, and there's such an intellectual approach to the piece. The idea of gravity, weight, depth and rotation also ... came to mind when I was choreographing. Jens is a wonderful because he really understands what the music needs for choreographers and dancers."

Joan Woodbury, co-founder of **Ririe**-Woodbury Dance Company, said performances set to live music are always interesting because the musical performance is unpredictable.

"No one does the exact same thing every time or ever," she said of performing music. "The tempo can change, and so [the musicians and dancers] are really taking cues from each other."



Jesper Egelund, Frans Hansen and Anna Klett rehearse the music that will accompany the dance performance of **Ririe**-Woodbury's new piece "Gravity." (Paul Fraughton/The Salt Lake Tribune)

The **FIGURA** musicians -- Anna Klett on clarinet, Frans Hansen on percussion and Jesper Egelund on double bass -- said they are excited to see how the concert plays out.

Klett thinks it will be an interesting experience for the audience. "I've played with dancers before, but not like this with this kind of staging," she said. "I think it will be interesting to see because there are two pictures on stage at the same time. I think it's great because it's going to expose the audience to something different."

Another interesting aspect of the concert is that Hansen turned common objects he found around the studio into percussion instruments for the performance. He will play a garbage can, lead pipe, glass plate and empty water bottle.

"Jens wrote several different objects that you can beat on [in the piece]," Hansen said. "So when I got here, I knew I had to find things to play. I have them all on a table. I'm very excited. It's fun. I like the rawness of sound you get, and it's a nice clash of culture with the classic instruments."

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Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company and FIGURA Ensemble in 'Gravity'

When » Dec. 17-19, 7:30 p.m. with a 2 p.m. matinee Dec. 19

Where » Black Box Theatre in Rose Wagner Center for Performing Arts, 138 W. 300 South, Salt Lake City

Info » Tickets are \$30 (\$15 for students and seniors \$20 for groups of six or more) at 801-355-ARTS or www.arttix.org.

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