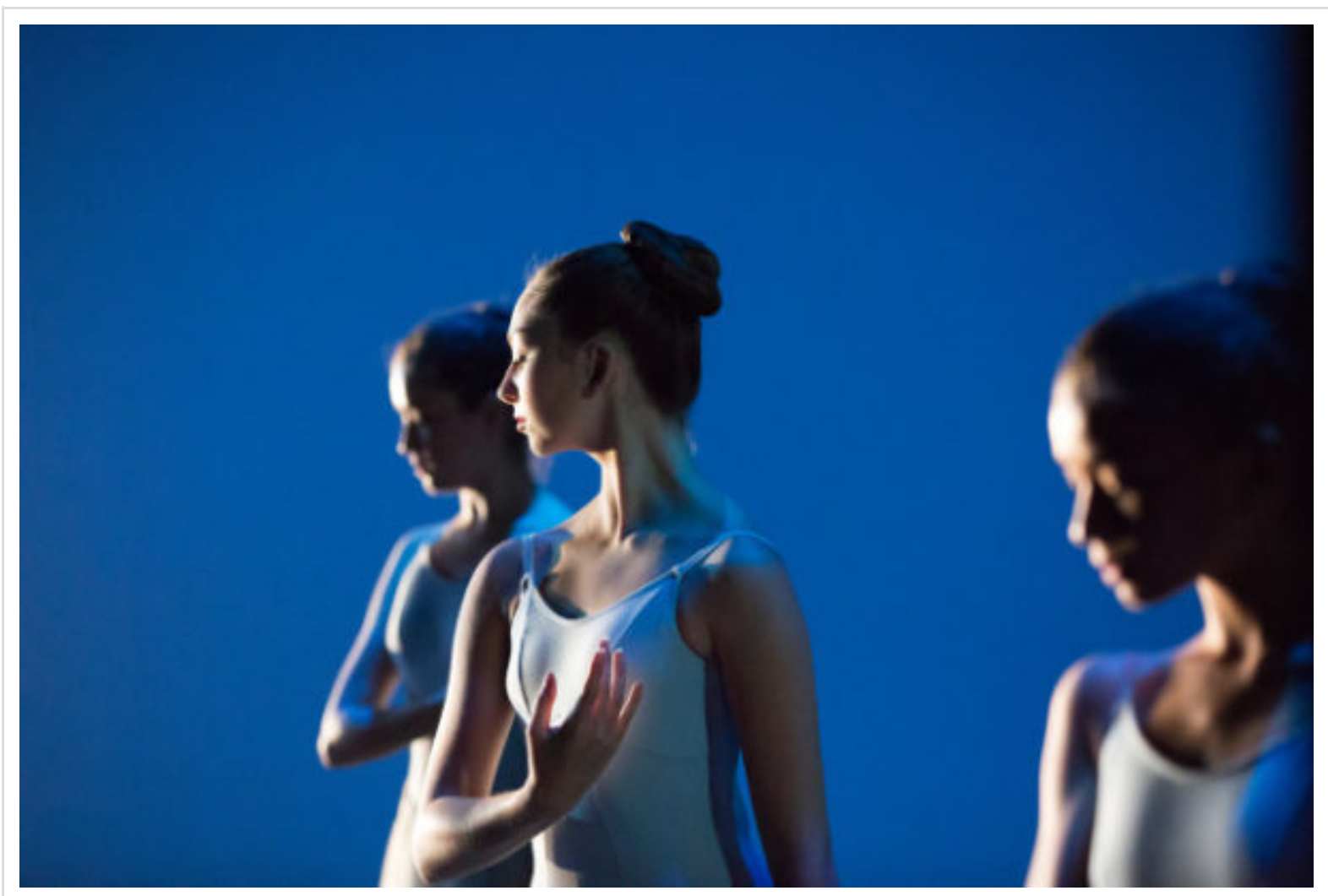


Love for Yvonne & a bright future for Westside Ballet 1

JUN 12 2019

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It was an evening of beaming smiles, prodigious effort, community love, and some real artistry last Saturday at the Broad Stage, as the **Westside Ballet** staged a impressive Gala fundraising event. Visiting “etoiles,” stars from companies as esteemed as New York City Ballet, Smuin Ballet, The Joffrey, and Miami City Ballet, studded the program, bringing panache to classical pas de deux. The guest-dancers had two things in common: admirably clean and confident technique and the woman who coaxed their bodies into ballet-classicism and the uncanny bravura they displayed on stage, their teacher, former New York City Ballet principal dancer Yvonne Mounsey (1919 – 2012).

The well-attended event more or less overtook the Broad Stage campus, in a friendly way, from a drinks hour, through performance and a post-show dinner. A community has evolved around the Westside School of Ballet that Mounsey founded in partnership with Rosemary Valaire in the early ’70s. The house erupted with spontaneous applause (one was struck by how genuine the reaction) as Mounsey herself danced in wonderful vintage footage of, among other ballets, George Balanchine’s *Serenade*. She radiated in the mode of a British-style ballerina (she was South Africa-born and reared), which means she danced like a lady, with passion burning beneath the surface.

Next thing you knew, after a glorious ‘defile’ (the classical ballet corollary of the big-tent parade at the circus), a group of pre-professional dancers took the stage to perform this deceptively “easy” ballet. (*Serenade* is actually a lengthy beast, opening with the most delicate of ensemble work and then welling into real drama nearly beyond the ken of student dancers.) Since Balanchine famously created it on his burgeoning company, it was a fitting choice. Mounsey’s colleague and friend, the great New York City Ballet principal dancer **Patricia Neary**, who was in the house looking incredibly smart in a black pantsuit, staged the work certainly in honor of her departed friend.

The beautiful photo below of Gala chairwoman Allegra Clegg (who gave words in her mother’s memory) and Martine Harley, artistic director of the Westside Ballet, expresses the elegant tone and joy of the evening.



Allegra Clegg, Martine Harley

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Jun 14,2019 12:49 pm

julie McDonald

Debra,

What a beautiful article and tribute! Love the photos, too..