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STUDIO ONE TO LAUNCH 30th ANNIVERSARY SEASON
New Philip Neal Ballet, *Phoenix Rising*, to premiere; *Bow Out* to return

RICHMOND, VA – Richmond Ballet is set to kick off its 30th Anniversary Season with the first installment of this year’s Studio Series, Studio One, October 1-6, 2013, at the Richmond Ballet Studio Theatre with a new ballet from Philip Neal, and a popular favorite, Val Caniparoli’s *Bow Out*. After a celebrated, 23-year career at New York City Ballet, Neal returns to Richmond once again to set a new original work, *Phoenix Rising*. Neal’s world premiere will mark the fifth time The School of Richmond Ballet alumnus and Richmond native has set a new work for the Ballet’s professional company. *Bow Out*, an eclectic contemporary piece – choreographed by Caniparoli, who for many years acted as the choreographer-in-residence at San Francisco Ballet – also makes a return to the Ballet’s Studio Theatre in the 2013. With slick styling and boundless energy, *Bow Out* oozes cool and charisma.

Bow Out, commissioned by Richmond Ballet in 1995, was originally inspired by Val Caniparoli’s careful selection of music, a work for the saxophone by David Bedford and Roy Powell, performed by the Apollo Saxophone Quartet. The ballet’s first movement, often frenetic and fast-paced and filled with angular steps that mimic the pulsating beat of the music, demands both stamina and precision from its dancers. The second and final movement of the ballet casts a differing mood, reflecting the mystical, danceable quality the music now projects. Caniparoli also cleverly uses *Bow Out* and its costuming to explore gender roles in contemporary ballet, reversing the notion of distinct male and female roles. All of Caniparoli’s eight dancers – four male and four female – don men’s suits that slip and slide effortlessly between partners. Costumes for *Bow Out* are designed by Bay Area-based designer Sandra Woodall, who has worked closely with Caniparoli throughout his career.

Caniparoli speaks highly of his long-standing relationship with Richmond Ballet and the company’s dancers. “Richmond Ballet dancers are great collaborators,” says Caniparoli. “They contribute to the creative process which in turn makes for a stronger and more cohesive ballet.”

As with Philip Neal’s previous work, *Phoenix Rising* bears the hallmarks of New York City Ballet’s clean, demanding, decidedly American style pioneered by the company’s legendary choreographer and founder, George Balanchine. “The abstract work will express a universal theme,” Neal says. “It will reveal how the struggles and challenges an individual may encounter in life’s interactions actually serve to strengthen one’s resolve on a path towards happiness and fulfillment.”

The choice of the ballet’s primary theme is inspired by Neal’s own experiences of self-discovery after retiring from New York City Ballet. “I have Richmond Ballet to thank for this realignment of focus – I hadn’t choreographed for six or seven years until Stoner [Winslett, Artistic Director of Richmond Ballet] invited me to do a piece for the 2012-13 season,” says Neal. “Working with Richmond Ballet has been the best artistic experience I have had since retiring from performing.”

Neal counts his now growing familiarity with the Ballet’s current roster of dancers as an added benefit: “I know that each one possesses an innate gift for dramatic self-expression coupled with immaculate technique. I look forward to displaying their formidable talents with this challenging new work.”

Phoenix Rising will be set to *Symphony No. 1* by American composer Samuel Barber. “Barber composed this emotionally stirring music in 1936,” adds Neal, “honoring the classical traditions of past iconic composers while hinting at the American post-modern music movement that was to follow.” Additionally, Neal’s ballet will feature costumes by the highly-acclaimed designer, Holly Hynes, who has worked with some of the most illustrious choreographers in the world of ballet today, including Christopher Wheeldon and Alexei Ratmansky. Inspired by the experimental fluorescent light installations of contemporary artist Dan Flavin, Hynes’ costumes use bold colors to accent the nine different dancers featured in *Phoenix Rising*. “I was very inspired by these streams of color thrown off by the fluorescent lights and how the reflections or pools of color would behave on the floor,” says Hynes. “Philip loved the idea of everyone in different colors, and I think these saturated colors will happily blend together.”

While in the River City for the premiere of his ballet, Neal will also lead a special pre-performance discussion with the boys of St. Christopher’s School in late September. Neal, who attended St. Christopher’s School for a time during his youth, has welcomed the opportunity to share his creation process and experiences of the professional ballet world with the school’s performing arts students. This year also marks the first year that St. Christopher’s will be participating in the Ballet’s community outreach program, *Minds In Motion*, which exposes 4th grade students to the world of dance.

Performances for Studio One:

Tuesday, October 1, 6:30 pm
Wednesday, October 2, 6:30 pm
Thursday, October 3, 2 pm and 6:30 pm
Friday, October 4, 6:30 pm
Saturday, October 5, 6:30 pm and 8:30 pm
Sunday, October 6, 2 pm and 4 pm

All performances take place at Richmond Ballet’s Studio Theatre, at 407 East Canal Street, Richmond VA 23219.

PLEASE NOTE: Media wishing to attend any Studio One performance **must** arrange to do so through Richmond Ballet’s press office by contacting Kate Crowder at kcrowder@richmondballet.com or 804.344.0906, ext. 246.

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For more information about Richmond Ballet and its classes and programs, visit www.richmondballet.com or call 804.344.0906.

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Richmond Ballet, The State Ballet of Virginia, is dedicated to the education, promotion, preservation, and continuing evolution of the art form of ballet. Richmond Ballet strives to keep meaningful works of dance alive and to produce and foster new works that remain true to these values. Now in its 30th professional season, Richmond Ballet’s mission is to “awaken and uplift the human spirit, both for audiences and artists.”