

Dance

# Cleveland Ballet again a Playhouse Square troupe

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There's a new player at Playhouse Square. Well, not a new player, exactly. More of an old one brought back into the fold. In a happy return to the good old days, Cleveland Ballet has been named a resident company at Playhouse Square. Starting next season, with a performance Oct. 14, the now 3-year-old reincarnation of Cleveland Ballet will rejoin the ranks of the venue's anchor troupes and stand once again alongside Great Lakes Theater, the Cleveland Play House, DanceCleveland, the Tri-C JazzFest and Cleveland State University. "To be part of Playhouse Square, it's big," said Cleveland Ballet artistic director Gladisa Guadalupe. "It gives us credibility across the nation and an opportunity to continue our mission. For them to see us and reward us in this way makes a huge difference."

It also comes with several significant perks. Gina Vernaci, executive producer at Playhouse Square, said



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resident status confers such benefits as higher-profile marketing, greater access to rehearsal space and priority in scheduling. Indeed, she said, resident companies are the "bedrock" upon which Playhouse Square operates. The intangible benefits may be even more valuable. In addition to relieving companies of certain practical burdens, Vernaci said, residency at Playhouse Square constitutes a "stamp of approval," a sign to the world that Cleveland Ballet is worthy of attention.

"It says that this is something that literally has legs," she said, fully aware of the pun. "It means a lot." Beyond that, added Guadalupe, from the company's

studio in Bedford Heights, "We're going to be part of the culture downtown. In terms of the arts in Cleveland, we're going to be back where the action is." The honor was not easily won. Vernaci said she and Guadalupe talked of residency at Playhouse Square since the day Cleveland Ballet was founded, in 2014, but waited to give the company ample time to demonstrate its artistic depth and long-term financial viability with new productions of "Coppelia" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." "People vote with their feet," she said. The greatest winners in all this may be the citizens of Northeast Ohio. All those still mourning the 2000 split of Cleveland San Jose Ballet can once again take pride in Playhouse Square showcasing local, professional dance talent, in addition to touring acts. "We've missed them," Vernaci said, voicing a sentiment surely shared by dance lovers across Northeast Ohio. "It's wonderful to have ballet back in the mix. Nothing beats having [a company] of your own."

## FOUNDRY

FROM D1

On a recent tour of the site, which after a year-and-a-half of construction is nearing completion, Marcovy was like a proud father as he showed off the indoor, state-of-the-art, 65,000-square-foot rowing facility, boathouse, workout facility, parent areas, office space and spaces intended for event rental. While paying homage to the buildings' complex and intriguing histories, the new design is sleek and modern. "We wanted to stay true to the buildings, while making them modern and functional," says Marcovy. He's especially proud of the locker rooms, which transformed rudimentary industrial space into spacious private changing rooms and showers. Work was done by the Krill Co. contractors. The final architectural design is by Kaczmar Architects Inc. Though the Foundry is now operational, the current phase of construction is slated to be completed in September. That includes the foyer, front entrance, locker rooms, offices and conference areas.



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The transformation of the Foundry is about far more than architecture, though, and the Foundry is far more than a rowing facility. "It is very important to us that this be accessible to all children in Cleveland," says Trebilcock. "This is not just a yacht club or a rowing facility; it's something for everyone in the city." To that end, the Foundry has formed partnerships with the Cleveland Parks and Recreation Department, Urban Community School District. Other schools, such as Magnificat and St. Edward, also use the facility, as will camp and scouting groups this summer. Through the Cleveland Youth Rowing Association, which offers financial assistance via the Foundry, any interested youth can take up the sport. That's a big deal when rowing shells often cost tens of thousands of dollars, as does training. No one under sixth grade is allowed on the river, but groups of younger children can practice in the indoor rowing tanks. All youth rowers must be enrolled in a Foundry rowing program to go on the water. The Foundry has created four curricula for interested school groups, too, including a STEM offering that focuses on the physics of rowing. The others concentrate on physical fitness, nature and history. Physical fitness, is, of course, part of all the school programs. There are also programs aimed at adults interested in rowing, including meet-up groups and tank drop-in sessions. And the Foundry is starting a program for under-23 and elite rowers this summer, with the goal of helping them get to the Olympics. So far this year, despite the fact that the complex is not completely refurbished, more than 2,000 students have participated in Foundry programs. Trebilcock and Marcovy expect that number to increase exponentially when the complex is fully open. "We want to get 10,000 kids per year in here," says Trebilcock. "Getting people to the river, to the lake, is great." The site of Cleveland's past may just be its future, too.



A school group waits to get out on the Cuyahoga River outside the Foundry.



Rowing shells inside the Foundry.



Foundry executive director Aaron Marcovy, left, and Mike Trebilcock, who bought the old building in 2015, on Columbus Road outside the Foundry.