Dance Takes Center Stage

The appearance of Russian dancer Alexander Godunov this Wednesday at the Municipal Auditorium may very well be the biggest event to ever occur on the Lafayette dance scene. Formerly a member of the Bolshoi Ballet, the ballet star defected to this country in 1979 and until recently was a principal dancer with the American Ballet Theater. Godunov will be on stage along with seven other stars of the ballet world in a sold-out performance sponsored by the Pine Arts Foundation. The production and following reception will be taped by Metromedia for national distribution later this year, so anyone who doesn’t have a ticket for “Godunov and Stars” can at least take consolation in the fact that it’s being preserved on film.

Also, there are a number of other dance events scheduled for the area this week that may complement Godunov’s show. The first of these is the summer concert to be presented Tuesday in Angelle Hall by the University of Southwestern Louisiana’s dance troupe, The Company. Made up of USL students and community members, The Company emphasizes modern dance techniques and this season is taking advantage of the talents of local and out of state artists as well.

ULS dance instructor Kathy DeleanBurk is summer director of the company and has choreographed a “new wave, punk futuristic” piece for their concert. Guest choreographer Artie Simon, a USL graduate who is studying on a scholarship at New York University, has created a lengthy, abstract work entitled “Sky Island” for the program.

Other dances include “Lumen” by USL senior Wil Chapman and “Vivaldi,” a classical number with a modern flavor staged by Melissa Daspit. According to Burk, the USL dance program, which emphasizes modern dance and choreography, is “a small department, but the dancers are really into it.”

Modern dance is only a portion of a four-day workshop in which 75 students of the art will be participating this week. The course, which commences Wednesday at Lafayette High School, features jazz and classical ballet as well.

Workshop organizer Clancy Whipp says this marks the first time the three forms of dance have been offered here through the same program. The session was the idea of Colleen Andrus, a stage mother who didn’t want to send her daughter away to dance camp. So they brought it here.

Whipp says she’s excited about the quality of the guest instructors visiting the workshop and that it was a “lucky coincidence” to get them all together. It also demonstrates a spirit of cooperation on the part of local persons involved in the field of dance.

Representing modern dance is Jesse Durancieau, a performer with the Erik Hawkins Company who made an impression on local dancers when his group appeared at USL this past spring. Visiting jazz specialist is Susan Quinn, a member of Chicago’s Gus Giordano Dancers. Quinn was recruited to the area through the help of local school owner Carol Delarue, who emphasizes jazz training.

A Russian ballet dancer and teacher (Godunov and Mikhail Barishnikov as well are among her students), Bella Kovarskaya was invited to the conference by...
Jeffrey Perkins Walls, a dance teacher and director of the Lafayette Ballet Company,
Walls herself plays a significant role in the workshop as she recently returned from a Teacher's Course in the USSR. A group of 18 instructors from the U.S. and South America trained for two weeks with the Vaganova School at different sites throughout the Republic, marking the first time that non-Russians have been able to witness such techniques behind the scenes.

Walls will share her experiences, as well as video tapes procured by trip leader and ballet aficionado Olga Smoak, during a public presentation Friday night at Fletcher Hall Media Center.

Another open lecture-demonstration will be held at Fletcher Thursday night as Dureauceau presents a clinic on mask-making. Both these events have no admission fee.

Never before has such a line-up been offered, so even those who don’t dance should appreciate and take advantage of these terpsichorean opportunities.

GETTING FUNKY — Members of The Company dance to an ultra-modern punk number. Though modern dance is the emphasis of USL’s school of dance, activities this week feature classical ballet and jazz as well in workshops, performances and demonstrations.