

CAROLINA CONSTANTINO

Neoclassical flair and aesthetic

As the Artistic Director of Dancecyprus, talented Cypriot dancer and choreographer Carolina Constantinou is on a new path to expression and creativity.

Carolina Constantinou's new role as Artistic Director of Dancecyprus carries great responsibility, but if there's one thing she isn't lacking in, it's experience. Having danced her way around Europe, including Paris, Madrid, Berlin, Thessaloniki, Lisbon and Munich, Constantinou has worked with renowned choreographers and has collaborated in numerous remarkable projects. Her vision for the company's future is clear and she relishes the chance to experiment in terms of repertoire and neoclassical style.

She was born in Limassol, and was taught dance by Nadina Loizidou. She represented Cyprus at the Eurovision contest for young dancers in Lausanne in 1995 and in Gdansk in 1997, and graduated with a teaching degree in dance from Montpellier in France in 2001. She was then a soloist at the Komische Oper in Berlin for three years, while also performing as a guest dancer in various productions in Europe.

2006 marked the beginning of Constantinou's collaboration with Dancecyprus, which is a registered charity founded with the aim of encouraging dancers and choreographers to seek inspiration in Cypriot cultural heritage. For their inaugural production in 2006, she choreographed a piece called 'A Pair of Wings Please', and also danced as a solo-

ist in the Mediterranean-inspired ballet by choreographer Antonio Colandrea called 'Sirens'. Her stunning dancing and dynamic choreography were also illustrated in 'Rhapsody', their September 2008 production.

When Dancecyprus first approached Constantinou for the position of Artistic Director, she felt she had more to convey as a performer, which necessitated her living and working abroad. The second time the proposal was put forward, it coincided with her decision to return to her homeland after 13 years away.

"I felt that I wanted to give something back, after being away for so long," she says. "It's a vicious cycle faced by so many talented Cypriot dancers, who long to return here, but who know they'll have no opportunities for a career."

In August 2009, she took on the mantle of Artistic Director of Dancecyprus, and charted a new course. Her creative energy and distinctive flair are evident in the company's productions, and dance lovers who attend their performances feel that their expectations have been more than surpassed. Her first project was the Dancecyprus gala in September 2009, under the auspices of First Lady Elsi Christofias.

This production showed a spectacular level of international collaboration between dancers from world-renowned

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ballet companies such as the Royal Ballet, Staatsballet Berlin, and Atterballetto Italy. This was followed by another innovative and striking performance in 'Triptycho' in November 2009. In September 2010, she presented part of her latest choreography at the Cyprus-Russia Gala at the Presidential Palace in support of Radiomathon Charity for Children with Special Needs.

That choreography is part of a complete ballet production entitled 'The World of Cyprus' inspired by the famous painting by Admantios Diamantis, which was due to be the company's next production but, unfortunately, an injury to her shoulder during rehearsals means that she will be unable to perform it until next year. Another production will be put on from December 10-12 for Dancecyprus' second gala, entitled 'Dance for a better life' in collaboration with the European Commission and the PIO for the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, which will feature dancers from famous European ballet companies, along with some very talented Cypriot dancers.

Starting in January next year, the gifted choreographer will form the company's first group of dancers from a small but growing pool of aspiring young performers who will also be selected to take part in the productions of Dancecyprus.

"The company regularly organises workshops to offer young talent a chance to dance on stage with professionals," she explains. "This helps to expose them to our collective experience, and prepare them for their studies abroad."

Upon her return to Cyprus, Constantinou felt that considerable

changes had taken place in the world of dance in Cyprus. The University of Nicosia now offers a Dance Programme, the Municipal Dance Centre run by Lambros Lambrou in Limassol provides high quality conservatoire-style training, and the Rialto Theatre is a stalwart supporter of dance, with a rich repertoire of performances year-round, and many other institutions are also active in their support, but there is much scope for improvement. Constantinou firmly believes that dance has a future in Cyprus, as long as strong foundations are laid in the form of state-sponsored funding.

"Contemporary dance is being recognised as a culturally significant art form, and it deservedly receives support from ministry departments. And now it's time for classical dance to be awarded the same status, and to benefit from dedicated annual sponsorship which would allow for a permanent income for dancers, many of whom stay abroad to work.

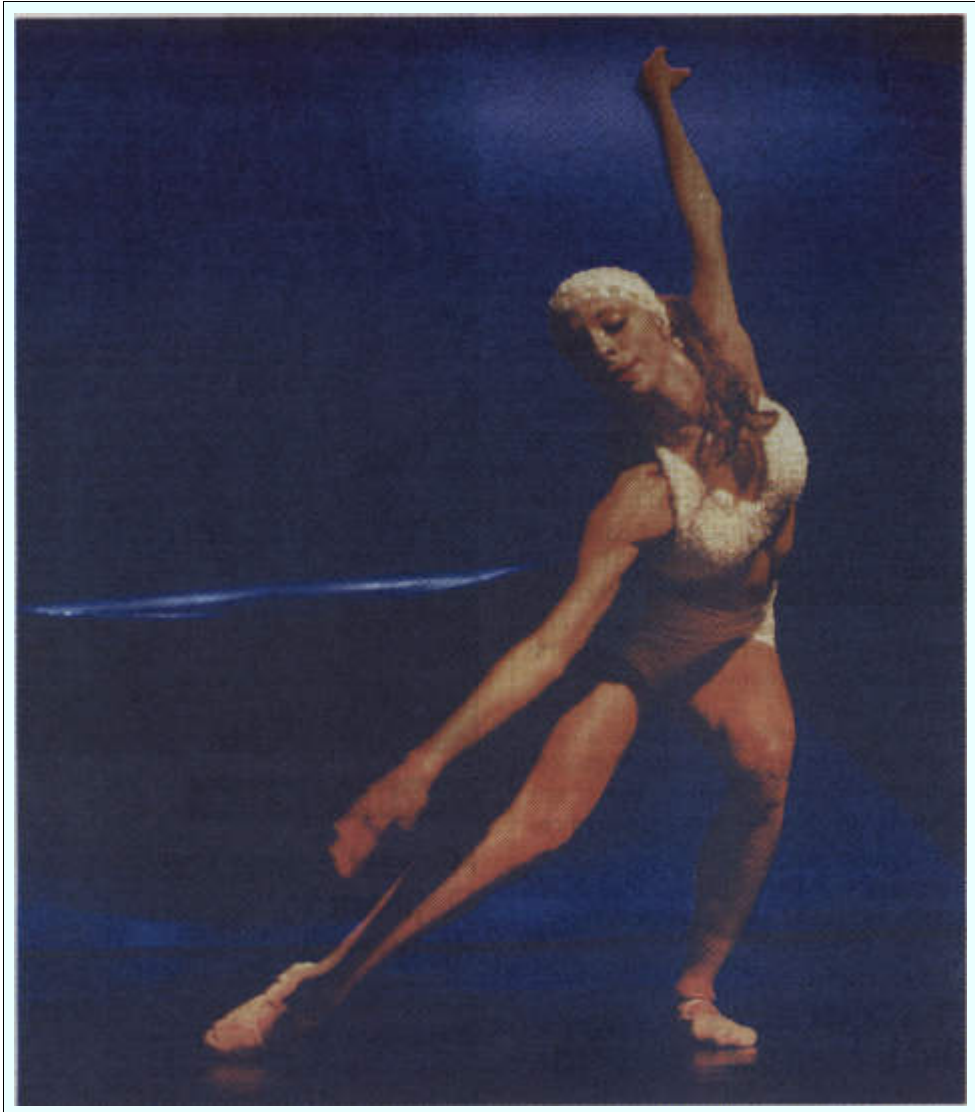
"For those who return, the best case scenario is a teaching job, and I've heard of some who are forced to work as waiters! It's inconceivable that we are the only European country without a national company."



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