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“Dance on Film” Festival Explores the Magic of Movement on the Big Screen

By Lou Fancher



Lauren Jonas Photo provided

The Diablo Ballet and Lafayette Library and Learning Center's second annual “Dance on Film” series leapt into action June 6 with “Brigadoon,” but there's still time to hop into the behind-the-scenes and on-the-screens action later this summer with “Singing in the Rain” and “Seven Brides for Seven Brothers,” two more favorites of Diablo Ballet artistic director and show co-host Lauren Jonas.

Jonas grew up with New Yorker parents who were “always first in line” when new Broadway musicals and films premiered. Singing along with recordings, swinging through ballet barres inspired by classic combinations of dance, music and film,

Jonas' future as a dancer was shaped as much by the movies' lyrical qualities as it was by pliés.

“I adore these films and I am excited to share them with people who also love them,” Jonas says.

The history of dance is packed with great partnerships and this series has multiple pas de deux (a dance for two). There's the LLLC and Walnut Creek-based Diablo Ballet, teaming up to present the films and talks. And in addition to the fantastic on screen duos, Jonas will promenade through the pre-film discussions with Beau Behan, movie critic and host of Beau's Flicks & Nix.

“We'll be speaking independently,” Jonas says. “My focus will be on the choreography, a discussion of the artistic form and unique requirements of film dancing verses stage performances.”

Dance on film affords a degree of control not available to live, onstage performers, but often, there are trade-offs. The amount of space may be limited; the floor's surface less than ideal; costuming can be visually stunning, but awkward – even dangerous – to pirouette in; and the ability to do multiple takes means a dancer's body

suffers considerable wear and tear. And then there are all the artistic personalities and Hollywood producers to please.

But anyone who's heard Jonas speak before knows she has an internal “I love anything that moves” clock, so expect her intros to be upbeat. And Behan brings the same energy, plus a lengthy resumé and thousands of hours devoted to watching and studying films.

“It's so rare that we are able to talk about dance and its influence on major media like film,” Jonas explains. “I will be discussing the imprint these films made on me as a dancer, artistic director, and (as a) human being.”

Although you'll have missed Jonas' in-depth perusal of “Brigadoon,” you don't have to give up learning more about Gene Kelly's magic with a lamppost, umbrella and water in “Singing in the Rain,” on July 10, or the four New York City Ballet principal dancers adding astounding virtuosity to “Seven Brides for Seven Brothers” on Aug. 15.

For more information, call (925) 943-1775, ext. 2, or (925) 385-2280, or email Dan@DiabloBallet.org.

Family Focus

Balanced Parenting

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

Be moderate in order to taste the joys of life in abundance. - Epicurus

As parents, we need to ask ourselves continually whether any of our approaches or methods is too extreme. Unlike the philosophy of “Tiger Mom,” finding some kind of middle ground with our children is usually the most effective way to keep communication open and respect for each other in place.

For example, we don't want to be too authoritarian, but we also don't want to be too permissive. Parents who act too powerful and all-knowing often provoke rebellion from their children. Substance abuse, eating disorders, underperformance in school, cheating, and stealing are some of the ways children may react against too much parental control.

One family I worked with had a high school junior who was failing two courses and was constantly tardy for class. He also resisted doing chores at home and spent his time holed up in his room playing video and computer games. Upon further examination, it was obvious that Ethan was furious at his parents. According to him, both parents criticized and nagged him incessantly. They were quick to find fault with him and didn't seem to notice when he did anything positive. The parents admitted they were outraged that Ethan refused to talk to them or cooperate. A stalemate of negativity had developed in this family

Ethan was willing to come in for family therapy once he realized that he could benefit in some ways. He let his parents know how their anger and attitudes were affecting him. He was actually stuck because he did have goals for himself, but didn't want his parents to think that their negative tactics were going to work. And because Ethan was already angry and negative about himself, their anger was even more hurtful and damaging.

After many spirited sessions, Ethan agreed to accept help from a

tutor, and his parents agreed to use a kinder, more loving approach with him. They maintained their very appropriate expectations and standards, but they were able to guide Ethan with a lighter hand. We mediated many agreements on both sides, and everyone felt greatly relieved to have more understanding and open communication. And with the reduction of hostilities, all family members were able to shed a great deal of personal stress and anxiety.

Other areas where parents can sometimes be too dominating and create great resistance include heavy regulation of food (when to eat, what to eat or not eat, how much to eat), television, internet, texting, social activities, exercise, sleep, and family participation. When children feel too many rules are forced on them, they tend not to cooperate fully with parental authority. Flexibility, not rigidity is key. If children see you trying to be fair, and if they feel their point of view is considered in decision making (even slightly), they are more apt to go along with your agenda.

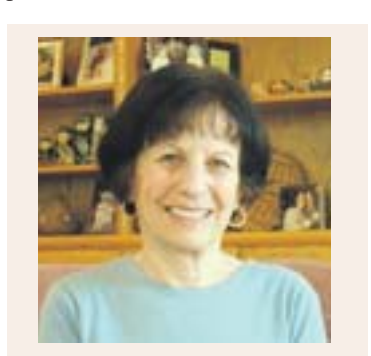
At the same time, parents who are too lax in providing structure and rules at home often create confusion, lack of self-discipline, and other difficulties for their children. If you are unsure whether or not you are providing a good balance for your children, it is important to seek guidance. Don't wait until your child acts out, especially since some forms of resistance can be hidden at first.

Another example of finding middle ground is in your reaction to your child's performance, accomplishments, and the mere fact of his existence.

Current research on the use of praise for children recommends praising them occasionally for their specific behaviors and skills, rather than using frequent, more general praise. In this way, the praise is meaningful as well as motivating, and can help a child feel strong and capable.

One very well-intentioned mom I work with is divorced with a 9-year old child. She shares custody with her ex-husband and his new wife. Because Leah must work full-time and juggle single-parenting, she often feels inadequate as a parent. As a result, she constantly tells her daughter, Maddy, how wonderful she is, how much she loves her, and how she's the most important person in her life. This is nice for Maddy to hear, but not necessarily several times per day. What has happened is that Leah is actually reassuring herself that she is being a good mom every time she says these things to Maddy. For Maddy, the message loses its value when it is constantly repeated and seems to be stated more for her mom's own needs than for Maddy's sake. Leah needs to let Maddy know specifically and more occasionally why she is proud of her and why she is special to her. In this way, Leah's comments will be more meaningful and empowering for Maddy.

Achieving balanced parenting is an ongoing effort and one that can never be quite perfect. But it is heartening for children to see their parents trying to be fair and responsive while they are determining limits and expectations.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. Contact her at (925) 376-9323 or margierye@yahoo.com. She is the author of “Treat Your Partner Like a Dog: How to Breed a Better Relationship” and “Appetite for Life: Inspiring Stories of Recovery from Anorexia, Bulimia, and Compulsive Overeating.”

“Man of Steel”

By Derek Zemrak



Image provided

Zack Snyder's reboot of Superman will no doubt be the blockbuster event of the summer.

“Man of Steel” is a serious treatment of the classic Superman story. Snyder directed “300” and “Watchmen,” but “Man of Steel” has less “comic book” feel than his other movies taken from graphic novels. And like Snyder's other movies, Superman is over-the-top and action-filled from beginning to end. Audiences will enjoy the ride whether or not they are longtime Superman fans.

The special effects are a feast for the eyes, though I found myself getting a bit full. Superman gets thrown through so many buildings it's amazing that there are any left standing in Metropolis by the end of the movie.

Henry Cavill (“Immortals,” “The Count of Monte Cristo”) does a wonderful job playing Clark Kent/Kal-El/Superman, a young man who wants to help in every way he can while still concealing his powers. There is so much back story in the movie, that sometimes it was difficult to understand the motives for his actions.

Oscar winner Russell Crowe (“Gladiator”) plays Jor-El, Superman's real father from Krypton. As usual Crowe delivers a great performance, but Jor-El is involved in more of the plot than I would have liked, taking the focus away from Kal-El.

Four-time Oscar nominee Amy Adams (“The Master,” “The Fighter”) portrays Superman's love interest, Lois Lane. She plays the spunky reporter well, but there isn't much chemistry between her and Cavill.

Oscar nominee Diane Lane (“Unfaithful”) and Oscar winner Kevin Costner (“Dances with Wolves”) are effective as Clark Kent's earthly parents and while they infuse him with morality and integrity, they also fear revealing his secrets. And yet, surprisingly, we see very little of them.

I thoroughly enjoyed this movie, even if it was a bit longer than perhaps it needed to be.

“Man of Steel” has a total running time of 2 hours 23 minutes and is rated PG13.

Derek Zemrak is a Film Critic, Film Producer and Founder of the California Independent Film Festival. You can follow Derek on Twitter @zemrak for the latest Hollywood news. Derek is the host of Real to Reel on TRadioV.com live at 6 p.m. every Tuesday.

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