dance

A send-off, the Big Apple and a big tour for Aspen Santa Fe Ballet Saturday night

Ballet company will

Andrew Travers The Aspen Times

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet will give its only local contemporary dance performance of the winter season Saturday night, bringing back three recent audience favorites to the stage of the Aspen District Theatre.

But the locally based company isn't resting on its laurels in a season that included just this one-night contemporary dance show and the December run of "The Nutcracker." It is embarking on an ambitious spring tour that places the company center stage on the international dance scene.

After this weekend's Aspen performance of Fernando Melo's "Dream Play," Jorma Elo's "1st Flash" and Alexander Ekman's "Tuplet," the company will set out on an international tour that includes a prestigious five-show run at the Joyce Theater in Manhattan and a multi-stop tour through Israel.

The New York run, with performances at the Joyce running March 20 to 24, marks the company's ninth time on the most prestigious stage in contemporary dance.

"It's pretty remarkable and unique for any company based outside of New York," Aspen Santa Fe executive director Jean-Philippe Malaty said of the company's regular appearances at the Joyce over the past 18 years.



Alexander Ekman's "Tuplet."

Though the company has dual homes in Aspen and Santa Fe, New York is key to its artistic and financial success. "It is the world capital of dance,"

Malaty said. "It's where we recruit a lot of our dancers and it's where many of our patrons have their primary residences." Performing at the Joyce also draws the

eyeballs of national dance presenters who book the company on tour, it's where many of the world's top choreographers are introduced to Aspen Santa Fe's unique ROSALIE O'CONNOR/COURTESY PHOTO

style and it's where some of the company's major founders - like the Shubert Foundation - check in with its progress. Artistic director Tom Mossbrucker will

BALLET, B8



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BALLET From page B7

also teach master classes at the Juilliard School while the company is in the city, scouting for future talent. "It's an important week for us," Malaty explained.

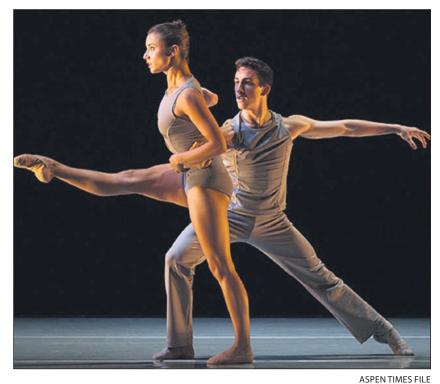
The New York run comes after regional stops in Scottsdale, Arizona, and Fort Collins and a one-night stand in Purchase, New York home to the esteemed dance conservatory of State University of New York at Purchase.

After a matinee at the Joyce on March 24, the company will board a plane to Tel Aviv for a tour of Israel that runs through early April and includes a four-day run in Tel Aviv, stops in Jerusalem and in Yagur, a kibbutz in northern Israel.

"Between New York and Tel Aviv, it's a major tour," Malaty said. "This tour is big for us on so many levels,"

Malaty noted that, in terms of placing the company on the international dance scene, the Israel shows are as important as the performances at the Joyce. The country is an epicenter of progressive 21st-century dance, epitomized in the work of Ohad Naharin (subject of the film "Mr. Gaga," which won the 2016 Best Documentary award at Aspen Filmfest; local dance audiences may remember Naharin's work from Hubbard Street Dance's performed here last summer).

While the tour is a boon to the company's international reputation and a key to its future, it's also an artistic challenge for its dancers. They're preparing a robust and diverse repertoire for this late winter



Fernando Melo's inventive multimedia production "Dream Play" is one of three works to be performed by Aspen Santa Fe Ballet on Saturday night.

and spring run. In addition to the three pieces they will perform this weekend in Aspen, the upcoming shows include performances of Jorma Elo's "Half/Cut/Split" with live accompaniment from pianist Joyce Yang, Cayetano Soto's "Huma Rojo," Alejandro Cerrudo's "Silent Ghost" and Nicolo Fante's "Where We Left Off."

To reinforce its ranks for the physically and artistically demanding tour, the 10-dancer company is bringing in a handful of Aspen Santa Fe alumni. Among them is Samantha Klanac Campanile, who retired in

IF YOU GO ...

What: Aspen Santa Fe Ballet Where: Aspen District Theatre When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m. How much: \$36 to \$94 Tickets: Wheeler Opera House box office; aspenshowtix.com **More info:** The program features Alexander Ekman's "Tuplet," Fernando Melo's "Dream Play" and Jorma Elo's "1st Flash."

2016 after 14 years with Aspen Santa Fe when she helped define the company's elegant athleticism and who is now the mother to a 19-month-old.

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