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## Best of 2006: DANCE

### 10 dance events that deserve the hype

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Advertising and publicity drive the entertainment business like a steam-roller, shaping opinions by flattening them into conformity.

For all the marketing fireworks and gossip that precede a premiere, however, the real test comes in the darkness of the theater, where each spectator in the quiet of his soul must judge the encounter by what it makes him think and feel.

Not all this year's hot tickets flamed and sparked as promised. Some were clearly overblown, like the Broadway dance-icals "Hot Feet" and "The Times They Are A-Changin,'" and wannabe sensations like Angel Rojas and Carlos Rodríguez, the bad boys of the Nuevo Ballet Español.

Other much ballyhooed productions were fine enough, but not extraordinary, like Mark Morris' "Sylvia" and his new "Mozart Dances." "PUSH," a heralded collaboration between the great ballerina Sylvie Guillem and choreographer Russell Maliphant, turned out to be lame. This was also the year when Boston Ballet's resident choreographer, Jorma Elo, swept the ballet world off its feet, only to leave people wondering why.

Arts promoters are quick to bestow laurels even before a premiere has taken place. Yet sometimes years must elapse before the true value of an artist's work becomes apparent. This was the case with the Silver Belles, the protagonists of Heather Lynn MacDonald's wonderful documentary "Been Rich All My Life." These elderly chorus girls of the Apollo Theater, once admired for their pretty legs, have at last been recognized for their artistry and fortitude.

Here are the Top 10 dance events for 2006, presented in the order of their opening dates:

The moving "Been Rich All My Life" makes its debut at the annual Dance on Camera Festival in New York. It enjoys an extended run at the Quad Cinema there, tours nationally and comes out on DVD. (Jan. 4)

"The Kings of Dance" showcases Johan Kobborg, Angel Corella, Ethan Stiefel and Nikolai Tsiskaridze, four of ballet's most appealing stars. This lovefest at New York City Center also thrills with Flemming Flindt's psychotic dance-drama "The Lesson," while Tsiskaridze's one-man "Carmen" is a theatrical tour-de-force. (Feb. 23)

The exceptional beauty of Christopher Wheeldon's "Evenfall" smiles through the tears of a melancholy Bartók score, receiving its premiere as part of New York City Ballet's Diamond Project. Spectacularly inventive and brilliantly plotted, this blend of classical and modern styles is a masterpiece, injecting new life into the classical school. (May 10)

American Ballet Theatre's spring season came packed with sensations. David Hallberg and Veronika Part gave an inspired rendition of "Apollo" on May 27, showing us Terpsichore's fresh beauty through Apollo's adoring eyes. Marcelo Gomes combined technical prowess with a nuanced and profound characterization of Albrecht in "Giselle" on June 13, while Diana Vishneva danced with a supernatural lightness and refinement, achieving a rare moment of transcendence in Giselle's second-act variation, on June 17.

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company presents "Another Evening: I Bow Down" at Rutgers' Mason Gross School of the Arts in New Brunswick. The choreographer literally casts out demons in this uplifting piece about faith, community and our response to catastrophe. (Sept. 19)

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange presents "Small Dances About Big Ideas: Choreographer's Commentary Version" at Dance New Amsterdam in Manhattan. The choreographer quietly engages us in a difficult subject. Recalling the late Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term "genocide," Lerman gently affirms that we can all be "up-standers," not "by-standers." (Oct. 6)

The Bayanihan Philippine National Dance Company begins a string of local appearances at the Stockton Performing Arts Center in Pomona. More than just a colorful potpourri, the program honors multiple legacies with a fascinating mix of European, Asian and indigenous influences. (Oct. 26)

**The New Jersey Tap Ensemble of Bloomfield offers a dazzling display of rhythm tap, combining old-time hoofing with the beauty of song in "The Duke Ellington Legacy and the Harlem Renaissance," an elaborate production at Kean University in Union. (Nov. 6)**

The magnetic dancer Roxane d'Orléans Juste has attained a peak of artistry in which finely tuned physical responses combine with intimate, dramatic awareness. She was unforgettable in "Dances for Isadora" and "Day on Earth," which the Limón Dance Company presented as part of its 60th anniversary season at the Joyce Theater. (Nov. 14)

Weighted and sinuous, moving her body with the slow but forceful elasticity of a python, and at other times exploding in a barrage of light and brilliant footwork, Eva Yerbabuena is a master of traditional flamenco. Her musicality in "Eva: A Cal y Canto" at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark was highlighted in an extraordinary rhythmic dialogue with the cajón player. (Nov. 26)