

Northbrook Symphony reunites with dancers

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By **DOROTHY ANDRIES** Contributing Columnist

Music inspired by dance is the theme of the Northbrook Symphony Orchestra concert Sunday. Under the baton of its music director Lawrence Rapchak, the orchestra will present four pieces, two of which will include a performance by the Leopold Dance Group.

The company, headed by Northbrook native Lizzie Leopold, danced with the NSO last season, and the audience response was so positive that Rapchak engaged them again.



Natalia Negrón and Aidan Feldman, members of Leopold Dance Group, will once again dance as part of the Northbrook Symphony Orchestra's concert Feb. 21. (Photos courtesy of Dan Merlo)

Seven dancers will appear in the first two works on the program. Three will dance to Corelli's Concerto Grosso in F, and four will dance to Saint-Saens Septet for Piano, Trumpet and Strings, which also features Patricia Lee on keyboard and Charles Finton on trumpet.

"I love working with Maestro Rapchak," said Leopold, who is studying for a master's degree in performance studies and dance theory at New York University. "He has so many wonderful new ideas."

For the Corelli, Leopold plans to use balloons to impart an upbeat spirit to the courtly dance, which was published in 1708. "I'm thinking of it as a cocktail party," she said. "We have limited space on the stage, so the balloons will add some fun."

Leopold envisioned a dance marathon as she choreographed the Saint- Saens. "It's pure movement, a lot with the arms," she explained. "It will just go on and on."

In addition to Leopold, dancers include Melissa Bloch, Alexandra Burley, Natalia Negron, Jordan Newmark, Alexander Springer, and Nicole Romano Uribarrio. Some are in New York and some in the Chicago area. "We've videotaped rehearsals and made them available online to the dancers back at home," Leopold said. "It's been really a great way to work. I came home at Christmas time and got things started and now the work is finished."

For the first time in the orchestra's 30 year history, the program will be played by strings only. "I've increased the septet in the Saint-Seans to a string orchestra," Rapchak said.

After intermission the orchestra will play "Summer Night, Pastorale Interludes for Strings" by 20th century Swiss composer Othmar Schoech, who died in 1957. "He wrote operas and songs, many for basses," the conductor said. "This is an enchanted piece, a tone poem that was written in 1945. The orchestra played it beautifully the very first time. In the second section the strings provide an accordion-effect, as if playing for a folk dance."

There is a very strong probability that the Northbrook Symphony is giving this 15-minute work its United States premiere. "According to the publisher, copies have never been sent to this country," Rapchak said, with obvious pride. "So I believe we have a premiere."

The afternoon concludes with one of the most beautiful pieces in the string repertoire, Grieg's Holberg Suite. "Everyone love that music," said Rapchak. "Everyone will be walking out smiling."

"Invitation to the Dance -- Encore!"

Northbrook Symphony Orchestra concert at 4 p.m. Feb. 21, Sheely Center for the Performing Arts at Glenbrook North High School, 2300 Shermer Road, Northbrook. \$23-\$45; \$7 child/student with ID. (847) 272-0755 or www.TheNSO.org