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National Ballet of Cuba to Make First Appearance in Capital Region as One of Four U.S. Locations

Saratoga Performing Arts Center to present three performances of Alicia Alonso's Giselle on June 6, 7 & 8

Saratoga Springs, NY – National Ballet of Cuba (BNC), internationally renowned as one of the premier ballet institutions in the world, will make its first appearance at Saratoga Performing Arts Center as one of just four U.S. locations on its tour, presented in partnership with Skidmore College. Known for its exuberant flair and historically informed style that are uniquely Cuban, BNC will perform three performances of Alicia Alonso's classic *Giselle* on June 6, 7 and 8.

National Ballet of Cuba was founded in 1948, by the legendary ballerina Alicia Alonso who – at the age of 97 – remains the Director of the company to this day. The Alicia Alonso National Ballet School, created in 1950, is attached to the professional company and is now the largest ballet academy in the world with more than 3,000 students. Alumni of the school perform in leading companies around the world. BNC's tour will be the company's 11th tour in U.S. cities with the last one taking place in 2015.

Alicia Alonso is one of the most important personalities in the history of dance and is renowned as a leading figure of classical ballet. Alonso's deeply humanistic interpretation of *Giselle* is considered the epitome of the romantic ballet tradition and the most iconic part of Alonso's artistic career. Taking a French masterpiece based on a German poem, once best known through Russian interpretations, Alonso's spectacularly re-created *Giselle* now defines the classic work. Her version earned her the Grand Prix de la Ville de Paris in 1966, and was incorporated into the repertoire of the Paris Opera Ballet in 1972.

Based on a fairy tale about a peasant girl who falls in love with a dashing prince disguised as a commoner, *Giselle* follows its heroine through a haunting story of betrayal, heartbreak, forgiveness and redemption. The title role of *Giselle* has been called "the ballerina's Hamlet" and is regarded as one of the most difficult in ballet due to the intensely dramatic nature of the role as well as the physical stamina required to dance the lead throughout the full-length production.

"It is no accident that the Paris Opera Ballet sent its ballet masters to Havana to learn from the Cubans," says Octavio Roca, author of the book *Cuban Ballet*. "The Alonso staging of *Giselle* is one of the most thrilling and moving dance

spectacles before the public today: note-complete, dramatically astute and emotionally true, an ideal vehicle for some of the world's greatest dancers. No one who loves dance can afford to miss this *Giselle*."

"I first visited Cuba in 1999 and was profoundly moved," said Elizabeth Sobol, president & CEO of SPAC. "The passion and dedication of the artists -- despite tremendous adversity and deprivation is unparalleled, and the high regard in which the country holds its National Ballet of Cuba and dance is unlike anything I have ever seen. Bringing Cuba to Saratoga represents the power of art and performance to transcend politics, economics, and social strife."

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Saratoga Performing Arts Center

The Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC), located in the historic resort town of Saratoga Springs in upstate New York, is one of America's most prestigious summer festivals. Its tranquil setting in a 2,400-acre park preserve surrounded by hiking trails, geysers, and natural mineral springs draws vacation crowds and arts connoisseurs each year for immersive experiences of performances by resident companies New York City Ballet, The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Freihofers Saratoga Jazz Festival, Opera Saratoga, and concerts by Live Nation. SPAC also hosts the annual Saratoga Wine and Food Festival in addition to imaginative programming such as the popular "SPAC on Stage" series and Caffè Lena @ SPAC.

SPAC is a 501c3 charitable organization. Donations and proceeds from fundraising events benefit the Center's children's education programs and support the vibrancy of its classical season. For more information visit spac.org.