

MIFA Victory Theatre in Holyoke, Vermont Performance Lab to showcase Thierry Thieû Niang's 'du Printemps'

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on May 05, 2014 at 12:00 PM, updated May 05, 2014 at 12:11 PM

The Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts has greater dance plans in the offing for Holyoke this month.

On the heels of their production of David Wampach's "Tour," MIFA is about to begin another French collaboration, this time with groundbreaking dancer and choreographer Thierry Thieû Niang, and Vermont Performance Lab.

The piece that their collaborative efforts will make possible, "du Printemps (A Time of Spring)" will be performed in both Holyoke and Marlboro, Vt., but that's not the only reason MIFA Executive Artistic Director Donald T. Sanders calls it "a tale of two cities."

Niang, brought to Holyoke directly from New York City's 2014 "Danse: A French-American Festival of Performance," will cast his dancers for the three-week workshop/ residency and two public performances right from the Holyoke and Marlboro areas. The casting call in Holyoke will take place on Tuesday May 13, between 10 a.m. and noon, and between 2 and 4pm, at the Holyoke Senior Center.

No dance experience is required to audition for the piece, but there is one requirement: one of the beautifully unique aspects of "du Printemps" is that 24 of Niang's dancers (12 from the Holyoke area and 12 from Vermont) will be men and women between the ages of 60 and 90. Together, under the direction of Niang, they will stage a powerful reimagining of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring."

Niang sees dance as a combination of form and meaning, and an opportunity to experiment with thoughts in progress and bodies living in the present. In his choreography he explores the relationship between the narrative and the abstract, individuals and groups and amateurs and professionals. His work, which focuses on what he calls "a poetics of togetherness in collaboration", has been seen in a wide variety of venues, from public studios and theaters to schools, hospitals and even prisons. Over his career he has collaborated with both trained professionals in the fields of art, music, acting and dance, and entirely inexperienced performer coming to the stage for the first time.

With Niang at the helm, this collaborative co-presentation by MIFA Victory Theatre and Vermont Performance lab is sure to be a dance experience unlike any other.

Performances of "du Printemps" will take place on Wednesday, May 28 at 7 p.m. at the Serkin Center at Marlboro College, and on Friday, May 30 at The Hub at Gateway City Arts in Holyoke. These performances were made possible with funding support from the National Endowment for the Arts, FUSED: French-U.S. Exchange in Dance, a program of the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States in partnership with FACE French American Cultural Exchange and Institut Français.