Modern dance film opens Wistariahurst’s spring season

Dance film shot on location at museum

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An event today in Holyoke is also quite a tongue-twister: Wendy Woodson’s “Wayfarer” at the Wistariahurst Museum.

And if you need another “W,” there will also be wine.

The early evening presentation will feature the film “Wayfarer,” an art exhibit, and an announcement of other upcoming Holyoke events. The evening is being produced by Wistariahurst in conjunction with the Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts (MIFA).

Woodson, artistic director and professor of theater and dance at Amherst College, worked in collaboration with Israeli choreographer Idan Cohen and dancer Noa Shiloh to produce “Wayfarer.” The film was shot on location at Wistariahurst Museum, with the dance performance featuring “Songs of Wayfarer” by Gustav Mahler. Woodson will be present for a Q & A session following the short film.

Woodson and Don Sanders, MIFA Executive Artistic Director, will talk about modern dance and set the stage for MIFA’s two upcoming major spring dance offerings.

Sanders described the film. “It’s a very poetic and absorbing adventure film for one woman, the dancer, who seems to travel through a kind of psychic territory like a human bird displaced from her nest,” he said. “Wistariahurst provides a perfect nostalgic and evocative locale that beautifully echoes the mysteriousness of the movement. Like most modern dance, the film helps us enter a world we’ve never seen before and in which we make our own associations and emotion connections. It’s a relief from the ordinary.”

The event will also highlight Deborah Baronas’ exhibition “Into the Shade/Work and Culture.” Baronas combines art and history, capturing the lives of 19th century textile mill workers, domestic servants and tobacco farm field hands via hand stenciled transparent scrims, paintings, artifacts, and video.

A third aspect of the evening will be the announcement of upcoming MIFA and Wistariahurst events. Wistariahurst will be previewing its spring lineup, which includes: The exhibition “A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era,” Wistariahurst Gardeners’ Annual Plant Sale on May 17, and the June 6 “Gala in the Gardens at Wistariahurst.”

MIFA will announce two dance performances from France: “TOUR” by David Wampach on May 2 and “du Printemps” by Thierry Niang on May 30.

“It’s always a wonderful development for Holyoke and Wistariahurst to be hosting this kind of first rate work making art welcome and accessible,” Sanders said. “Woodson is a noted performance artist in the Five College Dance community and is setting the stage for the arrival of international artists like Wampach and Niang into our city.”

The event will run from 5 to 7 p.m. There will be a cash bar and light refreshments. The event is free, but donations are appreciated.