



An Artistic

Treat your palate to the sensory stimulation of NCI Discovery when the National Choreographers Initiative returns to Irvine Barclay Theatre this month, dishing up its temptingly diverse quartet of fresh-from-the-oven dance works for a one night only showing.

NCI's highly successful debut at the Barclay last July led to its reprise this year, with Director Molly Lynch hand-picking four choreographers – all internationally known – to test out their ideas during a three-week rehearsal period in the dance studios at the University of California, Irvine. At the end of the three weeks, each choreographer will present a new piece at a workshop showing at the Barclay, offering their Orange County audience the chance to not only preview never before seen dances, but to participate in a question and answer dialogue, moderated by Lynch.

The excitement comes in the mix: Will there be classical or contemporary ballet, modern, jazz, or a melting pot of styles and energy? With a pool of 15 professional dancers, culled from companies across the United States (including one from the touring company of *Evita*), all with the freedom to explore their own movement and musical styles, almost anything can – and does – go. Thus the choreographers – Italian-born producer and stage designer Luca Veggetti, New York City Ballet alumnus, director and playwright Christopher d'Amboise, dancer/choreographer William Soleau and San Francisco Ballet's Val Caniparoli – dancers and audience are all offered a unique artistic experience that ultimately enriches all who participate.

"NCI gives choreographers the opportunity to develop new works that will hopefully go on to a new life and be produced by companies around the country," says Lynch, mentioning choreographer Lynne Taylor-Corbett's successful transition from last year's *Appalachian Stories*. Taylor-Corbett was able to develop her ideas for the work, which was a commission from Carolina Ballet, during her tenure at the inaugural NCI. She was then able to go on and expand the piece, which received its premiere with Carolina Ballet earlier this year. Impressed with one of the company's dancers, Taylor-Corbett recommended she audition for this year's NCI. She did, and she made it in.

"I think it's great to see how this is affecting and contributing to the larger dance community beyond these performances in Orange County. The use of "national" in the title was the right thing to do – the idea was to branch out and make it more of a national project." Lynch enthuses: "It's really about that interconnectedness between the choreographers, dancers and companies around the United States. I look at the arts as reflective of our times, and as new works are created, they help to strengthen the ballet world. Tradition is important from a historic aspect, but in order to keep the art form alive and vibrant we need to keep moving forward, and workshops like the National Choreographers Initiative achieve that."

NCI Discovery at Irvine Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Drive, Irvine on Saturday, July 23 at 8 p.m. Tickets \$28 and \$22. To purchase, call The Barclay Box Office at (949) 854-4646 or go to www.thebarclay.org. For information on the National Choreographers Initiative go to www.nchoreographers.org.

–PAM DIAMOND