

Experience film and dance: Kinodance Company will perform 'Denizen' Friday at Connecticut College

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Firm in the belief contemporary dance benefits from an integrated artistic approach, the Boston-based company Kinodance merges film, dance, music, visual arts, song and lighting to create its work — “Denizen.” The performance will come Friday to Palmer Auditorium at Connecticut College in New London.

Inspired by two Armenian filmmakers, Sergey Parajanov and Artavazd Peleshian, filmmaker Alla Kovgan and choreographer Alissa Cardone teamed with visual artist Dedalus Wainwright. They created a kinetic expression that explored the mythological and ritual legacy of the Armenian countryside, where they traveled.

“We were grappling ourselves in where we come from and our relationship to the land,” Cardone said. “In America there is no strong connection to the land. In Peleshian’s film you see images of people working the land in a way that is unfamiliar — almost exotic.”

“Denizen,” Cardone said, is similar to an avant-garde travelogue. The artists traveled the Armenian countryside, met with shepherds and visited churches in the mountains that were so old they had once been pagan temples. Armenia, Kovgan said, claims to be the first country to embrace Christianity.

The dance itself is comprised of seven dancers and one Armenian singer, operatic soprano Nouné Karapetian. She portrays the mythical goddess Anahit, the mother of wisdom, the goddess of fertility and the warrior goddess.

Armenian folk dance, taught to the company in Boston, was also integrated into the performance. Cardone, who choreographed and dances in the piece, said the work is “very physical and athletic. It has high energy and flow and is image based, which helps create an atmosphere — a mood, or quality or state.”

Anahit

The figure of Anahit is threaded throughout the work, wearing a long, beautiful blue velvet dress embroidered in gold trim.

“It was important to involve her,” Cardone said. “It grounded the piece more in Armenian culture.”

The dance is structured to evoke a cycle of poetic haikus. Each scene suggests familiar life experiences — war, birth, marriage, death, celebrations, traveling — and are more emotive than narrative.

“I think the piece is very soulful and very emotional,” Cardone said. “It takes you on an emotional ride where sometimes it’s meditative or thought provoking, sometimes nostalgic. It also builds an incredible amount of tension. Sometimes it’s incredibly joyous — we have a section called folk dance, and it has the ecstatic feeling you can get at a party.”

Film, Kovgan said, brings another dimension to the dance. Kovgan shot footage of the dancers in the Northern Lori region, capturing the same light and mood of Parajanov and Artavazd. Those images will be blended with the performance onstage.

Through what they have dubbed “choreography of elements,” Kinodance creates a unique quality for audiences, Kovgan said.

“We were trying to make this integration seamless ... it’s about trying to create an immersive experience. You don’t have to separate things, or tell a story or a fable about something.”

The dance will be preceded by the film “New London Calling.” It is an unscripted movement film that chronicles the young performers taking over the city of New London. They play unsupervised street games and create rites and rituals.

Their performance creates a sense of hope for the future, but also a longing for a glorious past. The film features 75 students from New London’s Dual Language Arts Academy, and was part of Connecticut College’s Dayton Artist-in-Residence Program.

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