

HEARTFELT PERFORMANCES

The skills of Pacific Dance Ensemble members, both past and present, will be on full display this weekend — with two very different shows at the Newport Performing Arts Center.

On Friday, Feb. 7, and Sunday, Feb. 9, Pacific Dance Ensemble (PDE) students, teachers and alumni will present their 34th annual free Valentine's celebration, "Dances from the Heart: A Showcase of Original Choreography."

And on Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 8 and 9, international cabaret sensation and PDE alumni Amelia Zirin-Brown, aka: Rizo, will perform her latest show, featuring original songs including covers of hits by Prince, David Bowie and Beyoncé (see sidebar).

This year's "Dances from the Heart" will feature choreography by PDE alumni Cecily Wechter, Kurt Danna, Anabel Tucker, Zephyr Kreis-Stokes as well as Artistic Director Nancy Mittleman and PDE members Erika Sugrue, Leela Kreis-Stokes, Madyson Fortmeyer and Maria Barten.

Cecily Wechter is an internationally based choreographer, launching her career in contemporary dance near Reykjavik, Iceland. After leaving Newport, Wechter went on to study and graduate from the School of Music and Dance at the University of Oregon. She is an alumni of the UO Repertory Dance Company and Lane Dance Company. She is currently teaches modern dance including an exploration into the Gaga movement style, a movement language developed by Ohad Naharin, choreographer and artistic director of the internationally acclaimed Israeli dance group, Batsheva Dance Company. Wechter has been a guest teacher for Mittleman's summer dance intensives for the past three years and is currently teaching modern dance for Mittleman's older students.

Kurt Danna studied at Newport School of Artistic Movement and danced with PDE for 10 years before going on to study design management, music and art at the Art Institute of Portland. For Danna, the arts have become one integrated form as he continues to choreograph and compose as well as designing costumes and masks.

The pair are just two of the many PDE dancers who have gone on to study and



"Dances From the Heart"

perform in such places as Juilliard in New York City, San Diego Dance Theater, The Laban School in London and many more.

"Dances from the Heart" will be performed at 7 pm on Friday, Feb. 7, and 2 pm on Sunday, Feb. 9, at the Newport Performing Arts Center, 777 W. Olive Street.

In addition to a showcase of new choreography, Friday's event will include light refreshments from Clearwater Restaurant and a silent auction featuring items donated by local and regional artists and businesses.

Proceeds from the auction will help PDE students attend shows by world-renowned dance companies, take part in exchange programs with other dance groups and benefit from guest artists visiting the Oregon Coast.

on the cover

Losing the Lady

Pacific Dance Ensemble's most celebrated alumna, Amelia Zirin-Brown, used to be known as her alter-ego, Lady Rizo. But, much like a certain Duke and Duchess, Zirin-Brown has shed her noble title and will take to the stage this weekend as simply Rizo, for a show titled "Losing the Lady."

"Losing the Lady" seductively peels back the layers of Rizo's alter-ego, exploring the delight and trappings of the shadow self through her own songs along with hits from Beyoncé, David Bowie and Prince.

Based in New York City, this performance artist, comedienne, singer, composer and actor received rave reviews three years in a row at the Assembly Festival in Edinburgh. She won the inaugural Time Out London and Soho Theatre Award and earned the 2013 London Cabaret Award. She is a Grammy winner for a 2010 collaboration with Yo-Yo Ma on the holiday album "Songs of Joy and Peace."

The New York Times once referred to her as "a formidable belter who can sustain phrases and notes even when sprawled on her back on a piano and scissoring her legs."

The Feb. 8 and 9 shows start at 7:30 pm at the Newport Performing Arts Center, 777 W Olive Street. Tickets, \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door, are available by calling 541-265-ARTS or at www.coastarts.org.



SHERVIN LAINEZ
Rizo