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Cuban dance company Malpaso returns with new work

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Jackson is getting a taste of Havana this week.

For the second time this year, Dancers' Workshop is hosting Cuba's premier contemporary dance troupe, Malpaso Dance Company, for a week of festivities surrounding the nonprofit's annual gala Thursday.

Malpaso was last in Jackson in the spring for a residency during which it worked with the esteemed Canadian choreographer Aszure Barton on a new piece. While the new work is in process, Malpaso performed the first piece the group created with Barton, "Indomitable Waltz," during the gala. They will perform it again at an additional performance Saturday.

Outside of the performances, Dancers' Workshop is throwing a Cuban fiesta on Friday, complete with food trucks, a salsa band and dance demos to celebrate the Cuban dancers' arrival. The event is free and family friendly — don't forget to pack your picnic blankets and dancing shoes.

"It's an event to really draw a celebratory atmosphere around them coming here from Cuba," Case said.

Dancers' Workshop Artistic and Executive Director Babs Case has wanted to bring Malpaso to Jackson for years. She first heard about them by following Barton, who has worked with some of the biggest names in dance, including Mikhail Baryshnikov.

With a visit to Cuba under her belt, she was intrigued by the dance company that has been taking international stages by storm. After seeing them in New York a few years ago, she knew she wanted to share their talents with the Jackson community.

“They’re highly technical dancers, which I think comes from their strong ballet tradition,” she said. “But they’re this strange combination of highly technical with raw emotion.”

The emotion infused in “Indomitable Waltz” makes it one of her favorite pieces of choreography right now.

“It’s beautiful, sensual, and there’s lots of emotion in it,” she said. “It’s just a beautiful dance.”

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