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Fashion and art for 'The Art of Dance' fundraiser for Malashock Dance School

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Malashock Dance and the Malashock Dance School will kick off its annual fundraising event, "The Art of Dance" on Saturday, May 13 at San Diego's Abbey on Fifth.

Benefitting the school's artistic educational outreach and scholarship programs, the iconic dance company, along with its junior counterpart, will mingle fashion, art and dance with a paddle auction. Dance vignettes, described as art inspired, will sidle live painting by Amy Burkham. Company members will also model Avant Garde

clothing designed by acclaimed fashion designer, Zandra Rhodes.

"I'm excited to showcase our collaborative side with elements of dance, art and fashion at this event," said artistic director John Malashock, "The Art of Dance will be a fun opportunity for the public to learn and support the work we do in an intimate setting."

Founded in 2007 as an additional tier of the dance company, the dance school provides scholarships and educational programs for under-served communities, low-income families, individuals with disabilities, and those simply "inspired to move."

"The Malashock Dance School creates partnerships and programs that enhance the emotional, physical, and artistic development of thousands of children in our community," said executive director Molly Puryear. "We empower children through movement and create great dancers and extraordinary people in the process."

According to Puryear, the school has partnered with 25 schools and institutions, "dancing" with 40,000 San Diego students since its inception. Programs serve low-income families and those with disabilities who lack access to free or low-cost arts programming. Instruction sidesteps socio-economic barriers and school budget cuts while filling the void of private dance studios in low income areas.

"Malashock dance works closely with public, private and charter school districts," she said. "Although all schools are required to offer art programs, budget cuts sometimes delete the proper staff. That's where we come in as a non-profit and say, 'Hey we'll write a grant and fundraise to support our involvement.' If the school says 'Yes,' we're on board. A contract is written and we expose the entire student body – most often kindergarten through eighth grade – to the arts."

Puryear added that the Liberty Station-based school connects dance with more

than 4,000 students every year to reach beyond classroom academia.

“Our life-changing scholarships and educational outreach programs help students focus, collaborate and problem-solve,” she said.

“Including those identified as at risk. We save students by dance. We help to increase test scores, school attendance and student/parent involvement. And we’re the only dance organization in San Diego that provides classes for students with cognitive disabilities. The Art of Dance will insure that we not only continue, but that we expand our outreach programs to other schools.

“The gala fundraiser is going to be a fun party,” she continued. “Malashock’s a cool vibrant, cultural organization, and this is going to be an exciting, fun and unique event, not seen anywhere in San Diego. The Art of Dance will intersect the high caliber of fashion, dance and art. Honorary chair and internationally acclaimed fashion designer and artist, Dame Zandra Rhodes, will lend her chic aesthetic to the evening alongside event chair Patricia O’Connor, Malashock Dance Board member and art and fashion specialist.”

Puryear described her role as executive director as her passion. “We’re the crux for integrating arts education into the role of expanding the arts,” she said. “We’re a professional contemporary dance school that sprinkles outreach residency and dance programs throughout the community. We give kids skills that translate into success in all areas of their lives. For the performing arts to survive, we need to cultivate seeds of interest and access at a young age.”

La Jolla born and bred John Malashock, a former principal dancer for Twyla Tharp’s New York Dance Company, founded Malashock dance in 1988. The undisputed talent performed globally while appearing in the Academy Award-winning film “Amadeus,” television specials and concerts with Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Celebrating its 29th season, Malashock tours nationally and internationally when not performing in San Diego. Touting a track record that includes original productions, workshops, art festivals, and dance films Malashock has also participated in the Emmy Award winning productions, “The Soul of Saturday Night,” “Love & Murder” and “The Floating World.”

Impressive collaborations also include the San Diego Opera, San Diego Symphony, KPBS-TV, Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Music Society, the Mainly Mozart Festival, Old Globe Theatre, Art of Élan and the La Jolla Playhouse.

Malashock and Puryear collectively built the dance school to give back to the community they love. Puryear also noted that both the Malashock Dance Company and School were the first Liberty Station tenants. Liberty Station Arts District has since “created a unique model of a collaborative dance building.” In addition to serving as the home for Malashock Dance, The Dorothea Laub Dance Place now houses the San Diego Dance Theatre, San Diego Ballet, and Neisha’s Dance & Music Academy.