Afro-Cuban dance, music for novice and ardent lover alike

Michele Miller, Times Staff Writer
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TARPON SPRINGS

Whether you’re an accomplished dancer yearning for direction from the masters, a novice wanting to give it a try or a dance lover content to take it in from a seat in the audience, you might want to take your pick from a weekend of contemporary dance offerings.

For the second year Tarpon Springs Cultural Treasure is hosting a three-day dance immersion program Oct. 11-13 conducted by members of the internationally acclaimed contemporary dance company River North Dance Chicago.

The events are funded in part by a South Arts Dance Touring Initiative residency grant and centered on a new dance production called Havana Blue that debuted in April in Chicago.

The show is a cultural blending of Afro-Cuban music and dance, and is a collaborative effort between the dance company’s artistic director and choreographer, Frank Chaves, who was inspired by a recent trip to his birthplace in Cuba, and Chicago Jazz Philharmonic director Orbert Davis, who created the original score for the production.

"Havana Blue captures so many elements of energy of the culture of modern dance and the incredible beat of Afro-Cuban music," said Kathleen Monahan, director of Cultural and Civics Service/Cultural Treasures for Tarpon Springs. "They are a totally accessible kind of dance company — whether you’re a novice or not. People have this image of seeing contemporary dance and don’t understand it. This is a dance company that everyone will love."

Lunch & Learn: 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Oct. 11 at Heritage Museum, 100 Beekman Lane, Tarpon Springs. "Cuban Roots," with River Dance. $15, $12 members & students. Limited Seating. Ticket includes talk, catered box lunch and soft drink. Call the box office in advance if you have special dietary needs.

"Havana Blue" preformance talk, 7 p.m. Oct. 11 at the Challenge of Modern Art Gallery, Leeps-Rattner Museum of Art, 600 Klosterman Road, Tarpon Springs. Free with museum admission.

Master Class for Dancers, 10 a.m. Oct. 12, Performing Arts Center, 324 Pine St. Master classes taught by River North Dance company members. $10.
Dance for Non-Dancers, 5 p.m. Oct. 12 at Tarpon Springs Performing Arts Center, 324 Pine St. River North Dance company dancers teach movement tailored for those who don't have a dance background but would like to experience a dance class. $10

River North Dance Chicago Repertory Performance of Havana Blue, 3 p.m. Oct. 13 at Tarpon Springs Performing Arts Center, 324 Pine St. $30, $28 members and students.

For tickets or information, call the box office at (727) 942-5605. Hours are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Tickets may also be purchased online at www.tarponarts.org.

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