

Trocks leap onto Peace Center stage

All-male comic ballet company to display its many fine pointes

By Paul Hyde
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Men in tutus? Dancing on pointe? It can mean only one thing: The Trocks are in town.

The all-male comic ballet troupe leaps onto the Peace Center stage at 8 p.m. Saturday.

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, affectionately known to its fans simply as the Trocks, will feature some of its most popular pieces, including "Swan Lake, Act II."

"Generally when we come to a place we haven't visited in a long time, we do 'Swan Lake,'" says artistic director Tory Dobrin, speaking on the phone from

YOU CAN GO

What: Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo
When: 8 p.m. Saturday
Where: Peace Center Concert Hall
Tickets: \$5 to \$35
Information: 864-467-3000 or www.peacecenter.org

New York City, where the company is based. "Swan Lake" is one of the most famous ballets in the world. Everybody's familiar with the music."

Also featured will be another Trocks classic, "The Dying Swan," danced in a flurry of molting feathers to the music of Saint-Saens.

The troupe will touch on modern choreography in "Patterns in Space," a parody of dance innovator Merce Cunningham and his music collaborator John Cage.

Much of the ballet company's humor comes from the idea that "a big, brawny guy trying to be a dainty ballerina is funny," Dobrin says.

Each of the 14 drag dancers in the troupe has a humorous stage name, such as Lariska Dumbchenko, Svetlana Lofatkina (the "Chernobyl Cherub") and Ida Nevasayneva.

The Trocks, an international presence since 1974, are known particularly for their parodies, but in perform-

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mances the group also mixes in a little male balletic dazzle.

For the uninitiated, artistic director Tory Dobrin compares the company to the sitcom "I Love Lucy."

"Lucy has moments that are super campy and ridiculous, but she also has moments that are completely serious — every-

day conversation between her and Ricky — but it's all set up to bring forth the comedy," Dobrin says.

He adds: "We take what we do seriously, even as we're trying to make people laugh."

The Trocks have a repertoire of about 50 works, which the troupe varies from performance to performance.

The constantly touring Trocks enjoy international renown, with more than 130 worldwide performances a year.

The company's 2012 schedule is typical: a U.S. tour in January and February, followed by Italy in March, South America in April, Asia in May, back to Europe in summer and Australia in the fall.

The company stays still only during its three-week engagement at New York's Joyce Theater every two years.

The Trocks enjoy a particularly large following in Japan, touring that country for several weeks every year.

What's to account for the appeal in Japan?

"They have a really wacky sense of humor," Dobrin says. "They also have a tradition of Kabuki theater, with men playing women's roles."

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo is appearing at the Peace Center as a part of the "Place for Everyone" series, which offers tickets at half the usual prices.

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