

Vail Dance Festival

Dancer Damian Woetzel has set himself up for what he calls a “superinteresting second act.” After 19 years as a principal with the New York City Ballet—during which he earned a master’s in public administration from Harvard’s Kennedy School—he is now the artistic director of the Vail International Dance Festival. Sarah Smith caught up with him between his travels to talk about this year’s program, which runs from July 27 to August 11 (vaildance.org).

What makes this festival special?

To begin with, the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater’s Rocky Mountain backdrop and the intimacy of the Vilar Performing Arts Center. We will also debut new work from Christopher Wheeldon’s company, Morphoses. And on August 4 every seat in the house is \$20.09, with seats on the grass for only \$9.

And this year’s must-sees?

Tap genius Savion Glover, a celebration of Wendy Whelan, and the Miami City Ballet under the direction of Edward Villella.

Where do the dancers hang out?

After the show, it’s often the Blue Moose in Beaver Creek. But the Vail Chophouse in the Arrabelle hotel is also a big hit. Last year I sent flamenco dancer Soledad Barrio there for a steak before her performance—she loved it.

Any other local favorites?

The white-truffle Parmesan fries and duck with foie gras ravioli at Sweet Basil.

Is the altitude in Vail ever a problem?

Not really, but we do have oxygen available offstage. Just in case. ■





"It was truly magical," says Woetzel of a 2008 performance by composer Philip Glass and Pacific Northwest Ballet's Sokvannara Sar.