

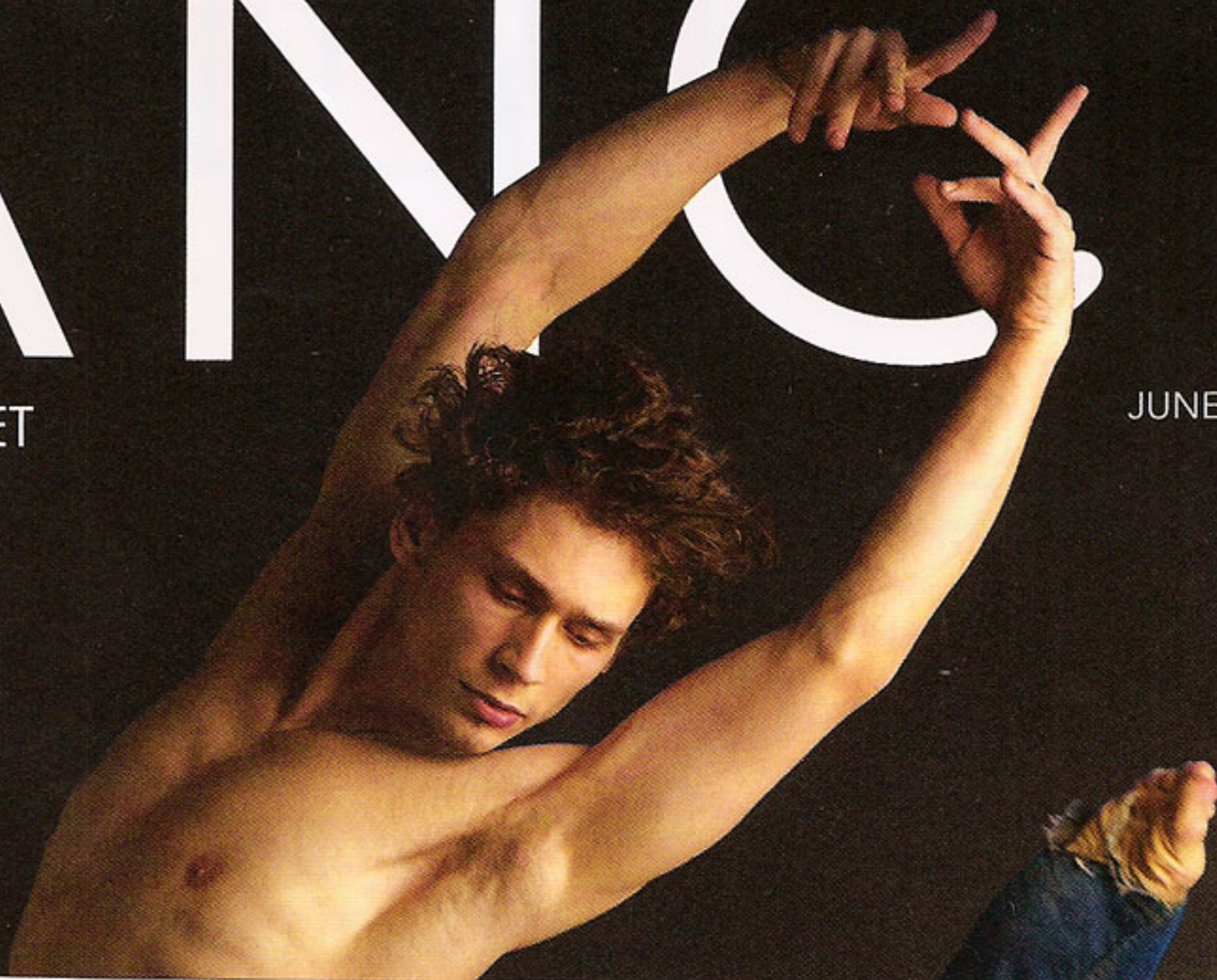
MAGAZINE

DANCE

THE WORLD AT YOUR FEET

JUNE 2009

IVAN VASILIEV



The Next Great Vasiliev

Among the dancers on board for this tour will be **Ivan Vasiliev**, who is something of a throwback to the old days of spectacularly heroic Bolshoi men. He stopped the show at last year's Youth American Grand Prix gala in New York, and he wowed Kennedy Center audiences as Basilio in the Bolshoi's *Don Quixote* in 2007. At 21, Vasiliev is younger and less polished than most of the Bolshoi's current stars. But his gasp-inducing jumps and turns do not eclipse his sense of artistry.

Vasiliev did not come up through the Bolshoi School. He studied at the State Choreographic School in Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine) and finished training in Minsk, Belarus, at the State Choreographic College. He won the Moscow ballet competition in 2005, earned the Grand Prix in Varna in 2006, and was named a *Dance Magazine* "25 to Watch" in 2007. He joined the Bolshoi in 2006 under the direction of Alexei Ratmansky.

Although Vasiliev dazzles as Basilio in *Don Quixote*, Grigorovich's *Spartacus* has provided his favorite role to date. Vasiliev prepared for a whole year for dancing the hero of a slave uprising in Roman times. "Technically it's difficult," he says, "but I would like to show that Spartacus also has

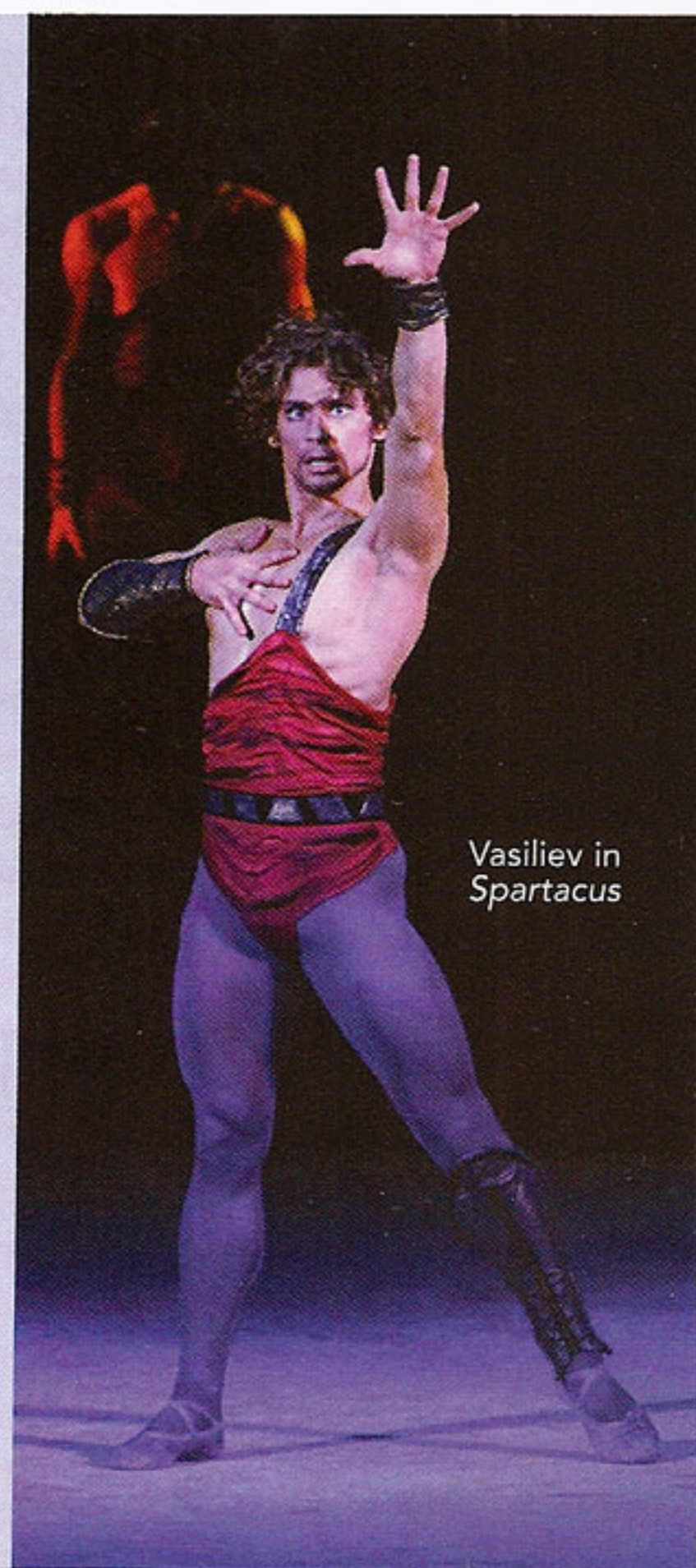
a strong spirituality. I bring everything I feel to this role." In last year's debut, he was so successful that Vladimir Vasiliev, the great dancer who originated the role (no relation to Ivan), came to the stage and embraced him.

Vasiliev appreciates the personal attention he's gotten from Ratmansky. "Alexei is a very emotional and creative person. If I wanted to dance a particular role, and he believed I could do it, he would give me a chance—even if everybody around said no. He used to say, 'If everything will be good and you will be successful, we will be happy. If not, we will cry and go ahead anyway.'" He also felt Ratmansky struck the right balance between classical and contemporary.

With the new director, Burlaka, Vasiliev has a wait-and-see attitude. "I love classical ballet, but there must be a balance. The Bolshoi should not live only in the past. Life is continuous and ballet is continuous. We have to move ahead, or else the Bolshoi will become like a big trunk in the attic."

Of course, if the ballets do occasionally get musty, it's up to dancers like Vasiliev to bring vivid and heart-pounding life to them.

—N.A. and J.L.



Vasiliev in
Spartacus