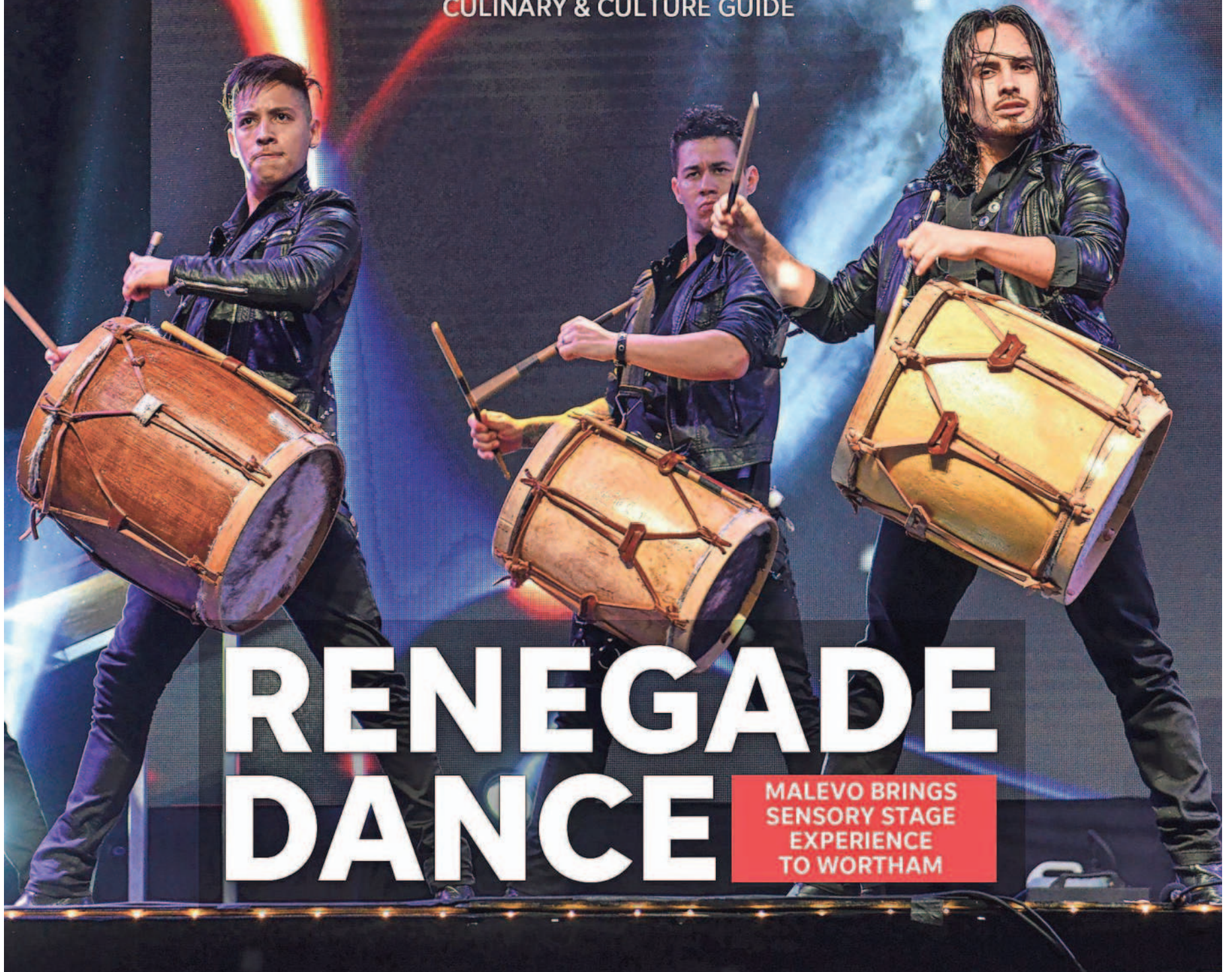


scene

CULINARY & CULTURE GUIDE



RENEGADE DANCE

MALEVO BRINGS
SENSORY STAGE
EXPERIENCE
TO WORTHAM

MALEVO

*brings high-energy
renegade dance to
Wortham stage*



COVER STORY

Hayley Benton Special to Scene

In the grassy plains of Argentina's Pampas, where flat, fertile earth stretches to the horizon, the gauchos of legend herd cattle by day — racing through the underbrush on horseback, swinging boleadoras overhead in pursuit of a runaway bull — and at night, they dance Malevo beneath the stars. • This traditional Argentinian folk dance is a battle-like competition of virility and skill, where gauchos stomp in turn to a fast-paced beat, their spurs clicking as each heavy boot hits the dirt. • Malevo, however, does not perform the Malambo of 19th century prairies. Instead, the Argentina-based company, whose name roughly translates to renegade or outlaw, has catapulted the traditional dance to heart-pounding new heights, transforming a cowboy's cultural step into a high-energy sensory stage experience.

Malevo's artistic director, Matias Jaime, had always been attracted to the artform "for its power and speed," he said. In fact, he even studied Malambo in its original, folkloric form. But, he explained, "I always felt that the traditional form was only the beginning of what could be possible. I wanted to modernize it and keep it relevant in today's culture, pulling influences from other artforms and (thinking beyond) a single dancer, a guitar and a drum." (Jaime's interview responses have been translated from Spanish.)

The Malambo of tradition, he continued, "was a somewhat static — yet very powerful — dance-off between two dancers. Gauchos used to have these duels at trading posts while working in the Pampas on horseback for long periods of time. It was their way of expressing themselves through competitive dance and musical rhythms. It was not really intended for the stage or a public performance."

In Malevo's Malambo, though, the all-male troupe of dancers has traded the gauchos' signature wide-legged look for a tighter, more form-fitting, all-black ensemble — their leather biker-style jackets framing fitted black dress shirts, top buttons left undone. The troupe itself is larger and more complex than its predecessor, with a stage full of multitalented dancers doubling as

IF YOU GO

What: Malevo

When: 8 p.m. March 3 & 4

Where: Wortham Center for the Performing Arts, 18 Biltmore Ave., downtown Asheville Tickets: \$20-\$58 at worthamarts.org; Master Class \$15

musicians and percussionists throughout the performance. And instead of stomping to surroundings of pastureland, Malevo dances to a backdrop of mesmerizing lights, psychedelic scenes and projected pyrotechnics.

Ultimately, Jaime said he aims "to create a show with a lot of texture to tickle the senses." Though he's quick to say: "I don't want to be misinterpreted: The traditional folkloric form of Malambo is one of the most important cultural patrimonies of Argentina — it is where we all started — but I'm fascinated with building on that, taking the artform into the future and pushing it to its limits." And though the elements may be amplified, at their core, they remain the same: It's all zapateo (or percussive footwork), drums, music and swinging boleadoras.

See MALEVO, Page 10

Malevo brings the plains of contemporary Argentina to downtown Asheville for two evenings of performances at the Wortham Center for the Performing Arts, at 8 p.m. on both March 3 and 4. PROVIDED/FABIAN USET

Malevo

Continued from Page 6

oras.

In 2016, the company gained a global audience when Malevo reached the semifinals of the hit TV show “America’s Got Talent” — an experience Jaime called “life-changing.” Praised by all four judges in their initial audition, Malevo went on to get a “Golden Buzzer” from guest judge George Lopez following the group’s second performance on the show, which sent the company straight through to the quarterfinals.

Being on the show “was exciting and incredibly motivating, yet also very stressful and humbling at times,” Jaime said. “No one had ever really heard much about Malambo before that, but thanks to the exposure (from the show), more and more people are getting to know our artform.”

Tango has been “the de facto cultural export from Argentina for decades,” Jaime continued, but his company strives to give Malambo its own chance to shine.

Malevo brings the plains of contemporary Argentina to downtown Asheville for two evenings of performances at the Wortham Center for the Performing Arts, at 8 p.m. on both March 3 and 4. In addition to its two main events, the company will also host a Malambo Master Class at 11 a.m. March 4 on the Diana Wortham Theatre stage at the Wortham Center. In this workshop, participants will discover the origins of Malambo, learn foundational steps and choreography, and enjoy an up-close dance demonstration by Malevo. Tickets for Malevo’s performance and its Master Class can be found at worthamarts.org.

Malevo dances to a backdrop of mesmerizing lights, psychedelic scenes and projected pyrotechnics. FABIAN USET

USET



Argentine group Malevo is scheduled to perform March 3 and 4 at the Wortham Center.

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