Dances classical, dramatic and whimsical will be the wide-ranging focus of this year’s 32nd annual spring concert by the Vineland Regional Dance Company (VRDC), set for Saturday, April 2, at the Guaracini Arts Center at Cumberland County College, Vineland.

Performances this year will feature a program of original dance works by guest choreographers. One of the highlights will be the work *Point of No Return*, by Philadelphian Yaqhaan Medan, a freelance choreographer and dancer. The dance centers around a portal in Africa that slaves passed through before they were put on boats to America.

“This intense, African style work captures the power of the VRDC,” said Kimberly Chapman, VRDC Artistic Director. Four men perform the dance, including the choreographer; professional guest dancers Zachery Schwab and Christopher Rouse; and company dancer Spencer Wetherington.

Other guest dancers who will appear throughout the evening are Jenna Dannenberger, Erin Kane and Elizabeth Tkaczynski, all alumni of VRDC.

A contemporary piece, described by Chapman as “cutting edge,” is entitled *(dis)connect*. Cassandra Taylor, former dancer with Lines Ballet of California, re-staged the piece. It is “hip-hop inspired,” says Chapman, and features en pointe dance.

A work of a starkly different theme, *From Time to Eternity*, addresses the painful subject of losing a loved one, choreographed by Ballet Mistress Kelly Bocchetti Millar. The music of cellist Yo Yo Ma will accompany the piece, written by Italian contemporary composer Ludovico Einaudi.

Rounding out the evening will be three works choreographed by Chapman, Juilliard graduate and former professional dancer with the (Continued on next page)
Bridgeton kicks off ‘FoodFilmFest’ with Italian theme

Dinner and a movie—it’s a traditional night out for many. But Bridgeton Main Street and the recently-opened Ashley-McCormick Entertainment Center have taken the concept to a whole new level.

On Saturday, April 9, a “FoodFilmFest” will debut with a wine tasting party, sumptuous feast and a movie that celebrates all things gastronomic, “Big Night,” starring Stanley Tucci and Isabella Rossellini. The entire event is billed as an “Italian Fest,” the first in a series of ethnically-themed entertainment and food.

Carola Hartley, Bridgeton Main Street Executive Director, called the concept “edible movies.” “We wanted a big kick-off to this series,” she said. “Our first feast is really in a way our own ‘Big Night.’”

The film, to be screened in Ashley-McCormick’s 100-seat theater, will be preceded by an olive bar/Italian wine-tasting party and followed in the banquet area by a five-course gourmet dinner that was inspired by the food depicted in the film.

The menu was created by guest chef Giovanna Bellia LaMarca, a native of Sicily who lives in New Jersey and teaches at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York. She is the author of *Sicilian Feasts* as well as a new book on the cooking traditions of Northern Italy. The chef will also present a cooking demonstration of the evening’s special desserts.

Hartley describes “Big Night” as “a foodies’ cult film that tells the poignantly funny story of two immigrant brothers struggling to make a go of a new restaurant on the Jersey shore. It climaxes with what one critic calls ‘the joyous gourmet Italian feast of a lifetime.’”

Hartley also stressed that this is just a start for a series of ethnic feasts planned for twice a year. Future FoodFilmFest events will target the cooking, culture and foods of the Mexican, African American, Japanese, and Northern European traditions, she said, “all a part of the incredible cultural mix of Down Jersey.”

Ashley McCormick Center is at 44 E. Commerce St., Bridgeton. Festivities begin at 6 p.m.

Ticket, menu and other information is available—and is always being updated—at www.Food-Film-Fest.org. For sponsorship as well as ticket information by phone, call Bridgeton Main Street at 856-453-8130 or 973-864-4001. Tickets are also available at The Canvas Bag (46 East Commerce St., Bridgeton); call 856-455-5673.

The next FoodFilmFest will be “Mexican Night” featuring the film, “Water for Chocolate,” on Oct. 15.

Dance event showcases local, professional talent

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Eliot Feld Ballet Company. The first work Chapman has choreographed is entitled Montserrat. She describes the inspiration for the piece: “Towering over 3,000 feet, Soufrière Hills Volcano on the island of Montserrat in the Southeastern Caribbean Sea is still active today.”

This fiery ballet features a pas de deux with former VRDC dancers Jenna Dannenberger and Zachery Schwab. “After partnering with them for over 10 years, I am excited that Jenna and Zachery will be performing with us once again,” said Chapman.

She has also choreographed a classical work to Strauss waltzes that showcases the abilities of apprentice dancers at VRDC.

The last work the Artistic Director has choreographed is a duet for former company dancers Erin Kane and Elizabeth Tkaczynski. Set to “I’ll Fly Away,” this work is described as a “spirited, uplifting contemporary work.”