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'Dancing With the Pros' bringing top dancers from TV to the Keith-Albee

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Courtesy of Marshall Artists Series Dancing Pros Live will bring the excitement of the country's best ballroom dancers to the Albee Performing Center. The Marshall Artists Series show is set for 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 6.

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HUNTINGTON After 10 years of dazzling audiences on "Dancing With the Stars," Edyta Sliwinska and her husband fellow DWTS dancer Alec Mazo stepped away from the spotlights a few years ago to start a family.

But the couple, who celebrated the birth of their first child in January, are back in the thick of the dance scene as part of a creative team that's putting together an all-star and interactive touring dance show, "Dancing Pros: Live!" that features top dancers from hit TV shows, "So You Think You Can Dance" and "Dancing With the Stars."

Hosted by Alan Thicke, Golden Globe nominee and star of the hit TV show "Growing Pains," "Dancing Pros: Live!" sashays its way into the historic Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 6 as the Marshall Artist Series continues its star-studded 78th season.

Tickets are on sale now at the Marshall Artists Series box office, which is open noon to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. The box office is located in the Joan C. Edwards Performing Arts Center. Tickets are \$93.95, \$77.90, \$67.20, \$60.78. Tickets may also be purchased at www.ticketmaster.com.

While Thicke hosts the 2014-2015 Live Tour, Sliwinksa, who has appeared on every season of "Dancing with the Stars," and actor and dancer, Oscar Orosco will judge the star competitors, Chelsie Hightower and Ryan Di Lello, Artur Adamski, Paul Barris, Tess Buchatsky, Sasha Chernositov, Dmitry Demidov, Denys Drozdyuk, Arina Grishanina, Regina Maziarz, Antonina Skobina and Anastasia Trutneva.



Vocalists Joanna Pacitti, from "American Idol" Season 8, and Angel Taylor, from "The Voice" Season 2 will accompany the dancers on stage in this exhilarating performance. The remaining professional competitors on the tour are dance champions.

In the midst of intense rehearsals to prep for the show, Sliwiska said everyone is excited to bring the all-star dance show out live to the people.

"We are actually starting the show on Nov. 1 so we are going out in less than four days and I think everyone is excited about getting to get in front of the audience who only have had a chance to see the dancing on TV," Sliwiska said. "Now we will be able to be face to face and to have this close encounter where they will almost be able to touch the dancers and feel that energy rather than just the visual effects. This experience will be a lot more intense than watching it on TV. No mentioning too that they will be watching all professional dancers. Some of the celebrities who dance on the shows are great and I am not taking away from them but you can't compare them to professional dancers."

Not only will the audience be watching the professional dancers, but the audience will be in Sliwiska's shoes, in that it will be the final judge on what couple wins that night's competition.

The audience members will use an electronic voting device at their seats to vote for their favorite couple.

"I think one of the major things that is different about this show and that is exciting is the interactive component," Sliwiska said. "The fact is that yes this is a great show with amazing dancers and you will see amazing talent but it is also up to you who will win in the end. It's a competition on stage with



five couples and every person in the audience will have a voting device and they will get to be the judges in their own seats and they will decide the winners in the end. For the first time they will feel what it means to really have the dancers' fate in their hands."

Sliwinska said folks coming to the show should not be intimidated or pressured by having to judge professional dancers. She said literally that the vote should be easy vote for the couple that, pun intended, moves you.

"I think they should sit back and enjoy it and decide which couple stands out to them and kind of captures their hearts more than anything else," Sliwinska said. "They might not understand why they like one couple more than others but that is fine because you have to look for that emotional connection. I think that is the true meaning of dancing. We want to capture an audience and get to their heart. If a couple achieves that with the audience and they get their vote that is what it is all about. You don't have to be an expert. Just watch it and kind of discover in yourself what you like. Do you like more dynamic moves and light-hearted music or more artistic and melancholic dance."

As one of the professional judges, Sliwinska said she will be just giving honest feedback and technical advice about the programs when they are completed.

"I am going to be very honest and truthful and I will try not to be mean," Sliwinska said. "We are not keeping score but I think I do need to guide the audience. I want the audience to disagree with me as well and I want them to say 'well I don't care if they pointed their toes, I am going to vote for them anyway.'"

Sliwinska said one of the parts of the show everyone will enjoy, is the comedic banter and professional ease of Alan Thicke.

"Alan Thicke has a way of winning over an audience. In just a couple minutes he feels out the audience and then says a couple of lines that connect with an audience instantly," Sliwinska said. "He is funny and sincere and it seems to come to him so easily. He is very relaxed which has been good. We are all stressing out and he is like this stress relief, this comic relief and is really in his top-notch form - funny and very quick and reacts to everything happening on stage."

Sliwinska said that one thing she thinks everyone will love is the sheer diversity of the music and dance styles that will be splashed across the stage.



"Yes it is a competition but it is also just a great show and I hope the audience will enjoy it with the variety of the music and the variety of the dancing," Sliwinska said. "I hope that everyone will find something for themselves. We go from classical music to pop and rock. We have Queen and Peggy Lee's 'Fever' and pop songs like Pharrell Williams' 'Happy' and we go through all of the styles of dance. Ballroom is a main style but we have break dancing, hip hop and lyrical and flamenco. I think people will enjoy sitting back and watching all the changes in mood and energy and atmosphere. I think that what this show has is quite incredible because of the talent. We really do have the top notch. We have the U.S. champions in ballroom dancing."

Sliwinska, whose husband is working behind the stage with some choreography and tech side of the production, said that she hopes the touring show, also continues what the TV shows do, and that is inspire regular folks to try ballroom and couples dancing themselves.

"This type of dancing, ballroom was popular back in the 1940s with Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire but then it faded away and was not cool particularly for younger people," Sliwinska said. "Then 'Dancing with the Stars' comes along and it has changed because you have celebrities like Jerry Rice and Emmitt Smith and all of these football players who are almost iconic in popular culture and they come on and cha cha and suddenly it is cool and something fun to do. I think a lot more people see the journey they go through and they see they are basically starting at point zero and in a couple of weeks later are pulling off these performances, so from the perspective of the general public, it is true that maybe they feel it is not such a difficult thing to do, and I can have fun too. I think once people get out and dance they realize how much fun it is to dance with a partner. People have forgot how much fun it is to partner up and to twirl around. I feel lucky to have been part of that movement."

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