

NEXT BIG NY THING

LARRY KEIGWIN / CHOREOGRAPHER

ONE ADVANTAGE OF having new superstar artistic director Ethan Stiefel at the helm of the Royal New Zealand Ballet is the high-profile mates he can lure to our shores.

Stiefel's fellow New Yorker Larry Keigwin is in Wellington for five weeks to choreograph an original work for the ballet. Keigwin is a dancer, choreographer and artistic director of Keigwin + Company. Last year, the *New York Times* anointed him dance's Next Big Thing, describing his work as "witty,

kinetic and musically responsive".

When *Metro* spoke to Keigwin a few weeks before curtain, he was still moulding the new work into shape — and had yet to decide on a name.

He describes our dancers as having "great facility". "It's like having really great clay to work with. Performers are performers. They're the same across the globe, and it's just about injecting your creative spirit," he says.

Keigwin's RNZB piece will comprise one-third of the troupe's NYC (*New Young Classic*) — *Three Short Ballets from the Big Apple*, which opens their 2012 season in Auckland on February 29.

Despite the obvious difference in size,

Keigwin says he's been delighted at the range of dance forms he's discovered here. Reminds him of home, he says.

Keigwin's enthusiasm for both traditional and contemporary influences has seen him earn commissions well beyond ballet: he recently choreographed *Fashion's Night Out* — the opening event at New York Fashion Week — for *Vogue* and the new off-Broadway production of *Rent*.

The RNZB programme also features *Who Cares?*, choreographed by George Balanchine, and *28 Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, by acclaimed *Black Swan* choreographer (and Mr Natalie Portman) Benjamin Millepied.

SARAH ILLINGWORTH

