BALLET REVIEW

Fresh score, fresh moves open season

LAWRANCE BERNABO
For the News Tribune

A small but extremely enthusiastic and appreciative audience showed up at Symphony Hall at the DECC for "A Fresh Mix" the Minnesota Ballet's eclectic collection of five pieces that served as their season opener. The high point was the world premiere of "Recurrent Stages," choreographed by Artistic Director Robert Gardner to original music by Ryan Homsey, a former member of the company.

Performed by eight dancers, "Recurrent Stages" is divided into three stages: "Litany," "Chaos" and "Grace." Gardner's choreography for this piece is strikingly different from what he has done recently, and reminiscent of some of what I saw last October when Black Label Movement performed their piece "Wreck" here in town. "Litany" features a kaleidoscope of movement, driving by the rhythm of the music, that achieves an almost geometric progression that was quite enthralling.

Homsey's original score was played live by the composer and the DSSO's "Music to You" string quartet. The minimalist music is based on rhythmic harmonies more than melodic lines. Another key element of the performance was Kenneth Pogi's lighting design, which involved not only changes in color but a strategic bracketing of each stage with silhouettes and fadeouts.

If you go

What: Minnesota Ballet's "A Fresh Mix"
Where: DECC Symphony Hall
When: 7 p.m. tonight.
Tickets: Adults $17-$42, students $12-$32, children $10-$27
For information: (218) 529-3742 or www.minnesotaballet.org

The focus of the other half of the evening was on showcasing several of the Minnesota Ballet's dancers to great effect. In the opening Pas de Trois from "Le Corsaire," a historical antecedent of Gardner's fascination as a choreographer with odd-numbered pairings, the common denominator was the dancers working against their momentum, creating sharply defined diagonals.

Reinhard von Rabenau, who always seems to receive the warmest applause from the audience, did spins that progressed into downward spirals leaving him on one knee. Emily Reed displayed some decidedly old-school footwork (the piece goes back to 1899). Sam Neale had his signature moment as a member of the company with his impressive leaps and series of turns, his buoyant athleticism thrilling the crowd.

The Pas de Deux from "Flames of Paris" featured Catherine Wootten and Michael Agudelo. Evincing a coquettish charm, Wootten provides a dazzling series of spins and then skipped across the stage on one foot, before skipping off stage in character to applause. Agudelo answered with some impressive leaps and bounds.

The two upped the ante, Agudelo with a circle of leaping turns, and Wootten with another series of spins combined with even fancier footwork. The applause was almost nonstop as they took their turns dancing, with Wootten finally driving the crowd to the biggest cheers of the night at the sheer number of spins she performed.

Also on the program were "Barber*isms," a quintet of dances down to the music of Samuel Barber's "Souvenirs," which featured some very precise synchronized dancing by Madeleine Surges and Caroline Touhy in support of Suzie Baer in the Waltz and Gallop segments, and a decidedly different sort of tango danced by the trio of Alana Gergerich, Marco Clemente and Agudelo.

The evening concluded with a revival of guest choreographer Ginger Thatcher's "Five O'Clock-Fox Trot," which began with Reed's flapper dancing against two trios of conversing party quests. Decked out in tuxes and Roaring Twenties-style gowns designed by Kathryn Marsaa, the dancing had a mixture of emphasis on movements downward and outward with upward and outward. The net result was quite stylish and rather delicious, a light counterpart to the intensity of the evening's centerpiece.

LAWRANCE BERNABO *went from one of 12 to five of 12 this season. It might be metonymy, but he will take it.*

CAPITOL CHATTER

Klobuchar praises bipartisan group's shutdown involvement

partisanship is much more

What the president ap-

bers "overplayed their

whatSup

- wherewhowhenwhy -

Left to right, Sara Balbin, Reg Behrends, Sara Qualey, and Diana Randolph host the 7th annual Blue Moon Art Tour on Labor Day weekend. *(Photo by Kelly Randolph)*

Superior native composes Minnesota Ballet score

When the Minnesota Ballet opens its 2013-2014 season at Symphony Hall at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center with "A Fresh Mix" Oct. 18-19, the performance features a premiere work by artistic director Robert Gardner to an original score by Superior native and composer Ryan Homsey.

An amplified string quartet performs the score live.

Homsey, who graduated from Superior High School, earned a Bachelor of Music at the State University of New York in Purchase and a Master of Music at New York University Steinhardt. He now teaches at the Conservatory of Music, SUNY at Purchase.

His music has been performed in the U.S., Italy and France, and featured in music festivals, concerts and theater productions.

In composing for the Minnesota Ballet, Homsey returns to the company he danced with for four seasons after graduating from the ballet school in 1998.

Gardner is thrilled to be working with Homsey in this new role. "He's the perfect choice for a ballet composer with his extensive background in both dance and music," Gardner said.

To commission Homsey's score, the ballet received a grant from the American Composers Forum's Live Music for Dance Minnesota program in partnership with NewMusicUSA with funds provided by the McKnight Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Artists open studios for Blue Moon tour