



September 11, 2009

## Ballet's 'New Works' showcases local talent

### Ballet review

*By David Lyman*  
*Enquirer contributor*

The concept was inspired; commit Cincinnati Ballet's season-opening New Works program to Cincinnati choreographers, musicians and composers.

Thursday, the concept came to fruition. The result? New Works is a revelatory collaborative showcase. Even better, it's a great evening's entertainment.

Not perfect, mind you, at least on opening night, which was packed with hoopla, most of it superfluous. Honoring board president and philanthropist/businessman Otto M. Budig Jr. was the one exception. His impact on local arts – and the Cincinnati Ballet, specifically – has been invaluable.

But a preshow discussion by the choreographers? An emcee – actress/author Victoria Rowell – who did little more than read information that was in the program? They just slowed down the evening.

Fortunately, people who attend the remaining performances – New Works runs through Sept. 20 – will see a superior show. No live music, unfortunately, but no unneeded add-ons, either.

The evening's greatest eye-opener was Missy Lay Zimmer and Andrew Hubbard's "Retrospect," with music by Over the Rhine's sultry-voiced Karin Bergquist. Zimmer and Hubbard are artistic directors of Cincinnati's young and ambitious Exhale Dance Tribe. But paired with dancers of Cincinnati Ballet's caliber, they unleashed a torrent of elegantly sassy movement.

At the same time, the slow, sensuous and smoky movement of "Retrospect" displays a rarely explored level of theatricality by the company dancers. They turn the slightest gestures into emotional images with enormous impact; the idle caress, a furtive peek, a brief but erotic brushing of lips. Fascinating dance. Fascinating theater.

Northern Kentucky University faculty member Heather Britt, best-known locally for her Rhythm & Motion classes, closed the program with "All Too Wonderful." Working with all 19 company members, Britt takes full advantage of the power of unison dancing. But the emotional underpinning of the piece is Peter Adams' commissioned score. From its first notes, it invests the piece with a fable-like quality, a sense that something momentous – maybe even magical – is about to unfold.

Britt, an extraordinarily musical dancer and choreographer, follows right along. Her dancers pour over the stage like so many platoons of an enchanted army. Occasionally, they break out for solos and duets. There's an especially memorable one by Joshua Bodden and Dawn Kelly. But "All Too Wonderful" is at its strongest in its mesmerizing ensemble sections.

Italian choreographer Luca Veggetti was the evening's outsider. He's not a Cincinnati and neither is composer Paolo Aralla. The score is ambient electronic – not rhythmic, not melodic, just droning sounds that wash over the stage. It's against this austere backdrop that Veggetti's somber and analytical "Script" unfolds.

Fortunately, Veggetti has cast two of the company's most senior principals, Kristi Capps and Anthony Krutzkamp, dancers every bit as cerebral as the choreography.

They're patient and highly focused dancers. They understand this isn't entertainment. This is an internal intellectual exercise, a dance about dance itself.

Former company soloist Joy Jovet's "Queen City Dream" opened the program. It's longer than it really needs to be. But it's built around an intriguing amalgam of straight-ahead classical dance with equally straight-ahead bluegrass performed by Jake Speed & The Freddies. Anchored by Speed's brassy voice – reminiscent of a young Ralph Stanley – the band infuses the choreography with a welcome light-heartedness.

Devon Carney, the company's associate artistic director, weighs in with "Into the Night," a duet pairing dancers Jill Marlow and Anthony Krutzkamp with recorded music by Peter Frampton.

Chronicling the evolution of a relationship, it feels shallow and unadventurous at the outset. But perhaps that's the nature of new relationships. Choreographically, though, Carney is stronger when he deals with meatier emotions. Fortunately, the onstage relationship matures and so does Carney's dance. And by the seething, strife-filled fourth section, Carney and his dancers are into fertile territory. New Works is always an edgy undertaking. But this year, artistic director and CEO Victoria Morgan has notched it up to a new level both philosophically and choreographically.

*E-mail [davidlyman@gmail.com](mailto:davidlyman@gmail.com).*

*New Works continues through Sept. 20. For ticket information, go to [www.cincinnati.com](http://www.cincinnati.com) or call 513-621-5282.*

---