

Excellence with playful ease

River North Chicago was celebrated on Tuesday evening with modern Jazz dance in the theater.

by RICHARD PETER

Hamel. Presumably it is the ease, the effortless wit, the feel for timing, the playful and unbridled joy of movement that continue to distinguish American companies. And of course, the technical perfection, body control and musicality. In addition, the fantasy of choreographers such as Frank Chaves' - far exceeding the norm - made River North Chicago an experience on Tuesday in the theater.

Blurred movements

The "Grusin Suite" has given traditional Jazz dance its direction since 1996. Piano Jazz and a type of casual warm-up with surprising numbers. Then a trio that had already received enthusiastic applause was followed by a type of Pas de Deux with borrowings from classic ballet. Then



An ensemble that accompanied not only "Easy Lessons" with unbridled enthusiasm: River North Chicago. Photo: Theater

– and this time furiously – the ensemble shows what speed can mean. It is so fast that motion blurs into halos. What Monique Haley performs in "Beat" – is unimaginable, the forms she draws in the air – constantly changing angular and mechanical forms that progress into flow,

standstill and then again into a St. Vitus dance tantrum, yet never take on a life of their own.

Masterful is the "Take a seat" for five dancers and five folding chairs. Man can perform almost endless variations with such a seat as requisite – in a second part as if bound to the seat as if it were a back shield and the backrest covering the chest.

Brilliant humor results from these situations. Downright hypnotizing "Pulse" with pulsating rhythms and a lighting design that plays with stroboscopic effects.

After intermission "Temporal Trance" is a beautiful fast elegiac Chaves-choreography, suspending and regaling music by Peter Gabriel, Vangelis,

Gabrielle Roth and The Mirrors. Russian inspired: "The Mourning" and as most recent choreography (2008) "Train", ritualized dance par excellence. Then the "Gypsy Kings" with Sinatra's "My Way" in three choreographic dance styles and finally, casually ending with Jazz dance of the late 50s "5 Easy Lessons" with a "Slow Down" that included the entire

company.

A half-full house for modern Jazz dance is not half bad for Hameln. And this can be improved upon. Because word of the ability of this ensemble will get around – even to those for whom Jazz dance does not draw any sweat and reach people who want to be fascinated by the breathtaking pace and joy in performing of this troupe.