

# Danced Poetry and Precision

Group from Chicago offers a spectacular overture to “Magic Moments”

IDSTEINER ZEITUNG 10-07-08

By Susanne Gross

IDSTEIN The audience of the new “Magic Moments” season [“Sternstunden” Saison] at the Stadthalle experienced a spectacular overture. Sunday evening’s guest performance by the River North Dance Company from Chicago, conjured up dancing scenes of high precision and great expressive powers.

Five dancers in brown-black costumes are on stage. Their upper bodies are surrounded by folding chairs. They carry the seats as if they were backpacks on their shoulders, the chair legs project into the air like four metal wings of a mysterious insect. In spite of the limitations caused by this object, the men perform accomplished pirouettes and jumps. This is how untraditional one of the ten varied choreographies of the River North Chicago Dance Company was. This performance the overture of the new theater season at the Idsteiner Stadthalle.

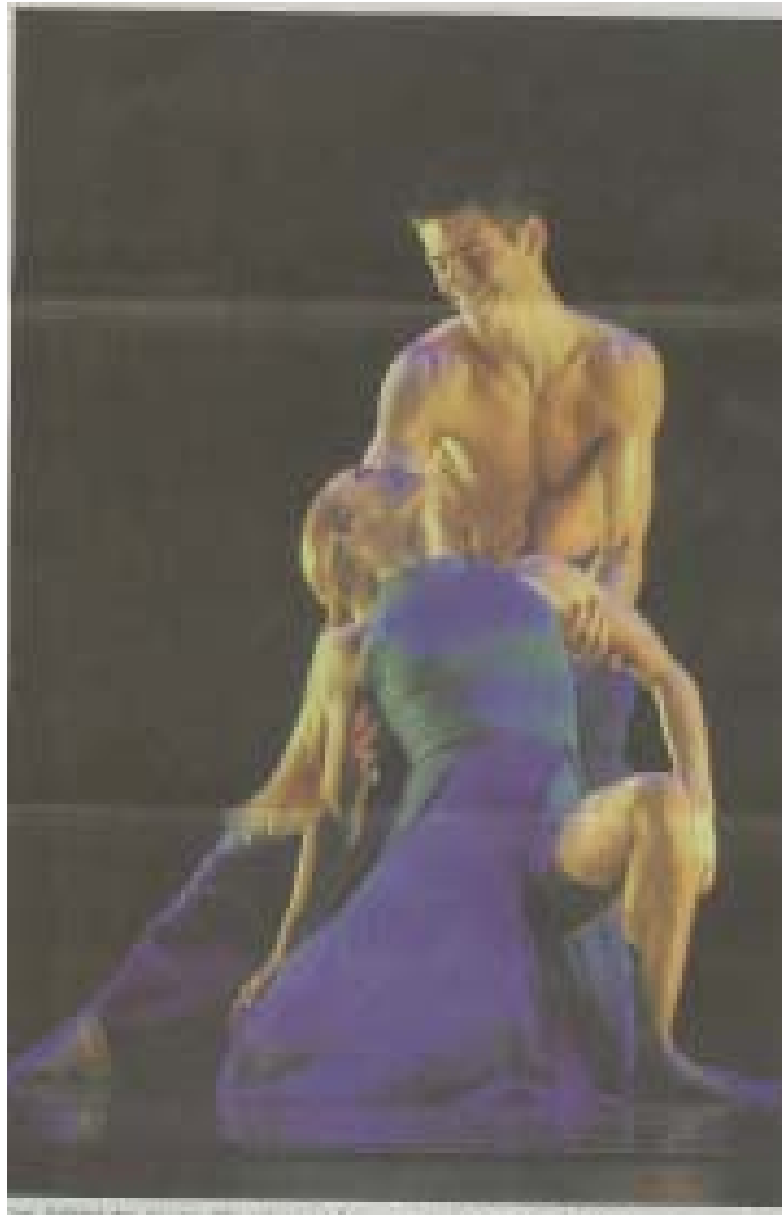
Thirteen dancers, under the artistic direction of Frank Chaves, showed the full hall a classy program of modern dance. The group, which was founded in 1989, has given guest performances with pieces from the years 1996 to 2008 during its first German tour. In this performance, choreographies of Pas de Deux for the entire ensemble alternate with solos.

Costumes that are coordinated with the content of the pieces complement the overall picture of perfect staging and performance, as well as the alternately withheld lighting, the use of spot lights up to a fully lighted stage. The concept was complemented by variations in the music that continued to offer new enticements ranging from very strong rhythmic pieces to pieces without a recognizable beat up to song titles such as the well-known melody of Frank Sinatra’s “My way” in a recording of the Gypsy Kings.

Thus the aesthetic sense of the audience continued to receive new stimulation.

In the piece “Temporal Dance”, choreographed by Frank Chaves, the ensemble showed its entire spectrum of technically perfect pirouettes and jumps in a short, permanently repetitive rhythmical sequence. As a prelude, two pairs performed synchronous, sinuous movements in the shimmer of green light. These athletic and acrobatic body movements remind of a circus number.

In the piece “Pulse”, the emphasis of the movements was expanded by



As an overture to the “Magic Moments” season, the River North Dance Company from Chicago gave a guest performance in the Stadthalle. The Dancers conjured up scenes of high precision and great expression. Here, Michael Gross and Lizzie MacKenzie in the dance number “At last - Excerpt from Mission”.

sliding. Again and again the dancers emerged from the side backdrops and fish-tailed a stretch on stage.

The piece “The Mourning” was also impressive. First, birdsong filled the hall. Then, one hears a female voice speak in Russian, to which two soloists perform a Pas de Deux. Accompanied by the melancholy music, the dramatic, expressive movements appear particularly intense.

A counterpoint was offered with “Train”, which was enthusiastically celebrated with whistles and ovations. To music that rang in the ears like gun salvos, the dancers showed choppy, fast-paced movements. The cording sewn into the upper parts of the costumes appeared like tracks. The pace of the movements corresponded to the rhythm of the music and the voices in the back-

ground that could be heard again and again gave the impression of a hectic daily scene at a train station.

In the last piece, “Five Easy Lessons” it became clear that humor and comedy are also part of the repertoire. The audience was transported back to the ballroom atmosphere of the 50s. Dancers remaining sulkily on their chairs and young ladies powdering their noses amused the enthusiastic audience.