

Marielouise Scharf | Amberg, 09-29-2008

## Pure Temperament, Elemental Force and Tension

**The *River North Chicago Dance Company* inspires its Amberg audience during its first European tour.**

This is how dance becomes a big hit: crisp arrangements, unusual music, interesting lighting, fantastic costumes and highly motivated, young and exceedingly likeable soloists who show what they can do. During the performance of the *River North Chicago Dance Company* at the Amberg Stadtheater, they displayed magnificent skill. The audience was quickly caught up in the enthralling dynamic, the unbridled desire to dance and the enthusiasm of the 13 dancers. This company is full of life, and with its strong expressive force and its uncomplicated merriment, it quickly lured the residents of the Upper Palatinate out of their usual reserve. Spellbound and enraptured by the excellently trained dancers it applauded the individual dances.

“Rhapsody in Blue”

With tender poetry and targeted precision, the troupe presents a unique dancing experience. It tells stories in spaces that are created with light and shadow, music and rhythm, rest and movement. These are sometimes blackly archaic, sometimes colorful and glittering. Perfect technique, skilful accents and the choreographies mirror the broad spectrum of artistic inspiration by choreographers such as Ashley Roland, Daniel Ezralow, Sherry Zunker and Frank Chaves. The evening starts with an optical “Rhapsody in Blue”, an unrestrained cheerful Jazz dance creation. Not yet spectacular, but already an eye-catcher. The first very important moment is presented by Monique Haley with her energetic solo. She translates percussion rhythms into dance. Body outlines blend in and out, with lightning-fast movements that coalesce into impressive forms and immediately dissolve again: pure temperament, elemental force and tension.

Magnificent dance cosmos

From then on the performances progress in rapid succession. A funny interpretation with chairs follows which challenges the dancers into various engagements with these pieces of furniture. They lock in and out, require jumps and body tension, entice to acrobatic sequences and elegant moments. A gently flowing soft Pas de Deux is offered by Michael Gross and Lizzie MacKenzie. Young and heavenly in love, they glide across the stage. The conclusion of the first part is “Pulse”, an unusual ensemble choreography which transports the audience into a magnificent dance cosmos. The dancers slither toward one another in pairs, meet in the middle and separate again. Circles are formed, groups hold hands and again and again the figures dissolve until a single dancer in the spotlight reaches his hands upward in unity with the music, the movement and the cosmos. The “feast for eyes and soul” continues. Flowing action and flying hair seduce in the “Temporal Trance”. A near-classic dance for two is told passionately dramatic. Explosive and unbridled dancing miracles are created in steamy fog that begin and end in the spotlight. Three dancers, three choreographers and three dancing styles reach the summit of the art of dancing. All are fantastic individual artists that complement each other beautifully. It is almost a parable of the evening, this mix of Jazz dance, athletics and European-African dance traditions. With “5 Easy Lessons” of a playful and merry homage to Jazz dance of the late 50s, this superb and highly congenial company concludes the performance. After such an evening, the viewer finds himself transported to the higher spheres of dance.