

DANCE REVIEW

River North keeps its edge

Premieres of 'Between Three,' 'Train' offer alluring performances

By Sid Smith TRIBUNE CRITIC

River North Chicago Dance Company's hallmark is a mix of audience-friendly works with enough thoughtfulness and edge to stay intellectually respectable.

Their goal is not to perplex, but to amuse and excite. They're easy on the dance concert newcomer while fresh and lively for longtime fans.

Additional kudos to the troupe, which performed to a large, enthusiastic crowd Friday at the Harris Theater, for its persistent showcase of Chicago choreographers. Besides several fine works by artistic director Frank Chaves, the company (which also danced Saturday) offered works from Julia Rhoads, Harrison McEldowney and Lauri Stallings, who, though no longer here, launched her choreographic career while dancing with Hubbard Street.

Rhoads' brand new "Between Three" offers sterling evidence of our city's bright talent. Beautifully set to its score by Alarm Will Sound and Amina, this piece for three women is flowing, sweet and lovely. But, if you watch closely (and you don't have to in order to enjoy it), you'll see Rhoads having a field day exploring the permutations of a threesome, craftily manipulating the changes and interactions that lead from three-way synchronicity to two dancers in sync and the third in opposition. How the women pair up and liquidly shift alliances is a design delight, pure form graced with a human touch reminiscent of Paul Taylor.

The other premiere, "Train," by New Yorker Robert Battle, is an innovative, seemingly harsh but ultimately irresistible assault by six dancers to a metallic, percussive score, flush with all manner of clever choral lines and nifty, intricate footwork. Early on, it boasts accomplished solo work from Clayton Cross, its lone male, but the real stunner is the elaborate blend of defiance and allure in a show-stopping solo from Hanna Britcson.

Older favorites included McEldowney's "The Box," a Samuel Beckett-like fable of a man whose hands are imprisoned in the title device, ameliorated by the choreographer's trademark humor and optimism—the trapped man finds salvation in his feet. It's delightfully performed by tall, expressive Sean Hilton. Chaves' acrobatic, engaging duet "At Last" is nicely danced by Wade Schaaf, even as pert, seductive, feisty and funny Lizzie Mackenzie pickpockets the spotlight.

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Jessica Wolfrom of River North Dance Company



Tracy Michelle Arnold (from left), Carey Cannon and Marcus Truschinski in William Brown's production of William Shakespeare's "As You Like It" at Writers' Theatre in Glencoe.

THEATER

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moody Dane, Rosalind has a complex sense of the fragility of life and also the fleeting life of romantic attraction. You sense here both an endpoint to all the courtship shenanigans and, as we age, our growing reliance upon them. And that only deepens the play.

There is amusement, especially from the clown Ross Lehman, but these are thoughtful comedic takes, writ with sophistication. Still, the best moment of a well-paced night comes with that overly famous soliloquy about the seven ages of a man.

Larry Yando, recently Scrooge at the Goodman Theatre and an actor whose work onstage seems ever to find new depths, under-

"AS YOU LIKE IT"

Where: Writers' Theatre, 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe

When: Through April 13.

Running time: 2 hours, 20 mins.

Tickets: \$45-58 at 847-242-6000

stands that old Jaques isn't so much recounting the trajectory of every life as detailing a tragedy that even the leafiest forest can only temporarily forestall. Most renditions of that speech are done as the melancholy whining of a depressive man.

With the stage full of actors listening, breathing and sympathizing, Yando simply tells it like it is.

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WILCO

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true rarities were performed, but the most impressive feat was how deftly the band handled the wide range of music from its disparate incarnations.

Opening night went heavy on the quieter "Sky Blue Sky" material and the pacing dragged in the second half. But the performances of "Candyfloss" and the "Yankee Hotel Foxtrot" era outtake, "Cars Can't Escape," highlighted the band's

pop sweet tooth.

Saturday weighed in with a heavy dose of "Being There" and "A.M.," with loud guitars set on "twang." As Tweedy, Cline, Sansone and Stirratt lined up across the stage and wailed on "Casino Queen," it was like a Lynyrd Skynyrd guitar-army flashback.

Greg Kot's unauthorized biography "Wilco: Learning How to Die" was published in 2004.

greg@gregkot.com

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