

# CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

## Giordano troupe adds sass to talent

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Labels tend to be beside the point in dance these days, with dancers studying every technique -- ballet, modern dance, Broadway-style jazz, gymnastics, hip-hop -- and choreographers expecting fluency in all these movement "languages" and their various "dialects."

A case in point: Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, seen in a two-night engagement at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance this weekend. With a program that demanded marathon energy and technical proficiency, this company of 10 dancers showed they were capable of changing styles as quickly as costumes.

It all began with "Giordano Moves," a high-flying jazz dance "primer" of sorts in which Jon Lehrer and Nan Giordano gleaned bits and pieces of founder Gus Giordano's decades of work, stitched them all together to an original score by George McRae, and created a zesty introduction to the art form. The gyrating hips, isolated shoulders, exuberant leaps, jerked heads, flexed hands, off-center leg extensions and pure sass of it all was evident throughout, with Kimberly Cunningham, Elijah Gibson, Brandon Glasgow, Meghan Grantin, Lindsey Leduc, Maeghan McHale, Eugene Peabody, Cesar Salinas, Ruth Sherman and Bruce Weber dancing up a storm.

The world premiere of choreographer-composer Tony Powell's "Impulse" (to a neatly sliced and diced soundtrack comprised of music by Thom Willems, Ethos Percussion Group Carlos Stasi and the Kodo Drummers of Japan) had the dancers moving at breakneck speed and with acrobatic abandon, in patterns suggesting everything from a Darwinian ascent to wacky gamesmanship a la Twyla Tharp. A phenomenal finale came in the form of a snakelike unfurling by the eight dancers previously named.

"Loose Canon," Lehrer's playful post-modern romp to Wynton Marsalis' version of Pachelbel's familiar Canon in D major, was a goofier but equally strenuous world premiere. Humor in dance is never easy: Sometimes Lehrer nails it; at other moments he relies on cliches (a male version of a "Swan Lake" pas de trois). The five dancers gave it their all.

Michael Rioux's "Punk You Very Much," is a minor work that probably goes over well at school concerts. Set to the White Stripes, Liam Lynch and Modest Mouse, it features two couples in bright, funky streetwear doing some breakdance moves and exuding lots of punky attitude.

Mark Swanhart's "Sidecar" has a kind of Czech absurdist film-meets-high school dance follies quality. It's about being the odd guy (or girl) out, trying to alternately fit in and stand apart, attempting to make sense of love (or "whatever"). Alternately flip and dark, it is most often just quirky. But it lets the dancers catch their breath before launching into Ron De Jesus' relentless and fiery "Prey" -- a work to the Kodo Drummers that leaves the dancers gasping for breath and the audience jumping to its feet.

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