



## **Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago: Zoom, Zoom, Zoomby by: Roger A. Cope, Classical Voice of North Carolina**

**Asheville, NC, February 10, 2006:** Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago (which is headquartered in Evanston) showed up on the eve of yet another major winter storm for a two-night stand at Diana Wortham Theatre, Pack Place, and it is difficult to know which of those two events had more impact. The weather made big cold and snow, but the ten dancers coughed up two hours of relentless excitement and deep art. Frankly, I'm going with the dance company; these kids put out. With Giordano Jazz Dance and Ann Dunn's ADDANCE Company production of WinterDance last month, we have witnessed two front-rank dance productions, one bordering on the avant-garde, and the other just flat out dazzling.

Before we go too far we should probably define some stuff relating to choreography. Let's assume for the moment we're all pretty clear on ballet, modern, Broadway musical chorus lines, and the occasional hoe-down dance forms. Now jazz, by its very definition, suggests a departure from forms we know have signature elements. So in effect jazz tends to use or "borrow" things from all forms and then interpret these elements within a new construct for the sake of itself. If we don't know what the thing is, we at least should recognize some of the parts.

Using a mosaic of moves taken from modern and big-stage musical productions, the Giordano Jazz Dance company presented a varied and energetic six-part program with one intermission. They used recorded music, some colored flies and extensive lighting, including color gels. The choreographers included Davis Robertson, Sam Watson, Ron de Jesus, Jon Lehrer, Nan Giordano, and Gus Giordano. The emotional scope ranged from absurd to fun/humor to demanding serious art, and everybody hit the marks and delivered the parts beautifully. The company is in the middle of a road tour (performing in Clinton on February 18 – see our calendar for details), so we can forgive occasional misalignment or error of timing in the large ensembles. But these people are so good and the program so rich in creative concepts that those criticisms are irrelevant. No, really.

For the record the five women and five male dancers were Kimberly Cunningham, Catie Deitz, Jacquelyn Elder (Go 'Noles!), Elijah Gibson, Brandon Glasgow, Meghan Grantin, Jon Lehrer, Eugene Peabody, Ruth Sherman, and Bruce Weber. The youngest is 20, the oldest, 33. They come from over a dozen professional dance companies, have pure educations and training in dance, and teach in addition to performing, and no one broke a sweat while chatting with the audience afterward.

The works performed were *BeingOne* 2005, an exercise of individuality amid a group; the four *part Hi Jinks*, written in 1998 as a tribute to television comedy with humorous moves reminiscent of Bill Hug; a major grab-bag *called Giordano Moves*, reflecting all the influences of company creator Gus Giordano; *Entropy*, a purely abstract and atmospheric ensemble dance; a duet dating from 1983 *called Sing Sing Sing*, to the music of Louis Prima; and *Prey*, by Ron de Jesus, easily the most artistic and demanding work on the program.

Somewhere it is said the Arts should inspire, enrich, motivate, provoke, excite, move, and reflect the potential of a human experience, whether imagined or real. It is also said that perception is reality. You know, whatever.

It is programs such as this one, presented by Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, that remind us of all these things and what the arts can be and can suggest about the human condition – and how the spirit can be elevated through creative programming and brilliant performance.

This company was founded in 1962. The staff is deep, the productions are professional, the dancers, fit and talented, and the company's schedule is packed. For sheer elevation of the spirit, this was one show to have marked down on the calendar.