

Hotcha! Whoopee! And All that Jazz
Dancin' Unlimited presents *Dancin' on Broadway and Beyond*

Leave the prosceniums and drop curtains in Manhattan; Dancin' Unlimited, directed by Marilyn York, brings the best of Broadway to the small theatre setting. The intimate space of 1st Stage in McLean, VA set the ideal scene for the April 22 and 23 production of *Dancin' on Broadway and Beyond*.

The numbers transitioned from *Chicago* to *Beauty and the Beast* to *A Chorus Line*. The black box setting left the set to the audience's imagination. The performers painted scenes with their movement and voices taking us from a smoky cabaret to an enchanted castle.

All That Jazz number "On Broadway" opened the show; vocalist Matt Nall invited the audience in to the journey. "They say there's always magic in the air," he sang. With the wit and poise of Gene Kelly, song and dance man Michael Hibbs was "Dr. Jazz." His crisp tap hoofs and scuffs had the audience begging for more. And more is what they got with the comic dancing duo "Who's Got the Pain" from *Damn Yankees*, reminding us of Broadway's bombshell Gwen Verdon. "Is there a doctor in the house?" Everyone was in stitches!

Gabi Stapula stole our heart as Adelaide from *Guys and Dolls*. She was a one woman Hot Box chorus as she perfectly delivered Adelaide's nasal pips and squeaks. Ah.... Ahh.... AHHH..... CHEW! In other words, a person could develop an incurable adoration for Adelaide and her lament.

Skidoo. The red light behind the fishnet-clad dancers made for a steamy introduction to "Chicago Razzmatazz." The magic is in the details of this original Fosse choreography; each windy finger and pop of the hip pulled the viewer in, one shoulder dip at a time. The dancers shimmied into the "Hot Honey Rag" and finished with a hurrah of "All That Jazz."

It was Disney brought to life in "Me." *Beauty and the Beast's* Gaston (played by Nall) haughtily attempted to sweep Belle off her feet. The sweet-faced Stapula would have none of his arrogance, but the audience was reeling with laughter at his extravagant antics and barreling baritone. Give 'em a top hat and a sequin tailcoat, throw in a kick line, and that's one singular sensation of a first act.

In act two, the "beyond" portion of this performance became clear. Dancin' Unlimited's signature works "Visions" and "Into the Night" are of classic jazz lineage. This style is nearly lost in today's cookie cutter contemporary and "So You Think You Can Dance" addiction, but not here. At the same time, the group piece "Push" and solo work "Yours" show that Dancin' Unlimited can entertain the contemporary dance lover as well.

Hibbs comes back to the limelight in "Minnie the Moocher." A clear crowd favorite, each red skirted dancer vied for Hibbs' sly affection. Not afraid to show a little leg in this piece, the dancers kicked and swayed hoping to win the position of his arm candy, only to be shunted when Hibbs is led away by a leggy blonde.

"Dancin' on Broadway and Beyond" harkens back to a time of Broadway when every musical was an original spectacular event. Remember when Chita Rivera donned smoky eyes and high black stilettos and became infamous? Remember when Millie became thoroughly modern and Lola got whatever she wanted? While Broadway has turned to staged recreations of cartoons and action figures, York hasn't forgotten what Broadway can be.