

26th Annual Jazz and Tap Dance Festival 2012 – Bringing Down the House

Write-up – Lauren Green

The Jazz and Tap Dance Festival has brought the Metro Area's best tap, jazz and hip hop companies together in one show for 26 years. Presented by headlining company Dancin' Unlimited, the show ran for two nights, Mar 3 and 4, at NVCC's Ernst Community Cultural Center in Annandale, VA.

In addition to Dancin' Unlimited, the Festival included Encore Theatrical Arts Project, iMPulse (Metropolitan Fine Arts Center's resident company), Center Stage Dance Company, Capitol Movement Inc and the Metropolitan Youth Tap Ensemble.

Each company brings something unique to the table. Dancin' Unlimited, directed by Marilyn York, has stayed true to classical jazz technique with "Hybrid" and "Chambermaid Swing," but shows off their athleticism in "Drum" and a more modern approach with "Because You Told Me Not To."

Opening on Encore's "Tear the House Down," the audience is invited into a Cabaret set. The leggy red-dressed dancer invites us in and soon the whole stage is sparkling with fan kicks and thrilling technical sequences. Choosing to highlight a smaller number of their most advanced dancers on this go-around, Encore, directed by Raynor van der Merwe, has not lost their wow-factor, as seen in their other scintillating numbers "That's Life" and "Fishies."

iMPulse is an opportunity for the pre-professional dancers of MFAC, directed by Melissa Dobbs, to experience the contemporary side of the jazz dance art form. In their pieces "To the Beat" and "Any Other World," they blend the syncopation of jazz with competitive lyrical dance, popularized by shows like SYTYCD.

Center Stage, directed by Sherri Shortell, brought the crowd to life with their show-stopping hoofing in "Gone in the Morning." In "Forget You," Celo's raging hit song about the-one-that-got-away got a roaring ovation from the crowd, as three young male dancers parade their leaping prowess, with a little spice on the side.

Capitol Movement, founded by Stephanie Jackson and Amber Yancey, takes hip-hop up a notch. Tying in their contemporary side with some pop n' lock action in "Cosmic Love" and "Obsessive Compulsive Behavior," they are an interesting blend of tut, tear and flash.

The Metropolitan Youth Tap Ensemble may look like only three dancers, but they rule the stage, adding percussive tap notes to a passionate display of emotion in "Turning Tables" and Drumadics."

Another successful year for Jazz and Tap Dance Festival, the show ran smoothly from start to finish and even lit up the ceiling with the program notes to save the audience the trouble of checking their programs between numbers. As the Festival continues to build hype from one year to the next, Dancin' Unlimited is looking forward to making the 27th Festival even better.