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Rhapsody in movement

Kathy Harty Gray Dance Theatre debuts at Piccolo REVIEW

BY NADA S. ARNOLD
Post and Courier Reviewer

Were I a seasoned dancer, weaned on classical modern techniques (remember the late Martha Graham), I would want to be like Martha -- barefoot and free, weaving like the wind, sleek and sassy at 80. Well, thanks to Kathy Harty Gray, whose Dance Theatre debuted Tuesday at Piccolo's Dance Interlude, the fountain-of-youthful dancers is alive, well and flourishing with enviable grace.

Most of the nine women in the company are multi-taskers, having trained for 20 years or more, and worked as instructors or dance professionals and are now adding other careers and raising families.

All jumped at the opportunity to work with Gray, a Julliard



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graduate trained by Graham, Jose Limon and other modern-dance legends. Her mission for the last 20 years, via the company and through teaching at various venues, has effected a unique resuscitation of the idiom born in 1900.

Yesterday's presentation at the College of Charleston's Chapel Theatre before a sparse audience included five diverse segments.

Gray introduced each number, explaining her choreography and its classic vocabulary -- as she does with community outreach programs in the Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia area where she teaches.

"Battleground" visited Civil War women awaiting the return of loved ones with Graham's signature inward folds and cupped hands expressing malaise and sorrow, as did Limon's careful leaps and leg lifts.

With "Seasonal Wonders," the mood shifted. Garbed in black leotards, flowing aprons and trailing scarves, the movements simulated falling snow, windy waters and sunny meadow, with lovely moves by Karen Blank and Iantha Parker. The number also introduced excellent partnering by Aquiles Holladay (at 21, a student and the only male in the ensemble) with Stephanie Siddens (and in "Glenn dalough" with Carrie Wilcox).

Irish ancestry and a visit to Kinsale, Ireland, inspired Gray's "An Irish Rhapsody"-- a sad take on the Irish diaspora with a poignant wake; also the vigorous "parting dance" incorporating the flat-footed Kinsale stomp.

The final number, "The Voice of the Future," offered a Celtic tribute to emigrants who survived the ocean crossings by the full company, which includes: Lisa Johnson, Cathy Malin, Joselle Alexander and former College of Charleston theater, dance and arts instructor Suzie Celentano.

It was theater and modern dance that was educational, elegant, refreshing. I left mumbling the lyrics from "Chorus Line"--"gotta dance, gotta dance." Not that I can do that kind of stuff.

The program repeats today at noon.



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