

Harlem Dancers Show What They Got!

By: Patrick Garr

Wow! The Dance Theater of Harlem (DTH) has completely raised the bar for all! Today, March 20, 2009 the Dance Theater of Harlem performed their Interactive Performance at the Opera House. It was different, but amazing! It was very interesting how it was an interactive performance. They even had some audience members join them on stage when asking what type of social dances there are. I have never been to a show where that had taken place.

Some interesting facts that were learned at this performance were that ballet was started in the 15th century in the French Quarters. In addition, we learned that the two founders of the Dance Theater of Harlem were Karel Shook and Arthur Mitchell. Both were African Americans and so was the Dance Theater of Harlem at first. Now the theater is multi-racial. The

choreographers at DTH are Robert Garland and Arthur Mitchell himself! Arthur Mitchell is still alive today and is still choreographing some of the dances that they perform as well. I also learned how the dancers in Dance Theater of Harlem have rehearsals from 10:00AM until 5:00PM. During this time they have two, separate, hour and a half long classes and the rest of the time is rehearsal all



together. The first class is normally as a group and the second is separate so the men can work on jumps and leaps while the women can work on

pointe. In warm ups during the first class, they execute combinations that work with pliés, tondus, degages, kicks, and rond dejambes as well as rond dejambe en lairs. All of these movements are executed in their classes as well as on stage in the dance.

During the performance the movement was slow and flowy at times when other times it would be upbeat, quick, and small movements. During this performance there was a certain explosive feature that caught the

audience's eyes. During most of the dances the movements were also very bound and together which is classical ballet and at other times it was a little freer and loose. The looser ballet is called neoclassical ballet. Neoclassical ballet, by definition, is the 20th Century ballet that is the new ballet and uses the technique from the 19th Century, but is not narrative and most is drawn from George Balanchine and his works.

In addition, the dance New Bach was definitely favorable through the audience's eyes especially because of the pop from the classical blend to ballet. New Bach had classical music and had ballet, but with a contemporary tint to it. The blend of ballet and contemporary with the music was very interesting and made the audience sit on the edge of their seats to see what was coming next as well as entertained all members. In this specific performance there was no part out of the entire show that was seemingly dislikable and created and created an amazing and great ambiance for the audience as well. This performance was fabulous as well the dancers kept up their energy and did an amazing job! Their technique was complete and very good as well as

facial presentation toward the audience and all the dancers were always smiling. The music they used was different from the typical classical ballet music and was very interesting as well. There was no set on the stage. The costumes were simple, but effective. The boys always had black tights and white shirt, if not it was no shirt and black tights. The girls wore leotards and skirts or tutus. The lighting consisted of specific lighting that was used to create the feeling that they were in a forest with trees and the light was coming between them and typical colored or white lighting on the stage. During the entire dance all of the dancers were surprisingly completely on time and together all the time. It was amazing to watch how good the timing was and if they were ever off time it was off a fraction of a second and they always got right back on time.

Overall the show was great. It was enjoyable and one of the most innovative shows that I have seen. I would definitely recommend this show. I would recommend it to families and to all age groups. Everyone even non-dancers or dancers would love this show!