

Breathtaking ballet

Youth, experience blend together

By BILL KNIGHT
Journal Star critic

Fantasies, fables, and forms all come alive in ballet, and the Peoria Ballet Company this weekend is celebrating life in a special local performance.

The breathtaking shows — which conclude this afternoon at 2 at the Illinois Central College Performing Arts Center — use student dancers in a ballet corps and a few featured roles, experienced performers and teachers in a few other inspiring spots, and a handful of guest artists to round out the cast.

The group of artists collectively are so hypnotic, it seems as if they could dance past cannibals, transfixed beyond hunger. Individually, Marc Darling of Chicago and David Thompson of Seattle are very good, as is artist-in-resident Miguel Romero, Janet Moran — the exceptional talent who also is the Peoria Ballet School director — and a few of her standout students: Karen Miller, 14; Nancy Lueders, 18; Renee Smith, 19; Faith Noar, 15; and Stacy Sargent, 21.

The mesmerizing Moran returns to the stage with her effective skill at appearing impassive yet passionate. In the traditional piece "Les Sylphides," her poise, beauty, and movement escape easy description.

Besides the artists, the art form is once more shown to be an outstanding example of demonstrating how the human form and its use sets people apart. Ballet creates animated metaphors, and opens the door be-

tween observation and understanding.

In the more abstract "Rodin... A Tribute" (enjoying its world premiere here) Thompson and Lueders don bronze body stockings to help achieve a primal atmosphere, their flesh rippling beneath Dana Rademacher's superior lighting. In the first movement, the pair have an intentional fluidity in their actions, an unsettling and captivating sight that's part animalism and part nihilism — a sort of a dance version of poetry's blank verse.

Chicago dancer Manard Stewart joins Thompson and Darling in the second movement of the work-in-progress. It's a hectic, modern transition to the rather ingenious third movement, which underscores the struggle and spirit embodied in choreographer Alfonso Figueroa's vision of the sculptor Rodin.

Sets and sounds range from a dreary stand of timber to columns of cloth, from recordings of Chopin to New Music by Charles Ives and synthesizer-heavy rock from Hotel. Costumes and accessories range from those sheer body suits and white scarves to "Les Sylphides'" dainty dresses and fragile garlands. The energy is uniformly invigorating.

This is the company's last performance before their appearance in Scotland, and also includes works entitled "Hues," "Seasons," and "Changes," the latter an emotionally draining, demanding sight, in a multimedia presentation.

Tickets for today's matinee performance are available at the door.



Manard Stewart and Janet Moran pose in a moment from "Les Sylphides," a non-narrative but

classical ballet that begins the five-piece summer concert of the Peoria Ballet Company.

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