

By CATHY KIGHTLINGER

Ballet backers kick up their heels

Posted: September 20, 2009

When 11 international ballet stars danced across the Murat Theatre stage during the Indianapolis City Ballet's gala debut last weekend, an enthusiastic audience greeted them during and after the show.

Throughout the performance, dancers -- representing companies including New York City Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet and American Ballet Theatre -- received cheers and a few standing ovations.

Afterward, about 250 patrons attended a gala reception, where they met the dancers. (Ballet organizers said more than 1,800 tickets were sold for the performance.)

Dressed in everything from business attire to ball gowns, patrons hobnobbed with the international crowd that attended the show.

Choreographer Dinko Bogdanic, of the Zagreb Ballet in Croatia, said he attended because his friends organized the local performance. He also gave a boost to professional ballet here.

"Each main city in the world has a ballet company; why should not Indianapolis have a ballet company?" he asked. Ballet Internationale Indianapolis, the city's previous professional ballet group, ceased operation four years ago.

Jane Fortune and Bob Hesse, who led the evening's organizing efforts, seemed overjoyed at the response. Others attending included philanthropists Christel DeHaan, Mary Levin, Helen Small, Ellen Greenleaf and Wayne Zink; Indiana Repertory Theatre Managing Director Steven Stolen; Valerie Eickmeier, dean of Herron School of Art and Design; and Mayor Greg Ballard and his wife, Winnie.



Jane Fortune and Bob Hesse won applause for organizing the evening. - CATHY KIGHTLINGER / The Star



Philanthropists Christel DeHaan (left) and Mary Levin took in a reception following a performance by 11 dancers to mark the debut of Indianapolis City Ballet. - CATHY KIGHTLINGER / The Star