



Virtuosity marks thrilling ICB's 'An Evening With The Stars' gala

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By **Tom Alvarez**, Indianapolis Performing Arts Examiner

Those who attended the 2009 Indianapolis City Ballet *An Evening With The Stars* hoped this year's gala would equal last year's dance extravaganza. Happily, they (and everyone else who attended) were not disappointed because, this year's edition held this past Saturday evening, at the Murat Theatre at the Old National Centre, was even more extraordinary.

Produced by ICB Executive Director, Kevin Hesse, and directed by Jolinda Menendez, the 2010 *An Evening With The Stars*, was an electrifying, joyous celebration of both classical and contemporary ballet, featuring a cavalcade of world-famous dancers who thrilled the entranced audience with their talent and virtuosity.

Commencing the evening was the world premier of "Night and Day," choreographed by Margo Sappington, with music by Cole Porter, as sung by Ella Fitzgerald, and danced by Veronkia Verterich (Valentina Kozlova Dance Conservatory of New York) and Vitali Krauchenka (Corps de Ballet, American Ballet Theatre).

During his introductory remarks, Chris Stack, the gala's humorous MC, referred to a concious effort on the part of the Sappington to pay tribute to Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers through her choreography. Wearing a gown made of a gossamer fabric, Verterich, and her partner Krauchenka, in tails---captured the romance evoked by Rogers and Astaire in their films, as they beautifully floated across the stage.

Leaping into the air almost effortlessly was dance sensation Daniil Simkin (Soloist, American Ballet Theatre), appearing with Misa Kuranaga (Principal, Boston Ballet) in the excerpt, "Le Corsaire Pas de Deux," choreographed by Marius Petipa with music by Riccardo Drigo. Though diminutive in size, Simkin displayed amazing strength and agility, dancing a role acknowledged for its technical difficulty.

Simkin also appeared solo at the top of Act II, in "Les Bourgeois," with choreography by Ben Van Cauwenbergh, and music by Jacques Brel---once again connecting with the audience while displaying exceptional jumps and precision.

Possessing extraordinary poise (not to mention, unbelievable extensions) , was Mexican beauty, Elisa Carrillo Cabrera (Soloist, Berlin Ballet) who along with partner Mikhail Kaniskin (Principal, Berlin Ballet) were striking in Act I's, "Kazimir's Colours," choreographed by Mauro Bigonzetti with music by Dimitri Shostakovich. It was a sensual contemporary piece that showcased Cabrera's and Kaniskin's amazing dramatic abilities, and powers of control and flexibility.

The pair of Cabrera and Kaniskin also demonstrated superior technique and artistry in Act II when they performed "In the Middle Somewhat Elevated," a virtuoso contemporary piece choreographed by William Forsythe, with music by Thom Williams.

Based on the enthusiastic response of the audience, which included numerous young dance students, "Flames of Paris," featuring Natalia Osipova (Principal, Bolshoi Ballet) and Ivan Vasiliev (Principal, Bolshoi Ballet) with choreography by Vasily Vainonen, and music by Boris Asafiev, was both a showstopper and an undeniable artistic triumph.

Vasiliev, was a super-masculine, powerful, force of nature, causing the audience to gasp as he made death-defying leaps, jumps, twists and turns in mid-air, followed by firm landings. His dancing sent the crowd to into a frenzy both in this piece and in "Don Quixote Pas de Deux" in Act II during which he partnered again with Osipiva, who herself drew audible crowd raves for her spins and turns.

Reprising the role that brought down the house at last year's gala and did the same this year, was Miguel Quinones (Parsons Dance Company) in "Caught." It was choreographer David Parson's stroboscopic, signature piece, with music by Robert Fripp, that gave the illusion that Quinones was flying through the air. As was also the case last year, the audience lept to its feet in wild, thunderous applause and whistles, giving the event the aura of a rock concert rather than a ballet performance.

In an evening of rare and stunning performances, also deserving of mention are the rest of the gala stars, all of whom contributed to the world-class caliber of the evening's proceedings. They included: Yuan Yuan Tan (Principal Dancer, San Francisco Ballet) and Damian Smith (Principal, San Francisco Ballet) in Act I's, "Pas de deux from The Fifth Season," and "Distant Cries" in Act II; and Julie Kent (Principal, American Ballet Theatre) and Marcelo Gomes (Principal, American Ballet Theatre) in Act I's "Lady of the Camellias, Act III Pas De Deux" and Act II's "Othello."

In his opening remarks prior to the start of the gala, co-founder Bob Hesse announced that Indianapolis City Ballet has plans to form its own company, to be introduced in 2012. Based on what he, co-founder Jane Fortune, the ICB staff, and supporters have demonstrated in terms of vision and resources (as evidenced by the galas of these past few years and other ICB programs), there is a likelihood that a resident company could one day place Indianapolis on the world's cultural map.

For more information about Indianapolis City Ballet and its program of upcoming master classes for intermediate and advanced dance students, visit www.IndianapolisCityBallet.org.