

## Ballet gala audience embraces national, international dancers



By Jay Harvey

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By nature's calendar, harvest time is under way, but according to at least one newly crafted arts timetable, it's spring planting.

Saturday night's "Evening With the Stars," despite its self-sufficient glamour, also was intended to till the soil and sow the seeds for the revival of professional ballet here.

Indianapolis City Ballet may be able to put its name to a resident company eventually, but for now the label is already distinguished by the stellar entertainment that John Meehan, its artistic chairman, assembled at the Murat Theatre for its gala debut.

The program set the amplitude of ballet's language and breadth of expression before a large, enthusiastic audience. But Meehan's light touch in introducing each of the 11 pieces steered clear of lecturing, and the showcase wasn't set up to make educational points.

Sure, you could revel in the vivid contrast of one of the world's most famous love stories between Kenneth MacMillan's lyrical balcony pas de deux from "Romeo and Juliet" and the icebreaking clarity and declarative energy of "Radio & Juliet," Edward Clug's setting of the young lovers' first meeting at the Capulets' ball to music of Radiohead.

The former, with Julie Kent and David Hallberg, brought out the eloquence with which arms and hands can suggest intimacy and inhibitions, presenting a series of visual analogues to Shakespeare's poetry.

Crisply performed by Denis and Anastasia Matvienko, "Radio & Juliet" focused more on teen bravado and flirtation in modern postures -- quick, angular slouches and lots of close-to-the-face gestures that seemed to presage the obstacles the couple soon will resolve to surmount.

Otherwise, the showcase allowed each piece its own integrity. And each piece was certainly danced as if it were the most important thing in the world for the time it lasted.

That feeling gripped the evening from the start, in David Hochoy's resetting as a ballet of "Fascinatin' Rhythm," originally for Dance Kaleidoscope, the Indianapolis modern-dance troupe he's directed for many years. With Tiler Peck, Sarah Lane and Joaquin De Luz, it kept its Gershwin sauciness intact while taking on a special soaring quality in this version.

Other highlights: Denis Matvienko's brilliant variation in the "Diana and Actaeon" pas de deux; the sensory assault and lift, thanks to strobe lighting, of David Parsons' "Caught," as danced by Miguel Quinones; Alicia Amatriain and Jason Reilly's virtuosic range of partnering in the comical "Grand Pas De Deux" and the edgy "Mono Lisa;" and the snappy exuberance of De Luz and Peck in the pas de deux from George Balanchine's "Stars and Stripes."