



BWW Dance Review: NEW YORK JAZZ CHOREOGRAPHY PROJECT a Plethora of Jazz Dances

by

Marsha Volgyi

April 14

<http://www.broadwayworld.com/article/BWW-Dance-Review-NEW-YORK-JAZZ-CHOREOGRAPHY-PROJECT-a-Plethora-of-Jazz-Dances-20160414>



At the Salvatore Capezio Theater at Peridance, located near Union Square, on April 9, 2016 the New York Jazz Choreography Project (NYJCP) had a line-up of thirteen jazz dances. Some of those acts ranged from duets to large ensembles. Their co-artistic director, Marian Hyun, spoke to the audience briefly to describe the goals of this not-for-profit organization. One of these goals is to keep American jazz dance thriving. The dance style of jazz is very important to me because this is what fuels many of the steps in numerous Broadway shows. Jazz has also showcased many great artists over the decades-Bob Fosse, Luigi, Ann Reinking, Jerome Robbins, and hundreds more. For this review, I will be highlighting my five favorite pieces. Each piece of the evening was a joy, yet I want to discuss those dancers and acts that significantly stood out to me.

2am, Dance with Me

This was the opening piece of the NYJCP. And rightfully so. It was filled with the youthful energy danced by the students of the *Steps on Broadway Conservatory Program*. Co-choreographers Bill Hastings and Chet Walker created a wonderful mixture of group formations, musical theater intonations, and unexpected movements. In one section, the male dancer of the student group was playfully dragged by his arms in a full split while two females dancers propelled him across the stage. The manner in which the young man performed that moment showed by his smile that he truly was in his element-dancing. I loved how Mr. Hastings and Mr. Walker decided to have the female students wear dance heels. Dancing in heels is different than in flats. However the ladies did a fantastic job of making this difficult task look smooth.

Fever

I am not one for seeing another dancer perform to this song. It is a piece of music used too often in productions. However, this time I did not mind listening and watching a performer dance to *Fever*. First, this song was sung by Beyoncé. A plus. Second, dancer Hannah Jennens interpreted Rachel Leigh Dolan's choreography with a non-seducing element. This song does not always have to be danced in a sexy manner and I applaud this interpretation. Moreover, it had a playful lyrical touch with the use of Ms. Jennens' clean technical jazz technique. There wasn't the usual unending backbends on the song's accents nor on-the-floor fan kicks facing forward-thankfully. It was a pleasure just to enjoy and imagine that I had never seen anyone dance to this music before until this wonderful dancer.

Blackbird

Laura Stecher as the Blackbird never touched the ground. She was accompanied and supported by the dancers. Each one not only held Ms. Stecher aloft yet also danced jazz with grace. The supporting dancers caught her in a choreographed catch and also in a dolphin-like ripple effect that continuously travelled across the space. I attribute this ingenuity to its choreographer, Sue Samuels. Costume and make-up were also flawless.

Romantic Moonphase

A modern-day Giselle Act I without the intense drama. The bench was one of the reminders for me of that ballet. However, it was the chemistry of dancers, Jeff Davis and Alice Pucheu, which sparkled. Each person had a chance to demonstrate their particular skills and then dance as a pair. Mr. Davis gave us clown-type moves with fantastic quick steps. The prop allowed the act to be three-dimensional and I thought was a nice addition to the already thrilling performance. Interestingly, Mr. Davis was the choreographer and a great showman.

eat Crow

This dance was 1920's flappers with a twist. To open *eat Crow*, Chawnta' Van was the featured lead dancer. She had such charismatic expressions to help pull us into this era. After her solo, an ensemble of eight female dancers in 1920's costumes sold me. At one point, they began to dance as a group by keeping up with the climactic musical tones. This made me want to find a open space on the stage and join in with the excitement. Jazz is exciting, and choreographer Barbara Angeline tuned into just that.

Even though these were my favorite acts, there were pieces which included 80's style controlled jazz, intense hip-hop, and swing dancing. All of what the NYJCP coordinated that evening was an evolution of jazz. I would even say that each style fell under the umbrella of this expressive art form. If you want see more of the NYJCP, visit them on their website jazzchoreographyenterprises.org to find out how you can also see what I saw.

Photo Credits: Jan La Salle (*eat Crow* ensemble & *Fever* Hannah Jennens)

© 2016 Copyright [Wisdom Digital Media](#). All Rights reserved.