

DANCE REVIEW

'30x30' shows off a wealth of talent

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BY **BARBARA ZUCK**

For The Columbus Dispatch

Thirty new ballets by 30 choreographers. Temporary insanity by BalletMet?

The concept might have sounded foolhardy, but BalletMet's new *30x30* program amounts to an embarrassment of riches, as the choreographers invited to make short new works for the company responded by creating a treasure chest of intriguing, often innovative ballets.

From new work in Russian-styled classical ballet to jazz dance and everything in between, the program unveils exciting forays into many dance styles and serves as a reminder to how deep the talent in dance in this country is right now.

The original plan was to present all 30 pieces in one evening. When this proved unwieldy, two programs of 22 pieces each were put together, allowing for some repeats from night to night, although it still amounts to a lot of new dance at once.

At last night's sold-out opening of Program I, in the company's Performance Space, works by ballet heavyweights such as James Kudelka and Stanton Welch rubbed shoulders with works by emerging talents including dancers from BalletMet's own ranks. Both Kudelka's *See #3* and Welch's *Return* suggested references to historical art.

In Kudelka's piece, dancer Jackson Sarver seemed like a god come down from the Sistine Chapel ceiling as he performed gestures and struck poses that hinted at religious art. The music — a rarely heard sonata by Biber — seemed to cast Jimmy Orrante, always watching at a distance, as the guardian angel.

In Welch's *Return*, the four dancers looked like part of an ancient frieze come to life momentarily in a balletic pas de quatre with beautifully inventive steps in the partnering.

Working with time limitations, most choreographers chose to work with a small numbers of dancers, including pairs.

David Shimotakahara created a sensual and at once original duet in *Sweet*, performed with fluid grace by Justin Gibbs and Annie Mallonee. Ma Cong's *Two of Us* is a more lighthearted and quirky pas de deux, performed by Hitomi Yamada and Christian Broomhall.

Adam Hundt's *Bang, Bang (My Baby Shot Me Dead)* made for a stunning and startling bit of dance theater, as did Justin Gibb's emotion-packed *This Is A Lie*. Dmitri Suslov's *Pas de Deux of Niriti and Vayou* is a full-blown throwback to the Golden Age, with a complete adagio and set of variations in the classical style, with dancer Jeff Wolfe performing in bravura style.

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IF YOU GO

BalletMet Columbus will perform 30X30 at 8 tonight and Saturday, and 2 and 7 p.m. Sunday in the BalletMet Performance Space, behind 322 Mount Vernon Ave.

Tickets cost \$25 at the box office (614-229-4848; www.balletmet.org) and Ticketmaster outlets (614-431-3600; www.ticketmaster.com).

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