

FEATURES - THE ARTS; Pg. 03C  
DANCE/2004, YEAR-END UPDATES;  
BALLETMET CONTINUES TO STEP UP

Barbara Zuck, THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Neither BalletMet Columbus nor its fans will forget 2004.

The 26-year-old company -- born in a small studio over a Downtown bagel shop and now the city's premier dance organization -- made its coveted Joyce Theater debut May 25-30. More than a half dozen East Coast critics raved.

The professional approval was gratifying for the hardworking company.

The troupe went through small artistic upheavals in 2001 when former artistic director David Nixon departed for England and again, at the end of last season, when more than a handful of dancers followed suit.

But with Gerard Charles as associate director, and artistic associate Stanton Welch providing additional inspired choreographic creations, BalletMet has extended its steady climb to artistic prominence. Charles' long history with the company and the community -- he began here in 1986 as a dancer and also served as ballet master from 1988 to 1991 -- has helped ease the transition.

Charles' new version of The Nutcracker is the company's finest to date and drew audiences despite competition from the Radio City Christmas Spectacular featuring the Rockettes, which played the Ohio Theatre before Nutcracker.

Although the ballet dominates the local dance scene, other, smaller efforts exist, if in fewer numbers than in the 1980s and early 1990s. Natalie Marrone's ongoing research into Italian dance and culture paid off in her latest evening-length work, Chant Dances. OSUDance, under new coordinator Mike Bruce, presented its finest work in years, a true collaborative effort among Ohio State University dance professors and students that amounted to a varied and exciting night in the theater.

Dance lovers await the next generation of young choreographers brave enough and determined enough to start their own companies. That's the American tradition, one worthy of perpetuating -- even in dance-tough central Ohio.

Box Story:Best dance events

- \* Swan Lake, choreography by David Nixon, BalletMet Columbus, Sept. 30-Oct. 3, Ohio Theatre

- \* The Nutcracker , choreography by Gerard Charles, characterizations by Robert Post, BalletMet Columbus, Dec. 10-23, Ohio Theatre
- \* Exuberant , choreography by Susan Hadley, Melanie Bales, Victoria Uris, Zvi Gotheiner and Doris Humphrey (labanotated score by Lucy Venable), OSUDance, March 11-13, Riffe Center's Capitol Theatre
- \* Evolution, choreography by Stanton Welch, BalletMet Columbus, April 29-May 9, Capitol Theatre
- \* Radio City Christmas Spectacular , the Rockettes, choreography by Linda Haberman, CAPA/Broadway in Columbus presentation, Nov. 18-Dec. 5, Ohio Theatre
- \* "Rendezvous at the Riffe," choreography by Welch, Harrison McEldowney, Nixon and Marius Petipa, BalletMet Columbus, Feb. 12-21, Capitol Theatre
- \* Mercy 10 x 8 on a Circle , Blauvelt Mountain (A Fiction) and Another Another History of Collage , choreography by Bill. T. Jones and Arnie Zane, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, Wexner Center for the Arts' Mershon Auditorium, Feb. 17
- \* Chant Dances , choreography by Natalie Marrone, the Dance Cure, March 11-13, Riffe Center's Studio One Theatre