



Crossing Paths: A unique dance collaboration

A review

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Christine Buss/Contributing reviewer

Anyone who has attended the annual Sterling Spring Dance Concert produced by Renee Moe has seen firsthand the creativity with which Renee weaves together pieces that blend the various ages and abilities of her dancers. Once again, on Friday evening at the Arrowhead Center for the Arts in Grand Marais, we were able to enjoy, and appreciate, Renee's participation in another creative and inspirational adventure.

Crossing Paths was an event that united two very different dance companies—the Minnesota Ballet and Ressler Dance!, both out of Duluth. Allen Fields, director of the Minnesota Ballet, introduced the show by giving the audience a brief overview of the two diverse forms of dance represented in the evening's performance. He likened this integration of ballet and modern dance to "putting a football team and a basketball team together and telling them to play."

Ballet is a much older, more established form of dance in which the dancers hold their bodies very upright, dance across the stage on their toes, and move their legs and arms in defined ways. Modern dance, on the other hand, is a very new form—within the last 100 years—and is in the beginning stages of developing its art. In direct contrast to ballet, modern dance is weighted, more natural or free, and low-to-the-ground in its movements. One can understand, with this simple comparison between the dance forms, the difficulties presented in creating a common ground on which these opposite troupes could dance together.

The dancers gave the audience a one-of-a-kind performance that featured a wide array of music and movement. They danced to the fiery beat of traditional flamenco music, the rousing sounds of Leonard Bernstein, and the classical melodies of Beethoven (to name just a few). It was obvious, from their passionate energy and radiant smiles, that the dancers took great pleasure in the innovation and fun brought about by this imaginative collaboration.

The choreography was at times surprising, and brilliant, put together in a style that flowed naturally even if out-of-character for the specific dance form. The audience had probably never seen ballet presented in such a playful, whimsical fashion. The joyfulness of this venture was ever-present as we watched these two groups move together in original ways.

This event was certainly not without risk. The act of combining these divergent styles of dance stretches one's imagination and abilities. The outcome could have been a complete disaster; however, instead it was an amazing creation of exceptionally talented and innovative directors and dancers ... and well worth the risk. Kudos to the choreographers—Doris Ressler, Robert Gardner, and Allen Fields.

Seeing a performance like this might make one contemplate the larger, ongoing issues in the world. We could learn much from the artists of this collaborative endeavor—from discovering new ways to create common ground to finding unique approaches to settling world conflict. There is great hope for peace after experiencing this inventive and inspiring production.

The two dance companies want to come back again next spring and make this collaboration an annual event. Both groups would like to spend a week in our community, sharing their skills and the incredible gift of dance with children and adults alike. If individuals or businesses are interested in assisting with their return, please contact Renee Moe at (218) 387-2575 or reneemoe@boreal.org.

Christine Buss is an avid supporter of artistic creations and is the owner of Creative Project Consulting. She is also a beginning tap dancer and a student of Sterling Dance.