

Kannapolis Citizen *Week of June 13 to 19, 2007*



Piedmont Dance Theatre wows, inspires

The lawn at Village Park was packed for Piedmont Dance Theatre's third annual outdoor performance, "Dancing under the Stars."

The local nonprofit dance ensemble, sponsored by Cabarrus Arts Council and Kannapolis Parks and Recreation, performed a mix of classical ballet and modern dance.

This year, audiences cheered along with dances accompanied by five classic songs by Ray Charles; including "Georgia on my Mind" and "Hit the Road Jack."

Becky Tolle of Kannapolis Parks and Recreation says the event offers a very different flavor of entertainment and always draws a crowd.

"The concerts are wonderful, the movies in the park are great, but the ballet gives people a chance to come out and see a true theatrical performance," Tolle said.

About 750 people turned out for the performance, Tolle estimated. Piedmont Dance Theatre is directed by Rebecca and Daniel Wiley, who also run a privately-owned dance school. The theatre is their nonprofit educational group, aimed at enriching the community through performing arts.

“It’s something special, because I know what we’re offering the community is top-notch stuff,” Daniel Wiley said. He joined his wife, Rebecca, as co-director last year.

Prior to that, Daniel was principal dancer with North Carolina Dance Theatre in Charlotte.

Daniel said that the dancers enjoy sharing their talent with the community. “We’re not holding back ...It feels awesome. We feel it’s very important to show all the different aspects of dance.”

Saturday’s show mixed contemporary and modern dance styles, which Daniel said is not always done elsewhere.

“With different companies I’ve been with, they have a tendency to educate an audience strictly through classical ballet.”

When those companies try to incorporate different styles, audiences may not know what to think.

That’s why the Wiley’s try to give a variety of styles in their performances.

“It keeps getting better every year,” Daniel said. Rebecca said she was very pleased with the response from Saturday’s show.

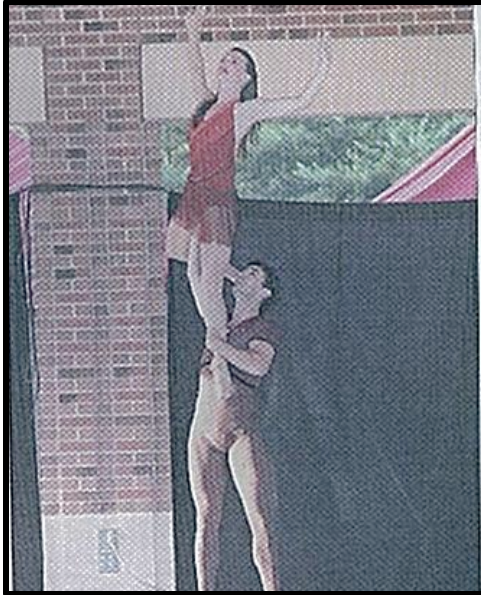
“I got three e-mails from people who said you couldn’t find a better show in New York City,” she joked.

“I feel that all of the dancers did well,” she said, adding that the performances are beneficial for everyone involved in the company, not just the audience.

“Even the professionals learned something, also. It was a learning experience for the entire cast, not just the students,” she said. Rebecca said that Piedmont Dance Theatre is also involved in community outreach events, including a planned educational partnership with Cabarrus County and Kannapolis City Schools.

Planning is also under way for this year's performance of "The Nutcracker," with the Salisbury Symphony slated to perform at one show with the dancers in Salisbury.

Meanwhile, the inspirational effect of the dancers was evident on Saturday: All around the lawn, girls were dancing in imitation of the artists on the stage.



Some of the young people in the audience are already dancers in training.

"Dancing is fun," said Tiffany Wright, age 12, who has been taking classes at Dance Dreams Studio in Kannapolis for five years.

She prefers jazz and tap dancing to the more traditional ballet that opened the show. But Tiffany said she enjoys being a dancer. "It's fun. Sometimes it's challenging, and it's good exercise," she said.

Payton Black, age 3, and Cameron, age 2, had fun watching with parents Casey and Susan Black of China Grove.

"The kids are really enjoying it. My wife used to dance. It's good, fun entertainment," Casey Black said.

