

Dance Review

'Incendio' lights up the stage at the Hult Center

By Gwen Curran

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What a treat! The Ballet Fantastique's "Incendio" at the Hult Center this past weekend had it all.

The choreography was brilliant. The technique was brilliant. The music was brilliant. Even the costumes were brilliant. Donna and Hannah Bontrager produced (dare I say it again) a brilliant show.

The first act presented the best of the best from Ballet Fantastique's repertoire. "La Soleda" (2005) opened the evening with old world classical technique, fabulous costumes and new world music by Pink Martini. Ashley Bontrager, Alanna Fisher, Amelia Unsicker and Krislyn Wessel were sparkling to watch.

Next was "Gaucho" (2011) with a trio of powerful dancers, Hannah Bontrager, Elijah Labay and Leanne Mizzoni. Unsicker delighted the senses in her passionate solo, "Passion" (2010) to music by John Corigliano from The Red Violin.

"Orion" (2010) melded the forces of five females – Ashley and Hannah Bontrager, Fisher, Mizzoni and Wessel – who danced out the constellation's five stars. To music by Metallica as played by the Scorched Earth Orchestra, these ballerinas appeared to float in the heavens with a deliberate and possessive calm.

Unsicker returned for another Red Violin solo, "Obsession" (2010). Her hands, as an extension of her talented body, were especially eye-catching.

Camille Morgenstern and Kelsey Kelly danced the "Habanera" from "Carmen" exceedingly well as company apprentices. We will see more of these two in the future.

The six lead ballerinas finished Act I with "Tango Forte." Virtuoso footwork and dazzling theatrics made this a mesmerizing piece. Music by DoubleX Inc. drove the dancers to incredible and striking movements.

Ballet Fantastique has a history of using live musicians. "Incendio" is the title of this evening of dance and also the name of the Latin guitar world fusion quartet from Los Angeles. Lisa Carbe, J.P. Durand, James Stubblefield and Bryan Brock create a swirl of Latin American music forms, adding Indian, Arabic and Celtic bits and jazz improvisation to produce a spicy international sound.

The eight collaborations between the Incendio musicians and the Ballet Fantastique dancers in Act II were an energetic mix.

“Tango Para Abel” was a tribute to J.P. Durand’s father and his love of Argentine tango. Ashley Bontrager, Labay and Mizzoni flirted with the music and each other through this dance. Unsicker’s solo, “St. Margaret’s Tears,” tells the Celtic story of a mother’s sorrow. Illumination dancers Hannah Bontrager, Fisher and Wessel changed character dramatically for this piece, which had exciting Middle Eastern and flamenco echoes; wonderful percussion.

In “Magie Noire,” Mizzoni was courageous and strong working with her novice partner, Justin Feimster.

“Misterioso” is Incendio’s signature piece. Ashley Bontrager, Fisher and Wessel moved surely through this complex music.

Incendio’s solo, “Luna,” was a fun, upbeat samba. Next time, please light the musicians more so the audience can see their faces and instruments.

“The Finale” paid tribute to the late great bass player Jaco Pastorius and the flamenco master Paco de Lucia.

Incendio fue fantastico!

Gwen Curran of Eugene reviews dance for The Register-Guard.