

Mizzou Global Communications

thoughts and ideas taking over our world

Garth Fagan Dance Company brings international flavor to Mizzou debut

Posted on [February 27, 2013](#) by [Marie French](#)

by [Niki Kottmann](#)

There was no music, yet he was dancing. Then two more, and two more after that, and soon the whole stage was full of dancers who seemed oblivious to the fact that there was no accompaniment helping them stay on beat.

On Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2013, the world-renowned Garth Fagan Dance Company took the stage at Jesse Hall for a truly unforgettable performance. The group is now celebrating its 40th season, and consists of eight highly trained dancers and four apprentices who come from all over the United States and the world.

[Fagan](#), the founder and [artistic director of the award-winning company](#), is a Tony Award winning choreographer who is best known for his work on Broadway's "The Lion King."

His style is highly complex but typically regarded as a form of modern dance with Afro-Caribbean influences. Many of his pieces involve moments or long periods of silence followed by music.

Bill Ferguson acts as the company's artistic and administrative liaison, as well as personal assistant to Fagan. He has his own original definition of Fagan's unique style of choreography.

"Garth's choreography is a mélange of the world's best cuisines," Ferguson said. "But it's not like somebody just smashed the best Chinese with the best French with the best African...it's like somebody took their time and really melded the stew together, and added the pieces the way they're supposed to be done...it's like a gumbo, it speaks to every part of the world."

Audience member Michael Grinfeld, an associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism, enjoyed his second time watching the company perform. The first was during a tour in New York City.

“They have a very strong style, powerful dancers and edgy choreography,” Grinfeld said. “At certain times they’re suspended in space. It’s dynamic, rotates between times of stoic silence.”

Ruth Russell, another audience member, is a modern dancer and enjoyed watching a new form of her style. She particularly liked the way the dancers transitioned on and off stage and how one would appear just as the other was exiting.

The company has had multiple international tours and has performed on every continent except Antarctica. It has been highly successful and receives numerous positive critiques everywhere it goes.

“One of the things that comes through the most in Garth’s choreography is the humanity,” Ferguson said. “Wherever we go, humanity is the thing that speaks across cultures, across socioeconomic borders, and it speaks across languages. So when people see themselves in the work, or they see the best of human kind in the work, they can relate to it.”

Ferguson believes that Fagan has a gift for choosing pieces that will really speak to an audience. He recalled a performance during their 1985 tour of Africa in which, halfway through, the audience spontaneously began singing along to the Catholic Church hymn that served as the dancers’ accompaniment.

The company is also highly regarded for its originality. Everything from the shape of its movements to the way dancers learn the choreography is very different than other dance styles, and that’s what makes them all the more impressive.

“You don’t really see this technique or this style,” said Sade Bully, a dancer in the company. “It almost looks improvised, just like regular people dancing. It’s very technical and at the same time you make it look very natural. It has a very high energy demand.”

Bully was told the morning of the performance that she would be taking another dancer’s spot in one of the pieces. After rehearsing once, she performed the new routine that same night, yet nobody would have noticed if an announcement hadn’t been made before the show began.

The company’s performance ended on a very positive note. The last dance was one of the only ones during which the performers smiled.

It was set to an uplifting, jazz-like beat that left the audience in a happy, loving life sort of mood. This sentiment perfectly embodies the company’s image of a close-knit group that inspires unity among its audiences.

“It’s a community on stage,” Ferguson said. “We’re not all the same size. We’re not all the same color. We’re not all the same shape, but we all dance the same way... That unity, amidst the diversity of the community, speaks to people.”

Share this:

Twitter 2

Facebook 8

Like this:

★ Like



One blogger likes this.

This entry was posted in [MU Events](#) and tagged [dance](#), [Garth Fagan](#), [Garth Fagan Dance Company](#), [International](#), [Jesse Auditorium](#), [Mizzou](#) by [Marie French](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#) [<http://muglobalcommunications.wordpress.com/2013/02/27/garth-fagan-dance-company-brings-international-flavor-to-mizzou-debut/>].