Pandemonium Dance Circus

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The Pandemonium Dance Circus has joined modern dance forces in Milwaukee through the return of dancer Betty Salamun and lighting director David Drake. Their first concert took place at Milwaukee's Jewish Community Center on May 5 and 6 and drew an audience of approximately 300 for each performance. The concert marks a triumph for the young artists' determination, and the results are a very respectable beginning.

The concert consisted of five works by Ms. Salamun: "Incantation", "Dance to Your Daddy", "Force Field", "Lacquered Nests", and "Horizon". In addition to Salamun and Drake, the company includes Julie Eder, Barbara Traugott, and Ferne Caulker-Bronson, artistic director of the Ko Thi Dance Theatre. The program was ambitious for a first concert.

Ms. Salamun, who studied with Viola Farber and Merce Cunningham in New York, has not yet developed a distinctive style. A touch of lightness, tending toward the comic, was the dominant mood of this concert. A tendency toward cuteness was at its worst in "Dance to Your Daddy", in which the choreography lost interest and the dancers, especially Mr. Drake, seemed to be enjoying themselves too much. At times the lighting stood out and competed with the choreography. I am certain that these excesses will be corrected as the Pandemonium Dance Circus moves beyond its "getting started" stages.

The most memorable dances presented in this concert were "Force Field", performed by Caulker-Bronson, Salamun, and Traugott, and "Horizon", danced by Caulker-Bronson, Drake, and Salamun. Both these works showed the most choreographic development and the most compelling dancing.
Overall, the Pandemonium Dance Circus presented a very believable performance, one they can be proud of and one which they can build on in the future. Milwaukee very much needs to expand the quality and scope of its modern dance offerings. We hope that the Pandemonium Dance Circus will continue to grow and contribute to that end. The impressive audience should encourage other dancers to try.

We are especially pleased to note that Salamun, a UWM dance graduate, and Drake, a Marquette theatre graduate, have returned to Milwaukee from New York to pursue their careers in dance.

--Curtis L. Carter