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Arts

Modern Moves

The dancers and choreographers of Moving Collective want to take the intimidation out of modern dance

By **Javacia N. Harris**
Photos by Frankie Steele

Theresa Bautista thought she'd always be a ballerina. Even after performing with the now-defunct Art! Art! Barking Dog Dance Company, which specialized in contemporary styles, she just didn't think modern dance was for her.

But after some chats with mentors about human anatomy, Bautista discovered how natural the movements of modern dance could be and fell in love with the genre. She is now so passionate about it she created Moving Collective, an organization that contracts dancers and choreographers from Kentucky and surrounding areas for occasional performances.

"I think a lot of times people think that the only professional dancers in Louisville are at the Louisville Ballet," she said.

Bautista had noticed a lack of opportunities for contemporary dancers and choreographers to showcase their talents, and when Barking Dog started making plans to close (the company had its final show in June) Bautista knew she had to do something.

"I just thought, 'Why isn't the city using the many talented dancers that are here? Why not create an opportunity for them to choreograph and perform?'"

Nineteen dancers and choreographers were involved in Moving Collective's first show in January 2006. There was a second show in October. Both performances drew more than 200 people, which isn't bad for a small group of modern dancers dependent on word-of-mouth publicity. This weekend, Moving Collective will present "Impressions" Saturday night at the Oldham County Arts Center.

Even if dance really isn't your thing, Tamara Begley believes you'll find something intriguing at the show.

"Variety is the keyword," said Begley, a local dancer and choreographer who helped get Moving Collective up and running. "There are some dances that are very serious. There are also some dances that are very humorous. It's a very wide spectrum."

Begley, who studied dance at University of North Carolina-Greensboro, choreographed a piece in the show called "That Which Is Most Important." Using techno music and a game of musical chairs, Begley said the piece explores "competition in our culture, especially between women, and the pressure to conform."

In "October Song," choreographer Kimberly Nygren Cox honors Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month with a solemn, graceful dance that shows off her strong ballet background.

"I've had experience with friends who have lost children or haven't been able to conceive, and I know that it's very commonplace but often not talked about," said Cox, who retired from the Louisville Ballet as a soloist in 2003.

Then there are pieces like "gamegirl," a fun, upbeat dance inspired by videogames and



Members of the Moving Collective dance group rehearsed "Transitions," a piece about the different stages of life set to music. (Frankie Steele)

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Farnsley-Moremen Landing
- Derby City Roller Girls**
Treo Roller Pavillion
- Jeffersontown Gaslight Festival**
Downtown Jeffersontown
- "Regrets Only"**
Bunbury Theatre
- Tracy Smith, Patrick Spring**
Comedy Caravan

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choreographed by Bautista, who also teaches dance for the Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts.

Beth Rodriguez, a Louisville native who recently returned to the River City after dancing in Brooklyn for eight years, choreographed a solo piece that she will perform called "Named Rose."

"The movement is based upon sculptures by (Auguste) Rodin," Rodriguez said. "I was moved by his work because it had such a grace, especially the hands of the subjects he sculpted." And she named the piece after her mother. "My mom is lovely, and her hands are very graceful."

Dancer Julia Kean, who will perform in three pieces in the show, said she feels that watching modern dance is a lot like going to a museum.

"Some of the solos are like a moving sculpture," she said.

Bautista thinks, however, that some people shun modern dance for the same reason they pass on a trip to the museum. "I think contemporary dance can be as intimidating as modern art," she said. "I think sometimes people feel like there has to be a story or a very obvious theme and they have to get it. Contemporary dance, I think, can be both daunting but also welcoming."

Ask the dancers what they love about modern dance and most will give the same answer -- the freedom.

"With modern, you have to let go more and let go of all of the restrictions that keep you so technical in ballet," Kean said.

In Impressions you'll often see flexed, bare feet, not pointe shoes. You'll see dancers who manage to be graceful even when they are falling down or flopping around, pieces in which the dancers look like children on a playground, moves that look borrowed from martial arts, and dance set to music by Björk.

Some works may leave you sad or contemplative. Others may make you wish you were up on the stage joining in on the fun.

"Modern dance is such a wide-open genre, it's hard to explain," Begley said. "You can do anything, pretty much, and it's okay because it's modern dance."

Impressions

8 p.m. Saturday
Oldham County
Arts Center
7105 Floydsburg Road Crestwood, Ky.
Tickets: \$10 (cash and check only)
Info: 241-6018