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## DANCECleveland and Playhouse Square Present Azure Barton & Artists (Review)

By Mark Horning

If modern dance is food for thought then Saturday's performance of Azure Barton and Artists at the Ohio Theatre was an intimate gourmet feast for a thousand lovers of the fine arts.



The first number performed was *Les Chambres des Jacques (Jack in the Box)*. This lively upbeat dancing extravaganza featured colorful costuming, vibrant music and incredible dancing that can best be described as whimsical and athletic.

The piece was originally created for Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal with the score of music of Vivaldi and The Cracow Klezmer Band. This mixture of musical styles looks strange on paper but worked wonders on the stage. The varied mix of music came from such diverse artists as Gilles Vigneault, Antonio Vivaldi, Les Yeux Noirs and The Cracow Klezmer Band and was arranged by Lev "Ljova" Zhurbin.

To my untrained ear, the music was reminiscent of classical, French folk music, gypsy and blue grass with hints of cajun thrown in. As eclectic a mix as this was, the dancers were able to keep in complete sync with the various challenging rhythms, moving their bodies as the tempo demanded.

After a short intermission, the troupe returned to perform *Busk*. The gypsy and choral music interspersed with Swedish chants was the perfect venue for the black clad hooded dancers. The only color on the stage was the color of their dance which was vibrant.

Clever use of highlight and lighting combined with the faces of the group made for an interesting effect. Juggling and a unicycle added a degree of additional complexity to the number and were greatly appreciated by the audience. Interspersed among the solo numbers were brilliant vignettes of group dance that also kept the audience visually involved.

Dancers included Azure Barton (who is also the Artistic Director and Choreographer), Cherice Barton, Tobin Del Cuore, Julia Eichten, Andrew Murdock, Emily Oldak, Christopher Ralph, Donald Sales, Annika Sheaff and Ben Wardell. Lighting design was by Burke Brown with Original Lighting by Daniel Ranger. The Costume Designer was Fritz Masten. The rest of the 2011 Tour Staff included Rehearsal Director Jonathan Emanuell Alsberry, Stage Director Jenni Bowman, Intern Clea Owens and Travel Coordinator Rosalind Barton.

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