

Saturday  
June 18, 2005

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# Star Tribune

NEWSPAPER OF THE TWIN CITIES

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DANCE REVIEW | TU DANCE

## New company makes a splash

By Camille LeFevre

Special to the Star Tribune

It's a dance event that's big, bold and beautiful to behold. The Twin Cities' newest troupe, TU Dance, directed by Toni Pierce-Sands and choreographer Uri Sands, is larger than any other local company, with 18 dancers. A showcase of local and out-of-town talent, the multicultural ensemble performs with the richness and precision of an orchestra.

Sands' singular choreography, a fresh blend of movement traditions, challenges you to reach for a new kind of descriptive language. During the two-hour concert, each piece is different in tone, style and composition. And throughout, the dancers convey a joy and generosity of spirit that bodes well for this venture.

The evening opens with the world premiere "Entrance II." Pierce-Sands appears, arms curving in welcome as rhythmic pulses quicken throughout her body. The rest of the company follows seamlessly, combining long, lean lines; curves, ripples and angles; hand flourishes, tiny hip thrusts and shoulder shimmies; and leaps that contain little explosions like starbursts.

There's a rhythmic, luscious musicality to the movement, performed with

### IF YOU GO

**What:** A new dance company directed by Uri Sands and Toni Pierce-Sands.

**When:** 8 p.m. today and Thurs.-Sat., 7 p.m. Sun. and June 26, 2 p.m. June 25.

**Where:** Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Av. S., Minneapolis.

**Review:** The Twin Cities' newest troupe is a big multicultural ensemble that performs with the richness and precision of an orchestra.

**Tickets:** \$17-\$22. 612-340-1725.

squeaky-clean technique. The choreography looks at home on all the dancers, but it pours like quicksilver from Mary Ann Bradley, Penelope Freeh and Prince Credell.

The sweet duet "High Heel Blues," another world premiere, is set to a delightful Tuck and Patti song. Here Pierce-Sands' swooping, swirling movements are a charming contrast to Sands' muscular control, which is so absolute he leaps sky high, turns, then lands soundlessly, panther-like, low on the floor. (Dancers change nightly.)

In contrast, "Shapes and Gaits" is a perplexing yet oddly compelling work. A company premiere set to music by Victor Wooten, Vivaldi, Bach, Radiohead, and unattributed voice-overs about prejudice

and acceptance, the piece juxtaposes the serious and the comic as it examines outsider status and the need to belong. The work opens with Freeh in a spotlight, bound with black bands controlled by invisible keepers. Those keepers turn out to be zany characters whose moves are rigid and abrupt, elastic and springy, by turns.

Abdo Sayegh, Jason Jacobs and Credell perform a trio of rigorous posturing, balletic man stances and balletic turns before they walk arm-in-arm, in a gesture of gay solidarity, toward a large triangle of light. In their duet, Laurel Keen and Alec Donovan are like two awkward, unyielding puzzle pieces that manage nonetheless to fit their jutting angles, flat feet, gloved fingers together. When Freeh reappears unbound and finally stands, a sense of humanity pervades the work.

The only misstep is the jazz trio "Sweet Tea." A company premiere set to music by John Coltrane, the work has a lazy-summer-afternoon feel that doesn't jibe with its jumbled choreography. Also on the program are the uplifting "Lady" and the luxurious "Tones of Adney." Sands' impromptu solo during intermission was an unscheduled delight.

*Camille LeFevre is a Twin Cities dance critic.*