

STATE OF THE ARTS: City's dance scene

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THE GAZETTE

The Gazette's second State of the Arts section is a look at how music, dance, theater and the visual arts are faring in the Pikes Peak region. This year's theme - "On the Move" - reflects movement, both figurative and literal, in the local arts scene. Cottonwood Artists' School is moving its huge collection of studios. The Manitou Arts Theater is moving out of Manitou Springs. And many segments of the arts community are moving forward in ways we couldn't have imagined a year or two ago.

Unlike other performing arts, this year's biggest news in the dance community was bad.

Peak Ballet Theatre, which got off to a promising start in 2002 and had become one of the city's most creative dance studios, closed in May, citing financial difficulties.

The season's positive highlight may have been a student production that same month, when the Ballet Society of Colorado Springs and the Colorado Springs Youth Symphony joined forces for Stravinsky's "Firebird Suite." This performance had enough passion and energy to give the most cynical heart hope for the future. "To be in a packed Pikes Peak Center, that was incredible," said Patricia Hoffman, co-director of the Ballet Society.

Colorado College's just-ended Extraordinary Dance Festival continued to build on the college's tradition of great dance, which goes back to Hanya Holm in the 1940s. This year's performances took place in the Cornerstone Arts Center, benefiting from a more intimate scale and better sightlines and acoustics than the old venue at Armstrong Hall.

Ormao Dance Company, the region's all-female dance group, unveiled "Canopy," a major new piece, at the Louisa Performing Arts Center.

At Indigo Dance Theatre - conceived in 2007 to be the city's first fully professional company - director Zetta Alderman is finding the going to be slow. "We have the talent," she said, adding, "The only thing I don't have is the money."

And there are many annual productions of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker" - four high-quality student productions (five if you count Northridge Dance Conservatory's Nutcracker-influenced "Christmas Carol") along with the collaboration between the Colorado Springs Philharmonic and San Diego Ballet.

The Ballet Society provides the local talent for that production - including Clara - and has built such a good relationship with the Philharmonic that the upcoming season contains three collaborations, in a repertoire that includes extensive excerpts from "Coppélia" and "The Firebird."

"In the past, it's mostly been animal ballets with the Philharmonic," said Hoffman. "We hope we can segue to a more adult audience."