

Press Kit: Electronic media edition



CITYDANCEENSEMBLE  
*Power. Passion. Purpose.*

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photo of Kathryn Pilkington  
by Paul Gordon Emerson

## Mission

“As artists from the nation’s capital, it’s our responsibility to seek out the finest choreographers, most gifted dancers, and the richest stories to tell. That’s how we create our concerts—concerts that excite, inspire, and challenge audiences here at home and around the world.”

– Paul Gordon Emerson, CityDance Ensemble Co-Founder & Artistic Director

## Power. Passion. Purpose.

CityDance Ensemble has been celebrated as “Washington’s preeminent modern dance company” (*The Washington Times*) and as a *Dance Magazine* “Top 25 To Watch.” The company’s collaborative spirit has earned it the reputation of “a brave and talented troupe willing to take risks” (*The Washington Post*). Its work in technology and film has garnered a Washington, DC Mayor’s Arts Award for Innovation in the Arts and commissions to partner with scientists from Princeton University. Above all, this thirteen-year-old company has consistently enchanted audiences from its home base in Washington, DC to Abu Dhabi, from small town Nebraska to St. Petersburg, Russia.

CityDance Ensemble, Inc. is the parent organization that includes CityDance Ensemble, a professional contemporary repertory company; CityDance Early Arts, an outreach program providing free dance classes and performances to children in underserved communities; CityDance Center at Strathmore, a dance school for children, youth, and adults and pre-professional program for teens; and CityDance FilmWORKS, an award-winning creator and presenter of original dance-on-camera productions.

The mission of CityDance Ensemble, Inc. is to advance the appreciation for and participation in the art of dance through excellence in performance, education, film, and artistic innovation. CityDance is committed to green practices and environmental leadership in the performing arts.

photo of Alice Wylie  
by Lois Greenfield

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## Accomplishments

### 2009

- Company tours the Middle East in April/May 2009 and Chile in May/June 2009.
- CityDance Ensemble premieres Paul Taylor's 1985 *Last Look*, the first time a company other than Mr. Taylor's own has been granted licensing for this masterwork.
- CityDance Ensemble receives the DC Mayor's Arts Award for Excellence in an Artistic Discipline.
- CityDance presents a special performance of *Jungle Books* in concert with and commissioned by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

### 2008

- CityDance is presented by Joyce SoHo, marking the company's New York City debut.
- CityDance receives Greater Washington Board of Trade and *Washington Business Journal's* first annual Greater Washington Green Business Award in the Outreach/Education category.
- Company member Jason Garcia Ignacio is named a "Top 20 Showstopper" by *Washingtonian Magazine*.

### 2007

- New England Foundation for the Arts awards CityDance Ensemble the NEA American Masterpieces grant to reconstruct Sophie Maslow's 1942 *Folksay*.
- CityDance inaugurates a partnership with the new Harman Center for the Arts, home of the Shakespeare Theatre Company, bringing an annual season to the flagship venue in downtown Washington, DC.
- CityDance premieres its original production of *Jungle Books* with major funding from the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities and Washington Performing Arts Society.

### 2006

- Company completes third international tour with a three-week program in Poland, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Serbia.

### 2005

- CityDance FilmWORKS receives the DC Mayor's Arts Award for Innovation in the Arts.
- Baltimore Symphony Orchestra commissions two works from CityDance.
- CityDance opens the CityDance Center at Strathmore at the new Music Center at Strathmore, the "jewel in the crown" (*The Washington Post*) of Washington's performing arts centers.

### 2004

- Company completes second international tour with programs in Poland and Lithuania.
- *The Washington Times* names CityDance as "Washington's preeminent modern dance company."

### 2003

- CityDance Ensemble wins the DC Mayor's Arts Award for Outstanding Emerging Artist.
- *Dance Magazine* names CityDance among the "Top 25 to Watch."
- FilmWORKS premieres at Washington, DC's leading independent movie house, prompting *The Washington Times* to declare "an art is born."

### 2002

- Company completes first international tour, opening the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dance Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia.



photo of Giselle Alvarez  
by Paul Gordon Emerson

# The Dance Company

**“It is very clear that this group of talented dancers brings to the stage agility, enthusiasm, and a good foundation of the serious and demanding techniques of dance.”**

- Gustavo Win, Washington, DC Arts Critic

CityDance Ensemble, hailed as “Washington’s preeminent modern dance company” (*The Washington Times*), is a professional contemporary repertory company based in the nation’s capital. Promising its signature **power, passion, and purpose** at every turn, the company performs athletic, challenging repertory by choreographers such as Paul Taylor, Larry Keigwin, Doug Varone, and Kate Weare. Under the leadership of Artistic Director **Paul Gordon Emerson**, Rehearsal Director **Christopher K. Morgan**, and Executive Director **Alexandra Nowakowski**, CityDance blends strong technique and physicality to present performances full of integrity, expression, and life.

photo of Jason Garcia Ignacio by  
Paul Gordon Emerson



Founded in 1996, CityDance Ensemble proves itself to be an innovative, exciting company that fulfills its reputation as **“Washington’s preeminent modern dance company”** (*The Washington Times*). The company has been named as a **“Top 25 to Watch”** by *Dance Magazine* (2003) and has won the DC Mayor’s Arts Award for Outstanding Emerging Artist (2003), Innovation in the Arts (2005), and Excellence in an Artistic Discipline (2009). CityDance Ensemble performs regularly at the Harman Center for the Arts, Music Center at Strathmore, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and other theaters in the DC metro area. In addition, the company tours both nationally and internationally, bringing its **“breathlessly innovative”** (*Dancer Magazine*) performances to audiences around the world.

CityDance strives to serve a **diverse population of audiences** as both a performance troupe and as an educator. Creating performances that are **inspiring and challenging**, yet always **accessible** to audiences, is a mainstay of the company’s programming. CityDance enriches and educates a variety of audiences through its **dynamic repertory** as well as its **family concerts and education programs**. CityDance performs regularly in the DC area at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Music Center at Strathmore, and Harman Center for the Arts, and tours throughout the nation and world.

In an art form that continually grows and changes in its demands and desires, CityDance Ensemble consistently delivers performances filled with equal amounts of precision and passion that **push the spoken and unspoken boundaries** of professional dance.

# Touring Repertory

CityDance Ensemble performs concerts brimming with artistically excellent, diverse repertory that makes the company uniquely appealing to experienced dance enthusiasts and newcomers alike. A company that has been praised for having both a “sense of humor” (*The Gazette*) and “astonishingly eloquent” choreography (*The Washington Post*), CityDance delivers performances that are warmly embraced by audiences ranging from Sarajevo to Philadelphia to Kearney, Nebraska.

CityDance Ensemble builds its concerts around three signature series:

**The NEXT Series** commissions new dances every season from emerging choreographers ready for the world stage, forging new works that are innovative, challenging, and exciting.

**The Legacy Series** returns historic dance masterpieces to the repertory in commitment to celebrating the art form’s distinguished past while staging works that remain relevant today.

**The Originals Series** commissions original scores by leading composers from across the musical spectrum, creating new works that range in style from classical to contemporary.



photo of Alicia Canterna  
by Paul Gordon Emerson

## 2009-2010 Touring Repertory

**Last Look (1985)** by Paul Taylor  
**Mattress Suite (2004)** by Larry Keigwin  
**Eclipse (1999)** by Doug Varone  
**Folksay (1942)** by Sophie Maslow (*an NEA American Masterpiece*)  
**Harmonica Breakdown (1938)** by Jane Dudley (*underwritten by the NEA*)  
**Scorched (2008)** by Kate Weare  
**Drop Down (2006)** by Kate Weare  
**Falling (2008)** by Paul Gordon Emerson  
**Han (2006/2007)** by Paul Gordon Emerson  
**Nocturne Monologue (2003)** by Jason Hartley  
**War (2008)** by Austin McCormick  
**Ties That Bind (2002)** by Christopher K. Morgan

## 2009-2010 Touring Repertory: Global Warming Project

**On a Train Heading South (2005)** by Brenda Way  
**Thirst (2009)** by Christopher K. Morgan  
**The Mountain (2009)** by Jason Garcia Ignacio  
**Revolution of the Butterflies (2008)** by Isabel Croxatto

## 2009-2010 Touring Repertory: Family Concerts

**Rudyard Kipling’s Jungle Books**  
**Dancing on One Planet**

# Booking

## Repertory Concerts

CityDance Ensemble presents evening-length concerts of dances from the current repertory featuring choreographers such as Paul Taylor, Doug Varone, Larry Keigwin, Kate Weare, and more. Repertory is also available from CityDance's global warming project.

## Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Books*

CityDance's original family production of Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Books*, created with funding from the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, is an enchanting 60-minute dance and music concert for the young and young at heart.

## Dance-on-Camera

CityDance FilmWORKS presents dance-on-camera screenings and workshops from its own repertory, as well as the international dance film community.

## Education Programs

CityDance Ensemble offers a variety of education programs as a supplement to repertory concerts. Education offerings include residency programs, lecture demonstrations, and master classes taught by dancers, filmmakers, and choreographers. CityDance also tours programs from its Early Arts outreach program, including its signature *Dancing on One Planet* concert and a tailored educational program of *Jungle Books*.

## Booking Contact

For bookings, please contact:

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photo of Christopher K. Morgan  
by Paul Gordon Emerson

# Leadership

photo of Paul Gordon  
Emerson by Lois  
Greenfield



**Paul Gordon Emerson (Co-Founder & Artistic Director)** was CityDance's original Executive Director and has been a part of the company since its founding. His career spans several fields, from campaign politics to defense and foreign policy analysis as a legislative director on Capitol Hill, to broadcasting and photography, with stops as a communications director and builder along the way. The common theme in all of this has been dance, which he came to for the first time at age 27. Mr. Emerson is co-host of the award-winning "Performance Moves" cable television magazine. He is the 2006 Pola Nirenska Award winner for service to dance in the Washington, DC area. He also directs the company's FilmWORKS division, which won the 2005 DC Mayor's Arts Award for Innovation in the Arts.

**Alexandra Nowakowski (Executive Director)** is responsible for CityDance Ensemble's overall business and financial operations including strategic planning, business development, fundraising, and marketing. After ten years of professional experience in the for-profit sector, she made the transition to providing professional services to the dance community. As former Vice President of Product Development for MarketResearch.com and a Sales Operations Manager for WorldCom (now Verizon), Ms. Nowakowski uses her broad business background to implement the best-practices of financial, operational, and marketing strategies for CityDance.

**Christopher K. Morgan (Rehearsal Director & Choreographer-in-Residence)** is a choreographer, performer, and arts facilitator. Said to be "charming and poignant" by *The New York Times*, he has been presented in Germany, Lithuania, Ireland, Poland, Hong Kong, and throughout the U.S. In addition to his work for CityDance, Mr. Morgan creates work through New York-based pick up dance company Muse, which he founded in 2005. He is also the Director of the Dance Omi International Dance Collective. Teaching credits include Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Shawbrook, Iwanson Schule, Stephens College, Western Kentucky University, and lectures for the Alliance of Artist Communities, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, New York City Ballet's Education Department, and Dance Theater Workshop. Performing credits include David Gordon, Fabulous Beast Dance Theater, Malashock Dance & Co., Verb Ballets, Selfish Shellfish, as a soloist with several opera companies, and as a guest artist for the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange.

**Lorraine Audéoud Spiegler (Director of Studio Education and The Conservatory)** holds a B.A. in Dance and a Masters in Dance and Arts Management from American University. She began her studies at the Washington School of Ballet under the direction of Mary Day. Ms. Spiegler is co-founder of The Washington Ballet's DanceDC Program and served as the organization's first Director of Education and Outreach. She returns to the U.S. after working at the Escola Americana do Rio de Janeiro as a Dance and Language Specialist. She has completed numerous Brazilian projects, including serving as a choreographer-in-residence for Richard Cragun's Ballet DeAnima, co-creating a Goucher College international study abroad course, and serving as a dance education advisor for Centro de Movimento Deborah Colker.

## Artists: The Dancers

**Giselle Alvarez** began dancing at Ballet Concerto Studios in Miami and then studied at Miami City Ballet School with her mentor Nancy Raffa. At the age of 15, Ms. Alvarez began dancing with the company, gaining professional experience in many Balanchine ballets. In 2004, she moved to Raleigh, NC to dance for the Carolina Ballet. There she performed new works with Timor Bortosenkov and Lynn Taylor Corbett. In April 2006, Ms. Alvarez relocated to the DC area, as a Studio Company member of The Washington Ballet.



**Elizabeth Gahl** is a graduate of Georgetown University and was a scholarship student at the Washington School of Ballet, where she frequently danced with the Washington Ballet Company. Awards and recognitions include the Lisa Gardiner Scholarship Award from the Washington School of Ballet, the Grand Prix Award at the Philadelphia Regional Competition of Youth America Grand Prix in 2002, and WUSA-TV's Amazing Kids in 2001. Her choreography has been performed at the Kennedy Center, the Youth America Grand Prix Competition, and the Peabody Institute's Spring Showcase at Friedberg Hall.

**Jason Garcia Ignacio** began his dance training at the age of 12 in Manila. He trained at Ballet Philippines, Philippine Ballet Theater, Steps Dance Studio, and was a member of Earth Savers Dreams Ensemble with whom he toured and performed internationally for five years. In 2001, Mr. Ignacio continued his dance training in New York City with a scholarship at Ballet Hispanico, where he also served on the faculty as a teacher. He was a fellowship student at The Ailey School and toured nationally with the Martha Graham Ensemble. He has performed with the Daniel Gwartzman Dance Company, Diversity of Dance, Cortez and Co., Connecticut Ballet, Zig-Zag Ballet, American Repertory Ballet, Verb Ballets, and was an apprentice for Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. Jason was named a "Top 20 Showstopper" by *Washingtonian Magazine* in 2008 and won the 2009 DC Mayor's Arts Award for Outstanding Emerging Artist. In 2009, Jason was awarded The Kennedy Center's Local Dance Commissioning Project for his work *The Mountain*.



**Delphina Parenti** grew up in a dancing family, performing at various venues and festivals with her parents in their family shows, as well as dancing with Theater Upon a Star Dance Swan, a multi-media dance theater company in Oklahoma City. A few years later she began to study ballet and modern dance, eventually completing her last two years of high school at North Carolina School of the Arts. Delphina went on to receive her BFA from the Juilliard School. While at Juilliard, Delphina also participated with Public Dance Theater, a non-profit dance organization designed to bring dance to everyone and for anyone. Professionally, she has worked with Pam Tamowitz Dance and Karen Reedy Dance on a project basis, and has participated twice in the Professional Project in Montreal.



**Kathryn Pilkington** is from North Carolina and received her early training from her mentor Sandra Miller. She then went to The Juilliard School where she danced works by Anthony Tudor, Ohad Naharin, Martha Graham, Jiri Kylian, Robert Battle, Zvi Gotheiner, and Lar Lubovitch. Graduating with a B.F.A. in 2004, she became a dancer and rehearsal assistant for Contemporary Dance Theater of NY, under the direction of Jennifer Kries, and Sensedance, under the direction of Henning Rubsam. She was also an ensemble member of the Radio City Christmas Spectacular.



**William Smith** was born in West Palm Beach, Florida, and first studied dance at the Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts and was coached by Joan Miller at the Palm Beach Ballet Center and Marie Hale at Ballet Florida. After training at the North Carolina School of the Arts and winning Mr. Dance of Florida, he moved to New York City to train with the Alvin Ailey School and the School of American Ballet. At 17 years old he became a member of the New York based Les Ballets Grandiva, an all-male comedy ballet company that toured exclusively in Japan. For two seasons he danced corps de ballet and soloist roles in classical and contemporary ballets. In 2001, he moved to Montreal and became a soloist with La La La Human Steps. In Montreal, William had the pleasure of working with Edouard Lock on the original creation of the critically acclaimed *Amelia*. In 2003 Mr. Smith danced as a soloist with Le Opera National De Paris in Rameau's final opera, *Les Borreads*. William went on to perform in his own cabaret acts in New York, Tokyo, and Montreal. In 2006 William joined the Actors' Equity Union working for Walt Disney World. This is William's first season with CityDance Ensemble.

**Maleek Mahkail Washington** was born in the Bronx, New York, and at seven years old was introduced to dance at Broadway Dance Center. He attended The Boston Conservatory while performing with the Commonwealth Ballet and working with Complexions. He recently attended Jacob's Pillow for his second year and has collaborated with Rod Rogers Dance Company. In addition, he has interacted with choreographers such as Azure Barton, Helen Pickett, Michael Utoff, Milton Meyers, Yuriko Takata, and Tim Rushton of the Danish Dance Theater. This is Maleek's second season with CityDance.



**Alice Belle Wylie**, originally from Maryland, began her dance training under Jane Bittner while participating in several summer workshops including Boston Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, and the Kennedy Center's Exploring Ballet with Suzanne Farrell program. Since that time she has trained extensively with Dawei Zhang, Violette Verdy, and Truman Finney. She graduated magna cum laude with a B.S. in Ballet and French from Indiana University. She has danced with Ballet Austin, Kim Robards Dance, DanceSmith, and is currently in her seventh season with CityDance Ensemble with whom she has toured internationally. Alice is a certified Vinyasa yoga instructor and teaches throughout the DC area.

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# Innovation, Green Programs, and Education

## Innovation & Green Programs

Winner of the 2005 DC Mayor's Arts Award for **Innovation in the Arts**, CityDance Ensemble prevails on the forefront of cutting-edge dance, film, and technology. **CityDance FilmWORKS** is a leading pioneer in the emerging art of dance-on-camera, creating stand-alone films and multi-media works that stretch the boundaries between stage and screen. Using state-of-the-art technology, CityDance's Tekhni Project employs computer programming to map the stage and enable movements by the dancers to trigger sounds and create their own music.

As winner of the Greater Washington Board of Trade and *Washington Business Journal's* **Greater Washington Green Business Award** in Outreach/Education, CityDance is forging new territory at the intersection of arts and the environment. With its annual concert program *Warmer*, CityDance invites choreographers to use art to give voice to the issue of climate change. CityDance also engages children in conversations about the environment through its in-school performances of *Dancing on One Planet*.

## Education

CityDance's in-studio education division, led by Director of Education **Lorraine Audéoud Spiegler**, is housed at **CityDance Center at Strathmore** in North Bethesda, Maryland.

CityDance trains the professional dancers of tomorrow through its **CityDance Select/Conservatory** program, a pre-professional intensive training program for serious dancers ages 13-19. The program features training in a variety of styles and techniques and focuses on other areas such as dance history, choreography, multimedia arts, and arts management. CityDance Select made its premiere performance with CityDance Ensemble in the December 2007 production of *Jungle Books*.

CityDance also manages and directs the dance program at **The Madeira School** in McLean, Virginia, providing dance instruction and performance opportunities for the school's boarding students.

**CityDance Early Arts**, the organization's outreach education division, is committed to revealing the world of the arts, and especially the joy of movement and dance, to children of all ages and backgrounds. Early Arts has an unwavering dedication to reaching those communities in the DC area where arts education is the least accessible and affordable. Early Arts runs several free outreach programs in public schools and community centers, reaching thousands of students each year.



photo of Delphina Parenti  
by Paul Gordon Emerson

## Rave Reviews



photo by Lois Greenfield

“A modern dance company that can compete with the best”  
*The Washington Post*

“There was passion in the dancers’ resilient athleticism”  
*The New York Times*

“Breathlessly innovative”  
*Dancer Magazine*

“Washington’s preeminent modern dance company”  
*The Washington Times*

“Astonishingly eloquent”  
*The Washington Post*

“The most talked about modern company on the local scene”  
*The Washington Times*

“A wide-ranging, eclectic repertoire”  
*The Washington Times*

“CityDance Ensemble has the guts to deliver on its promise”  
*The Washington Post*

“Top-notch dancers”  
*The Washington Post*

“The ambition, hard work and competitiveness that drives successful Washingtonians”  
*The Washington Post*

“CityDance Ensemble dazzled an overflow audience during Amman’s third annual modern dance festival...the performance left the audience yelling for more.”

*U.S. Embassy in Jordan*

“Something not to miss”  
*Philadelphia CityPaper*

“The finest artists in the festival”  
*Warsaw Poland Post*

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photo by Paul Gordon Emerson

“An art is born”

## “An art is born”

### An Art is Born (in an abridged version)

*The Washington Times*

by Jean Battey Lewis

June 21, 2003

Capturing dance on film has come a long way since its early beginnings. Witness the more than three hours of dance on PBS this past Wednesday evening that ranged from documentaries to reasonable facsimiles of live performances.

Using the devices of film and the moving images of dance to create a different, independent art form is much less often explored. All the more reason to **hail the fledgling efforts by the dynamic modern dance group**, CityDance, that recently packed the Visions Cinema/Bistro/Lounge in Dupont Circle.

This new venture is one more effort by Paul Emerson, the company's imaginative director, to cross disciplines and find new audiences for dance.

For FilmWORKS, CityDance unveiled eight short pieces that freely used the devices of film (fade-ins, fade-outs, double exposures, montages, slow motion) in works that were clearly trying to go beyond the literal. Inevitably, this often produced dreamlike, surrealistic images that resonated with various degrees of success.

The whole ambitious evening is one more indication of why **CityDance is becoming the most talked-about modern dance company on the local scene**. It has already made a mark with its repertory approach, mounting works by Washington's most talented choreographers, its frequent use of live music, often commissioned, and its educational program. CityDance claims to have the largest outreach program of any modern dance group in the area.

The evening's beginning was its high point: “Suitcase,” directed by the talented choreographer Vladimir Angelov, also had the most real dancing in it... “Suitcase” springs from a duet Mr. Angelov premiered on stage last fall, but was a fine example of using a stage piece and transforming it into something different using the resources of film...



photo of Ludovic Jolivet by Paul Gordon Emerson

Mr. Angelov was also the director and choreographer for “Deep Surface,” a remembrance of September 11.... In his new film version Mr. Angelov...splic[es] in strong documentary footage of the events of that day with an emphasis on the human: the faces of firefighters and fleeing, ash-encrusted civilians. Against these almost unbearable images and their stark reality, Mr. Angelov provides a counterpoint, juxtaposing strong restrained gestures performed by a group moving in taut formation....

Ludovic Jolivet, director of the CityDance FilmWORKS, created and performed in several of the evening's films. Mr. Jolivet, born in Paris but working in this country for many years, is both choreographer and dancer. His principal focus, however, appears to be on what this evening was about, that is, nurturing the hybrid art form of dance films....

CityDance is well suited for its foray into film: the evening's close-ups underscored what an unusually comely group of women there are in the company. **This new venture by CityDance certainly seems to have legs**. FilmWORKS will be a part of its appearances next season at the Kennedy Center. A separate evening of FilmWORKS will be an introductory evening, followed by two evenings of stage performances, when CityDance appears in Richmond, Philadelphia, New York City and St. Petersburg next year.

“This still-young troupe can dance in the big leagues”

## “This still-young troupe can dance in the big leagues”

At Strathmore, Troupe Rises to the Occasion

*The Washington Post*

by Lisa Traiger

February 19, 2005

As openings go, the one from CityDance Ensemble at the brand-new Music Center at Strathmore on Thursday was memorable, not for the political back-patting—both Maryland Sen. Paul Sarbanes and Montgomery County Executive Douglas Duncan offered congratulatory remarks—but for the impression that **this still-young local troupe can dance in the big leagues.**



photo of Kathryn Pilkington  
by Paul Gordon Emerson

The evening was a full one, offering eight works, including four by resident choreographer Vladimir Angelov, one by in-demand modern choreographer Doug Varone and another by New York up-and-comer Roger C. Jeffrey. Ballet star Rasta Thomas, the company's artist-in-residence, has performed with the Kirov Ballet and Dance Theatre of Harlem, and is currently with the national tour of Broadway's "Movin' Out." He flew in to dance a pair of solos. Notable about Thomas's appearance in the area premiere of Angelov's darkly shaded "Soul-o" and in the quirkily comic "Bumblebee" was that his breathtaking virtuosity didn't overshadow the 11 CityDance performers. They held their own and more against Thomas's formidable talents.

With its alternating funny and serious vignettes, the opener, "How Do I Love Thee?" by the late D.C. stalwart Eric Hampton, looked as fine as ever on the music center's expansive stage. The closing piece, Artistic Director Paul Gordon Emerson's jazz-inflected "Peregrine," a large, demanding work, requires height and width for flying leaps and airy lifts. **Now it has room to soar.**

Surprisingly, the intimate works—solos, duets and trios—were not overwhelmed by the grandeur of the nearly 2,000-seat hall. "Soul-o," accompanied by cellist Vasily Popov, deals with a personal breakdown played out in high relief. Angelov's newest, "A Comfortable Quiet," while a compelling duet for Reginald Cole and Tiffani Frost, lacked the palpable scars of Frost's own coming-out story when she had choreographed it to the same spoken poetry, which she also penned. To dance a Varone work requires thin-skinned sensitivity to his exacting gestural communication. Bruno Augusto, Melissa Greco and Ellen Rippon are on their way to inhabiting this psychological ménage à trois.

**CityDance Ensemble, unquestionably, is all grown up.** At the inaugural dance program at Strathmore, the company demonstrated how well dance fits the space, and the audience of nearly 1,500 concurred. There is more to say about where to sit for the best sight lines and how to frame works on the proscenium-less stage. But for now, let dance at Strathmore continue.

“A modern dance company that can compete with the best”

## “A modern dance company that can compete with the best”

‘CityDance Celebrates,’ With Talent to the Corp

*The Washington Post*

by Pamela Squires

June 18, 2007

He’s done it. CityDance Ensemble Artistic Director Paul Gordon Emerson has taken his company in 10 years from so-so to wow.



photo of Jason Garcia Ignacio and Alice Wylie by Paul Gordon Emerson

has been able to choose, and it has chosen well: Alicia Canterna (Kirov Academy of Ballet in Washington), Kyra Jean Green (Juilliard School), Bruno Augusto (National School of the Arts in Cuba), Florian Rouiller (Joffrey Ballet school), and university dance department-trained dancers Ellen Rippon, Eileen Beth Mitchell and Alice Wylie. All dance with the heft and meatiness that separate modern dancers from their strictly ballet counterparts.

The program included two world premieres (“White” by White Oak Dance Project veteran Susan Shields and “Souvenirs” by Meisha Bosma), two company premieres (“Contained Infinity” and “Dust Bowl Ballads”) and repertory pieces (“Bubbles” by Green, “Endless Cycle” by Tara Pierson Dunning and “Han” by Emerson). **There wasn’t a bad one in the bunch.**

“Souvenirs” used a mysterious score by Somei Satoh with a plaintive melody that soared above a babble of sound. The good-humored quartet “White” bounced along in eight-count phrases. Harumi Terayama’s “Contained Infinity,” to a score by Andrzej Przybytkowski, featured a marvelously strange adagio that sounded like foghorns in the distance. It was paired with slow-motion lifts and a turbulent, body-pounding allegro accompanied by the sound of distant laughter.

Toward the evening’s end strode Sophie Maslow’s 1941 “Dust Bowl Ballads,” two simple-yet-savvy solos (beautifully danced by Mitchell and Green) that reminded us that newer is not always better.

Many local modern dance companies have emerged and either persisted on simmer or flamed out in the last several years. **Rare is the exception, and that exception is CityDance.**

Friday at the Music Center at Strathmore, it was delightfully clear that he had fashioned a fully professional company in every sense. Finally, we have a home-grown **modern dance company that can compete with the best.**

“CityDance Celebrates: Women in the Arts” honored the artistry of women in contemporary dance. Yet **the company gave a performance so astonishingly good** that it celebrated modern dance itself.

What is it that has made this company’s star shine so brilliantly after years of simply showing its potential? The lure of salaries certainly has helped attract the likes of former New York City Ballet dancer Jerome Johnson, as well as tempt superbly trained locals and excellent dancers temporarily in Washington. With firm financial footing, a terrific home (Strathmore) and gathering dance-world buzz, CityDance