

By Frank De Ligio

The double-bill performances of the School and the Company of Ballet des Amériques at the Emelin Theatre this past weekend were a joy to behold.

The pre-professional students of the School displayed their serious dedication and commitment while having great fun as they cavorted through the "Carnival of the Animals."

The choreography was a wonderful balance of classical serenity and clever amusement created by director, Carole Alexis.

Her work keeps evolving along lines of profound, breath-taking beauty, integrating time and space and movement in unusual sequences that surprise the eye, while, in the next moment, evoking smiles and giggles so that we never forget that dance is also a display of joie de vivre.

There were so many brilliant touches. Alexandria Ina Rose Bocca's Cuckoo was charming. The Dying Swan of Irene Przywara (from the company) was tender and stirring. The Pianist of Marguerite-Louise Galopin was startling, athletic and smart.

The Lions, Tortoises, Chicks, Donkeys, Elephants, Hares, Kangaroos, Fish and Birds moved in graceful homage paid to the righteous essence of each species.

In addition, the professional company presented splendid renditions of Madame Alexis's works in progress, "De fleurs et de pleurs" and "Lentil Soup", two dance collections that are fascinating: ripe, yet young. The present stages of each are both deeply satisfying and full of promise as they continue to mature and change.

As we have watched the company over the last few years, we have remarked often on the progress of the individual dancers and on the superb interaction that is so intriguing to observe.

Jenna Simon has become an exquisite, diamond-bright presence, always illuminating, sharp edged, etched.

Irene Przywara grows more mysterious and complex as she takes on different roles, now sultry, now fragile, always evocative.

Christine Sawyer has transformed in a flash from the high-functioning newbie to center stage attraction with dazzling extension, speed and strength.

Ashley Cook brings energy and abandon to her performances and Hope Ruth such exuberance and intelligence.

Garrett McCann is a powerful force and a winning partner.

Guest dancer, Sanford Placide, brought a sinewy, slithering strength and a body engaged from head to toe.

We only got to see Isodale Alexis in “Lentil Soup” as she recovers from her ankle injury but she has become a leader, fully invested in her roles, an artist who is spell-binding and charismatic.

The trainees, Marquerite-Louise Galopin and Alexandria Ina Rose Bocca, are revelations. Louise came back from injury with wonderful turns in several dances, strong en pointe, displaying a proud, elegant line, and Alex was ubiquitous, often at high speed, fleet and accurate and always incandescent. Alex digs deep inside each role, takes charge, and lets her strong spirit shine forth.

Before our eyes, these young ladies are grabbing hold of destiny and riding for all their worth. What a privilege it is to witness their progress.

As well as the magical choreography of Carole Alexis, the classics of Petipa and Fokine, the exciting “Flamenco” of Arielle Rosales and the intriguing “Pathways” of Adrienne Riter, there were two student performed Divertissements that deserve special mention for their highly engaging pleasures.

“Suzi Q” and “Mademoiselle Marie-Jeanne” reflect the contagiously enthusiastic personality of their maker, Franck Muhel. It is obvious from the performances of the children that they caught that spirit and danced it in their steps.

There was so much exciting modern dance and ballet, so much that was new and delightful, presented on stage this weekend at the Emelin Theatre by Ballet des Amériques, that it is difficult to hold onto all the highlights in memory.

But every remembered image glows, filling the dark theater of the mind with the radiance of art.