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DANCE REVIEW | Collage Dance Collective

## Merging the modern and classic

Dancers perform with energy and emotion in ambitious performance.

By ROBERT EISELE  
Special to The Star

A varied and accomplished program of contemporary dance was on view Sunday afternoon at the Lyric Theatre as the newly formed Collage Dance Collective took the stage.

The new company's mission statement promised to explore "the interface between modern, contemporary and classical dance," and Sunday's program did just that.

Artistic director Kevin Thomas, an alumnus of Dance Theatre of Harlem, choreographed the curtain-raiser, "Sweet in the Mornin,' " which was set to Bobby McFerrin's bluesy a cappella vocal. The piece featured three couples basking in a morning-after glow, with Thomas providing an inventive collection of pairings and ensemble movements.

"Takedeme" was a solo piece choreographed by Robert Battle to the guttural, staccato cadence of Sheila Chandra's music. Company member Brandon Leffler's sculpted form provided the vessel for Battle's exploration of inner and outer selves, and of an attempt to break through the cacophony of modern existence to forge an emotional connection.

Iyun Harrison's "Unspoken Words" moved from the pure kinetic energy of its opening movements to a more flowing and formal denouement built around a hypnotic series of repeating circular patterns.

"Encounter," the first-half finale, offered up Erick Enmanuel's ethereal, otherworldly steps set against a stark backdrop of midnight blue. The synthesizer-driven piece spotlighted the expressive movement of company members Jaime Kotrba and Ramon Thielen in a series of precisely executed extensions and lifts.

Set to a Gustav Mahler score, Royston Maldoom's "Adagietto #5" opened the program's second half with an elegant and cohesive examination of the interpersonal dynamics of a romantic triangle, danced with emotional conviction by Kansas City native Allyson Ashley, Mark Burns and Thomas.

Sandra Holloway's "Life Interrupted" began as a deceptively simple tale of coupling and parting, danced with flair by Naimah Willoughby and Dion Wilson, then morphed unexpectedly into an indictment of the human toll of slavery.

Bill Wilson's "Rosa" explored wordlessly the courage and conviction of civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks, embodied here in the fiery defiance of dancer Camille Parson.

The finale of "Capricious Chase," choreographed by Thaddeus Davis, was a multi-movement piece set to the stylistically diverse music of Phillip Glass, Ravi Shankar and Patricia Mabee. The ambitious, full-ensemble dance was built around rigid human forms and pulsive musical beats, bathed in atmospheric bursts of light and shadows.

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### **COLLAGE DANCE COLLECTIVE**

**Reviewed:** Sunday, Feb. 4

**Where:** Lyric Theatre

**Attendance:** 100 (approx.)