

Chicago Dancing Festival opened with a snapped suspender and a nightmare

Posted By Deanna Isaacs today Aug 28, 2015, at 08.43 AM



YI-CHUN WU

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company in *The Black Rose*

The Chicago Dancing Festival got under way Tuesday night at the Harris Theater with a program of five works by four companies.

Highlights included one scene-stealing costume malfunction and a creepily compelling fairy tale.

Stars of American Ballet, an organization that takes dancers from various companies on tour to places that don't often see professional ballet, brought an all-male contingent to the festival to perform two of the opening evening's works: Justin Peck's *Distractions* and Servy Gallardo's *Tango*.

It was early in the second of these—a brief solo showcase of virtuoso moves by New York City Ballet principal dancer (and SAB founder) Daniel Ulbricht—that the garment malfunction occurred. A suspender strap popped loose from its anchor and proceeded to join in the dance, sailing into the air and following its wearer's every spin, like a good partner.

Ulbricht didn't miss a step, handling the mishap so smoothly it could have been part of his plan. The suspender even got a nod when he took his bow.

New York-based Ballet Hispanico presented its clever ensemble piece *El Beso*, choreographed by former Luna Negra artistic director Gustavo Ramirez Sansano, and Pam Tanowitz Dance did Tanowitz's more blatantly experimental *Heaven on One's Head*, accompanied at first by no sound at all except the squeak of bare feet on wood, and then by members of the Chicago Philharmonic. (*Heaven on One's Head* was slated for a repeat performance at the festival's Wednesday evening event.)

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company's *The Black Rose*, a darkly over-the-top, not-for-kids two-act story ballet, was the blockbuster closer.

Dramatically costumed and choreographed and beautifully danced by leads Mucuy Bolles, Reid Bartelme, and Barton Cowperthwaite, *The Black Rose* is a macabre take on *Sleeping Beauty* complete with rape and cannibalism, powered by a wonderfully weird collage of a score—by Chicago native Scott Marshall—that draws on Disney and Tchaikovsky and includes the 1940s standard "You Stepped Out of a Dream." I'd see it again in a second.

The festival continues through the week, with a gala honoring Lubovitch at the MCA tonight and a free finale at Pritzker Pavilion Saturday night at 7:30 PM that'll include Twyla Tharp's *Sweet Fields*, performed by the Miami City Ballet; Peck's *In Creases*, performed by the Joffrey Ballet; and the Bluebird pas de deux from Marius Petipa's more sanguine version of *Sleeping Beauty*, danced by soloists from American Ballet Theatre to Tchaikovsky's classic music. More information [here](#).

Tags: Chicago Dancing Festival, Lar Lubovitch, Pam Tanowitz, Justin Peck, Servy Gallardo, Stars of American Ballet, Daniel Ulbricht, Ballet Hispanico, Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Mucuy Bolles, Reid Bartelme, Barton Cowperthwaite, The Black Rose, Harris Theater, Image