



AMAZING DANCERS
by Katie Johnson

I saw something amazing this spring at Broadway Performance Hall, a professional dance concert. It was beautifully staged, and cleverly costumed, but that was only to be expected of a professional modern dance company. The varied music set off the varied and interesting choreography to perfection, but that wasn't unexpected enough to be amazing, either.

The amazing part was that nobody in the whole company of about thirty dancers was over fifteen years old, and the youngest ones were only eight.

For an hour and a half, in ten separate and unique dances, these young people kept us spellbound. They were seagulls, in a moving dance about ostracism and loneliness; they were rocks, projecting a spirit of pre-history; they created the universe again in a shimmering piece called "Stars at Play." In a charming, grinning march-tempo with very intricate movement among the dancers, the company devised and displayed a mathematical game with the numbers from one to nine; and in another piece they developed a generic fairy tale, with all the elements of magic and witches and princess-saving, superbly characterized and danced.

Amazing to watch. Here were these thirty children, dancing straight and tall, their movements clear and beautiful, showing a packed house that they can be committed to the arts, that discipline and dedication are not forgotten among the youths of today, at least in Seattle. White, brown, boy, girl, tall, short, braids and crewcuts, every body shape you could imagine, dancing together, feeling and looking as competent and artistic as any dance troupe. I was amazed, as I said. During the first three minutes I quietly buried my hazy expectation that I was attending a dance recital. You know the kind where all the parents come with fixed smiles and a repertoire of false congratulations all ready? This concert wasn't like that at all. This was for real.

This was the concert of the Kaleidoscope Dance Company, and in fact was their tenth anniversary concert. This group has evidently been amazing for ten years now. The thirty members of the Kaleidoscope Dance Company are ordinary regular schoolkids, who practice weekly after school. In addition to this major annual concert, they also perform several times a year, in many schools around Washington for special assemblies.

Kaleidoscope is the product of the energy and work and dedication of Anne Green Gilbert, a nationally-known Seattle dance educator and author. Her Creative Dance Center offers classes for children from toddlers to teenagers, and it is from these classes that the Kaleidoscope dancers emerge.

Thirty children believing in themselves, learning to be dancers; thirty children making a whole work of art out of their individual bodies and movements; thirty children committed to excellence in their endeavor; thirty children working together to make beauty for others.

Amazing.

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