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## Michael Huebner's Blog & Column

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## Hoover show has Alabama Ballet in laid-back mode

By Michael Huebner -- The Birmingham News

October 16, 2009, 1:36PM

Four stars out of five

### ALABAMA BALLET: 'NIGHT DANCES'

Thursday, Hoover Library Theatre

Repeats Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m.

Jeans-clad, pigtailed dancers, their shirttails tied at the waist and moving to a Grand Ole Opry broadcast, signalled Thursday night that Alabama Ballet's "Night Dances" program was going to be a lighthearted affair.

The voice of country crooner Patsy Cline triggered a flood of nostalgia as it filled Hoover Library Theatre in Anne Mueller's "Heartaches and Hotcakes." Four dancers brought out the catharsis in songs like "There He Goes," "Lovin' in Vain," and "She's Got You," their innocence and naivete both a throwback and an escape. Mueller, a former Alabama Ballet dancer now with Oregon Ballet Theatre, choreographed with honesty and earthiness -- nothing too fancy, just a lot of country charm.

Brandon Ragland stayed closer to neoclassical ballet in "Within Reach." Set to three movements from Bach cello suites, it is an abstract exercise that hit the mark in the fast-paced courants, but needed a lighter, more reflective touch in the slow Sarabande.

Teri Weksler's "Bonhomie" is more literally aligned to her musical choices in piano works by Schumann and Schubert. Weksler choreographs like a quilter quilts, creating a cohesive contrapuntal tapestry that is the sum of its parts. Most impressive were the symmetrical weavings created by eight dancers and fluid transitions from one piece to the next.

For "Soul Searching," Roger Van Fleteren drew from soul hits such as "Call Me



Alana Czernobil and Benjamin Linn perform in Alabama Ballet's "Night Dances" show this weekend at Hoover Library Theatre.

### Michael Huebner's Blog & Column headlines

- Hoover show has Alabama Ballet in laid-back mode 1:36PM
- Gabriela Montero delivers flights of fancy in improv at Birmingham, Ala., recital 2:59PM
- 'Soul' of Vietnam displayed at Birmingham Civil Rights Institute exhibit 7:30AM
- Alabama Ballet dances to heartaches, hotcakes in Hoover 7:15AM
- Medina takes top honors in Arova Contemporary Ballet competition 6:45AM

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Mr. Pitiful" and "Mustang Sally." The collection ranges from sultry to sexy, playful to romantic, with funky, jerky moves mixing with stylish, sauntering gaits. The standout pairings were Jennifer Ferrigno with David Kiyak, and Lindsey Sara Barber with Ragland. Though not one of Van Fleteren's best pieces, it fit well as a bookend of a laid-back program that showed the ballet company's lighter side.

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