



★ ★ ★ **BEST DANCE COMPANY** ★ ★ ★

## ATTACK THEATRE

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**"WHO THE @%!# is Attack Theatre?"** a famous pop singer (who shall remain nameless) is said to have exclaimed when Attack Theatre music director/cellist extraordinaire Dave Eggar turned down a chance to record, preferring to tour with Attack instead.

Who is Attack Theatre? CP readers who voted the troupe the area's best dance company know its members as dance innovators whose penchant for multi-media collaboration produces wickedly entertaining stage productions. But the company that got its own day named after it by the City of Pittsburgh in 2006 is so much more.

Since its founding in 1994, by husband-and-wife co-directors Michele de la Reza and Peter Kope, Attack has evolved into a troupe of a half-dozen dancers. At times, its ranks have also included musicians like singer Dina Fanai, of Trans-Siberian Orchestra fame, and national recording artist Eggar, who has worked with the likes of Evanescence, Josh Groban and Michael Brecker.

are extremely adept at connecting with a performer, integrating dance or movement so it doesn't look like it has been applied on top of their performance."

So how does a modern dance company known for its physicality and attacking movement style collaborate so well with opera and the symphony?

"Our reputation for creative problem-solving has attracted the directors and producers of organizations like the opera and the symphony to us," de la Reza explains. "We not only bring to the table high-caliber choreography and dancers, but we also bring an openness to the collaboration."

De la Reza and Kope say they see art as a part of everyday life, and find it odd to focus on only one aspect of art in their presentation of work.

"We have always found the best way for us to stretch our creative output is by putting ourselves in unique learning situations," says Kope. "We do that through collaborating with all types of artists."

In addition to performing, Attack also

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This past year, the company blanketed the Pittsburgh arts scene with several stage works, including First Night Pittsburgh's three-ring dance circus *Take Your Pick*, a revamped version of its nationally touring production *Games of Steel*, and *Someplace, Not Here*, an homage to dating in the new millennium with area band Local Honey. Attack also increased its number of "First Friday" works-in-progress performances in 2007 at its studio in Garfield, and hosted 600 of its closest fans at its annual Dirty Ball fund-raiser.

Apart from its own works, Attack Theatre's footprints could be found on a number of area productions this past year: Quantum Theatre's *Le Grand Meaulnes*; Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh's *The Sound of a Voice* and *Red Dust*; Pittsburgh Opera's *Billy Budd*; and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's forthcoming *Highmark Holiday Pops: Holidays Around the World*.

"I very much like their approach to movement," says Pittsburgh Opera artistic director Christopher Hahn. "It is difficult to find choreographers who understand the necessary limitations singers have. Michele and Peter

engages in a bustling outreach effort. In 2007, the company conducted nearly 20 residencies and performances in local schools, plus a number of others outside the area.

"I think what makes Attack Theatre stand out from a lot of other dance companies is not just their willingness, but their insistence that there be a really strong educational outreach program that goes along with their shows," says Catriona Macphie, managing director of the Freed Center for the Arts, at Ohio Northern University. "While they were in residence here, they did a number of master classes with the dance and music students and were on hand to talk to anybody and everybody about the work they do."

If there can be such a thing as "blue-collar" dance, Attack may have perfected it. Its common-man approach to theme and content plays well with dance and non-dance audiences alike.

Says Kope, "Our goal for the company is to keep our 'AttackTheatreness': investing completely in the context of the moment, and spreading the joy." ☺

