

ENTERTAINMENT

Tap star Glover conquers classical concert

NEW YORK (AP)—It's not every night that musicians at a classical concert are given their own improvisational solos — unless, of course, it's "Classical Savion," and the only instruments the star possesses are his shoes.

Savion Glover returned to the Joyce Theater this week (through Jan. 23) and the king of tap brought some old friends (members of the jazz quartet The Otherz) and some new (10 classical musicians and conductor Robert Sadin).

What followed was a joyous, two-hour blending of cultures that also was pure Savion.

Tapping to Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" and the first movement of Bach's "Brandenburg Concerto No. 3," Glover's percussive accompaniment lent the audience new ears. Whether filling in the spaces between the



Savion Glover recently performed at the Joyce Theater in New York, melding his extraordinary tap dance skills to various musical styles, including jazz and classical music.

notes with his nuanced, staccato rhythms, punctuating crescendos or hammering away against the melody, Glover's feet managed a rare feat, simultaneously reimagining the music and allowing its vibrant essence to come to the fore.

But one would miss much simply listening.

His wooden platform flanked by tiers of musicians, Glover's typically explosive visual interpretation of the music, though perhaps a bit more subdued during the classical pieces, offered as much excitement as its aural counterpart.

Long dreadlocks piled atop his head and loose Armani suit drenched in sweat, he whipped his lanky frame through spins and slides, often closing his eyes, grinning and stroking the air with his hands like a disc jockey massaging his turn-

tables.

As Sadin pointed out mid-concert, Glover brings back to classical music a rhythmic intensity that has "slowly been slipping away." This music was meant to accompany dancing, and is grand enough to accommodate ballroom or tap.

Collaboration and competition are often synonymous in tap, and Sadin's light-hearted repartee with Glover (who always plays well with others) revealed much admiration and fondness. At one point, as the fourth movement of Mendelssohn's "Octet in E Flat Major" drew to a close, Glover stood just behind Sadin, his back also to the audience. His arms flaring out at unpredictable angles, Glover was like a shadow conductor, urging on his own, internal orchestra.

As Bach's meditative "Air from Suite No. 3 in D Major"

filled the theater, Sadin stepped out of the conductor's platform and Glover poured a cup of sand across it, skating the edges of his shoes through the powder to add a scratchy texture to the music, like static on an old record. The dance paid tribute to the late Gregory Hines, whose framed photograph on the piano remained spot-lit throughout the show.

Following the classical works, The Otherz joined the fray. First came double bassist Andy McCloud. His collaboration with Glover and violinist Kris Tong offered one of the highlights, as Tong's rendering of Bartok's mysterious "Rumanian Folk Dances" threaded through the more insistent rhythms of Glover and McCloud. The unexpected but blissful combination served as a reminder that tap itself is a child of many cultures.

PBS' Tavis Smiley begins second season of talk show

LOS ANGELES (AP)—As Tavis Smiley begins the second season of his PBS talk show, his guest list isn't lacking for high-profile personalities.

In the first week alone, actors John Travolta, Don Cheadle and Kevin Bacon, documentary filmmaker Ken Burns and writer Christopher Hitchens are among those scheduled on "Tavis Smiley."

But for Smiley, the public television series (returning Friday; check local PBS stations for times) is just one forum — and, to hear him tell it, maybe not even the most important.

Spurred in part by his new relationship with Texas Southern University, where he helped fund a new media studies center, Smiley said he intends to focus on journalism students and what he can teach them. Part of the lesson, he said, is to prepare for a changing society.

"Somebody has got to talk to this next generation of journalists to let them know of the responsibility they have in this multicultural, multi-racial, multiethnic America," he said.

In a competitive world "they've got to have relationships and appreciation for communities of color and people who live there," Smiley said.

That insight is lacking in the news and entertainment industries, he contends, as exemplified by the hiring of

Brian Williams and Craig Ferguson, two White men, to replace two other White men (anchor Tom Brokaw and talk-show host Craig Kilborn, respectively).

The failure to seriously consider and hire women or minorities for such jobs is "wanton hubris," he argued, and something that will ultimately prove costly.

"Television programmers will eventually see the light or feel the heat. Clearly, many of them are going to have to feel the heat" of shrinking viewership in an increasingly diverse America, Smiley said.

For Smiley, 2004 generated heat in unexpected ways.

Last September's announcement of the Tavis Smiley School of Communications and Media Studies Center at Texas Southern University in Houston was a highlight of the year in which he turned 40.

The facility, built with a \$1 million donation from Smiley and money from the state of Texas on the campus of the historically Black school, officially opens Feb. 24.

It helped inspire him to add to his already busy lecture schedule. Smiley, whose nonprofit Tavis Smiley Foundation includes a Web site, conferences and newsletter, has said his mantra is to "enlighten, encourage and empower."

A disheartening and "painful" event, he said, was his

decision to leave his National Public Radio daytime talk show.

Smiley, who three years ago became host of NPR's first Black-oriented show, alleged NPR didn't make his renewal a priority and failed to live up to promises to expand marketing efforts.

The show started on 16 stations and was reaching more than 80 when Smiley exited in December; it attracted the same kind of multiethnic, upscale and educated audience he draws to PBS.

(When he was first weighed the job, he recalls, Bill Cosby advised him that NPR "represents the kind of credibility card you can throw down anywhere in the world.")

Smiley stood out among NPR hosts with his dynamic baritone and topics aimed at minorities as well as Whites. But many in the Black community remained unaware of his show because NPR itself isn't on their radar, Smiley said.

"At the end of three years, they still would not commit to outreach this program to those underserved communities, people who could appreciate and be empowered by NPR but are unaware of it," he said.

The experience made him question NPR's commitment to diversity, Smiley said.

NPR was eager to renew his show and remains intent

on expanding its minority audience, responded spokesman David Umansky. But as a nonprofit that focuses on

production and last year spent only \$165,000 on marketing, he said, NPR couldn't meet what Umansky alleges was a

\$3 million demand for promotion. Smiley denied the accuracy of NPR's figures (See Smiley, Page 9)



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