

The Trocks bring mix of fun, footwork to Peace Center

By Paul Hyde

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The Trocks are the Harlem Globetrotters of ballet. Just when you decide they're only a comic troupe, they dash off a feat of pyrotechnical skill that leaves you amazed and cheering.

That was the reaction of the exuberant audience that welcomed the all-male Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo (Trocks, for short) to the Peace Center Saturday night.

The Trocks, an international presence since 1974, has a tried-and-true formula: The group starts silly and gets increasingly serious to show that, hey, these guys really can dance.

No surprise, the group concluded its performance with a largely straight version of Massenet's Spanish-flavored "Majisimas," which provided plenty of opportunity for the dancers to dazzle with effortless leaps, double turns and other impressive moves.

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The funny stuff came early, particularly in the Trocks' classic Act II of "Swan Lake," featuring the hairy chested men in tutus.

The group's schtick-in-trade is to closely follow the original choreography (in this case by Lev Ivanov), then unexpectedly toss in a pratfall and some slapstick.

A ballerina falls flat on her (his) face. Another hollers out "ugh!" while leaping. A maverick member suddenly begins sashaying Broadway-style while others vainly try to keep the ensemble together.

Another ballerina gets kicked in the head. Still another mugs flamboyantly at the audience, as if to say: "Hey, look at me!"

The 14-member Trocks might be considered a sort of Three Stooges on Point if not for the serious bits and the genuine expertise. Charleston native Robert Carter, the star of the show in this reviewer's estima-

tion, executed a series of speedy *fouettes* that any dancer would envy.

The dancers in tutus certainly looked funny, but the ensemble exhibited a marvelous sense of unity, control and precision — all the traditional balletic virtues.

Among the other pieces, "Patterns in Space" was a hilarious parody of modern dance innovator Merce Cunningham and experimental composer John Cage. Three dancers moved about solemnly but aimlessly while two on-stage "musicians" made "music" by rustling paper bags and gargling, among other oddities.

"The Dying Swan," meanwhile, was danced in a flurry of molting feathers to the music of Saint-Saens.

The group's you-gotta-be-kidding-me encore — an Irish stepdance to music from "Riverdance" — left the audience literally screaming with jubilation.

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