

## Social Studies: Joffrey Ballet dazzles San Antonio

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Sarah Aujon (from left), principal dancer of Ballet San Antonio, visits with Dan Dupre, Sherron Huffman and Polly Lou Livingston at the Joffrey Ballet cast party. Photo: Nancy Cook-Monroe / For The Express-News

As Arts San Antonio's cast party for Joffrey Ballet sponsors and dancers wound down March 8, after the Joffrey's stunning local performance, the thump of techno rock drew some of us out to the Convention Center's grotto. In this low-slung nook of colorfully lit brick stalagmites and ponds, the pinnacle of American dance swung and shook with guests in a spontaneous Harlem Shake. (Even you haven't caught this new dance rage on YouTube, it was easy to tell the difference between the pros and amateurs — not that it mattered in this joyous outbreak.)

One way to tell who was who was at the party — besides the youth and wraithlike bodies of the professionals — was that orange scarves adorned Joffrey sponsors and donors, of whom there were dozens — Meg Salvadore, Ann Parker, Ana Montoya, J. Travis Capps Jr. and Lee Anthony, Cynthia Kirksey, Alvin Loewenberg, Maryetta McCain, Jenny McChesney, Andi Lutz and Will Liebmann, Arts San Antonio's chairman of the board.

Beaming over the sold-out performance and success of all six Joffrey-related events was Arts San Antonio honcho John Toohey with his wife, Judy. Honorary Chairs were Linda and former Mayor Phil Hardberger.

While some partiers talked about the centennial performance of “The Rite of Spring” and two more contemporary ballets they had just seen, old-timers remembered the Joffrey's original visit to San Antonio in 1976, when Margaret King Stanley of the San Antonio Performing Arts Association brought them for the first of six residences over 10 years.

Lonnie Gates II purchased the commissioned “Rite of Spring” painting by Kathy Sosa, for \$9,000. His parents, Annalyn and Lonnie Gates, had commissioned an ambitious Texas-Hispanic themed ballet, “Jamboree,” which was created in 1984 by late Joffrey choreographer Gerald Arpino for San Antonio.

Composer and Urban-15 founder George Cisneros said the Joffrey had asked him to write music for “Jamboree.”

“I met with Arpino several times, and he said the music I'd written was too contemporary,” Cisneros said, obviously peeved. “They wanted something more Western!”

Mixing with Joffrey dancers were those from Ballet San Antonio, our own professional dance troupe, who had performed for guests the night before at the Joffrey Gala at the McNay Art Museum. Many galas are opulent; this one was as sleek and sophisticated as the gravity-defying dancers.

“I was truly blown away by Ballet San Antonio's performance,” said Barbara Stevens, co-chair of all things Joffrey with Margaret Kanyusik.

With the Joffrey's classy visit now legend, Arts San Antonio has lifted its standards with the grace of a dancer. Congratulations on your dazzling hard work!

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