

# **Show Review: ‘Majestically Modern’ Performance by Paul Taylor Dance Co. at Majestic Theatre**

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Every visit to the Majestic Theatre is a reminder of the rich history it’s seen pass through its doors since opening in 1929. A landmark itself, the Majestic was once the largest theatre in Texas. It has played host to all kinds of entertainment from film screenings to Broadway musicals to live comedy, and on the night of February 10, ARTS San Antonio presented the genius of the Paul Taylor Dance Academy from New York City. Taylor’s choreography career began in 1954, and he continues to shape the world of modern dance with daring and imaginative choreography to illustrate topics encountered in everyday life.

The 16-member dance company surprised us by starting with a performance of Taylor’s first, awe-inspiring 1962 creation, Aureole. Set to classical Baroque music, Aureole took off in a blissful, light-footed flight. The dancers utilized the entire stage, showing off their gracefulness in all-white costumes that contrasted beautifully with a warm, blue backdrop. Without losing the fundamental elegance of ballet, Paul’s choreography draws in the focus and rebellion of modern dance by also moving the body to form hard, abrupt angles not usually associated with a classical dance form.



*Photo courtesy of Arts San Antonio*

Next was Taylor's 1998 creation, *The Word*—a powerful performance based on the Biblical verse of Hebrews 12:29, "For our God is a consuming fire." Costume designer Santo Loquasto chose a clean yet bold ensemble for dancers—white long-sleeve shirt tucked into knee-length shorts, with a tie and suspenders—that was reminiscent of the one-size-fits-all uniforms worn by students at private schools. Somber lighting bathed the stage, seeming to embody what it must feel like to be under the control of a powerful regime of faith. Suddenly, a ghastly form that could only be a demon appeared onstage. The light faded to a dark green and music roared in frenzy as the frightening figure challenged each member of the group to break their discipline. Performers furiously danced a climactic battle between good and evil that kept me on the edge of my seat. The high-energy piece utilized the entire stage and evoked a sense of panic through strong, precise movements that created an almost tangible sense of apprehension in the audience as to who would win.

The final movement—which, according to the playbill, was originally supposed to be the first—was *Arden Court*, choreographed by Paul Taylor in 1981. It ended with a feel-good performance, set in front of a delicate rose background, which seemed to tap into the happiness that surrounds love. An interesting thing about this particular piece is that the men also danced it. In a world outside of modern dance, only women would take it on. The Baroque music backing the performance was a perfect mixture of grace and formidability, matched by the six-piece orchestra's masculine and rhythmic sounds that filled the theatre.

The Paul Taylor Company flawlessly reinvents timeless choreography, while staying true to the original energy of Taylor's early years. It only seems fitting to showcase the brilliant work of one of the last modern-dance prodigies on the Majestic Theatre's historic stage.

Written by [Sara Rios](#) for Do210