

MUSIC & STAGE

High school dancers treated to master classes from N.Y. pros

By Michael Quintanilla

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Bob Owen, Staff / San Antonio Express-News

Robert Kleinendorst, a member of the Paul Taylor Dance Company, shows a dance move to members of the Stevens High School Sky Dancers, as he taught a class to the dance team. Monday, Feb. 9, 2015.

Before a wall of mirrors, 22 dance students at Stevens High School got a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity on Monday. They hoofed it up with Paul Taylor Dance Company pros Robert Kleinendorst and Laura Halzack in two master classes.

The New York-based company, which recently celebrated its 60th anniversary, is a leader among contemporary dance companies. The troupe is performing tonight in San Antonio.

The students, all enrolled in Stevens' dance program, got a taste of star-making movements such as birding, when dancers glide across the floor like a unified, graceful flock of ballerinas.

Halzack called it "the artistry of dance" as she gently instructed all to pivot and then contract their stomachs while delivering arm slices to the knee and bending into a plié.

Kleinendorst's session included a lengthy warmup, several dance elements and a big finish: 12 sissons, or jumps, followed by four assemblés, when a dancer's feet are brought together in the air before landing on one or both feet.

Video: Learning to dance with Robert Kleinendorst

Senior Maryssa Flores, 18, wouldn't have missed the lessons for anything.

"I love that dancing tells a story. It's an escape," she said, adding she will always dance, whether it's ballet or Zumba.

Of the students, Halzack said the girls had terrific attitudes and cared for each other.

"Dancing is also about a bonding experience," she said.

Added Kleinendorst, who said he was impressed with the Stevens program: "Dance programs get the short end of the stick usually. So we were happy to give these kids this New York experience."

The Paul Taylor Dance Company performs at 7:30 tonight at the Majestic Theatre, (210) 226-3333.

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