



## Sandusky stage, Chicago troupe giving dance a whirl this week

Published: Wednesday, March 23, 2011, 6:00 AM



By **Donald Rosenberg, The Plain Dealer**

Sandusky has a lot going for it, including spectacles known as Cedar Point and Lake Erie. But the city isn't usually associated with professional dance.

That will change this week, at least temporarily, when River North Chicago Dance Company makes a stop to hold workshops in local schools and perform Friday for 700 students and on Saturday for other curious citizens at the Sandusky State Theatre.

The troupe's residency is part of Dance Across America's Heartland Project, a collaboration among the presenting organizations DanceCleveland, Dance Affiliates (Philadelphia) and Dance St. Louis.

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, which is based in New York, provided a \$120,000 grant to help the presenters take River North to nearby communities. In addition to Sandusky, the company is appearing in York, Pa., and Rolla, Mo.

Each of the presenters raised considerable funds for the project, which has a total cost of \$327,000. The Sandusky State Theatre received \$30,000 from the Duke foundation and \$5,000 from the New England Foundation for the Arts, which also gave River North \$40,000 to support the residencies.

"It's a fantastic opportunity," said Thomas Kazmierczak, executive director of the

Sandusky State Theatre. "It will expand our horizons, expand the audience base and bring new works of art to our theater."

Aside from River North, dance only takes to the stage of the 1,500-seat Sandusky theater -- which opened in 1928 as a movie and vaudeville house -- when local dance studios present recitals and the touring Moscow Ballet performs "The Nutcracker."

Pamela Young, executive director of DanceCleveland, said the project came about as a result of the three presenting organizations "bemoaning the fact that so few presenters include dance on their series."

"They told us they felt dance was too hard to present -- and too expensive," said Young. "Taking dance to places is really important. It builds audiences for dance on a regional level and builds tour opportunities for dance companies."

Those companies must apply for the project, be willing to travel to the sites supported by the presenters and agree to work with local schools.

The project includes what Young calls a "tool box," an online resource for dance presenters that should be accessible by fall on the website of



Cheryl Mann

River North Chicago Dance Company members Christian Denice, Lizzie MacKenzie and Michael Gross perform Monique Haley's "Uhuru," which will be on the troupe's program Saturday at the Sandusky State Theatre.

### PREVIEW

#### River North Chicago Dance Company

**What:** A program of works by Sherry Zunker, Ashley Roland, Frank Chaves, Robert Battle and Monique Haley.

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

**Where:** Sandusky State Theatre, 107 Columbus Ave., Sandusky.

**Tickets:** \$10-\$25. Call 419-626-1950 or go to **sanduskystate.com**.

Dance/USA ([danceusa.org](http://danceusa.org)).

For the Sandusky piece of the dance pie, the theater is providing space, staff, hospitality and marketing. Kazmierczak said the theater has worked with Arts Midwest, a Minneapolis-based organization that books international performing artists throughout Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

In recent seasons, the Sandusky theater teamed with Arts Midwest to present musical ensembles from Japan, Israel, China and Quebec. The theater is occupied the rest of the year with theater events, concerts, movies and art shows, for a total of up to 60 shows. Ticket sales account for about 40 percent of the annual budget.

Kazmierczak said his theater's participation in the dance project was born during a New York conference for presenting theaters at which he met a representative from River North. She told him the project aimed to take dance into theaters that don't normally offer it.

"That's us," said Kazmierczak.

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