

Modern dance company expertly mixes music, movement

By Mary Ann Holley
of The Press Staff

Mention "modern dance" to most average folks seeking a night of entertainment and they'll likely snicker and decline the offer.

Any chance of those old-fashioned visions of indecipherable dance went by the wayside Wednesday, after one minute with The Perks Dance Music Theatre troupe now performing at The John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Perks puts a new, contemporary spin on modern dance, provoking the question, "Is it music to dance by or dancing to music?"

At a time when few dance

companies tour with their own musicians, Perks is both.

With Perks, a troupe based in New York City, the musicians are the dancers and the dancers are musicians.

In an almost indescribable way, Perks weaves an endless wave of visions in its performance. The diverse repertoire combines music, dance and storytelling.

From the beautiful and provocative "Walk this Way," which incorporates dance movements with yards and yards of silken fabric, to the group's whimsical mime with music performances, Perks stretches the limits of agility and emotion.

While all numbers are choreographed and led by founder

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and artistic director Rebecca Stenn, the design of each piece is the product of the harmony and chemistry between the five dancers and musicians.

Last year, as part of the grand opening of the Arts Center, Stenn performed as a solo act, dazzling the audience with her precision, athleticism and speed.

Classically trained at the Juilliard School, she gained notoriety for her contemporary dance as part of the Philobolus Dance Company.

Perks is a new direction in creativity for Stenn and the five musicians and dancers — one

most will find highly enchanting.

Children laughed at the witty movements, while adults marveled at the twists and twines of the slowly moving dancers.

The marriage of cello and electric bass guitar echoed through the flat black walls of the Art Center's Matrix performance space.

Unique stage lighting created an illusion of trailing light as the dancers moved across the room.

According to Perks, there is no right or wrong in modern dance. There is no answer, only visions.

There are definitely no complaints about The Perks Dance Music Theatre performance.

The Perks Dance Music The-

atre performance is the last of the season of the Footlight series.

A full performance will be held on Friday at 7:30 p.m. in the Matrix at the Arts Center, 608 New York Ave.

Tickets are \$14 for Arts Center members and students, \$18 for the general public.