

Arts & Entertainment

Lionel Richie show an uptown dazzler



Staff photo by Craig Anderson

Lionel Richie on stage Saturday night: "Class."

By Ward W. Triplett III

Class. For lack of a better word, that's the best way to describe what Lionel Richie showed to a packed Bob Devaney Sports Center audience Saturday night.

Review

The Richie show, part of his first major tour without the Commodores, was simply a class performance from beginning to end. It flowed smoothly, regardless of whether Richie was singing, making fun of Michael Jackson, or mocking the 67-13

Nebraska football victory. Richie made it seem so easy, and perhaps that's the only way it could have been after 15 years of concert experience. Richie was a treat to the 14,000 people in attendance won't soon forget.

First, Richie's stage was set up as uniquely as they come. The stage had eight different platforms, one for each band member. The middle supported a silver piano, which replaced the white grand Richie used while touring with the Commodores. And some of the best studio musicians in the business today were hired to 'replace' The Commodores. Each performed as if the stage had been a second life for them all these years. Guitarists Gary Jones and Carlos Rios each helped out on Richie's latest album, *Can't Slow Down*, drummer Jerry Brown, bassist Henry Davis and keyboardist Randy Sterns also performed admirably, while percussionist Sheila Escavado worked on Quincy Jones' *The Dude* album.

Finally synthesizer-keyboardist Greg Phillanges, who helped Richie out on vocals, did the bulk of keyboard work for Michael Jackson's *Off the Wall* and *Thriller* albums, as well as *The Dude* and several Brothers Johnson records.

At the beginning of the show, the spotlights focused on the piano, as the solo portion of "Truly" was heard above the first of many roars from the crowd. The piano's platform then slowly revolved to show the instrument was playing itself, and Richie emerged from the back of the open stage to sing the last part of his first solo hit.

From there, Richie mixed speeches praising the Commodores, the Husker victory ("What kind of football team wins a game 67-13?"), and how his show would be between "Sail On," "Easy" and "Brickhouse" from the Commodores days.

Richie didn't sing "Brickhouse" while he was with that group; Walter Orange sang it, while Richie played saxophone. It was the first big show-stopper, as Damito Jo Freeman, one of the original "Soul Train" dancers and until recently a featured actress on television's "Private Benjamin," came from the back of the crowd to dance with the band on stage.

After the song was done, Richie turned comedian for a few minutes. After mocking the slow, backwards-walk dance step Jackson has perfected and Freeman performed, Richie claimed to have taught Jackson every dance step he knows.

Richie then continued his familiar, songs-only show, with "You and Me," "You Are" and "My Love" before taking a break and leaving the stage to his band members, who traded solos throughout short renditions of "We Can Work It Out," "Satisfaction" and "Going to a Go-Go."

When Richie returned, the Pointer Sisters, who had opened the show with a short, tight set of their own that included full versions of each of their six hits and two from their new album "Breakout," joined him for "Jesus is Love," "Talkin' It To the Streets" and "Three Times a Lady." Richie ended the show with "Endless Love," "Lady" and "Still." The one encore included "Lady, You Bring Me Up" from Richie's last Commodores album and his recent hit "All Night Long." During that song Freeman returned and each band member except the drummer exchanged instruments at least once during the song without missing a beat.

Continued on Page 11

Ohio Ballet — Movement of body and mind

Dance troupe's grace matched by versatility

Review by Vicki Grossenbacher

Kimball Hall was nearly full Friday evening as the Ohio Ballet presented a combination of romantic ballet and modern dance.

Pianist David Fisher's talent was evident through his accompaniment of "Allegro Brillante" and "Scenes from Childhood." Charles Avison and Peter Tchaikovsky's recordings seemed live as they accompanied "Dance Suite" and the final number, "Reflections." The lighting by Thomas R. Skelton was subtle and effective.

Although "Allegro Brillante," danced to Tchaikovsky's "Concerto No. 3" in tradition is a ballet, the applause indicated it was not the audience's favorite piece. The dance began as the bass notes of the piano played slowly. The principal dancers were dressed in peach outfits, which contrasted well with the baby blue costumes of the other dancers.

The dancers' confidence in this piece seemed forced. However, their controlled technique was good. The audience was given a sense of a romantic interlude, as the 10 men and women executed the company's interpretation of George Balanchine's choreography.

The leaps, lifts and arabesques were presented either in solo, duet or group form. The quick, light movements coincided with the accompaniment as the dancers surrounded the coquettish prima.

The high point of the dance began with a loud, allegro bass with four women moving slowly in juxtaposition to a rapidly moving prima. An interweaving of men and women leaping broke into a diagonal line of women leaping to their partners. Finally, as in most ballet, the woman was carried offstage, over the head of a male dancer, as he slowly walked off-stage.

The audience seemed very pleased with "Scenes from Childhood," performed to Robert Schumann's "Kinderscenen." The modern style, along with the childish rendezvous added a natural, and comical element to the night's performance.



Photo courtesy Kimball Hall

The Ohio Ballet

Fisher played a soft melody as the short, well-trained David Shinotakahara leaped onto stage in a free, childlike manner. He ran, thrusting frustrated punches as if he had just come out of the mother's womb.

Then, women with ribbons in their hair, wearing a variety of colored flowered skirts and blouses of pink, blue and yellow presented a soft scene as they entered energetically. The men and women on-stage joined into pairs and moved to center stage, where the girls are held in a basketlike affair.

"Dance Suite" was performed to Charles Avison's "Concerti Grossi." This piece is a colorful combination of ballet and modern styles. The most impressive aspect of the dance was the contrast of the deep colors of green and rust against the cream of the women's ensemble.

"Reflections" conveyed a luminous and elegant, romantic grace.

'Untitled's' unclothed only minor distraction

Review by Lauri Hoppie

I will admit apprehension about the whole thing. I had never seen the art of dance performed naked before an audience. I was not sure how I would react when the Ohio Ballet performed nude Saturday night at Kimball Hall.

I forgot my fears as I watched the first two dances, "Schubert Waltzes" and "Scenes from Childhood." Both were traditional: women on toe shoes and men in unbearably tight tights. Their moves were strong and confident. I marvelled as the dancers seemed not to tire, but reach greater heights as they leaped and arabesqued to the live piano accompaniment.

Aside from the polished technical ability of the troupe, the most striking part of the performance was the principal dancers' personalities. They fell upon the audience and captured it, and they didn't let go until the last step.

I had almost forgotten my tension when it . . . almost . . . happened. "Untitled," choreographed by the troupe Pilobolus, was originally intended for six dancers, two of them nude. Here in Nebraska, the fairest and the squarest, the Ohio Ballet allowed the men to wear something like G-strings so that the audience saw everything but.

"Untitled" began with two Southern belles primping in their pre-Civil War dresses. Suddenly, they grew. Hairy legs pranced under their hems. The audience loved it; the women behind me cackled, especially when the skirts whirled and tossed, revealing the semi-nude men underneath.

Yet for all the silliness, "Untitled" made a bold statement. As the men began to emerge from between the women's legs — both an erotic and birthlike sequence — it became clear that the women were facing their masculine sides, particularly their sexuality.

Continued on Page 11