

DANCE

REVIEW

Troupes celebrate agility and passion

BY VICTORIA LOOSELEAF

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If dancers are the new athletes, there was much to laud in the strongly performed "Celebration of Dance" on Saturday night at the Alex Theatre in Glendale. The second annual offering, produced by Ballet of the Foothills' Jill Sanzo, showcased eight companies in a diverse program of mostly new — and engaging — works.

Females dominated, with Djanbazian Dance Company premiering its powerful "Can Shadows Dance?" Choreographed by Anna Djanbazian, the opus paid homage to Armenian women brutalized in 1915.

Set to a haunting score by Komitas, seven women in bleach-colored caftans created tableaux in which chest-pounding angst gave way to astonishing backbends, and ferocious leapers morphed into

crumbled heaps on the floor. The work ended in silence, a specter of death.

On a different note: Denise Leitner's new "Pathways #10," performed by her company, a Dancer's Voice, blended quicksilver jazz gyrations, threaded with high kicks and feral energy, as the female quintet bobbed to the Creatures' propulsive score.

Four plucky Bela Fleck arrangements (including some full-tilt Bach) made the perfect sonic accompaniment to Backhausdance's latest, "Sitting on January." Choreographed by Jennifer Backhaus McIvor, the work featured seven women and a lone male (William Lu), gamboling with chairs. All sweetness and charm, there was a Paul Taylor feel to the work, with technical finesse equal to the spirited footwork.

Nuevo flamenco reared its passionate head in Deborah Greenfield's new, "Juego Flamenco," dramatically danced by the choreographer's company, Rosa Negra Flamenco. Split kicks, unexpected partnering and saucy shoulder dips rocked, although Greenfield's costuming — unfortunate leggings and tunics for the gals, bland pants and white shirts over muscle tees for the guys — screamed for help. Even worse, Greenfield's solo was overpowered by an onstage pair of amplified musicians.

Completing the program: the previously reviewed "Light," choreographed by San Pedro City Ballet's Patrick David Bradley; and Jazz Antiqua Dance and Music Ensemble's deft performance of Pat Taylor's take on excerpts from John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme."