

BLACK GRACE DANCE COMPANY

Choreography by Neil Ieremia

Virginia Arts Festival

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For other events:(757)671-8100

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

April showers have come and in 10 cities the first of over 45 performances that make up the wonderful Virginia Arts Festival have begun. It is spring. The Black Grace Dance Company is a good event to begin the festivities and the season. It's dances celebrate life.

The company comes from New Zealand. It takes its name from a slang word in that country. It means daring and bravery. It's an apt choice to describe the highly athletic, virile performing by this company of six men and four women. The dances are all choreographed by Neil Ieremia. He has won numerous awards in his native country.

The dances celebrate the past and the present in a unique fusion of contemporary and Pacific tribal and ritualistic movement that has been described as "both eloquent and elemental." This hybrid approach utilizes absolute precision, split second timing and strong percussive, rugged statements. Their strength and team work is simply thrilling and phenomenal.

Their precision surpasses that of the famed Rockettes. The signature work "Minoi" is the best example of their rhythmic skills. It is based on a traditional Samoan "slap dance". The dancers do wildly gymnastic steps while "slapping out" the beat on their bodies.

The other seven dances that make up the program cover a wide range of living and life. Each leaves haunting images and memories of beauty or dramatic power. "War Brides", set to traditional and European music, functions on multi-levels. There are times of whimsy and fun in the slate of dances as in "Human Language" which has a somewhat ironic twist. The final work was "Method" danced to J.S Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 was the most musical and, for me, powerful work of the evening,

Unfortunately these Fine performers were here for only one night. However, don't forget them and be sure to catch their show on your next trip to New Zealand.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.