



Thursday » February
23 » 2012

Dance Canada has real energy

Alex Strachan

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The other dancing show takes over tonight. The hip, sexy, cool, homegrown one--not the one with Tom DeLay and Donny Osmond.

So You Think You Can Dance Canada expands to two hours for tonight's Top 8 performance program, and yet, despite the extra padding, it's unlikely to feel bloated or heavy.

That's because there's real energy here, and genuine talent to go with all that ambition. Dance Canada's returning champ and homegrown heartthrob Nico Archambault will choreograph the routines, along with virtuoso ballet choreographer Sabrina Matthews, who is choreographing Dance Canada for the first time. Visiting judges Mia Michaels, familiar to followers of the U. S. show, and pop-dance choreographer Dan Karaty, will join regular Dance Canada judges Tre Armstrong and Jean Marc Genereux.

Emanuel Sandhu, the contemporary ballet dancer and former figure-skating Olympic competitor from Vancouver, is still in the mix, as are contemporary dancers Jayme Rae Dailey (Montreal), Melanie Mah(Richmond Hill, Ont.) and Tara-Jean Popowich (Lethbridge); hip-hop dancers Cody Bonnell (Unionville, Ont.) and Kim Gingras(Montreal); ballroom dancer Vincent Desjardins (Trois-Rivieres, Que.); and tap dancer Everett Smith(Glen Morris, Ont.).

So You Think You Can Dance isn't strictly ballroom, or hip-hop for that matter. Dancers are judged on their versatility, as well as their specialty, and talent alone won't do. This is a real test of courage, physicality, composure and fearlessness under pressure, and when it's good--and this season of Dance Canada has been very good --it's a joy to watch.

So You Think You Can Dance just might be the most inspirational, life-affirming reality-competition program on TV at the moment. Or at least until Idol returns. (CTV --8p.m.; Access--10 p. m.)

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