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Jazz energizes dance performances

Bassettown's musicians will be plucking country tunes, but festival dancers will move to the different beat of jazz.

The LeMoyne Center Dancers from Washington will perform jazz routines choreographed to modern music by director John Dates and assistant Ronae Patterson.

"We are trying to create a party scene," Dates said.

The dancers will perform to singer Chaka Kahn's "This is Your

Night" and rock group DeBarge's "Rhythm of the Night." Dancers clad in black body suits with fluorescent colors will enhance the party atmosphere.

Paying tribute to singing sensation Madonna, the center's six dancers will don costumes similar to that of the entertainer for "Lucky Star."

For a look at fast-paced, high-energy dancing, watch the Joyce Ellis Dancers from Washington.

The song titles for some of the 15

dancers' routines reflect the high-energy theme: rock star Prince's "Let's Go Crazy" and "Baby I'm A Star;" the Pointer Sisters' "I'm So Excited;" and "State of Shock" by Michael Jackson and Mick Jagger.

The routines live up to the action promised in the song titles. To achieve the fast-paced choreography, Ms. Ellis constantly varies dance formations and the number of dancers (from 10 to 40 on stage at a time.)

Fluorescent colors, creative lighting and a fog machine add to the high-energy performances.

Joyce Ellis also will perform a solo dance as a tribute to her mother. "I haven't done this for a few years, and she always felt I should dance because people come to see me."

The Sally Miller Dance Company also will be performing modern jazz to modern, upbeat songs, but with one difference: The dancers will be wearing tuxedos.

"Sally liked the look from the stage and she also likes the Fred Astaire tuxedo," said Belinda "Boots" Ostrander, stage manager and company secretary.

The company will close the show with a routine to a song from the Broadway show "A Chorus Line." Dancers from all age groups (5 to 7, 7 to 12, 13 to adult) will form a long, Rockette-style kick line.

Only one group, the Vella School of Dancing will perform a variety of dance, including tap, ballet, acrobatics and baton.

For dates and times of performances, refer to the festival schedule on page W33.

— Judith Greer

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