



## The Star-Ledger

### Tap master add his beat to jazz trio

Monday, February 25, 2008

**ROBERT JOHNSON**

Savion Glover and McCoy Tyner

Where: Count Basie Theatre, 99 Monmouth St., Red Bank

When: 8 p.m. Friday

How much: \$45-\$100. Call (732) 842-9000 or visit [countbasietheatre.org](http://countbasietheatre.org).

Tap dance genius Savion Glover never seems to run out of ideas. Rhythms cascade from his feet in continuous and unpredictable streams, but, more than that, he keeps finding new ways to frame what he does so that it always looks fresh.

The dancer's current tour, in which he appears as the guest of celebrated jazz pianist McCoy Tyner and his McCoy Tyner Trio, is simply the latest in a series of remarkable encounters that have raised the profile of tap dancing while underscoring Glover's artistry and his seriousness of purpose.

The ongoing dialogue that Glover and Tyner began two years ago, and brought to the Rutgers Center for the Arts in Camden on Saturday, is less daring in some ways than Glover's past exchanges. Never afraid to provoke or to experiment, Glover has jammed with a classical string ensemble, with classical and modern dancers, and with Bobby McFerrin. His collaboration with Tyner is something new again. It does not seek to dazzle with conceptual chutzpah, nor endear itself with sheer adorability.

Instead, Glover and Tyner offer audiences an evening of concentrated artistry, replete with the music's inherent dignity and elegance. Tyner's own music dominates the sets, giving Glover his theme, and a backdrop in a vivid shade of magenta or blue seems the artists' only concession to theatricality.

The music is exciting enough. Tyner has earned his reputation for boldness, slamming the keyboard with the palm of his hand in a way that may or may not equate Glover's penchant for funky stomping (here little in evidence). The pianist opens the program with an impassioned number that proudly exposes his technique and generates magnificent, floating billows of sound, colored textures that are still hanging in the air when Glover steps onto a raised platform center-stage. The tapper uses the powerful clarity of his rhythms to cut through them, piercing the impressionistic sheets like a floodlight scanning the heavens on a night of violent electrical storms.

In this remarkable percussive duet, piano and feet are sufficiently different that each artist maintains his own distinct sphere and approach. Tyner is not to be trifled with, however, and Glover, who keeps his head and body angled toward the piano during most of the program, seems to follow more than he leads, asking rhythmic questions and amplifying the musical context, but mostly agreeing with Tyner's points. He seems freer in his relatively brief exchanges with trio members Eric Gravatt (drums) and Gerald C. Cannon (bass); and when, in part two, the conversation turns to Duke Ellington, Glover's feet have a lot to say.

Ellington's "In a Mellow Tone" supplies the crisp and classic segment of a program where the musical mood evolves subtly from drama to romance and onward to the exotic, without overstepping Tyner's personal style. Yet Tyner reaches out to Glover, also, especially near the official end of the program (not the indispensable encore) where the pianist captures one of Glover's beats and hammers it into his own score.

Sitting back from his keyboard, and pointing a finger playfully at his tap-dancing accomplice, the pianist could be taken for a dancer, too.

*Robert Johnson writes about dance for The Star-Ledger. He may be reached at [rjohnson@starledger.com](mailto:rjohnson@starledger.com).*