

The Top 14 survive the Luther-minator and multiple injuries, as they wow the judges

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"All around, strong performances, strong dancers, great costumes and great choreography," guest judge Dan Karaty said enthusiastically after the Top 14 performed.

"I don't think anyone loses in a competition like this," Karen Kain added from behind the judging table, noting that all of the dancers will have learned so much from their experiences on the show.

After difficult goodbyes to Nicolas and Jenna Lynn last week, the Top 14 were determined to stay out of the bottom three this week and tore up the stage with everything from cha cha to hip-hop, house to jazz.

The Top 14 showed off their best moves as host Leah Miller introduced each of them -- with various pirouettes and high kicks and wild jumps.

Joining regular judges Jean Marc Genereux and Tré Armstrong were guest judge and hip-hop choreographer Dan Karaty and the great prima ballerina and current artistic director of the National Ballet of Canada, Karen Kain.

This season, the dancers are competing for not only the title of Canada's Favourite Dancer, but also \$100,000. Both the winner and runner-up will drive away with new 2010 Mazda 3 Sports.



Guest judges Karen Kain and Dan Karaty were wowed by the dancers.

Hip-hop: Melanie Mah, 19, Richmond Hill, Ont., and Cody Bonnell, 19, Unionville, Ont.

Melanie and Cody danced a mambo last week, but changed gears entirely with a hip-hop number choreographed by Luther Brown this week. "It's full on swag and full on attitude," Luther said about his choreography and Melanie added that there was a lot of "butt grabbing!"

The dancers got tough on stage, combining hard hitting partnering work with fierce unison sections.

Dan was impressed. "As individuals, you both played your parts well," he said. "You guys nailed it."

Karen offered her commentary next. "I don't know anything about hip-hop," she said, "but I know what convincing physicality is." She was impressed by both dancers and called Melanie a chameleon.

Tré was looking for three components: style, swagger and syncopation and said the dancers had all of it. "They were right in the pocket," Jean Marc chimed in.

Jean Marc thought the performance was exuberant. "You guys survived the Luther-minator," he joked.

Cha cha: Amy Gardner, 21, Calgary, Alta., and Vincent Desjardins, 20, Trois-Rivières, Que.

Last week, Amy and Vincent had to dance for their lives after their hip-hop number, and this week, they drew the cha cha from the hat.

Their choreographer Gustavo Vargas dedicated the dance to his parents. "This routine is very dangerous," Vincent said. "There are some hard lifts," Amy added and they practiced in the studio with a crash mat.

Before the dancers took to the stage, Leah described the narrative behind the piece: a man who works all day, but barely makes enough to buy a loaf of bread and returns home to his wife who reminds him they don't need money to be happy.

Amy began seated at a turquoise table and Vincent joined her as they began this spicy, sensual number. There was incredibly fast footwork as the dancers twirled under each others' arms. In an exceptionally challenging lift, Amy, spinning around and hanging onto Vincent's wrists, became parallel to the floor.

"There are more important things in life than money," Dan said. "You guys just nailed that. It was fun. It was sexy. The lifts were unbelievable. Great job!" he gushed.

"That was very heartfelt," Karen said and added that she loved their commitment. She suggested Amy focus on the articulation of her legs and feet, and was impressed with Vincent. "I really enjoyed what you both brought to it."

Tré loved the narrative and entertainment of the number. "Amy, you are so privileged to have such a strong partner," she said, excited by Vincent's performance. "You have emotion beyond belief," she said to Amy.

"I loved it," Jean Marc began, and added that he loved their energy and their partnering work. "You were sizzling," he said to Amy. "Vincent is an amazing leader."

House: Tara-Jean Popowich, 20, Lethbridge, Alta., and Everett Smith, 25, Glen Morris, Ont.

After performing a quickstep last week, Tara-Jean and Everett performed an equally fast house number. "The hardest part is the rhythm changes," choreographer Sho-Tyme said in rehearsal, counting out the percussive beats. "I wasn't expecting it to be so fast," Tara-Jean said before they hit the stage.

Tara-Jean was costumed in a sparkly purple bra top, Everett in a red suit jacket and the dancing was indeed performed at lightning speed with loads of jumps and bouncing footwork. They got the crowd clapping instantly with this upbeat number and they were out of breath when they finished.

"It's so freakin' hard," Dan said about house choreography. "You guys made that look so easy. It just looked like you were having a good time up there. You guys rose to the occasion," he said, impressed.

"What really struck me is that you both are so unbelievably convincing at your joy in performing," Karen said next, noting their fabulous chemistry.

"It was fantabulous," Tré said, noticing the footwork, pirouettes and jumps. "That was sick. Awesome job, guys!"

Jean Marc loved Everett's movement and noted that for the last few weeks these two dancers have been performing dances in genres out of their specialties. "You're so cute," he said to Tara-Jean. "She embraces everything that's thrown at her."

Contemporary Kim Gingras, 24, Montreal, Que., and Emanuel Sandhu, 28, Vancouver, B.C.

Even though Kim's legs are terribly bruised and Emanuel has re-broken his finger, they were ready to tackle the contemporary number choreographed by Stacey Tookey this week.

"The story is simply (about) people reflecting on a lifetime together," Stacey explained. "I think they're going to have to fight for this one," she added about the dancers.

This love story began with the dancers sitting on the edge of the stage in lacey antique-inspired costumes. With sepia-toned lighting, the movement was nostalgic, the dancers' lines were long and clean and their partnering work had a playful quality. They ended the piece by holding hands.

"I don't say this often, but flawless, completely flawless," Dan began. He loved the technique, the performance and the partnering. "The timing was so right on, I almost forgot that I was sitting here judging," he said.

"I think this was a very brave piece artistically," Karen said, as it committed to "quiet artistry" instead of relying on flashy effects. Stacey beamed at receiving this high praise from such a dance luminary.

Karen was impressed by Emanuel's technical skills and said, "You are showing that you have courage and determination." She also loved Kim's transformative capacity.

"Dan said it, that was flawless," Tré said. "That was perfect."

Jean Marc was impressed by Stacey's choreography and loved that the dancers rose to the challenge. "You succeeded. Your mission was to take time and space and make memorable moments for us," he said emotionally.

Disco: Jayme Rae Dailey, 21, Montreal, Que., and Daniel Dory, 23, Montreal, Que.

Jayme Rae and Daniel pulled hip-hop from the hat last week and this week got disco with Melissa Williams. "It's straight up 70s," Melissa said. "It's fun, but it's not easy!"

Daniel was costumed in an opened collared shirt and Jayme Rae was in a sequined orange bra top and shorts with matching orange knee socks. There were crazy lifts, signature of Melissa's disco choreography, and the dancers were clearly having fun on stage.

The routine peaked when Jayme Rae placed her arms on Daniel's chest, and in a move that drew loud cheers from the audience, Daniel lifted her high above his head.

"Great disco routine, not a great disco performance," Dan said to huge boos from the audience. "You didn't dance it 70s enough. You've got to get cheesier...I don't feel like you committed to it 100 per cent."

"It was a trip down memory lane," Karen laughed, and said she found it very entertaining.

Tré disagreed with Dan: "You guys killed it, for real." She loved the funk and the soul of the disco: "That was sexy, very sexy, guys."

"That was total liberation on that dance floor," Jean Marc said. "It was exuberant, it was loud and it was provocative." He loved the connections, turns and smoothness of the performance.

West Coast Swing: Natalie Lyons, 23, Halifax, N.S., and Danny Lawn, 21, Brockville, Ont.

After a sultry rumba last week, Natalie and Danny headed to the studio with choreographer Benji Schwimmer for a West Coast Swing. "This piece is about heartbreak," Benji said about this autobiographical number. "It's fast," Danny noted. "Fast and passionate!"

The dancers started in a spotlight with Natalie costumed in a vinyl bikini leotard and Danny in a suit. It was a sultry, emotional duet that ended with Danny opening his suit jacket to reveal his sequined heart patched with criss-crossed bandages.

"There's a reason Benji won the show in the U.S.!" Dan said, loving the different approach to the genre. He also praised the strong connection between the dancers.

"(Benji) created a piece that really, really makes you look great," Karen said next.

Tré saw elements of contemporary in the movement and said she liked the dancers' execution of the routine. Jean Marc loved the dancers' energy and commitment and also their connection. "Danny, you showed up to the party!" he enthused.

Jazz: Corynne Barron, 18, Edmonton, Alta., and Austin Di Iulio, 20, Mississauga, Ont.

Corynne and Austin performed an emotional contemporary routine last week, but this week danced a jazz number in John Byrne's SYTYCDC choreographic debut.

The piece was inspired by film noir and "old Hollywood jazz," John explained about the routine that saw a starlet turn into a stalker. "We're trying to bring back the drama, suspense and thrill," John added.

The dancers started the piece by walking around the edge of a spotlight with Corynne in a silver ball gown and Austin in dress pants. The lifts were dramatic and saw Corynne leaping blindly into Austin's arms.

There was a dramatic, passionate kiss in the middle of the dance and Corynne surprised everyone by pulling out a gun near the end of the number. The piece concluded to huge screams from the audience as Corynne shot Austin.

"Very, very well danced," Dan said, impressed, adding that he loved their strong technique and the "blank psycho look" Corynne used to get into character.

"I really enjoyed the whole thing, especially the chemistry," Karen said. She appreciated Austin's athleticism and told Corynne that her legs "aren't just beautiful, they're expressive, which is most important."

Tré said both dancers were destined for Top 10. "You have such commitment when you dance," she said to Corynne.

"The entire thing worked," Jean Marc said. "I think both of you are amazing dancers. I think this show finished with a bang!"

Wednesday: Results Night

The Top 14 will return to the stage for Wednesday's results night in a sexy jazz funk number choreographed by Blake McGrath. "It's going to be so hot it might actually be too hot for television," Leah said, smiling.

On Wednesday night's show, the three couples with the fewest number of votes will have to dance for their lives, and one girl and one guy will leave the competition disappointed. Tune in to see who stays and who goes home.