

Burn the Floor: Call the firemen! This show is hot



JOAN MARCUS PHOTO

Michael Crabb Special to the Star

Burn the Floor

FOUR STARS! (out of four)

Burn the Floor, the Australian-conceived ballroom dance spectacular, was always incendiary, but I doubt the show often prompts the arrival of firefighters in full, helmeted regalia. As it happened it was a false alarm during Thursday's opening night intermission that brought Toronto's finest to the Canon Theatre yet, given the amount of heat this talented cast of champion ballroom dancers generates, the stage could probably have used a quick hosing down.

Yes, *Burn the Floor* not only slides and shimmies and swivels. It sizzles for close to two hours in a high-octane display of pre-tumescent couplings and ensembles that make the production's few more tranquil moments almost a welcome relief.

When *Burn the Floor* debuted in 1999, such television hit series as *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Dancing With the Stars* weren't even a flicker in the eyes of network producers. It could plausibly be argued that *BTF*'s non-stop global touring paved the way for these runaway television success stories; which lends a nice synergy to the fact that several current *Burn the Floor* cast members have appeared with distinction on these and similar television dance shows. Thankfully, with *Burn the Floor*, you get non-stop dance without Nigel what's-his-name or any behind-the-scenes emotional meltdowns.

This post-Broadway, North American touring production marks *Burn the Floor*'s fourth Toronto visit, and while the basic formula of highly theatricalized ballroom — from foxtrot to lindy — remains unchanged, everything appears to have been turned up several notches.

The original *BTF* that Toronto first saw in 2001 seduced through unostentatious charm. This version is so slick you wonder how the dancers stay upright.

This is a knockout cast by any standards, from headliners such as Latvian Anya Garnis and Russian Pasha Kovalev to elegantly understated yet utterly captivating veterans like Australian connubial couple, Damon and Rebecca Sugden. When they sink into the intimate luxuriance of a waltz it's as if romance took on a whole new meaning