

Mr. Glover Hits Again

BY JANE GOLDBERG

It was fasten your seatbelt as Savion Glover took off flying on opening night of his three-week season at The Joyce Theater in New York. He used his voice as another musical instrument, and rather than trying to "sell" a song, he scatted, and missed, laughed through the tunes. He even notated the rhythms of his music out loud, something all tap dancers do in their heads. He joked and quoted old hoofers, dead and alive. He trance-danced, staring into some far off space, and took us through four decades of style: swing, bop, cool, and hip hop. In the middle of every set, he would suddenly slow down the time, and become a lounge lizard crooning and shim shamming along a diagonal to "I've got the routine . . . so put another nickel in the machine." It was really fun watching Savion having fun even as Niagara Falls flowed from his beard, reminding us of the exertion in making it look easy.

Glover gained showmanship skills each night of the run. It was clear he was making up a new structure with the one-hour non-stop virtuoso solo. (The second half of the show featured Glover's company of six dancers.) I've never seen a tap dancer lead a band. Fred Astaire kidded about "I'd Rather Lead a Band," but Glover really did it, his right foot serving as the conductor's wand, always letting the five other musicians on the stage know when he was ready for a change. His hold on the audience was extreme, captivating everyone through his singular presence.

When it came to tap skills, the late Gregory Hines used to say, "There is Savion Glover, and then there are the rest of us." In his last words talking tap, Hines also said, "Savion Glover has changed the way we perceive tap dancing." With this past season, Glover made that clearer than ever. ■

Jane Goldberg is a tapper and frequent writer on dance. She saw Glover's performance at The Joyce six times.

