

Relentless Barrage hits and misses

Barrage, last night at Wilbur Theatre, Boston. Runs through Sunday.

By KEITH POWERS

Got loud, kinetic, noisy and busy? You got Barrage, the 11-player fiddle and dance band from the Calgary environs, now touring the world. Boston got its glimpse during

MUSIC REVIEW

Wednesday's extravaganza, *Vagabond Tales*, at the Wilbur Theatre, part of a six-day run that's out to show one thing: Fiddles can be fun. It almost succeeds.

Barrage comes aptly named: a wall of noise, light and rhythm that never lets up. The troupe hits with megaton impact, with all the force and damage that implies.

Barrage has seven violinists who dance, some who also sing, and a bedrock rhythm section. Jumping over each other, bowing, brushing, plucking, smacking and abusing their instruments in every manner, Barrage aims to prove that horsehair and catgut can be full-contact materials.

The music, decidedly a strong point, comes mainly from fiddle classics rearranged by music director Dean Marshall. Drawing from the great Canadian violin traditions, which encompass Irish, English, French and Gypsy musics, the Barragistas have plenty to work with musically. And work they did, with all seven fiddlers ending up in a lather at one point or another. All played virtuosically, although some of the music might have been recorded, and certainly every note was pitch corrected by the elaborate sound system. Nary a tone out of place, despite all the extreme fiddling? Hmmm.

The dancing? A bunch of hokey jigs and lame jumps. The set: an unchanging collection of landfill memorabilia from the mid-19th century, by the looks of it. The story line? You couldn't hang laundry on it. Barrage aims for good, clean country fun and delivers some good, all clean, backcountry entertainment. Fit for Boston? Not really.