

BACK STAGE

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company at the Baryshnikov Arts Center



Reviewed by Lisa Jo Sagolla
November 19, 2010



Photo by Steven Schreiber

Masterfully crafted, ingeniously musical, naturally lyrical, and bubbling with pleasing body shapes and effervescent motion, Lar Lubovitch's choreography is the pink champagne of modern dance. One feels giddy with delight watching his intoxicatingly fluid phrases organically fill the space and time with movements so entrancingly designed and emotionally rich that you never want his dances to end. One of the most pleasing characteristics of Lubovitch's choreographic vocabulary is its three-dimensionality. While much of today's contemporary dance is marked by a sharp linearity, Lubovitch's work makes full

use of all spatial planes, levels, and dimensions within and encircling his dancers' bodies, creating spirals, swirls, and arcs of movement that feel gratifyingly holistic.

In its current engagement at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, which was formed 42 years ago, opens its program with Lubovitch's signature 1978 ensemble piece "North Star." A classic example of the choreographer's genius for creating continually evolving, enthralling complex patterns of motion, the work is set to a Philip Glass score, reminding us that Lubovitch was one of the pioneering artists in the marriage of minimalist music and modern dance.

The centerpiece of the program is the world premiere of Lubovitch's mysterious "The Legend of Ten," in which a band of what look like Robin Hood-era woodsmen interpret the rhythms and musical textures of a Brahms score. But with its clever incorporation of abstracted clapping, finger snapping, and folk-dance maneuvers, the choreography also conjures drama, evoking the tensions, longings, and sense of tribal identity within the group.

Katarzyna Skarpetowska and Brian McGinnis give an impressive performance of the extremely challenging lifts and strength moves in the slow, shape-driven duet from Lubovitch's "Meadow," choreographed in 1999. And just when you thought it couldn't get any better, Coltrane is added into the mix. The program closes with a new production of Lubovitch's "Coltrane's Favorite Things," choreographed last spring to a 1963 recording of Richard Rodgers' "My Favorite Things" performed by the John Coltrane Quartet. Comprising a duet, quartet, and trio, the piece layers bouncy jazz qualities and an improvisatory feel upon Lubovitch's comely vocabulary and is danced with a winning combination of relaxed and spirited energies.

Presented by the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St., NYC. Nov. 18–21. Thu.–Sat., 7:30 p.m.; Sun., 3 and 7:30 p.m. (212) 868-4444 or www.smarttix.com.

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