



IMPRESSIONS: Lar Lubovitch Dance Company's 50th Anniversary Season at The Joyce



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"Something About Night"; Photo: Nan Melville

April 17 and April 22, 2018

Choreography: Lar Lubovitch

Performance: Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Martha Graham Dance Company, Joffrey Ballet

Music: Johannes Brahms, Elliot B. Goldenthal, Scott Marshall, Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann

Fifty years of doing anything — especially if it's choreographing — deserves a celebration, which is what [Lar Lubovitch](#)'s one-week residency at The Joyce Theater feels like. The program presents six pieces over three programs (I missed George Mason University School of Dance's *A Brahms Symphony* from 1985), including one premiere — the vaguely liturgical *Something About Night*.

Like any good party, this one shares the fun with friends. [Martha Graham Dance Company](#) spiritedly stamps and claps through the folk-accented *The Legend of Ten* (2010), and principals from the [Joffrey Ballet](#) offer nuance to selections from the melodramatic *Othello*, a work co-produced for American Ballet Theatre and San Francisco Ballet in 1997.



Lar Lubovitch Dance Company's Nicole Marie Corea and Tobin Del Cuore in *Something About Night*, Photo by Nan Melville

In addition to the real and symbolic back slapping that Lubovitch's 50th anniversary merits, the performances invite inquiry into his longevity. All the obvious elbow grease of making dances and raising dollars aside, how has he continued to attract an audience? One, I should add, that was vigorous in its appreciation at both shows I attended.

Lubovitch is an unashamed romantic who celebrates beauty as a virtue, even a necessity. He combines Byronic instincts with Balanchine sensibilities to form a stream-of-physical-conscious style that's painstakingly organized in space and time. This emotionalism as formalism relaxes ballet's rigidity and angularity into the curls and swirls of ovular port de bras and arcing stag leaps.

It's as pretty as it sounds, with steps dissolving in and out of each other, like watercolors bleeding together. Tableaux — often cresting on a diagonal — form only to ebb into a zippy solo that flows into a cyclonic group scene. Beginnings are endings, and time is a circle of impulses that appear predestined.



Lar Lubovitch Dance Company in *Something About Night*, Photo by Nan Melville

The grand scores accompanying the pieces showcase plenty of the old masters with Brahms represented twice and (Robert) Schumann and Schubert once. Even the modern compositions, like Scott Marshall's audio collage and original music for *Men's Stories: A Concerto in Ruin* (2000), throb with unrestrained pathos.

Lubovitch doesn't pussyfoot around the music, nor does he coast over it. Instead, he burrows his phrases deep into the notes and then lets them spurt up and out. This brushes up against music visualization, particularly in the sprightly male trio *Little Rhapsodies* (2007). Yet the slipstream of dancing chugs enough on its own trajectory to prevent any charges of [Mickey Mousing](#) the music.



Lar Lubovitch Dance Company in *Men's Stories*; Photo by Nan Melville

Throughout his career, regardless of critical opinion, Lubovitch has championed the values of grace and loveliness. To stay true to one's vision is what artists do, which is what he has done for fifty years. More than longevity, this feels like what we're celebrating.

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