

## Looking Forward, Looking Back

October 2, 2013.



Sylvain Lafortune and Richard Michalek in “Concerto Six Twenty Two,” which premiered in 1986. | JACK MITCHELL

**BY BRIAN McCORMICK**

### ***American masters: Lar Lubovitch Dance Company at 45***

Creating almost always involves looking forward. Looking back is a burden.”

This is the challenge the great choreographer Lar Lubovitch tackles in putting together his 45th anniversary season at the Joyce Theater.

“Works may evolve, but most of them aren’t worth doing again,” he testified. “Only a few remain in my mind as worthy of acknowledging, only a few are bring-backable. Any artist has to accept that truth.”

With a career that spans generations, Lubovitch has made many memorable dances — for his and other companies, for film, for Olympic skaters, for Broadway — and his master status remains

polished. Through the creation of new, award-winning works and his leadership role in the Chicago Dancing Festival, Lubovitch continues to be a major force in American dance.

Two premieres are promised for his company's two-week run, along with selections from the repertoire of more than 100 dances. Both programs feature live music.

Program A (October 8-13) features the world premiere of "Vez," a duet to a commissioned score by Randall Woolf for voice and flamenco guitar. It is a remix of the 1989 sensation "Fandango," with revised choreography.

"For some time, 'Fandango' was a signature piece for the company," Lubovitch said. "But because of the origins of the work, for the anniversary I decided to correct something I hadn't gotten right."

He had originally commissioned a score for "Fandago," but the composer withdrew.

"I was left with a dance and a date to premiere," the choreographer explained. "I was obliged to find a piece of music quickly, and Ravel's 'Bolero' was at hand, so I reconfigured the dance to that. The music hadn't been so exploited then, but it wasn't my intention."

The first week performances also feature the celebrated duet from "Concerto Six Twenty-Two" (1986), set to Mozart's "Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra." This dance for two men gained prominence through an early performance at Dancing For Life, which Lubovitch remembers as the first response to AIDS from the arts community.

"It became emblematic for the dignity artists preserved in the face of the AIDS crisis at a time when there was a shocking amount of homophobia in the dance world," he said.

Also on Program A is the extremely popular "Men's Stories: A Concerto in Ruin" (2000) for nine men, and a revival of the 1970 duet "The Time Before The Time After."

Program B (October 15-20) features all newer works, including a premiere for eight dancers called "Crazy 8's," plus "Listen" (2013) choreographed by company member Katarzyna Skarpetowska, and "As Sleep Befell," a dance for six shirtless men. The composer Paola Prestini commissioned the choreography for "Listen" and "Sleep," both of which premiered in June at the River to River Festival.



Katarzyna Skarpetowska and Brian McGinnis in "Crisis Variations." | BILL HERBERT

Lubovitch received the 2012 Prix Benois de la Danse for Choreography at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow for his 2011 dance “Crisis Variations,” also on the second program. Lubovitch called the award “the European Oscars of the dance world.” Only one other American choreographer has ever won.

Last but not least among them, the 2012 work “Transparent Things” is a work made to honor dancers.

“It’s about the ephemeral existence of dance,” Lubovitch explained. “Dance vanishes, it is transparent, and yet there are people who commit their lives to it, to something that doesn’t exist. Artists are devoting themselves to creating works that cannot be hung on a wall, that cannot be placed in museum. They are doing something of a higher nature, a higher humanistic purpose.”

Lubovitch believes that audiences value live performance over the “flattened, emulsified, drained-of-energy facsimile” offered by recordings or other mediatized versions. And rather than railing at idealistic youth and insisting on a more pragmatic view of dance’s possibilities, he celebrates their verve.

Sagaciously, he noted the example of the visual arts and waxed, “Frequently, movements arise among young artists to protest the dollar value of art.”

The benefits of being able to look back 45 years while also looking forward should not be underestimated.

**THE LAR LUBOVITCH DANCE COMPANY** | Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Ave. at 19th St.  
| Oct. 8 at 7 p.m.; Oct. 9, 15-16 at 7:30 p.m.; Oct. 10-12, 17-19 at 8 p.m.; Oct. 12-13, 19-20 at 2 p.m.  
| \$10-\$59 at [joyce.org](http://joyce.org) or 212-242-0800