

A swirl of a time

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DANCE REVIEW by Leigh Witchel

LAR LUBOVITCH DANCE COMPANY Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St.; 212-868-4444.

Through Sunday.

Lar Lubovitch works his strengths, and his biggest strength is his swirl. The choreographer -- who's done everything from ice dancing to Broadway ("The Red Shoes") -- set three dances on his own company that, even if they're a bit too similar, showcase what he does best.

None of the dances have a plot, though they all have a specific mood. "The Legend of Ten," set to Brahms, and "Dvorak Serenade" sandwich the evening with that trademark Lubovitch swirl: a group of dancers moving like a single organism that loops into itself or surges in waves.

The Brahms opens costumed in black where the Dvorak finishes in angelic white, but they're still cut from the same loaf: Each is set to romantic (recorded) music and has the same constant, circling motion. Both pieces are handsome on their own, but would look better apart. A second program, alternating with this one, features an all-male dance that offers more contrast.

A new piece, "Crisis Variations," may use some of the same ingredients, but at least it feels different. Yevgeniy Sharlat's jagged score, a riff on Liszt that's played live by violin, flute, saxophone, double bass and keyboard, propels the dancers, who clutch and push on another. The title proves apt: We never learn exactly what the crisis is, but it doesn't matter -- these folks are a mess.

The best part of Lubovitch's works isn't the concept, which is sometimes clichéd, but the fluid motion. Seeing his pieces done by his own dancers is the best way to get caught up in his swirl.

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