

Three Little Dances: Lar Lubovitch Dance, Program B at the Joyce....

October 25, 2013



Lar Lubovitch Dance Co. in "Crazy 8's" Photo: Phyllis A. McCabe

Program B of the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company's 45th Anniversary Season at the Joyce was an opportunity to witness some of Mr. Lubovitch's most recent, and possibly some of his best works.

The evening began with the *Transparent Things*, premiering in 2012, it was inspired by Picasso's "Family of Saltimbanques" (Family of Performers) and set to Debussy's String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10, played live by The Bryant Park Quartet. There is a simplicity to this work that gives it such beauty. Arrayed in Reid Barthelme's period costumes, you see street performers who love their craft. This is not some deep angst ridden travail into the mind's processes but rather an expression of an existence that has found purpose. A note found in the playbill stated... "*Though Picasso's street performers lived over an 100 years ago, they are very like today's dancers who have committed their lives to an art that exist only when it is actually happening, then vanishes leaving only traces in the transparent realm of memory*"



Picasso's "Family of Saltimbanques"

Attila Joey Csiki must be mentioned; wearing a harlequin's coat, his opening solo demonstrated his effortless technique. His fluidity blended each step and shape with an airiness that is unique to Mr. Csiki's dancing. Bravo Mr. Csiki!

I have seen *Crisis Variation* (2011) four times and honestly I just never got it or understood why the work was awarded the 20th annual prize for best choreography by the 2012 *Prix Benois de la Danse*. But, now, every disparaging thing I have ever written about the work I gracefully retract.

Throughout the piece, the dancers seemed in a state of crisis. The crisp technique employed in such works as *Men's Stories: A Concerto in Ruins* (though I still have problems with the score) or *Transparent Things*, is not stressed. The choreography has a natural unforced stance, an almost floppiness that is enhanced with loose limbs and a relaxed feet. The movements are not graceful, but purposefully.

Yevgeniy Sharlat's original score processes a rapidity, as if something is about to happen, of something that has become uncontrollable. The dancers are constantly circling one another, as if instinctively seeking protection in numbers. During Katarzyna Skarpetowska and Brian McGinnis duet, the dancers gather to the side, partly in shadows as if a necessity forces them to witness what might/will transpire.

Mr. McGinnis lifts Ms. Skarpetowska, her body at odd angles, until she is upside down, he is holding in a position that does not seem secure. You expect/fear that Ms. Skarpetowska will either fall or be dropped callously. Mr. McGinnis lowers Ms. Skarpetowska upside down, with her head on the floor he rotates her in a circle, then forces her to climb up his body and when she reaches the top he throws her off unceremoniously. The two have established a language of movement, a form of communication that is unique to them. Yet, with each speaking simultaneously neither is able to hear the other.

But, it is that last moment, when the dancers are all on the floor, a jumble of limbs and torsos, Mr. McGinnis unceremoniously lowers Ms. Skarpetowska, then he climbs over her body and is absorbed into that moving pile of anatomy. Then in an instant, something unseen grabs Ms. Skarpetowska and she is yanked into the amorphous heap. Black out.



"Crisis Variations" Pictured: L-R: Attila Joey Csiki, Nicole Corea, Reid Luplau, Jason McDole, Laura Rutledge Photo by Paula Lobo

It took me a while, but I now fully understand and appreciate why *Crisis Variation* received the prize for best choreography by the 2012 *Prix Benois de la Danse*. Mr. Lubovitch is the first American choreographer ever presented with the award.

Three Little Dances was made up of just what the titled stated, three small pieces. The first shown was Katarzyna Skarpetowska's *Listen* with music by composer Paola Prestini. I saw the premiere of the work at the *Capture/Release: A Celebration in Honor of Lar Lubovitch* at the Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts in June.

Absent from the stage were the cello and percussion players, the percussionist was behind an array of hanging objects such as bottles and bones. Also absent was Ms. Skarpetowska sitting on the side of the stage at a typewriter hitting various keys in assorted rhythms with a saccadic retentiveness. Nor was the video projection of a woman underwater present. (I missed those things, especially the typewriter and percussionist behind the array of hanging objects that he used as instruments...)



Lar Lubovitch Dance Company's Nicole Corea & Reid Luplau in Katarzyna Skarpetowska's *"Listen"*: Photo: Steven Schreiber

This is a stripped down version of that work; Ms. Skarpetowska's has done away with the bells and the whistles so you focus solely upon the choreography. *Listen* is a physical duet for Nicole Corea and Reed Luplau that is a both abstract and intimate. It is intense eight minutes with beautiful performances by both Ms. Corea and Mr. Luplau.

Lar Lubovitch's *As Sleep Befell*, set to Paula Prestini's score, which was performed live by Ransom Wilson's Le Train Bleu and vocalist Helga Davis. It is a thirteen minute work for six men, Jonathan E. Alsberry, Anthony Bucconi, Clifton Brown, Attila Joey Csiki, Oliver Green-Cramer and Reed Luplau.

The musicians are arrayed in a wide arc with Ms. Davis in the center, slightly elevated. The dancers are lying on the floor before her, everyone is in white. The men, in loose-fitting sarong pants, are in constant contact with one another, weaving in circles or undulating chains that would snake across the stage. The dancers' energy builds with the music into leaps and turns that plummet to the floor. There is a sense of ritual, nothing overt, but still present. It's one of my favorite works of Mr. Lubovitch.



Lar Lubovitch Dance Co. in "As Sleep Befell" Photo: Steven Schreiber

The World Premiere of Mr. Lubovitch's Crazy 8's as just plain yee-haw, hoe-down fun. Eight dancers doozy-doeed, line danced and heel-toed to Randall Woolf's "Hee Haw" wearing bright and rather whimsical, and somehow still sexy, cowboy costumes that looked to be unitards. It was an energetic and amusing end to a wonderful evening of dance.

It was a long night, but never a dull moment. I am always impressed by Mr. Lubovitch because he is so like Forrest Gump's box of chocolate....*You never know what you're going to get....*