

# Dance: Premiere by Lar Lubovitch

By JENNIFER DUNNING

**I**NTELLIGENCE, taste, stylish expertise and a group of extremely gifted and attractive dancers were all at work when the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company opened on Tuesday evening at City Center (131 West 55th Street), where it will perform through Sunday. But most of all, Mr. Lubovitch has created dance so warm and sensuous and pretty he seems to have created a new category: dance to bask in.

Mr. Lubovitch once said the constant in his choreography was an attempt to "depict music." In his new "Brahms Symphony," set to the first three movements of Brahms's Third Symphony, Mr. Lubovitch catches the music's sumptuous sweetness and its poignancy in dance that, characteristically, sweeps on and off the stage almost without pause.

"A Brahms Symphony" opens with the dancers rippling and racing across the stage. The corps is in black, the men in tights and leotards and the women in simple, long dresses. The four principals are dressed similarly but in one bright, warm color each. And the first stage picture — of a lapping black sea studded with bright points of color — holds throughout the dance.

There is a lovely image early in the first section, when Rob Besserer, in purple, leans against Nancy Colahan, in crimson, and the brush of his body against hers suggests a kiss. Later, a sweep of his arms is like a wave goodbye to a second lover, Christine Wright, dressed in hot pink. And he, the two women and Douglas Varone, in blue, have walks that suggest lonely searching.

Mr. Lubovitch has created some equally compelling imagery for the group. A plummeting lift, frozen in midair, comes to mind, or the lifted dancers who sail like birds across the stage's upper air. Again in lifts, dancers raise their arms slowly with the descent of their legs. And Mr. Lubovitch offers a breathtaking moment of similarly extended motion when the forward surge of a line of dancers is intensified by the sudden appearance from the wings of a dancer, lifted by her partner into that same surge ahead. She seems to fly up and out in their wake.

Miss Wright and Mr. Besserer have a delicate but lushly romantic duet, and each of the leads has a solo dance that sets forth individual qualities. Though Miss Wright is built like an exquisite leaf, she has a powerfully strong dramatic presence. Joyousness pours out of Miss Colahan in bold, expansive movement. Mr. Varone's gutsy, fluid phrasing is much in evidence in his solo. And Mr. Besserer, a Bessie Award-winning dancer, is so big and tall that movement and gesture read on him like large-

print type. There is an almost tactile pleasure to his solo, as if the viewer were modeling his moves in clay. Dance passes by so quickly. Here, it feels possessable.

The dance's intricate weave of stage patterns is plotted ingeniously, and for most of the new work Mr. Lubovitch's understated invention never flags. Interestingly, most of the dancing is cross-stage, parallel movement that keeps buoyantly close to the ground but for the lifts. Legs and feet tend mostly just to move bodies and cause the women's skirts to flare as the dancers sway and dip and run. It is the tilting torsos and swinging arms that give the dance its emotional coloring. And yet, despite the limits Mr. Lubovitch has set himself, "A Brahms Symphony" has a look of ease and freedom.

The good cast was completed by Mia Babalis, Peggy Baker, Kathy Casey, John Dayger, Ronni Favors, Joel Luecht, Leonard Meek and Rick Michalek. Craig Miller designed the dance's fluid lighting.

The program was completed by two signature works by Mr. Lubovitch and a recent dance that may well become one. "Whirligogs" is all the "knots," "tangles" and "confusion" specified in the dance's subtitle. What is going on here? Something seems to

be, as black-clad bodies and their projected shadows whirl and lurch through Luciano Berio's quirkily atmospheric soundscore.

"Keep moving," a voice says occasionally — that first commandment of late 20th-century choreography. And the dancers do, sometimes suggesting they are dancing out a history of mankind. The Adam and Eve in this phantasmagoric fray are the appealing Mr. Michalek and Miss Favors, one of the company's most eloquent dancers.

The handsome and funny "Beau Danube" is a little quartet that could well become a Lubovitch standard. It manages at once to be a luscious ooze of a dance and a tease on trance-dancing and movement studies of water and waves, in which Mr. Lubovitch has very interestingly incorporated acrobatics. Set to music by Johann Strauss, "Beau Danube" was well danced by Mr. Besserer, Miss Colahan, Mr. Dayger and Mr. Varone.

The program was completed by "Cavalcade," a pretty dance to Steve Reich's "Octet," but one that looks and feels too much like "A Brahms Symphony" to share a bill with it. Mr. Dayger and Mr. Meek, two errant but amiable soft-shoe shufflers, stood out in the cast.

# The New York Times