

Lar Lubovitch @ The Joyce - Program A

LAR LUBOVITCH DANCE COMPANY

By Philip Gardner

Wednesday October 9th, 2013 - In a recent interview, choreographer Lar Lubovitch said: “People have come not to trust things that are beautiful...precisely why, I couldn’t say. It’s not very modern to be drawn to beautiful forms and shapes, but it’s nonetheless what I do. Beauty exists because it has a place in this world.” Tonight at The Joyce his Company - marking their 45th anniversary - celebrated the beauty of movement and music in a rich and superbly danced program.



Three duets from different periods of Lar Lubovitch's creative career were performed by six marvelous dancers. In the first, a duet from Lubovitch's *Concerto Six Twenty-Two* (1986), set to the *adagio* from Mozart's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, the choreographer asks for complete

naturalness of movement and gesture from his two male dancers: Attila Joey Csiki and Tobin Del Cuore (in a Steven Schreiber photo, above). This duet, a poignant reference to the decimation brought on by the AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s, is so profound in its simplicity and its depth of feeling. Totally devoid of sentimentality or theatricality, the dancers gave a compelling performance.

[Earlier this year, I saw the duet from *Concerto Six Twenty-Two* at a studio rehearsal; read about the experience [here](#), with Nir Arieli's beautiful photos.]



Above: from *Vez*, photo by Steven Schreiber

The world premiere of *Vez*, a duet set to a commissioned score by Randall Woolf for voice and flamenco guitar, was splendidly danced by Nicole Corea and Clifton Brown with the music performed *live* onstage by soprano Mellissa Hughes and guitarist Gyan Riley. The duet opens with the dancers in silhouette against a sky of vivid red. Clifton Brown sweeps into a phenomenal deep backbend as the dance begins. At first Nicole and Clifton seem to express passion and tenderness in stylized movement; this evolves into a more natural and elemental partnering. The musicians were excellent, and the two dancers imbued the movement with their personal charisma.

A revival of *The Time Before The Time After* (1970) gave us a look at one of Lar Lubovitch's earliest choreographic works: it had not been performed by the Company in 30 years. Set to Stravinsky's Concertino for String Quartet, this animated *pas de deux* found ideal interpreters in Katarzyna Skarpetowska and Reed Luplau. Dancing to the agitated rhythms of the Stravinsky score, the couple distilled the wide-ranging elements of a long-standing relationship - playfulness, tenderness, cruelty, wit - into this brief encounter. Kate and Reed gave a zestful performance, with clarity of movement and expertly-timed gestures and expressions.



Above: from *Men's Stories: A Concerto in Ruin*, photo by Steven Schreiber

The second half of the evening was given over to Lar's epic three-movement ballet for nine men entitled *Men's Stories: A Concerto in Ruin*, which dates from 2000. To a panoramic collage of music devised by Scott Marshall, the men dance their way thru an emotional maze that ranges from camaraderie to combativeness. Clad in tailcoats, the dancers move with a courtly formality at first but this soon breaks down as ensembles alternate with explosive solo passages in which the individual personalities of the men are made manifest.

Between the warped overlay of various musical elements - from classical to pop songs and extending to spoken word - and the haze which wafts thru the *chiaroscuro* lighting effects, the ballet has a nightmarish quality and the men often seem like a league of vampires. Spectacular dancing - notably in the solo passages - gives *Men's Stories* a terrific jolt, and there was much to savor in the performances of Clifton Brown, Attila Joey Csiki, Jonathan E. Alsberry, Brian McGinnis, Reed Luplau, Anthony Bocconi, Milan Misko, Olliver Greene-Cramer and John Michael Schert.

This is a long ballet but so finely crafted that it keeps us engaged throughout. The introduction of a *bunraku* puppet in the work's final moments seems a miscalculation to me; it's an unexpected element which seems to divert our focus and dilute the effectiveness of the ballet's final image. It did not, however, dampen the audience's enthusiastic response to the work, the dancers, and the choreographer, who appeared for a bow at the end to a warm ovation.

There will be a second week of Lubovitch at The Joyce with an entirely different program. Details [here](#).