

## Lar Lubovitch: 46th Anniversary Season



Above: dancers Reid Bartelme, Mucuy Bolles, and Barton Cowperthwaite in Lar Lubovitch's **THE BLACK ROSE**; photo/NY Dance Project

Friday October 17th, 2014 –

**Lar Lubovitch Dance Company** celebrating their 46th season with a double bill at The Joyce: Lar's newest work, **THE BLACK ROSE**, is set for ten dancers to a commissioned score by Scott Marshall. It's paired with a new production of **ARTEMIS IN ATHENS**, a ballet originally created for ABT in 2003 to a score by Christopher Theofanidis.

For **ARTEMIS**, Lar Lubovitch draws on the Greek legend of Artemis, goddess of the hunt, and her fleeting love for Acteon, a mortal who has wandered into her sacred precinct. Death is decreed for

anyone trespassing in this secret glade, but Artemis saves Acteon by transforming him into a deer. Nonetheless he is pursued by dogs and hunters; in the end he's immortalized as a constellation in the night sky.

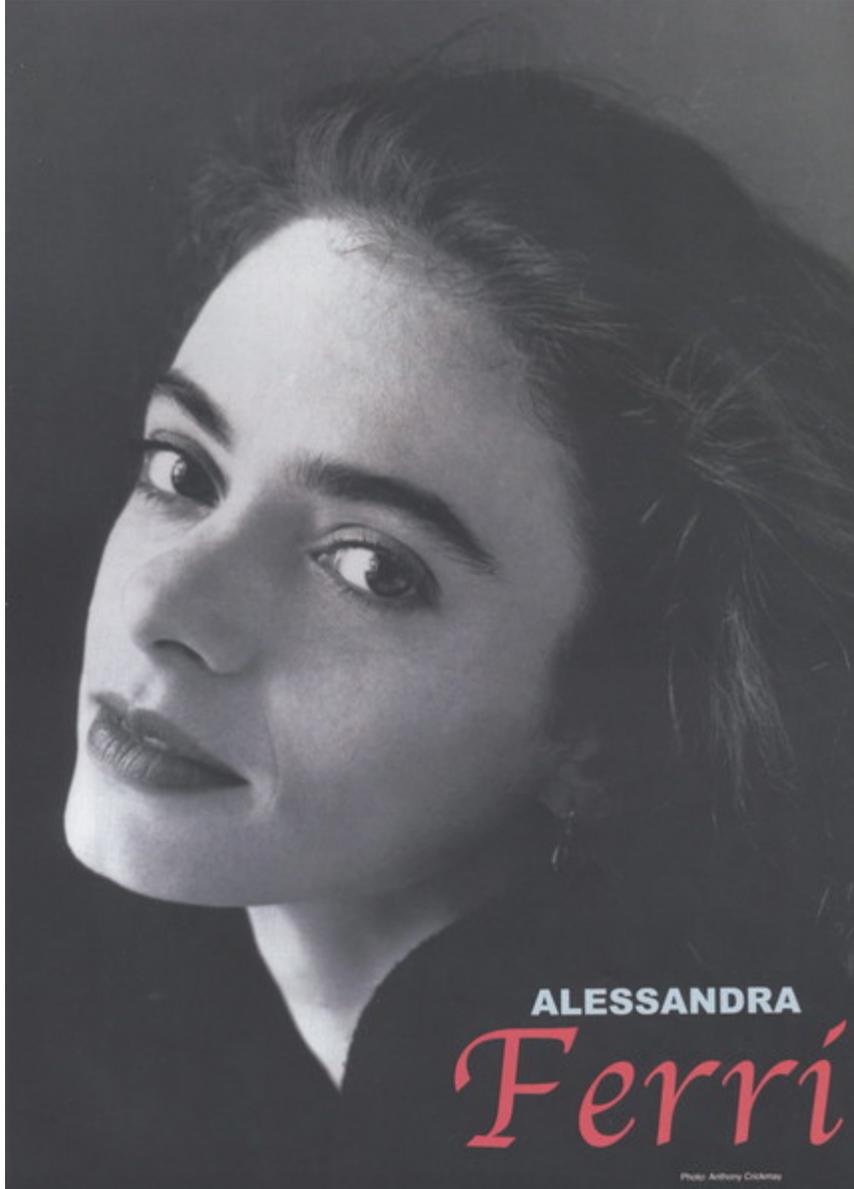


Above: Alessandra Ferri and Tobin Del Cuore in **ARTEMIS IN ATHENS**; photo/NY Dance Project

In this production, Lubovitch cunningly changes the setting from Athens, Greece to Athens, Georgia; Artemis and her court become Girl and Boy Scouts on a camp-out. The setting is among stylized (moveable) pine trees beneath a starry summer sky. Naomi Luppescu's khaki scouting uniforms look authentic, and everyone is decked out with copious merit badges. Turned into a deer,

Tobin Del Cuore wears a sleek fawn-and-white body stocking with spotted markings...and a subtle pair of horns.

Jonathan E Alsberry (why no dancing, JJ?) appears from the audience, perches on the edge of the stage, and sets up the story for us. He and the musicians of **Le Train Bleu** are all in uniforms and caps.



As Artemis, Ms. Ferri is on sensational form; dancing on pointe, she shaped her limbs into athletic yet lyrical poses, filling the space not only with her sweeping combinations but also with her distinctive perfume. It's marvelous to encounter her again, partnered by the dynamic Tobin Del Cuore who was especially impressive in his portrayal of the stag after his transformation, showing uncomprehending wonderment and fear. An ensemble of young dancers from Juilliard Dance filled out the cast, portraying hunters and attendants to Artemis.

In the pit, Ransom Wilson led the ensemble **Le Train Bleu** in Christopher Theofanidis' colourful, movie-soundtrack score. The meshing of live music, stage setting, costuming, narrative, and dance assured a lovely success for this imaginative work: what might have been merely a spoof is so artfully handled that we are drawn in.



Darkness prevails in **THE BLACK ROSE**. Scott Marshall (who also composed the score for Lar's **MEN'S STORIES**) creates a nightmarish soundscape where disco, Tchaikovsky, and popular songs from various periods weave into a restless, ominous sonic tapestry. This fragmented fusion of musical references overcomes its initial somewhat off-putting quality to become an absolutely essential element of the work.

The scenario is a bit like that of Balanchine's **LA VALSE**; a glamorously hopeful young woman enters a ballroom seeking romantic thrills only to be consumed by the dark forces. Her shy poet of a suitor seeks to protect her but - in a gruesome Witches Sabbath - is savagely blinded by the crowd who are under the sway of a vampiric warlock, a death-figure of predatory sexual allure. The girl is impregnated; her baby is delivered and serves as food for the fiendish dark lord. In the end, the ravaged maiden - having been left for dead - is reunited with her sightless lover. Together they will seek to find hope in their joint misery.

Themes from **SLEEPING BEAUTY**'s Garland Waltz and the Rose Adagio are heard at the opening ball where the guests move in a drugged stupor to the improbable mixing-in of a house beat. The lovers' reconciliation is set to "Beautiful Dreamer" sung as a hallucinatory lullabye. Gloom reigns overall, even at the end as the lovers struggle into a bleak future.

Like a Hollywood horror story, this cinematic ballet is both alluring and disturbing. In a sensational performance as the bewitchingly predatory master of death, young Barton Cowperthwaite used his long-limbed figure and boyishly appealing face to create a Lestat-like figure, glamoring his victims and dancing with ferocious elegance.

Two marvelous dancers emerged from "retirement" ("Once a dancer..." as Allegra Kent reminds us) to dance roles ideally suited to their personal attributes. Mucuy Bolles, radiant in black and blood-rubies as she enters the ballroom, will end up shattered, tattered, and in rags. She looked gorgeous and moved beautifully: a veritable triumph. Of equal perfection, Reid Bartelme as the hesitant lover imbued the character with a bookish shyness aligned to romantic hopefulness; once drawn into the hallucinatory turmoil of the sinister coven, Reid's familiar lyrical qualities as a dancer made it obvious why Lar needed him for this role: it's hard to imagine anyone else being as perfect.

Update: Some additional production photos by Yi-Chun Wu have come my way:



Alessandra Ferri and Tobin Del Cuore in **ARTEMIS IN ATHENS**.



Mucuy Bolles and Reid Bartelme in **THE BLACK ROSE**



Mucuy Bolles and Barton Cowperthwaite in **THE BLACK ROSE**