

It's Time to Declare a 'Year of Chicago Dance'

[Hedy Weiss](#) | October 9, 2019 3:24 pm



Craig Black, Jonathan Alsberry, Andrew Murdock in [Lar Lubovitch's](#) "Little Rhapsodies." (Photo by Kyle Flubacker)

The City of Chicago and the League of Chicago Theaters declared 2019 "[The Year of Chicago Theatre](#)." But anyone who has been following dance in Chicago in recent years will attest to the fact that it is now time to declare a "Year of Chicago Dance."

The evidence could be found in three different concerts on Chicago stages this past weekend. And that is just the beginning. There is much more to come throughout the fall and beyond – from Chicago-based companies to "imports" from around the world. But let's start with the most recent example of excellence:

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A Celebration of Lar Lubovitch at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance

Choreographer [Lar Lubovitch](#) was born in Chicago but has spent most of his life in New York, where, in 1968 he founded his own dance company for which he has created more

than 120 works. His connection to Chicago was powerfully re-established when in 2007 he joined forces with Jay Franke and David Herro to create and curate the Chicago Dancing Festival, which, for 10 unforgettable summers, brought free performances by world-renowned dancers and companies that attracted many tens of thousands of people to Millennium Park and other venues.



Martha Graham Dance Company in [Lar Lubovitch's](#) "Legend of Ten."
(Photo by Kyle Flubacker)

To celebrate Lubovitch's lifelong passion for dance, members of four companies – the Joffrey Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, the Martha Graham Dance Company and Ballet Austin – brought four of his works to the stage of the Harris Theater last weekend.

Lubovitch has always had great taste in music, and three of the pieces on the program demonstrated that, including his "Dvorak Serenade" (danced by Ballet Austin), "Little Rhapsodies" (set to Robert Schumann's "Symphonic Etudes," and expertly performed by Hubbard Street's Andrew Murdock and Craig Black, but above all, by the phenomenal dancer Jonathan Emanuel Alsberry, who also is the Lubovitch company's rehearsal director; and the exuberant "The Legend of Ten," to Brahms' "Quintet for Piano and Strings in F Minor."

Lubovitch is deft at combining classical and modern technique and often infuses his work with Russian-inflected folk dance patterns and step. His finest work is "Othello," a full-length ballet set to an original score by Elliot B. Goldenthal and memorably danced here in 2013 by the Joffrey Ballet.

Having the narrative and characters of Shakespeare's tragedy to focus his choreography Lubovitch is at his best, as demonstrated in the three scenes performed brilliantly by members of the Joffrey company. The dancers were Fabrice Carmels as the Moorish general consumed by jealousy; Victoria Jaiani as Desdemona, his falsely accused wife; Temur Suluashvili as Iago, the evil instigator of trouble; and Rory Hohenstein as Cassio, another victim of Othello's rage. Lubovitch even devised an inspired twist on Othello's mode of murdering Desdemona, and it had the audience audibly gasping.

Coming up

Here is just a small sampling of the many dance events headed to Chicago stages in the coming months.

- The Joffrey Ballet in the Chicago premiere of British choreographer Cathy Marston's "Jane Eyre," a full-length work based on the Charlotte Bronte novel; Oct. 16-27 at the Auditorium Theatre.
- Giordano Dance Chicago in its Fall Series, featuring a world premiere by Peter Chu, along with Randy Duncan's "Can't Take This Away" (featuring the glorious vocal harmonies of the Bourne Family), Marinda Davis' "Flickers" and Alberto Arias' "Surrender"; Oct. 25-26 at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance.
- Natya Dance Theatre, the Chicago-based Indian classical dance company, in "INAI- The Connection," a collaboration between Hema Rajagopalan, Natya's director, and Astad Deboo, an Indiana modern dance pioneer; Oct. 7-9 at the Dance Center of Columbia College.
- Hubbard Street Dance Chicago in "Forge Forward," a program that will include world premiere works by Kyle Abraham and company member Rena Butler, plus the brilliant Crystal Pite's "Grace Engine"; Nov. 7-10 at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance.
- Bangarra Dance Theatre, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander company from Australia that pairs ancient stories and song lines with contemporary movement, visual art and music; Nov. 22-23 at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance.

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