

WORLD ARTS TODAY

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The Lar Lubovitch Dance Company performing *The Legends of Ten* (left), photo by Christopher Duggan., and *Dvorák Serenade*, photo by Chris Roesing.

Modern dance maker shows new work

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By Karen McDonough

Lar Lubovitch is one of America's most widely seen modern dance choreographers. His Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, now 43 years old, has created more than 100 new works and traveled the U.S. and globe performing in more than 30 countries. Nearly every major dance company has a Lubovitch in their repertory. He's also choreographed for film (winning an international Emmy award) and the ice-dancing world.

The dance maker's newest work, *Crisis Variations*, is currently running during a two-week season at the Baryshnikov Arts Center. The piece, for seven dancers, is set to a commissioned score by composer Yevgeniy Sharlat and performed live by Grammy-nominated flutist and conductor Ransom Wilson and his avant-garde ensemble *Le Train Bleu*. The season also features three acclaimed company works, *The Legends of Ten*, *Men's Stories* and *Dvorák Serenade*. Lubovitch spoke this week about his latest inspiration, the success of his annual dancing festival and his philosophy towards the inevitable.

Talk about your latest work, *Crisis Variations*.

LL: I wanted to create a piece about an accident so-to-speak, so I wanted a lot of the elements through which this piece was created to be somewhat accidental with some control. I actually choreographed the piece to Franz Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes* and then the idea was to replace it with the commissioned score very, very late which we did so that the relationship with the music would be somewhat accidental rather than very specific which is what I'm known for and probably what I have evolved to be very skillful at is really emulating or painting a picture of the music. To break up that very tight relationship, I wanted that relationship to be somewhat accidental. The term crisis and the idea of creating something about and using accidents is because I wanted to create an atmosphere, a piece, which is not a story of a crisis but an evocation, it's an action painting of the sensations evoked by the word crisis. So it's a very dark piece actually and somewhat violent.

How were you inspired to create this?

LL: Because the world is in crisis. Artists create nonstop, and we're of this world. You can't always ignore the reality of the world around you in order to create something of beauty. And there's beauty in

darkness also. There are many things to be said about the ways it can be applied. This is an act of recognition that there is crisis around us all times. And that's a response to it. It's not a bromide; it's not an answer. It doesn't lead to a solution. It's simply an evocation of the mood, the sensation of crisis that surrounds us.

How did you end up collaborating with Ransom Wilson?

LL: Last winter we did a performance of *The Soldier's Tale*, a Stravinsky piece with Le Train Bleu conducted by Ransom Wilson, and it was very, very successful. I had wanted to work with him for some time. Economically, it hasn't been viable. But some years ago when we had regular seasons in New York at City Center, Ransom Wilson was a conductor and we had live music. And he used to be music director of a group called Solisti New York [Orchestra]. So we've really come back together after some years, but we had spent several years collaborating in the past.

Within the last five years, you have grown the Chicago Dancing Festival, along with Jay Franke, into a major annual event.

LL: I love dance, not just because I do it or not just my dance. I go to see a lot of dance and in every arena from the small downtown 40- or 50- person theaters to the big theaters. [The festival] is a chance for me to be a curator to put together great, great dance programs of tremendous variety. . . It isn't necessarily about me or my dancing but just the celebration of dance itself. It has become in five years a very big event in Chicago. It's described as one of the top cultural events of the year. It attracts a huge audience, it's been performed to something like 15,000 people in a week. It's in four different theaters. Companies come from all over. We have every intension of continuing and at this particular time we're in good shape financially for the festival and there's a great demand for it. And we're receiving a good deal of support from private benefactors and corporations.

What's your next project?

LL: At this point, at the age that I am [he's 68] and the number of years that I've been working, I've become very aware of the fact of ageism in dance. There's hunger for new and young at all times. Though I've worked for many, many companies, I have no intentions of quitting. But fewer people are asking for work now when there's so much young new talent that people want to see. And there's great interest in the young and the new, so there's a kind of subtle ageism in that. But my particular policy towards working with other companies hasn't changed. It's always been whoever asks me, I go. I've never been selective. I've never sent a resume or applied for a job or tried to get in a particular company. I've been very fortunate that I've been asked to work for all these companies, and I'll continue to work for any company that asks for me.

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company performs at the Baryshnikov Arts Center through Nov. 20.

