

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company

By Susan Yung



**Lar Lubovitch
Dance Company
40th Anniversary Season**

**Dance Theater Workshop:
October 1–4, 2008**

**New York City Center:
November 5–8, 2008**

Reviewed by Susan Yung

*Photo by Sharen Bradford.
Lar Lubovitch's Jangle.*

In his company's 40th anniversary celebration, Lar Lubovitch found a deserving setting on City Center's stage. Dances that have been performed in recent years at other smaller venues (like Dance Theater Workshop, the Skirball Center, or quirkier venues like a church or ex-synagogue), blossomed when performed on the big stage in full costume, with top-notch lighting.

Two of Lubovitch's most glorious dances were featured: *Concerto Six Twenty-Two* (1986), and *Dvorák Serenade* (2007). They both employ wonderful music and show off the choreographer's creamy lyricism. *Concerto's* Mozart score is the ideal aural setting for his more ebullient phrases, exemplified in the opening refrain when the dancers leap and chassé in a circle as the curtain rises, making us feel like we've missed the beginning of a great party. When this section reprises each of several times throughout the ballet, the joy it elicits compounds until the end. The keystone of *Concerto* is the male duet (performed by Jay Franke and George Smallwood), one of Lubovitch's major achievements. Its tenderness and equanimity are indelible, and its patient pacing and technical experimentation differentiate it from other sections.

Dvorák Serenade also features a duet, this one by Mucuy Bolles and Scott Rink, amid groupings formed by 10 other dancers. The tone is gentle, airy, and reverential, set in Lubovitch's polished balletic modern style. He ends the first duet with a distinctive pose—Rink, back flat, pulling on Bolles' hips—replaying the same phrase later. The dancers skip joyously in a figure eight, feet stamping, hands twisting overhead, in a nod to folk dance. A new work, *Jangle*, is a direct paean to folk. Subtitled "Four Hungarian Dances" and set to Bartok, its angles and bold rhythms are a nice contrast to the unfettered lyricism that defines his style. The circle and line dances serve as reminders that Lubovitch's dances are often about community.

In a sort of tribute to Paul Taylor's quirky *3 Epitaphs*, Lubovitch created *Whirligogs* (1969), taking Taylor's head-to-toe black leotards and simian posture as building blocks. One couple distinguished by bare arms (Arika Yamada and Spenser Theberge), moves amid a large group (made up of Juilliard students). Both Lubovitch and Taylor are masters at creating patterns and lyrical movement phrases.

Rounding out the City Center run were *Little Rhapsodies*, a bravura male trio, and *Men's Stories*. The latter, with an all-male cast in velveteen coats performing to a hallucinatory score by Scott Marshall, is dark, dreamy, and intoxicating. The company also danced *North Star* (1978), a pulsing metaphor for the human nervous system, to Philip Glass. The line of dancers folds and interweaves, and a frenetic solo by Kendra Samson captures some of the uncontrollable electricity of the brain. This piece was also performed at Dance Theater Workshop in October on a program of older works, including *Marimba* (1976, to Steve Reich), in which the company flocks from corner to corner, transforming chaos into order and back. Also set to Reich was *Cavalcade*, whose motifs of blowing streamers and whipped ribbons recall the dancers' flicking limbs, releasing what seemed to be an unlimited amount of energy.