

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Welcome back, Lubovitch, you look marvelous

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P-I DANCE CRITIC

Last updated February 6, 2009 4:57 p.m. PT

After too long an absence, the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company returned to Seattle for a series of three performances that opened Thursday night at Meany Hall. The local appearance is part of the company's first national tour in a decade and a celebration of its 40th season.

DANCE REVIEW

LAR LUBOVITCH DANCE COMPANY

WHEN/WHERE: Through Saturday at 8 at Meany Hall

TICKETS: \$38, with various discounts; 206-543-4880, uwworldseries.org

The anniversary is significant by itself. How many other American modern dance companies can claim that? A few names immediately surface -- Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Trisha Brown, Alvin Ailey -- but how many more? Just to survive is noteworthy.

But the Lar Lubovitch has done more than that. Although 60 percent of the company joined only this season, they looked fully integrated in the buoyant style that seems so integral to the choreography.

The Seattle program had new and old: "Concerto Six 'Twenty-Two," from 1986, and "Jangle" and "Dvorak Serenade," from the past two seasons.

"Concerto" is one of Lubovitch's best-known works, and justifiably so. It is a splendid evocation of Mozart's sublime Clarinet Concerto, which carries the Kochel listing of 622, thus Lubovitch's title. The concerto came late in Mozart's life and was premiered in Vienna only a couple of months before his death in 1791. It is a work universally admired and has never lost its place in the repertory.

Lubovitch captures in dance the concerto's simplicity, freshness, ebullience and, yes, its transcendence. Not that the choreography simply mimics the music. Lubovitch's response to Mozart is one of very careful listening. On occasion the movement corresponds to individual phrases, but on others it freely departs from the music. Whatever the steps, they never lose sight of the spirit of the work. He can be playful, witty, happy, grave. The arms of the dancers often are spread as if they are wings on which the rest of the body flies, or floats, in some cases. The Adagio is famous because it is a pas de deux for two men, a rarity in modern dance and even more so in ballet. It is remarkably tender, restrained and beautiful. Jay Franke and George Smallwood dance the section with empathy and masculine grace.

Set to Bartok's first and second violin rhapsodies, "Jangle" is a different kettle of fish, the spice between "Concerto" and "Serenade." Gone are similarities to ballet, gone are lyric sensibilities, gone are the feelings of being airborne. This is a tougher, denser work, just like Bartok's music. What remains is Lubovitch's response to the rough-hewn music -- its intensity and dissonance -- but not its phrases.

Choreographed in the preceding year, "Dvorak Serenade" is a pretty, sweet piece, just like the music. ...The dancers, for all of their newness in the company, look good -- confident and poised.

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