

Masterful performance by Lubovitch dancers

By Wendy Liberatore/ For The Daily Gazette June 18, 2015



"Transparent Things" was one of three works on the program when the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company took the stage at SPAC Wednesday (Photo by Rose Eichenbaum)

SARATOGA SPRINGS — Lar Lubovitch Dance Company returned to Saratoga Performing Arts Center on Wednesday night in a trio of works that confirmed its reputation as a dance ensemble of excellence. Founder and Artistic Director Lubovitch is a master. He marshals his dancers in the most powerful formations for heightened dramatic effect; and each of his works touches on humanity, in small ways and large.

In his newest work, “The Black Rose,” Lubovitch expressed human’s darkest predilections. This macabre story that bordered on Satanic was compelling — so much so that it was impossible to tear one’s eyes away from the horror.

Based on Gothic fairy tales, actual cautionary yarns meant to frighten children away from impulsively straying from the prescribed path, “The Black Rose” was a “Sleeping Beauty” gone awry.

To music by Scott Marshall that liberally borrowed from Tchaikovsky’s idealized version of “Sleeping Beauty,” the story centered on the belle of the ball (Mucuy Bolles) who falls for the romantic poet (Reid Bartelme) but then turns from him for the monstrous suitor (Barton Cowperthwaite) with the black rose.

The story ruptured into vignettes of depravity including stabbings, rape, thief and cannibalism. Throughout, the dim and shadowy lighting that at one point revealed a massive cobweb that turned into a bat, and the faceless, stomping gang at the Witches’ Sabbath sent chills.

All the scenes were tightly condensed, making for a thrilling, but frightening ride.

The evening opened on a more humorous note, with the action-paced “Coltrane’s Favorite Things.” Set to John Coltrane’s rendering of Richard Rodgers’ song from “The Sound of Music,” the dance modeled the Jackson Pollock’s action painting that hung as a backdrop. The knockout piece drove the dancers from start to finish. They undulated like an unstoppable tidal wave, slowly swirled as if floating off into the stratosphere and threw up their arms and legs in explosions of energy that lit the stage like fireworks.

Chanel DaSilva and Robbie Moore led the energetic ensemble in this joyride. And at the end, their chests collided, their flopped their heads on each other’s shoulders as they rightfully sank, with precise musical syncopation, to the floor.

The evening was rounded out by “Transparent Things,” which was guided by Debussy’s haunting String Quartet in G Minor, played with passion by the Bryant Park Quartet. The piece, inspired by Picasso’s “Family of Saltimbanques,” followed a jolly close-knit group of six. One (Anthony Bocconi) gets separated from the troupe, and dances a melancholy plea that painfully portrays his loneliness. Happily, he finds his way back in a beautifully touching reunion that ends with the dancers unified in a split that melts to the floor.

The Lar Lubovitch Dance Company will repeat this program at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Kaatsbaan International Dance Center in Tivoli. If you missed it at SPAC and you love dance, you should go.