

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company

by Steve Weinstein
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Attila Joey Csiki (top) and Tobin Del Cuore in the duet from "Concerto Six Twenty-Two" (Source:Steven Schreiber)

His annual fall two-week season at the Joyce Theater finds Lar Lubovitch in a gayer mood. That doesn't necessarily mean happy, but, well, you know. Gay.

The choreographer, who has risen to the top ranks in the contemporary dance world, presents four works in the Program A of his eponymous **Lar Lubovitch Dance Company**. Of these, two present the more traditional male-female partnering, while one consists entirely of a male-male duo. The fourth piece, by far the longest, is a showcase for the male members of the troupe.

"The Time Before the Time After" is not as incomprehensible as it sounds. Set to a modern, discordant Stravinsky work for string quartet, it most notable for the supple, at times almost Gumby-like, artistry of dancer Reed Luplau. The 1970 work is a great set piece for Igor Stravinsky's propulsive music, which doesn't just lend itself to interpretation via physical movement; it demands it.

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"Vez," the program's one premier, showcases one of the company's best-known dancers, Clifton Brown. The Alvin Ailey alumnus and Bessie winner (the Downtown dance world's answer to the Oscars) gives the weight and freight that only years of dancing can bring.

He and Nicole Corea are as supple as strands of hair in a gentle breeze. Overall, however, I found the piece meandering. While live musicians in this unfortunate age of canned recordings is always refreshing, the score quickly becomes monotonous. That said, Gyan Riley plucked his guitar for all it was worth, and singer Mellissa Hughes navigated the treacherous Spanish-language glissandos with ease.

The duet from "Concerto Six Twenty-Two" must have appeared radical when it premiered in 1986. Even today, the romantic pairing of two men still gets attention, even if it's no longer startling. Of the two, Attila Joey Csiki is far more graceful, but Tobin Del Cuore's athleticism really comes in handy -- especially when he lifts Csiki and holds him, straight as a board, perfectly parallel to the floor.

Set to a Mozart concerto, the duet gives hints throughout that this is about two men in love. If there were any doubt, it's settled when they walk off arm in arm. The biggest problems with the piece are the matching white-on-white polo shirts and slacks. If the white represents death, then I guess Heaven must be an eternal semester on an Ivy League crew team.

By far the highlight of the evening comes at the end, with "Men's Stories." By turns funny, exhilarating, poignant, prissy, queeny and macho, the pastiche score rummages through genres as distant as 19th century court dances and Billy Holiday singing the blues. Similarly, the dancing is just as variable. At one moment, a group shimmy segues immediately into a brief Irish jig.

What ties it all together is a kind of conversation in motion on what it means to be a man. With the changing nature of masculinity and the place of the male in modern society very much discussed, this piece, which premiered in 2000, has acquired a new urgency.

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company runs through Oct. 20 at The Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Ave. at 19th St. in New York. For information or tickets, call 212-691-9740 or visit www.joyce.org

Steve Weinstein has been a regular correspondent for the International Herald Tribune, the Advocate, the Village Voice and Out. He has been covering the AIDS crisis since the early '80s, when he began his career. He is the author of "The Q Guide to Fire Island" (Alyson, 2007).