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Review/Dance:

## The Wider Dimension of Lubovitch's Male Duet

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Two men in white approach each other from opposite sides of the stage, dance together with the clarity of geometric form and then part, exiting separately into the wings from which they entered. The dancers' mutual support speaks of a caring relationship.

Yet what is now the most famous male duet in the international dance world is more about love than lovers. Julio Bocca and John Gardner beautifully brought out the wider dimension of Lar Lubovitch's choreography with their quiet intensity on Tuesday night with American Ballet Theater at the Metropolitan Opera House.

As a company premiere, this excerpt from Mr. Lubovitch's stirring three-part 1985 Mozart work, "Concerto Six Twenty-Two," was the only novelty on Ballet Theater's second mixed bill. It says something about the state of ballet choreography when the so-called contemporary program of the season comes from choreographers initially identified with modern-dance rather than ballet.

The range, admittedly varied, included a premiere from last year, Ulysses Dove's nihilistic "Serious Pleasures," and older works: Glen Tetley's hymn to hope and resurrection, "Voluntaries," and Mark Morris's streamlined movement study, "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes."

Although new to the company, Mr. Lubovitch's duet has acquired a life of its own, especially since it was cheered at the "Dancing for Life" AIDS benefit at Lincoln Center in 1987. It was seen recently at a fund-raising performance for Mr. Lubovitch's own troupe and is also being performed internationally by Mr. Gardner and Mikhail Baryshnikov on tour in Mr. Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project.

Commissioned by the National Center for Contemporary Dance in France, the full work is set to Mozart's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra (K. 622). Mr. Lubovitch's *tour de force* is to suggest depth of feeling through spatial design and subtle timing. The closest he comes to a literal gesture is when the men place their arms around each other's shoulders after they have curved an arm overhead to form a symbolic circle of friendship. The piece is very much about structure, with Mr. Lubovitch running the opening sequence backward at the end and continually reversing roles so that the supported man becomes the supporter.

Form, in effect, creates the heightened images of mutual comfort and consolation that make this duet so moving in its simplicity. We are all our brother's keepers. Harold Themmen was the clarinet soloist, with Charles Barker conducting

Mr. Morris's 1988 "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes" derives its title from Ben Jonson's song that Virgil Thomson incorporates in his Etudes for Piano. Gladys Celeste was the onstage pianist.

Mr. Morris, using toe work for the women, meets the maverick composer on his own ground, meshing basic ballet exercises and sophisticated, quirky sequences in the same way that Thomson overlays familiar tunes and studies with his own dissonance and textures.

The central tango solo, created for Mr. Baryshnikov, is danced with straight-limbed perfection and smooth turns by Gil Boggs now, and his duet with Ethan Brown had the witty canonic structure that is a Morris forte. Christina Fagundes, Keith Roberts and Carl Jonassaint stood out in the cast, which also included Shawn Black, Robert Conn, Veronica Lynn, Kathleen Moore, Ashley Tuttle, Roger Van Fleteren and Stephanie Walz.

In a somber mood, Amanda McKerrow and Guillaume Graffin, lyrical but strong in a variety of bird- and fishlike shapes, symbolized the resolution of mourning and grief at the heart of Mr. Tetley's "Voluntaries." With David Shuler as the organist in Poulenc's Concerto for Organ, Strings and Percussion, the magnificent high-flying ensemble danced Mr. Tetley's 1973 meditation on the death of the choreographer John Cranko. Julie Kent, flanked by Mr. Conn and Clinton Lucket, provided the right counterpoint.

Mr. Dove's "Serious Pleasures" is as paradoxical as ever. Its images of men impaled on pegs or of couples rushing out of shuttered doors for erotic encounters leaves little to the imagination and yet never makes the overall meaning clear. Robert Ruggieri's bombastic electronic score was the springboard for an energetic cast led by Parrish Maynard.

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