

More From The Lubovitch 50th @ The Joyce



Above: The Joffrey Ballet's Fabrice Calmels in Lar Lubovitch's *Othello*; photo by Herbert Migdoll

~ Author: *Oberon*

Saturday April 21st matinee - Continuing the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the **Lar Lubovitch Dance Company** at The Joyce, four dancers from The Joffrey flew in to perform excerpts from Lar's 1997 full-length ballet, *Othello*, while Lubovitch Company members offered three distinctively different works by the choreographer. It was a first-rate afternoon of dance all round.

Little Rhapsodies (dating from 2007) is a gem of a dancework: to the delightful *Symphonic Études*, Opus 13, of Robert Schumann, three men - Jonathan Emanuell Alsberry, Reed Luplau, and Benjamin Holliday Wardell - trade solos and dance in unison.

At curtain rise, the dancers are seen in silhouette. They dance together, in a folkish vein. Then the solos begin: Mr. Wardell is a gorgeous and expressive mover; the ever-brilliant Mr. Alsberry is winningly whimsical and blithely balletic; and Mr. Luplau with a lightness of touch, breezy turns, and copious charisma. Music and movement are happily meshed in a *pas de trois*, followed by more solos: Mr. Wardell something of a revelation; Mr. Luplau amazingly swift, sure, and supple; Mr. Alsberry effortlessly combining the dynamic and the lyrical. The trio dance on to a fun finish.

Dance companies worldwide should snap up *Little Rhapsodies*: a perfect ballet to show off the male virtuosos on your roster.

Othello: A dance in three acts is Lar Lubovitch's 1997 full-length ballet, choreographed to a score by Elliot Goldenthal. In excerpts from Act III, guest artists Fabrice Calmels, Victoria Jaiani, Temur Suluashvili, and Rory Hohenstein of the Joffrey Ballet danced the final pages of the tragedy with a compelling sense of theatre.

In a claustrophobic black chamber, Mr. Calmels' downcast, glowering Moor sits on his black throne. The supplicant Cassio (Mr. Hohenstein, his hands bound) and the conniving Iago

(Mr. Suluashvili) get under his skin whilst the incredibly lovely and vulnerable Ms. Jaiani as Desdemona seems unaware of her impending doom. The chilly music says it all.

Ms. Jaiani has a solo, her *en pointe* dancing a vision of grace. Mr. Calmels, his towering stature taking over the stage, displays the anguish of his mixed emotions. In a love/hate duet, he caresses his wife one moment and seems repulsed by her the next.



Mr. Suluashvili's handsome, conniving Iago now continues his machinations to bring about Othello's downfall: in their dramatic scene, Mr. Calmels leaps onto the arms of his throne as Suluashvili's Iago cowers beneath the Moor's wrath (above, in a Cheryl Mann photo). Then the fatal handkerchief is produced. In this scene, composer Elliot Goldenthal makes marvelous use of the saxophone.

Eerie music accompanies Ms. Jaiani's return as Desdemona. Then the composer conjures up an ominously cinematic setting for the final combat between husband and wife. Othello quickly prevails, and - true to Shakespeare's immortal words - '*I kissed thee ere I killed thee*' - passionately kisses Desdemona as he strangles her with the handkerchief.

As the four Joffrey dancers received resounding applause, I was recalling my only previous encounter with the Jaiani/Calmels partnership: they danced in Edwaard Liang's *Woven Dreams at Fall for Dance in 2011*. They were splendid then, and splendid today.

Something About Night, Lar's newest creation, was premiered earlier in the week. I liked the piece a lot at its first performance but, as so often happens, a second viewing today made an even stronger impression. The gently ecstatic duet for Nicole Corea and Tobin Del Cuore really cast a spell today, and Brett Perry's solo was nothing less than sublime. Belinda McGuire and Barton Cowperthwaite had less to do than I might have wished, but Barton still had *Men's Stories* ahead of him, wherein his performance brought down the house.



Men's Stories: A Concerto in Ruin (above, in a Nan Melville photo) closed the performance on a mighty note. The cast was the same as that of the [opening night](#), and they all outdid themselves. Stunningly-danced solos by Reed Luplau, Jonathan Emanuell Alsberry, Anthony Bocconi, and Barton Cowperthwaite - and an epic performance from Benjamin Holliday Wardell - kept the level of excitement sky-high, whilst Colin Fuller, Matthew McLaughlin, Brett Perry, and Lukasz Zięba all looked great and danced their hearts out.

The poignant, darkling, magically masculine world of *Men's Stories* kept the audience in a rapt state of involvement, its musical *mélange* endlessly evocative. As waves of applause swept thru the house, the dancers took several bows before Mr. Lubovitch joined them onstage to a barrage of cheers. Happy 50th, Lar!!

Friends and fans gathered on the lower level after the show; I loved seeing Gabrielle Lamb again, having a long chat with Nicole Corea, meeting Fabrice Calmels, and congratulating JJ, Barton, Reed, and Brett. When Mr. Lubovitch quietly walked thru the backstage door, the crowd burst into spontaneous applause.

~ Oberon

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