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Lubovitch troupe performs 3 works

By Nancy Goldner
Inquirer Dance Critic

Lar Lubovitch is too talented and young a choreographer to be fastened to a particular work, to be known as the man who made the adagio of *Concerto Six Twenty-Two*. Yet, the work is extraordinary enough to warrant the fame it has brought Lubovitch.

Since it was created in 1986, I have seen the dance maybe four times, and each time the audience responds as if it were electrically charged. Last night, when the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company performed at the Annenberg Center's Zellerbach Theater as part of the New Dance series of Dance Celebration, was no exception.

The adagio, which is the middle section of a three-part work to Mozart's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* (K. 622), is for two men. The men's liberation movement has made unisex duets fashionable. What makes this duet groundbreaking is that its theme of love is treated explicitly. These guys are not pals; they're not merely two dancers who happen to find themselves on the stage at the same time. They are in love.

True that the tenor of their expression falls under the category of friendship rather than eroticism, but this should not mitigate the fact that they are indeed lovers.

As important as the honesty of the piece is the maturity of its content and form. As a result of genuine collaborative effort between Lubovitch and the dancers — Sylvain Lafortune and Rick Michalek — the two men come across with authoritative dignity both as people and as dancers.

The latter is crucial. For no matter how startling or controversial or moving one may find their relationship, it is always subsumed by the

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inventiveness of the choreography itself.

The love theme quite aside, it would not be inaccurate to call the duet an exquisitely crafted exercise in the play of weight. In a sense, the duet is about one dancer's surrender to gravity and the other man's transcendence of it.

It is also about the many kinds of physical support one body can give to another. Which brings one back to the dance's groundbreaking quality. The men take turns lifting each other, but only in this duet are they as intricate and featherweight as the lifts men execute with women.

The novel aspect of *Of My Soul*, to a Bach cantata, concerns gesture. Lubovitch incorporates sign language of the deaf into the fabric of the choreography. The dance, like most of Lubovitch's work, is finely crafted and has moments of stunning simplicity, when a phrase or pattern is repeated with only a trace of variation.

The signing, however, seems gratuitous and for the most part adds nothing but fussy flourish. Obviously, Lubovitch does not intend for it to serve an informational purpose, but it is too gimmicky to serve an aesthetic function.

A sample of Lubovitch's work from the 1970s, *North Star*, was also on the program. It duplicates the effect of the Philip Glass score only too well. On and on and on the dancing pulsates, never coming up for a gulp of air.

Inevitably, Lafortune and Michalek were the stars of the evening, but the entire company looked good. Lubovitch would be welcomed back in my book.