

Bright Spirits

BY BURT SUPREE

LAR LUBOVITCH DANCE COMPANY. At City Center (November 18 to 23). Premiere of *Blood*, also *Concerto Six Twenty-Two* and *A Brahms Symphony*.

The generosity of movement—its big-heartedness, roundness, and suppleness—in Lar Lubovitch's dances seems more and more gratifying to me. In his *Concerto Six Twenty-Two*, to Mozart's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*, K. 622, the excellent company, gleaming in white, leaps softly in a big circle, divides into matching lines of four, and devolves into duets interspersed with other small ensembles, and then more of those warm, reorganizing circles and neat, comradely comings-together. There's a briskness, jauntiness, a luscious springiness in the dancers' bodies. The dancers seem happy as porpoises plunging through the waves.

The choreography is smart, rambunctious, and true to the music, too—riding its rhythms and phrasing, using its support and punctuation, sometimes soaring quite free without ignoring it. In its blithe mood and shining whiteness, *Concerto Six Twenty-Two* recalls Paul Taylor's *Aureole*, though *Aureole* tends to skim the ground, and Lubovitch's dance

is more lush and bouncing. *Concerto Six Twenty-Two*, like other of Lubovitch's joyous, clearheaded pieces, has the airiness and noble scope of gesture that ballet has, but with a soft, muscular juiciness that ballet never attains. In ballet the floor is a kind of enemy, something that must be pushed away. In Lubovitch's dances the floor allows the dancers to assert their weight and fly off with renewed abandon. It gives the movement marvelous amplitude.

The slow movement is an exquisite, lyric duet for two men: Sylvain Lafortune and Rick Michalek. Thoroughly unsentimental, unaffected, but full of caring, it starts most simply. The men approach each other from opposite wings. Each reaches one arm forward. They touch palms, hold each other around the shoulders, and walk forward together. They form a wreath with their upturned inside arms, bring their outside arms down in a larger circle, then dip the small arm-circle into the larger one. The doubled circle, composed so carefully, is an indelible and reverent image of friendship, companionship, completion. Lafortune and Michalek leap into a fluid sequence of quiet, seamlessly smooth lifts and leanings. Each glides under the other to lend gentle support. Soaring but understated lifts are incorporated without fanfare into the seamless looping and swinging, pitching and diving of the whole movement. Chaste and tender, with that open-hearted spirit.

The third and final section is scampery and high-spirited, with show-off games and plenty of altered folk dance elements like soundless heel-clicks. Pairs of men slide women swiftly between them and



JACK MITCHELL

Babalís, Favors, and Lafortune in *Concerto Six Twenty-Two*

catapult them free. Leaping seems as easy as breathing. Being airborne is the dancers' natural state.

In what may be termed a change of pace, Lubovitch's novelty, *Blood*, to George Antheil's clanging, choppy battery of sound, *Ballet Mécanique*, is grotesque and gory, a gross out that becomes excessive enough to be pretty funny. The first figure we see is a woman in a blood-spattered black dress who jerks around and advances on us with her skirts tauntingly and unappetizingly lifted. A gangly, jittery man in red (John Dayger) staggers around. Everyone is angular, wriggling, and distorted in their movement, and

definitely half-witted. A guy in black (Lafortune) lashes six crawling figures. One hangs back, then slugs himself in the head and strangles himself with his shirt. Two small mobs crash two women head to head like siege machines. Everyone pulls at another woman, who comes apart midsection. The black whipper gleefully frolics with her glittering, sausagelike entrails. He gobbles them, thrashes around, humps them on the floor, and is dragged off, perhaps for committing an act of bad taste.

Bruce Wood bashes Dayger with a giant bone. Six or eight maimed and bandaged people polka in couples. Three men drag Ronnie Favors and pirouette her on her head. The music is drastic enough—like a factory that specializes in smashing things—to keep excitement mounting. Everybody must be getting turned on, because there's a lot more hard pelvic action—bumps and grinds and wiggles. But, can't get no satisfaction, and the crude violence mounts to giddier levels. They chase each other off and on, returning with an ax, cleaver, or scissors in their heads, a knife through the skull, a stiff noose around the neck. Frantic and staggering, jumping and kicking and waving, they're not dead yet.

The program closed with Lubovitch's passionate and sweeping *A Brahms Symphony* (to the first three movements of the third symphony), a beautifully complex and haunting work for four soloists, plus an ensemble that flows across the stage like shadows. The other wonderful dancers in Lubovitch's company, all of whom deserve praise, are Jeanne Solan, Kathy Casey, Gloria Brishbin, Daniel Baudendistel, Peggy Baker, Mia Babalis, and Kevin Schroder. ■