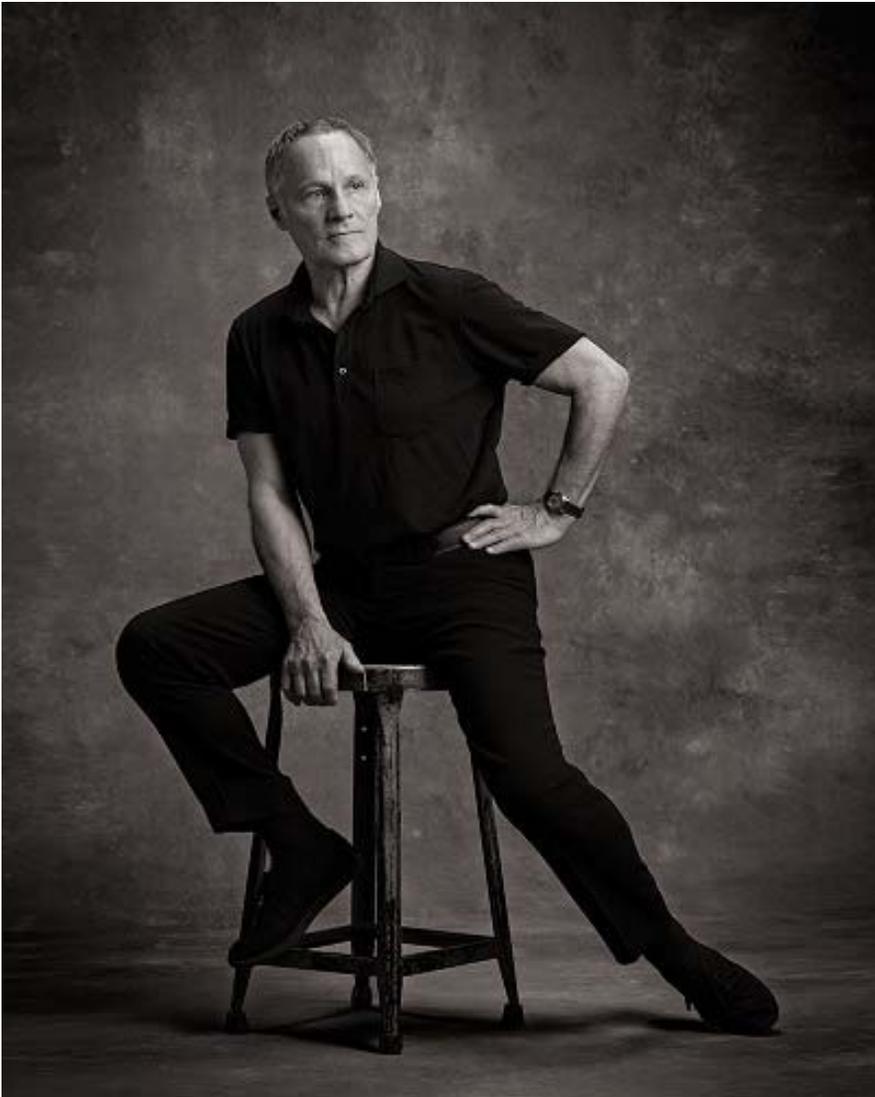


## Lar Lubovitch ~ Three Dances



Above: Lar Lubovitch, photo courtesy of [NYC Dance Project](#)

Friday May 21st, 2021 - This evening I tuned in to watch a program of highlights from three works by the eminent choreographer [Lar Lubovitch](#). The program featured excerpts from two familiar ballets by Lar, and part of his unique *The Planets*.

Watching the film's duet from *Concerto Six Twenty-Two* brought back memories of a beautiful afternoon photographer Nir Arieli and I spent [watching a rehearsal](#) of this piece in 2013. Mr. Lubovitch was coaching dancers Attila Joey Csiki and Clifton Brown, and the atmosphere in the studio was palpable.



Above: Sylvain Lafortune and Rick Michalek in **Concerto Six Twenty-Two**; photo by Jack Mitchell

The duet is set to the *adagio* from Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto*, a beloved work that reached a wide audience when it was used in the film *Out of Africa*. Sylvain Lafortune and Rick Michalek are the dancers in today's program; clad all in white, they could be lovers, or brothers, or best of friends. The Lubovitch choreography is a poignant response to the music; the men are mutually supportive and tender without becoming cloying. There are solo passages, danced whilst the other man observes. It's a study in masculine grace.

**Othello**, which premiered in 1997, was a joint creation for the Lubovitch Company, American Ballet Theatre, and San Francisco Ballet. In 2018, as part of the celebration of the Lubovitch Company's 50th anniversary, Fabrice Calmels and his colleagues from The Joffrey [performed excerpts from \*\*Othello\*\*](#) at The Joyce.



Above: Desmond Richardson and Yuan Yuan Tan in *Othello*

This evening we saw the ballet's third act from a filmed performance by San Francisco Ballet. The stellar cast featured Desmond Richardson as Othello, Yuan Yuan Tan as Desdemona, Parrish Maynard as Iago, Katita Waldo as Emilia, and a very young Gonzalo Garcia as Cassio.

As Act III opens, Cassio is in chains, being interrogated by Othello with Iago a menacing observer. Despite his pleas of innocence, the young captain doesn't stand a chance; he is taken away. Now Desdemona comes on the scene: Yuan Yuan Tan, achingly lovely, seeks to placate her jealous husband. Parrish Maynard as a scarily intense Iago watches the couple. The potent physicality of Desmond Richardson's Othello holds sway over his blameless wife. Katita Waldo as Emilia joins for a *pas de quatre* set to dynamic music.

Othello and Iago are left alone, and the latter summons up the green-eyed monster: jealousy. Here composer Elliot Goldenthal makes cunning use of the saxophone. Whilst Iago weaves his web of lies, Othello sees visions of Cassio courting his wife. Then Iago produces the handkerchief and Desdemona's fate is sealed.

The perfection of Desmond Richardson's portrayal is now to be savoured in a solo of technical perfection and great dramatic intensity. He then confronts his wife, and, following an anguished duet, he strangles her with the handkerchief. Now Emilia rushes in, and reveals Iago's deception; she barely has time to state the truth before her husband murders her. Othello, overcome with remorse, stabs himself.

The excellence of the cast made for a truly absorbing performance of this Lubovitch masterpiece.



Above: Isabelle and Paul Duchesnay in *The Planets*

Completing the program, we had an excerpt from *The Planets*, in which figure skaters and ballet dancers joined together. The music is "Venus" from Holst's *The Planets*, Mr. Lubovitch choreographed the skating, and Doug Varone the 'court of Venus'. The goddess is portrayed by Sonia Rodriguez of the National Ballet of Canada, and the principal skating couple are Paul and Isabelle Duchesnay, 1992 Olympic Silver Medalists.

Venus, after drinking from an enchanted pool, sees a vision of a company of lovers, come to pay her homage. These skaters fill the ice with swirling, flowing combinations. Now the principal couple - the brother-and-sister Duchesnays - execute a lush duet, sailing across the ice to the lyrical Holst music.

Paul Duchesnay kneels before Ms. Rodriguez's Venus; she is captivated by this mortal male and they begin a duet in which Ms. Rodriguez's feet never touch the ice. The goddess then returns to her temple, but the encounter has left its mark on her.



Above: Sonia Rodriguez in *The Planets*

While watching the program, many memories of my experiences with Lar Lubovitch's work - and of meeting him briefly in various settings - came flooding back. It's thanks largely to my friendship with Attila Joey Csiki - an iconic Lubovitch dancer - that I discovered the world of Lubovitch. Here are some articles and images from my blog about these encounters:

[Meeting Attila in person](#) for the first time in November 2010 when he was preparing a Lubovitch solo with pianist Kathleen Tagg.

In 2011, with Attila [teaching a Lubovitch class](#), is where the Lubovitch connection took hold. Three dancers in the class - Greg Lau, Sarah Pon, and Blake Hennessy-York - were embarking on their careers at the time.

Attila arranged for Kokyat and me [to watch a rehearsal](#) of Lar's *Men's Stories*. This was the first time I met Mr. Lubovitch; he was quite formal, which I liked.

2014 brought the fascinating [Black Rose](#) to The Joyce.

In 2017, in preparation for the 50th anniversary of the Lubovitch Company, Lar set his *Legend of Ten* on the Martha Graham Dance Company. Photographer Nir Arieli and I had [a fantastic time](#) watching a rehearsal.

And in 2018, the 50th anniversary was [celebrated in high style](#) at The Joyce.

There's so much more Lubovitch in my dance diary! And there's no way I could finish this article without mentioning my two Lubovitch goddesses: Nicole Corea and Kate Skarpetowska.

~ Oberon

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