

The Seattle Times

Vibrant Lar Lubovitch Dance Company exults in sheer joy of movement

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company celebrates its 40th anniversary, but it is still young and limber, as it showed in its concert at Seattle's Meany Hall Feb. 5. Review by Michael Upchurch.

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Additional performances

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company

8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Meany Theater, University of Washington, Seattle; \$20-\$38 (206-543-4880 or www.unworldseries.org).

Dance Review |

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. Yet it's a surprisingly young dance troupe.

Eight of the 14 dancers on its current tour joined the company this season. And most of the others came on board within the last few years.

Maybe that explains the freshness, buoyancy and sheer dancerly joy exuded in the three pieces the company performed on Thursday night. Even the one golden oldie in the lineup — "Concerto Six Twenty-Two" from 1986 — was a spry gambol.

Set to Mozart's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, K. 622, "Concerto" in its brisk outer movements is all loopy arm circles, swannings, sashays and maypole merriment — with no actual maypole in sight. Dancers dressed in white bob and weave in light tension with the music, as they ramp up toward a kind of giddy poetry.

There's some comedy thrown into the mix, including a goofy Frankenstein-monster walk for the whole ensemble. And some of the entrances verge on airmail deliveries. But the heart of the piece is its central movement: a duet for two men.

Jay Franke and George Smallwood — in slow elegant moves, and in close proximity — bloomed like a symmetrical flower at first. Then they picked up the pace to become an intricate four-limbed creature illustrating delicacies of balance and counterbalance, almost mathematically precise yet supple in their athleticism. They got the biggest cheers of the evening.

"Jangle" (2008), set to Bartók's Rhapsodies No. 1 and No. 2 for Violin and Piano, was a folk-flavored romp, complete with claps, slaps and hip swivels. The star here was Jonathan E. Alsberry, whose high kicks and swift moves lent him a dervishlike prowess among a tight corps of dancers. The final movement, alternating ensemble work with fleeting solos, fit together like the smoothest of puzzles.

"Dvorak Serenade" (2007) had a more ceremonial feel to it, as it built up contrasts between a central couple (elegant Mucuy Bolles and Scott Rink) and an ensemble that moved like the tide around them — a fluid, volatile tide. You never quite knew what kind of cresting wave or sidelong eddy was going to surge out of them.

In another striking passage, the two lovers, in pursuit of each other, wove their way through a forestlike ensemble of gently swaying bodies.

Some dance troupes are dance-theater ensembles. Others are just *dance dance dance*.

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company falls forthrightly in the latter category. It offers no stories, no plots. Instead, it's light and limber, with its focus entirely on how music and movement can interpenetrate to produce pure footloose delight.

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