



Flash Review, 3-15-07: Command Performance

Tynek Casts a Demi-Spell

By Alison D'Amato

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NEW YORK -- Dusan Tynek's offering for the 92nd Street Y's Harkness Dance Festival clocks in, all in all, at around two hours. That's a lot of material. I knew I was enjoying the show very, very much when I was eager to go back into the theater after intermission, and only just twitching slightly by the end of the second half. The three works on the bill, seen March 8 at the Ailey Citigroup Theater, are fairly consistent in tone and substance, which makes it even more impressive that a choreographer can command our attention for that long.

The first piece, "Fleur-de-lis," is a premiere featuring three couples set to the stirring violin sonatas of Heinrich Ignaz von Biber. (The evening in its entirety is called "String(s) Theory," a reference to both Tynek's use of string-based accompaniment and the "String Theory" of physics, which even a good hard look at Wikipedia couldn't give me a basic, working definition of. No matter.) "Fleur-de-lis" begins with a gentle insistency, the three couples slowly easing into the space. The men wait with outstretched arms and the women walk with eyes closed, barely edging into their grasps. This slow, pedestrian imagery doesn't last long, though -- Tynek's choreography gives way in no time to a full-on flurry of kineticism.

For this piece, costume designer Karen Young has created sophisticated outfits of sleek and well-tailored khaki. The clothes disappear, however, as the dancers go about their considerable business, and by the last section, they've got nothing left but their underwear. Dusan Tynek's dancers are beautiful, especially the women. I don't just mean that they're pretty and have impossibly gorgeous bodies, although they do. In "Fleur-de-lis" especially, it is hard not to be drawn in by their expressions, which radiate a deep commitment to the movement and a joy at being caught up in it. Either they're great actors or they're relishing every step of the demanding choreography. It may help that Tynek himself dances and thus gives his performers material that they will truly enjoy. I neglected to notice his mention as a dancer in the program, and so was fairly astonished to see him step forward out of the performers' curtain call to claim individual choreographer's applause. It's an accomplishment for a young choreographer to create such complicated, multi-layered images as he does while also being entrenched in them.

The force of Tynek's movement lies in a particular clarity of shape and intention, with the dancers' bodies evoking the concrete and architectural. The movement phrases are strong and specific, and often call on the performers to approach each other in the service of some exhilarating moments of partnering. One such moment is an exceptional, visceral duet for two of the male dancers in "Fleur-de-lis." It only lasts a moment, but the two men make the most of it, leveraging each other up into the air with a whiplike intensity. There is much of the classical in Tynek's approach, and thus the choreography often seems exciting without being at all edgy: the performers do a lot of balletic scurrying around, their chests puffed forward and arms dragging behind. I tried to mentally edit out these slightly forced moments of transition, however, because I was enjoying the meat of the work so much.