

Letter from New York

8 December 2003.

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The Dance Theatre of Dušan Týnek—a 30 year-old native of Czechoslovakia who studied with Aileen Pasloff at Bard, was a scholarship student at the Cunningham Studio, and has performed for many choreographers, including Lucinda Childs—put on several concerts this week at The Kitchen. The program featured three works, all from 2002 and 2003. *Charge*, being given its world première, is a Childs-like setting for a soloist and a corps of six to Philip Glass's 1987 violin concerto: costumed like party crackers by A. Christina Giannini in shades of pale blue, the dancers elaborate a complicated architectural analysis of the music while dutifully acknowledging the steady pulse-patter that drives it. One sees wonderful images—as when the

soloist (Eden Mazer) runs backward toward a line of bodies that breaks in half just as she reaches its center. The dance means to be spellbinding, though, and is merely hypnotic. If the only works on the program had been *Charge* and the 2002 *Wardrobe Spectre*—a dance-theater satire to Carl Maria von Weber's *Invitation to the Dance*, for the veteran soloist Richard Daniels and six invitees, whom he loads up with mismatched garments that he plucks from a laundry pile in order to hammer home a point about, as I understood it, the erotic equation between layers of clothing and layers of fantasy—I'd have left thinking Týnek a talent to watch and waited to see more before telling you about him. However, the opening dance, *Pilot's Dream*, a seven-section suite also being given its world première, is more than ingenious or neatly shaped: it's a beautiful, ranging epic, filled with dramatic surprise and expertly shaped choreographic events. As the dance critic Amanda Smith wrote to me of Týnek after the Thursday concert, "this piece puts him on the map for me." Set to various musical miniatures by Satie, *Anibal Troilo* (a tango from 1951), *Granados*, and others, the sections gradually built into a kind of story: a young man (Týnek) sustains a loving yet difficult relationship with an older figure (Keith Sabado); masochistically pursues

a dismissive goddess who flies recklessly alone toward some blonde ambition (Jennifer Howard); learns how to dance as a partner with a second, more accommodating dark siren from more antiquated waters (Eden Mazer), who may be an incarnation of his sister and who, a true wraith of Romanticism, vanishes in a breath as soon as he thinks he has overpowered her; returns to his original Valkyrie, with whom he reconciles; and joins the two women in elevating the father-figure, who writes an unspecified dissertation on life—first with his index finger and then with his entire body—on the nighttime firmament. The suite concludes with this older character, seated alone, fingering his thoughts into the floor, as if he had conceived the story himself, or were remembering it at a later time.



These events emerge entirely through dances, one after another, that unemphatically coalesce and melt into streams of images as they go. The choreography draws on the upright, leg-initiated movement familiar to audiences of Cunningham and Childs and on steps from folk dancing: it takes innovative risks, particularly in the partnering sequences, however step-experimentation doesn't seem to be its principal focus. Týnek, who originally planned to study natural science in the U.S., is not a scientist of dance technique. He's a dance poet, and a very rare one.

His duets with his sacred and profane loves are the most concentrated and extended choreographic engagements I've seen between couples in a downtown venue since the work of Christopher Caines, who also was once a scholarship student at the Cunningham Studio.

Caines is the more musically sensitive by far, and he always uses live music. He also has an extensive background as a student of classical dancing. Týnek, whose background is primarily in modern dance, has settled for tapes, alas: that is, he settles for specific musical performances rather than for the music itself. However, his choreographic references to what he listens to are knowledgeable and respectful, and the dramatic element of his imagination is distinctively his own. That Cunningham's enterprise has helped to produce two choreographers who make dances with beginnings, middles, and ends, to classical music, in the past ten years makes one wonder how much of John Cage's influence was conservative, in a beneficial sense, under all that iconoclasm. One is reminded that at David Tudor's memorial service, the live music played was entirely made up of Argentine tangos, because Tudor—so fiercely *terrible* in his own anarchic compositions—loved to listen to those insinuating songs outside the theater.

In the case of both choreographers, of course, there are many more influences. Týnek names Aileen Pasloff—a fascinating, wildly imaginative performer—as his mentor. Richard Daniels may also be a force. Týnek, along with Keith Sabado, Kate Johnson, and others, has performed in Daniels's work; and, according to an online review by Lisa Jo Sagallo last year, Daniels presented his own suite about dreams and nightmares (*Wee Hours*). In the event, *Pilot's Dream* announces a choreographer with a future to which one looks forward, in a time and a place where so many other hopes for the art of modern dance seem end-stopped. —Mindy Aloff

Illustrations:

Both photos are of, *Pilot's Dream*, both© Julie Lemberger

First: Dancers L to R: Dusan Tynek, Jennifer Howard.

Second: Dancers L to R: Dusan Tynek, Keith Sabado

(DT)² Dušan Týnek Dance Theatre

3-6 December 2003

The Kitchen

All choreography by Dušan Týnek

All Lighting by Roderick Murray

(Musical recordings not specified)

Pilot's Dream (2003, world première)

Costumes: Micheline Brown

I. "Desert Overhead, Stars Underfoot"

Music: "Lent et douloureux" from *Trois Gymnopédies* (1888) by Erik Satie

Dancer: Keith Sabado

II. "Planet-Hopping"

Music: "Lent" from *Six Gnossiennes* (1890) by Erik Satie

Dancer: Dušan Týnek

III. "Lines in the Sand"

Music: *Responso* (1951) by Aníbal Troilo

Dancers: Keith Sabado and Dušan Týnek

IV. "Four Thorns"

Music: *La Maja de Goya* (1910) by Enrique Granados

Dancers: Jennifer Howard and Dušan Týnek

V. "By Any Other Name"

Music: *Antonio Marinheiro (Tema de Peça)* (1972) by Carlos Paredes

Dancers: Jennifer Howard, Eden Mazer, Keith Sabado, and Dušan Týnek

VI. "Taming Game"

Music: *Pannonia Boundless* (1999) by Aleksandra Vrebalov

Dancers: Eden Mazer and Dušan Týnek

VII. "Homeward"

Music: "Lento" from String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, Op. 96 (B.179)

"American" (1893) by Antonín Dvořák

Dancers: Jennifer Howard, Eden Mazer, Keith Sabado, and Dušan Týnek

Charge (2003, world première)

Music: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1987) by Philip Glass

Costumes: A Christina Giannini

Dancers: Eden Mazer and Alexandra Berger, Paulina Danilczyk, Francisco Graciano, Bianca Johnson, Elisa Osborne, Keith Sabado

Wardrobe Spectre (2002)

Music: *Invitation to the Dance*, Op. 65 (1819) by Carl Maria von Weber

Costumes: Micheline Brown and Dušan Týnek

Dancers: Richard Daniels and Alexandra Berger, Paulina Danilczyk, Francisco Graciano, Bianca Johnson, Elisa Osborne, Dušan Týnek

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