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Dusan Tynek, BAM Fisher, Brooklyn, New York – review

By Apollinaire Scherr

## The Czech-born choreographer's arresting new 'Romanesco Suite' finds drama in abstraction



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Almost as soon as his eight-member company debuted a decade ago, Dusan Tynek was exciting critics. The Czech-born New Yorker honoured perennial virtues that tend to get lost in young choreographers' rush to make a mark: structure, shape and musicality, or, in other words, dancing and its shepherding into a dance. But Tynek did not entirely trust his powers. He would lard up his bright, crisp steps with themes that muffled their pleasures and surprises. Ten years on, he has justified his considerable gifts but remains unresolved about the kind of drama he wants to create.

In the terrific premiere *Romanesco Suite*, the drama lies in the abstract: patterns peppered with accident and unfurled in variations. The dance began with the arresting original troupe member Elisa Osborne circling the stage in a run. Dancers joined her, broke off to form clusters of movement or stillness, and leapt into each other's arms to be carried aloft along the circular track. Pattern and deviation constitute what Merce Cunningham, for whom Tynek briefly performed, called life and believed art could emulate: the simultaneity of small and big, willed and unwilled, like waiting for a cup of coffee in a bodega while rainclouds gather outside.

With the season's other premiere, *Stereopsis*, Tynek resorts to more overt drama. In an amplified voice as gravelly as sea caressing sand, he intoned poet Cynthia Polutanovich's loose evocation of Odysseus's ruin of the Cyclops. Whatever subtlety the choreography possessed was buried under costumes that riffed on caveman and Indian chief and warlike exhalations that the dancers discharged to punctuate their steps. *Stereopsis* came to seem as drearily repetitive as a Lucinda Childs exercise in minimalism.

But Tynek has already discovered how to combine story and steps without them cancelling each other out. For 2010's masterly *Base Pairs*, he instituted a separation of powers. Polutanovich's evocative erotic love poem, which Childs read on tape with the eerie impassivity of Laurie Anderson, existed on one plane. The angular steps, the disarmingly novel entanglements of couples, the eruptions of stillness, occurred on another. Ragged with feeling, the poem spoke to the individual. Prismatic and stark, the dancing emerged from far away to convey the whole picture, and how beautiful it was.

