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DANCE REVIEW

## Need Live Music or Not? Well, Why Not Try Both

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Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

**Dusan Tynek Dance Theater** John Eirich and Emily Gayeski appearing in Dusan Tynek's "Widow's Walk" at TriBeCa Performing Arts Center.

Live music doesn't always improve a dance. For some choreographers, live musicians are expensively irrelevant to their work or threateningly distracting. Dusan Tynek is not one of those choreographers. The participation of the string quartet Ethel in the second program of his company's two-week run at the TriBeCa Performing Arts Center made for an especially vibrant Thursday night.

That's not to say that Mr. Tynek needed a boost. For "Transparent Walls," the first work on the program, the score, by Aleksandra Vrebalov, was recorded, and yet the dance had plenty of drive. A multipart turbine of swinging limbs, the eight-member company repeatedly advanced upon the audience from the darkness at the rear of the stage. In one striking image among many, the women, leaning back against the men, were slid forward on their heels as if they were hand-trucks.

Still, “Widow’s Walk,” which made its debut last week, was brighter with Ethel in the house. The quartet’s muscular playing, almost too exciting, brought out the taut energy of Mr. Tynek’s dance, a fantasy about sailors, their wives and the pitiless ocean. The men rocked and floundered and hopped backward, as if pulled, with a leg extended behind them. The musicians of Ethel, tugging hard with their bows, seemed to make the sea tug harder.

For parts of this week’s terrific premiere, “Portals,” Cornelius Dufallo of Ethel set down his violin to bang on a Serbian drum, one of the Eastern European elements in another urgent score by Ms. Vrebalov (this one augmented by taped sounds of church bells and voices). “Portals” and “Transparent Walls,” created last year, are the first two parts of a yet-to-be-completed trilogy to Ms. Vrebalov’s music.

Mary Hamrick’s set for the new dance spans the stage with two layers of scrims. A tall arch cut out of the nearer scrim combines with the music and the men’s leather skirts to suggest an ancient city — somewhere, perhaps, at the edge of an empire. John Eirich, the piece’s stoic main figure, could be a sentry. When a man and woman fashion an arch with their bodies — another portal and a motif throughout the dance — Mr. Eirich watches wistfully, then ventures through the opening they make. Soon afterward, he spies through the wall of fabric Elisa Osborne, a companion he will subsequently lose and hold and lose again.

Both “Transparent Walls” and “Portals” feature a central couple whose bond seems jeopardized by the dance’s centrifugal activity. The implication of human drama balances the formal, spatial concerns indicated in the titles: the seemingly open field of the first work versus the partitions and compressing aperture of the second. Though “Portals” goes a little slack near the end, the structuring of its moving parts and its high level of invention, continuing behind the scrims and spilling through the gap, matched Ethel’s verve. Mr. Tynek’s choreography may be old-fashioned modern dance, but it’s very much alive.

*Dusan Tynek Dance Theater continues through Saturday at TriBeCa Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers Street, Borough of Manhattan Community College; (212) 220-1460, [tribecapac.org](http://tribecapac.org).*