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DANCE REVIEW

Action on the Stage Imprinted on the Eye



Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

Members of the Dusan Tynek Dance Theatre performing in the premiere of “Middlegame” at Dance Theater Workshop.

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All kinds of things can happen at a contemporary dance performance besides actual dancing. (And I mean all kinds of things.) But Dusan Tynek, a Czech choreographer who has lived in New York since 1992, makes traditional kinds of dance: pieces with recognizable steps, set to music, possessed of beginnings, middles and ends.

In three new works, performed at [Dance Theater Workshop](#) on Wednesday night, Mr. Tynek showed a remarkable capacity for creating tightly structured dance worlds, inhabited by ingenious, surprising movement invention.

His vocabulary is loosely balletic but devoid of any stretched emphasis or weightless elevation. In the opening “Transparent Walls,” the eight dancers surge from darkness at the back of the stage. To a moody recorded score for amplified cello and wind instruments, by Aleksandra Vrebalov, they move rapidly across and off the stage, quickly jumping and turning, scattering a central couple leaning in toward each other in deep arabesques.

That couple keeps re-forming amid the wind-blown dancing: one of Mr. Tynek's strengths is his ability to pluck sudden formations — a line of men carrying the women like stiff dolls, trios rising from and falling back to the floor — from the swirling activity and imprint them upon the eye.

Although Mr. Tynek's dances are busier than those of Lucinda Childs, with whose company he has danced, their clarity and loose-armed traveling momentum sometimes recall that choreographer's work. That feels particularly true in "Base Pairs," perhaps because Ms. Childs provides the husky, alluring voice for a poetic text by Cynthia Polutanovich, heard over the sound of a ticking metronome. The subject seems to be a love affair; religious imagery is evoked. Meanwhile seven dancers, dressed in Karen Young's white, image-imprinted leotards, move with mathematically exact steps in constantly changing light (by Roderick Murray), switching direction as their arms windmill around their bodies.

The final piece, "Middlegame," is a more ambitious, messier affair. Dressed in black or white variations on old-fashioned lingerie (the men's socks have garters), four men and four women have a series of encounters in what could be a cafe. Set to a variety of Gypsy and folk music, interspersed with Bach's Goldberg Variations, "Middlegame" evokes a Pina Bauschian world of male-female power games, bizarre encounters and opaque affairs of the heart.

It's a little rambling, but you can feel Mr. Tynek trying something new and less controlled. In parts, the work is marvelous, particularly toward the end when he creates ripples of canonic movement across chairs and builds momentum towards a sudden, surprising close.

Mr. Tynek is an undoubted talent, a choreographer who seems fascinated by movement itself and the strange, subtle ways in which it communicates strange, subtle things. If that makes him a rarity right now, he probably doesn't care. The dance — and dancing — is the thing.

Dusan Tynek Dance Theatre performs through Saturday at Dance Theater Workshop, 219 West 19th Street, Chelsea; (212) 924-0077, dancetheaterworkshop.org.