

11/10/11

## Dusan Tynek Dance Theatre: Music to My Eyes

By Susan Yung



Dusan Tynek Dance Theatre in *Widow's Walk*. Photo by Julieta Cervantes.

It's a no-brainer that the use of live music improves the experience of seeing dance by some unmeasurable but substantial increment. Mark Morris has carved a laudable, if lonely, niche by only using live music. But of course, like any other luxury, it must be paid for, and as companies build up repertoires, the attached costs also increase proportionally. But there are ways to compromise, as [Dusan Tynek Dance Theatre](#) did in two week-long programs at [Tribeca Performing Arts Center](#), when Tynek brought in the group ETHEL to play onstage for the second week. The music ensemble's presence alone lent an importance and immediacy to the choreography, and to the music for some of the works, by Aleksandra Vrebalov.

Tynek's company had performed one of the dances, *Widow's Walk*, the week before, to recorded music, which I didn't see. But the show with live musicians underscored the interplay that can take place between the dancers and musicians that seems to heighten the level of every emotion expressed, and as a result, draws the audience in more closely. ETHEL, a four-piece string quartet, is perhaps better known to New York audiences than Vrebalov; the group plays in larger theaters as featured artists. So it was a treat to learn that they'd been engaged as Tynek's "house band." They play with ferocity and spontaneity, and with such volume that it becomes a visceral experience, and yet Tynek's choreography was not overshadowed by the dynamic ensemble. He creates smart, substantial dance phrases (more of a rarity than you might imagine) that are strongly structured and that use every available entrance/exit in clever ways to move his impressive, daring dancers around. (Unsolicited advice to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater: check him out; his work'd be great on the company or Ailey II.)

Another dance performance using live music took place last week at Fall for Dance—Lizt Alfonso Dance Cuba, whose six-member band sat in a line upstage. It's hard to even imagine this medley of what are presumably the company's greatest dance hits without live music. All female except for one guy, the performers danced onstage one-by-one, beaming 1000-watt smiles to the rafters. Another part featured the old chestnut "Besame Mucho," sung earnestly as a couple performed an unremarkable ballroom dance. In the finale, half of the cast wore traditional flat shoes with a single strap mid-foot; they slapped the floor in rhythm, and the others wore more modern heeled shoes. It felt like the company had completely escaped the veil of irony and sarcasm that seems to have grown exponentially with the rise of the Internet—more stale and outmoded than refreshing, but maybe that's a comment on how deeply we've sunk into irony, or at least the habit of evaluation. In any case, the music, integral to the performance rather than in support of it, held its own pleasures.