

**THE GLOBE AND MAIL** 



Ballet British Columbia dancer Alexis Fletcher

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Dance review

## At Ballet B.C., bodies and brains in fabulous motion

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### 3 Fold

- Ballet British Columbia
- At the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver on Thursday

Ideas in dance are tricky, elusive things. They often come at the expense of kinetic surprise or emotional connection. Not, however, in Ballet British Columbia's mixed bill, *3 Fold*. Each of the three pieces had something to say, and did so with a proper sense of theatre.

*Diversion*, a premiere by Robert Glumbek (artistic associate with Toronto's ProArteDanza), was the

only piece without a program note to explain the ideas behind it. The title didn't suggest anything much, either. Yet the bodies were loaded with meaning, propelled by a drama of powerful shoulders and arms; of low-down, spaghetti-legged crouches; of bodies splattering out in all directions like inkblots in a Rorschach test.

*Diversion* presents a world divided into two teams – one made up of men and another of women – and that is probably its overriding “idea.” Not exactly fresh, perhaps; and yet, do we ever get tired of pondering human relationships? Glumbek's teams seem fairly incompatible. There's a scene in which one woman after another hurtles midair out of the wings, a human missile miraculously caught by Gilbert Small, each catch taking the couple crashing to the ground.

My one quibble is that the pointe shoes for the seven women seemed to get in the way of Glumbek's round, organic movement. It gave the six men – who were pointe-shoe-free – an advantage, and they roared through the piece with a shade more conviction.

*Parole Sospese (Words Suspended)*, by Italy's Walter Matteini, presented a very different world. Instead of driving electronic music, Matteini gave us Scarlatti, Beethoven and Vivaldi. And instead of a work driven by movement, *Parole Sospese* focused on atmosphere and character. A man (Jed Duifhuis) wanders about the stage in a tux and patent-leather shoes, mostly watching the others, who often seem infused with sadness as they skitter and crawl about the stage.

Some of the ideas behind the work remain obscure. The title is a mystery, as is the program note, which describes Matteini's inspiration as 16th-century poet Ludovico Ariosto. But the work, which Italy's Aterballetto premiered in 2007, says something gentle about waiting and sadness, and about companionship, too, in the warm, weighted duet by Small and Daniel Marshalsay.

The evening's closing piece, *Doppeling*, by former Ballet BC dancer Simone Orlando, was defined by the hair: By putting both the women and men in short, Louise Brooks-style wigs, and giving them the same lyrical movement, Orlando created a 15-member ensemble whose members (unlike in Glumbek's *Diversion*) have much in common. They all – women and men – cross the stage like flat-footed, stiff-legged mannequins, or arabesque prettily.

Orlando made the work – set to Bach's *Concerto in D Minor*, the same score as in Balanchine's *Concerto Barocco* – in 2009 as part of a company choreographic series. I'm glad she has revisited it. Back then, the guys began by playing it for laughs, like Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon when they cross-dressed in *Some Like It Hot* in 1959. This time round, the men just dance, in the same wigs and shiny bodysuits as the women. At times, it was hard to tell which team – male or female – the dancers were on, and that gave us something to think about.

It looks as if Ballet BC is on a roll: This launch of Emily Molnar's second season at the head of the small West Coast company was another fun and also thoughtful night out.

*3 Fold* continues in Vancouver through Saturday night ([www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)).

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