

Ballet BC soars into the future

Dancers break free of the company's tumultuous history to deliver an enthusiastic performance

BY KEVIN GRIFFIN, VANCOUVER SUN OCTOBER 2, 2009



Ballet BC dancers performed Emily Molnar's *Dedica* Wednesday.

Photograph by: Ian Smith, Vancouver Sun, Vancouver Sun

Ballet BC has returned to the stage with the kind of youthful enthusiasm that promises great things from the company.

In a one-night-only performance Wednesday, the dancers didn't look as if they were ignoring the company's recent tumultuous history so much as not allowing themselves to be trapped by it. They were going to get out there and dance, and that's exactly what they did.

They performed the premiere of *Dedica* by Emily Molnar, the company's interim artistic director.

Molnar described it as a new work inspired by the potential of both the company and the dancers meant to celebrate the body and the creative spirit.

It was set to selections from Antonio Vivaldi's *L'Estro Armonico*, a collection of 12 concertos reminiscent of the better known *The Four Seasons* but with darker passages. Molnar used baroque music to create a contemporary ballet that showed off the versatility and talent of the company's dancers.

Dedica was a whirlwind of movement for 17 dancers. They moved like they'd been locked in a cage and had suddenly been set free to fly around the stage. It was impossible not to be swept up by the sheer joy of what Molnar called "visceral and dynamic" movement. Plus, the dancers also looked like

they were having great fun.

There wasn't a weak link among them. But some who did stand out were Connor Gnam and Shannon Ferguson as well as the duet between Donald Sales and Makaila Wallace. Dedicca ended with a solo by Sales that was both athletic and sensuous. It showed what a wonderfully gifted dancer he is.

What also helped make Dedicca unique was the venue. I don't recall ever seeing Ballet BC perform in The Playhouse, a much smaller theatre compared to the cavernous Queen Elizabeth next door. Once the dancing started, I was struck by the intimacy of The Playhouse and how close I was to the dancers. A near capacity crowd also helped in creating a sense of occasion.

Dedicca was the highlight of a program called Ignite that included works performed by dancers from the National Ballet.

The evening started with George Balanchine's Apollo. Even though the ballet is more than 80 years ago, it looked remarkably contemporary and only goes to confirm Balanchine's great skill as a choreographer.

The ballet's narrative involves Apollo, the god of music, being visited and instructed by the three female muses in poetry, mime and dance and song. As Apollo, Guillaume Côté danced like a god, never mind a Greek god. At first, he's not too impressed with the muses until Sonia Rodrigues as Terpsichore dances for him. The muse of dance and song gets through his male arrogance and brings him alive both as a character and a dancer.

Next up for Ballet BC is a collaboration on a choreographic series with Arts Umbrella and the Dance Centre that goes on stage Nov. 13 and 14.

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