Dance review: Ballet B.C.dances back into our hearts in stunning season opener

BY KEVIN GRIFFIN, VANCOUVER SUN NOVEMBER 19, 2010

A scene from Ballet BC opener.
Photograph by: Handout, Files

Songs of a Wayfarer and Other Works

Ballet BC opens its 25th anniversary season with Songs of a Wayfarer by Emily Molnar, Face to Face by Kevin O'Day, and The bliss that from their limbs all movement takes by Jose Navas.

Final performance Saturday at 8 p.m.

Queen Elizabeth Theatre

Tickets: $31.25 to $77.25 from **www.ticketmaster.ca** and 604-280-3311

VANCOUVER -- Ballet BC is back. The province's biggest dance company opened its new season Thursday with a trio of works that firmly showcases Ballet BC as a contemporary ballet company.

In front of a large audience at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, the evening began with Songs of a

Wayfarer by Emily Molnar, the artistic director of Ballet BC. Set to the early songs of Gustav Mahler, the dancers performed on a minimalist set that suggested the outdoors without being literal. Of the four sections, my favourite was the last: Dario Dinuzzi and Makaila Wallace danced together with a focused intensity, Wallace executing her landings with exceptional delicacy and control.

Face to Face, by Kevin O'Day from Ballet Mannheim, was much edgier with both recorded music and live electric guitar. Initially, I found John King's score jarring and hoped it would evolve into something more pleasing. But when I surrendered to the music rather than resisting it, I found its rawness heightened the fluid sensuousness of the dancing. A particular stand out was Peter Smida who moved like a caged leopard.

The performance ended with Jose Navas' spectacular The bliss that from their limbs all movement takes.

The piece opened with five dancers moving in silence, as is Navas' style. As a choreographer, he does this to establish the primacy of movement, and Navas more than achieved his objective with this work.

When the accompanying music Passages, by Ravi Shankar and Philip Glass, started, it built slowly with expanding ripples of sound that formed into complex interweaving patterns — just like the dance.

In the opening sequence, Alexis Fletcher performed a delicate solo as if moving through water. Later, Livona Elis danced around Sales in electrifying contrast to his minimal movements involving only his head and neck.

At times, the dancers formed into geometric patterns like the dots on a pair of dice. But their grid-like shapes didn't last long: They broke down and reformed into new geometric shapes and forms. The movement of bodies was breathtaking: It was evocative of patterns that develop when groups of people randomly meet on crowded sidewalks but manage to find space to avoid collision.

In The bliss that from their limbs all movement takes, Navas has created his first work en pointe for an entire ballet company. It was a joy to watch from beginning to end. With a three-year contract as resident choreographer for Ballet BC, it means there'll be more works by Navas — including a new Giselle in 2012-2013. I can hardly wait.

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