

Leading Men

By: BRIAN MCCORMICK
10/30/2008

LAR LUBOVITCH DANCE COMPANY

New York City Center
W. 55th St.
btwn. Sixth & Seventh Aves.
Nov. 5 at 7 p.m.; Nov. 6-8 at 8 p.m.
Nov. 8 at 2 p.m.; Nov. 9 at 3 p.m.
\$25-\$95; nycitycenter.org
or 212-581-1212

Lar Lubovitch has been making dances for more years than most of today's working choreographers and critics have been alive. One of this country's preeminent dance makers, he is known -- although not always favorably -- for his expressive musicality, fluid movement language, and sophisticated formalism.

While this kind of history has been less kind to others from his generation, Lubovitch, the romantic, "evolved-modern" master, has persevered resplendently. For 40 years, he has been a continuous presence in the dance world, at home and abroad, and still leads the way in carrying the torch for lyrical American dance.

While his musical work may not fit today's iconoclastic artistic approach to minimalism, he broke that ground more than three decades ago, and still epitomizes the character of innovation, focusing on his own vision instead of the response it gets.

"Being a choreographer," Lubovitch told Gay City News, "is an eccentric choice of career. It's a self-made process; we have to invent ourselves.

"I haven't read reviews in over ten years," he added. "I never found any value I could take from them. I think it's important to find one's own voice to maintain your integrity. It's confusing to hear opinions, good and bad."

"I've been making dances for 40 years," Lubovitch explained, "and was not always pleased with the results. I have a tendency to want to move on to the next dance. But there are works that have received wide acclaim and others that were watershed moments of my own."

These most-wanted works, along with the choreographer's newest, will be performed during the company's season at City Center. If you missed the company at Evening Stars and Dance Theater Workshop, this is your last chance, New York City!



Sylvain Lafortune and Rick Michalek in Lar Lubovitch's "*Concerto Six Twenty-Two*," which broke the boundaries of male partnering, and became a regular feature at AIDS benefits after it was performed at the Dancing for Life benefit in 1987.

JACK MITCHELL

One of Lubovitch's most enduring works of particular significance to gay audiences is "Concerto Six Twenty-Two," set to Mozart's "Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, K. 622." Created for the Centre National de Danse Contemporain in Angers, France, in 1985, it brought audience members to their feet at the American premiere at Carnegie Hall in 1986. An ensemble work, the duet at the center of the dance broke the boundaries of male partnering, and became a regular feature at AIDS benefits after it was performed at the Dancing for Life benefit at Lincoln Center in 1987.

"It is a work," said Lubovitch, "that maintains its resonance."

The season also revisits two of Lubovitch's earliest works -- "Whirligogs," a study of alienation set to Berio's "Sinfonia," originally commissioned for Israel's Bat-Dor Company in 1971, and 1978's minimalist/formalist trance dance "North Star," set to Philip Glass' music of the same name. Members of Julliard's senior dance class will join the company in performing both of these seminal works.

The lush and dark "Men's Stories" from 2000, which has become a signature work of late, is also featured. This work for nine men in black velvet cutaway coats by Tony-winning designer Ann Hould-Ward, danced to an original audio collage by Scott Marshall, blends individual character motifs with strong, full-out dancing.

The 40th anniversary season also features two encores from 2007 -- "Little Rhapsodies," a suite of dances for three male dancers including guest artist Rasta Thomas, set to piano etudes by Schumann performed live by Pedja Muzijevic, and "Dvorak Serenade," a highly stylized romantic work to Dvorak's "Serenade for Strings in E."

The first full production of Lubovitch's new work "Jangle," set to Bartok's "Rhapsodies # 1 and #2 for Violin and Piano," completes the program. Each performance offers an opportunity to see great new works and classic favorites -- the perfect retrospective. (Programs vary; for complete information go to nycitycenter.org).

"Dance forgets its history," Lubovitch said, acknowledging his unique perspective as someone who has been making it. "Dance," he affirmed, "will always be a part of being human."

Despite the grim economic outlook of the Bush-Paulson recession and the perceived competition for audience from "new forms of entertainment media," Lubovitch does not believe dance is an endangered art form.

"I've been left out of that argument," said the co-founder of the two-year-old Chicago Dancing Festival. "In the last century, we've seen an explosion in terms of concert dance. I've made work through economic downturns and societal shifts."

"You have to take the longer, larger view," he added, sounding like a levelheaded economist. "Dance is here to stay."

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