

Lar Lubovitch dancers carry crowd into swirling, upbeat journey

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By [Wendy Liberatore](#)

Gazette Reporter

BECKET, Mass. — Choreographer Lar Lubovitch transports dancers and audiences to unexpected highs. His dances, seen at Jacob's Pillow this week, are a vortex of swirling activity. Viewers are suctioned in unknowingly. The only thing they are aware of is the delight of the smooth and majestic journey he provides.

There is little stopping and resting in the three works that Lubovitch is offering at the Pillow. The triptych, featuring a classic from 1986 and two new works, is to mark the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company's 40th anniversary.

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company

WHERE: Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Route 20, Becket, Mass.

WHEN: 8 tonight, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, and 2 p.m. Sunday

HOW MUCH: \$58; \$53 for seniors, students and children; \$10 for children at Saturday's matinee

MORE INFO: (413) 243-0745 or www.jacobspillow.org

It also gives Lubovitch a chance to invite one of the world's greatest ballet dancers back into the ensemble's fold. Rasta Thomas, an international star, former company member and now director of his own group, returned to dance "Little Rhapsodies."

You might imagine that Thomas would stand out among the ranks. But nearly every Lubovitch member (there are 14) is tops in the field of contemporary ballet dance. Thomas did distinguish himself, but not to the embarrassment of the others.

The sensitive dancing is one reason the Lubovitch program is beguiling. Another is the musicality. Lubovitch is attuned to the tones and textures of his chosen music. Better yet, is the choreography. It's endlessly fascinating and upbeat.

The program opens with one of his better known pieces, "Concerto Six Twenty-Two" to Mozart's bright Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra. As the curtain rises, the dance is already churning. Ten, dressed in white, move in unison in a circle. They dip and fling their bodies backward, shifting the circle like a flock of birds banking into the wind. Their arms are decorative, rounded semaphores that swing up, down and around. The feeling is light and playful.

The adagio follows and is a sensation. Two men, Griff Braun and Jay Franke, enter on opposite sides of the stage. They walk toward each other, extend one arm toward the other and stop when their fingers touch.

Impressive pairing

From there, they walk arm-in-arm and then fall into a duet of fidelity and friendship. In 1986, at the height of the AIDS scare, this pas de deux with all of its embraces and lifts was a bold statement.

Today's audiences are no longer shocked by a man dancing with a man nor a woman with a woman. Still, this coupling holds a mighty draw for its tender touch.

The rondo ending, with Charlaine Mei Katsuyoshi, Katarzyna Skarpetowska and Jonathan E. Alsberry leading, is a gleeful, intoxicating finale.

"Dvorak Serenade," from 2007, set to the composer's Serenade in E Major, had a similar look and feel. Again, dressed in white, the dancers roll out a continuous whirlpool of movement. Mucuy Bolles and Scott Rink are the central couple. Both work hard to hit the right moves, but the two have little psychic connection. Without that, the pairing is flat.

"Little Rhapsodies," with Thomas Franke and Attila Joey Csiki, is a fleet suite of dances. Thomas leads the pack in this rhythmic and commanding piano piece by Schumann, Symphonic Etudes, Opus 13. Lubovitch layers the piece with a folk dance flair that is infectious. Thomas dances it as an open plea to the dancing gods. Franke and Csiki are just a step behind, thoroughly enjoying the romp.

Needless to say, the audience liked it, too.

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