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Dance Review | Lar Lubovitch Dance Company

Celebrating the Propulsive Power of Music

By [JENNIFER DUNNING](#)

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The Lar Lubovitch Dance Company is 39 this year and holding. The company's program on Wednesday night at the Skirball Center at New York University affirmed at least one artistic belief that has guided Mr. Lubovitch's long and productive career in modern dance: the power of music to inform and propel a work.



Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

Scott Rink and Drew Jacoby, foreground, with the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company in "Dvorak Serenade."

The two world premieres on the program, keepers both, allowed Mr. Lubovitch's impressive lead dancers simply to move to music. His new "Little Rhapsodies," set to Schumann's Symphonic Études, exquisitely performed onstage by Pedja Muzijevic, is a playfully assertive male trio in which Rasta Thomas, Jay Franke and Sean Stewart bobbed, feinted and spun through Mr. Lubovitch's trademark spiraling motion, in smoothly plotted entrances, exits and encounters.

Some jokey moments recalled Jerome Robbins in a similar mood. But "Little Rhapsodies" is also a companion piece to Mr. Lubovitch's "Men's Stories," a fond affirmation of his male dancers' distinctive gifts and presences.

One revelation of “Little Rhapsodies” was the soft, velvet-edged way that Mr. Thomas, a guest performer, moved, even when squirreling through the understated technical challenges of this tour de force of dancing. Mr. Lubovitch gives him introverted dance to quiet music, pointing up his inherent physical expressiveness.

Mr. Stewart also inhabits a world of his own in “Rhapsodies,” but it is the glistening realm of easy, fluid perfection. He responds to the others, but the effect is of a cool reflection on a diamond facet.

Mr. Franke is the dance’s small, fervent dynamo, buzzing through the choreography with determination and compelling precision.

Mr. Lubovitch pampers his audience with the dance equivalent of a warm, lush bath in his new “Dvorak Serenade,” which juxtaposes and merges two ardent lead dancers (Drew Jacoby and Scott Rink); a springy quartet (Charlaine Mei Katsuyoshi, Mr. Franke, Kate Skarpetowska and Charlie Neshyba-Hodges); and a corps of six dancers that often serves as a shifting, tidal background.

The soft brightness and sepia shadow provided by Jack Mehler, the evening’s lighting designer, and Wendy Winters’s simple off-white costumes are just right for this impassioned response to four movements from Dvorak’s impassioned, melodic Serenade in E. Mr. Lubovitch knows how to move dancers around the stage in swirling, often unexpected patterns, but there is also pleasure to be had, with a closer look, in the reiterated curves of the dancers’ arms and torsos.

The evening’s only disappointment was the company premiere of “Love’s Stories,” whose taped score, a suite of song standards reinterpreted by the jazz vocalist Kurt Elling, infected the dance with its chill and sour disengagement. Mr. Stewart, the soloist, managed both to embody and rise above that disengagement, though jazz dance is not his forte.

And one duet cut through to saving human emotion, set to “Everytime We Say Goodbye” and performed by Mr. Neshyba-Hodges and the charming Harumi Terayama, who stood out throughout the evening for the deft physical articulation of their dancing.

The Lar Lubovitch Dance Company performs through Saturday at the Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Place, at Washington Square South, Greenwich Village; (212) 279-4200 or skirballcenter.nyu.edu.