

July 11, 2009

Dance Review August 2009

NICHOLAS ANDRE DANCE:

By [CECLY](#) PLACENTI

July 11, 2009 -- Dance Theatre Workshop, New York

If one of Monet's giant Water Lily paintings could come to life, it would move in the form of Nick Ross' choreography. Infused with scientific exactness and the romance of personal artistic reflection, like those famous canvases, Mr. Ross' choreography hints at the illusion of a never-ending journey, creating the refuge of a peaceful meditation in the midst of a chaotic life.

"Passage" began the evening's journey with dancers slowly meandering their way across the stage, silhouetted in light. Interspersed with soft gestures or fragments of dance movement, their walks were leisurely, unhurried, as if out for a stroll at twilight. As the piece grew in volume like a conversation, each performer danced their point of view and their responses in turn. With graciousness, the conversation and journey included the audience, and ended with the image of a wave ebbing and flowing on the shore.

In "Still Life," the stage is Mr. Ross' canvas as he paints a picture of universal human experience. In three duets, we see a study in relationships; love exploding from out of nowhere, maturing and eventually dying. "Go," the first duet was full of daring partnering moments and playful abandon. Kristy Engel was a spritely coquette and the cat and mouse game of love's exploration between she and Aaron Walter was one they both seemed to enjoy immensely. As more mature lovers, Blake Faulds and Katlyn Baskin in "Link" moved together with a subdued sense of confidence. Their intimacy and connection came through in their eye contact, familiar and gentle touch, and more lush lines and lifts. Mr. Ross used the elements of dynamics and space like a painter uses color and texture. "Go" was a wild rush of color, Engel and Walter careening through the space in bursts. "Link" was more about line and form and the cultivation of the space between the dancers. In "Done," the final section, there is fury and thrashing splotches of movements that Mark Taylor and Morgan Palmer throw at each other with raging force. There are jagged angles, bound and angry, made all the more sad by moments of sustained resignation.

With "Passio Nostri," Mr. Ross takes a break from the easy-on-the-eyes beauty of the previous two pieces and hits the audience with something altogether different. In black binding costumes and blacked out eyes, the 8 dancers looked like prisoners in Hades, trapped, tortured and toyed with. Showing that he can deviate from the tone that makes each choreographer's voice unique, Mr. Ross eased the convulsive and bound spasms of the damned with softness, almost like a respite from pain, only to suddenly shock them again in moments that seized them like electricity. Never seeming to be able to escape, and given moments to realize that, the dancers seemed under the control of an evil force, with moments of clarity that made their fate that much more terrible. In one chilling moment, the dancers clumped together each in the grips of their own unspeakable torment. As if in a trance, the downstage dancer began to slowly sway in a circle, eyes suddenly blank. Slowly each dancer joined in, unable to stop themselves.

It is not simply technical difficulty or poetic beauty that makes Mr. Ross' dances stand out. Nor is it just the crystalline clarity of his phrasing and transitions. He is a skilled architect at home moving in complicated patterns, making work that flows like the patterns in a kaleidoscope. Powerfully athletic yet always beautifully clear, his work pops off the stage like fireworks. "Undercurrent," a breathtaking quartet for the men in the company, was a moving meditation akin to watching water swirl around itself in the shallow end of a pond. In this piece we see Mr. Ross' architecture at its finest--- his use of counterpoint and staging teases the eye without ever demanding it look in any one place.

Katlyn Baskin, in "In the Absence of Others," was an elastic band stretched to its limit and let go. She moved through the dynamics of suspension and speed with grace and mastery and distinct joy. That's the thing about this company: they exude a palpable excitement and passion to be dancing that picks up the audience and carries them along on their wave. They seem to feel right at home in Mr. Ross' dynamic, athletic, and unpredictably phrased work and their joy gives even more punctuation to his statements.

"Until Blue" was as refreshing as a glass of ice water on a stifling summer day. I am always happily amazed at how even Mr. Ross' scribbling movements are crisp and purposeful; his cleanliness is never sterile or obsessive. He blends kinesthetic power with technical sophistication and diamond-like clarity, creating works that hit the eyes like giant canvases alive with color.

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Dance Review September 2008

NICHOLAS ANDRE DANCE THEATER: A DANCE JOURNEY

By [CECLY](#) PLACENTI

July 18, 2008 -- Dance Theatre Workshop, New York

Seeing an evening of Nick Seligson-Ross' work feels like floating on a wave, being carried naturally along by the rise and fall of the current of his choreography. With movements both soft and jagged, Seligson-Ross knows how to phrase and contrast to create a profound sense of completion in his work. Audience and performers are on a journey, and we come to rest together with a sense of fulfillment and excitement.

In "The Last Man," Seligson-Ross uses repeated movements and structures, varying them slightly from beginning to end. This theme and variation serves to tie his ideas together, further imparting the sense of journeying with him and his fiercely talented dancers. A brilliant contrast to the female quartet that preceded it, "The Last Man" features the glory of men in motion. Not overplaying the obvious strength inherent in the male form, Seligson-Ross highlights gracefulness that is still grounded and solid, never saccharine or drippy. What gives the fluidity of his work so much clarity is its directness. The movement rides on the music with ease, yet each step, each gesture or change of direction is purposeful and extremely clear.

"Etched" is an exploration of the dancer as athlete. Angular, precise and technically demanding, four female dancers attack the movement with controlled abandon. On this evening, the dancers' execution was bold and authoritative, the dancers strong and beautiful, their forceful, bound movements highlighted by moments of opposition.

One of two world-premieres, "Still Life," is a look at the stages of human relationships in three parts. Each section a duet, we see romantic love from its first coy blossoms to its unfortunate detachment. With movements that span the emotional spectrum from flirty and playful to isolated and icy, the piece creates a landscape of universal human experience.

Dynamically varied and unpredictably phrased, "In the Absence of Others" looks at the emotions we often don't want others to see -- the struggles, fears, and sadness behind the "happy face."

"Passio Nostri," Seligson-Ross's second world premiere, is a requiem, an otherworldly dirge calling souls forth to a new place. Of all the pieces this evening, "Passio Nostri" stands out as the most different, breaking away from an

unfolding signature style with spastic and erratic gestures. The costumes, dark bondage-type tops and blacked out eyes, give the impression of demons in the underworld.

Seligson-Ross expertly blends athleticism with artistry in celebration of the dancer as athlete. His pieces are technically profound and kinesthetically exciting, bridging an important gap in audiences' perception of dance and sport. He choreographs dances like he is putting together pieces of a puzzle. He is an explorer, discovering pictures and patterns as he goes along. As the journey ended this evening, one blissful hour from start to finish, I left pleasantly satiated yet longing for more.