

Oberon's Grove

Sunday October 24, 2010 - Re-connecting with Nick Ross and **Nicholas Andre Dance** in the second of two performances at the Jewish Community Center on Amsterdam Avenue. We went to the dress rehearsal on Friday evening where Kokyat photographed the works being presented. Nick has put together a really good programme including a revival of **PASSIO NOSTRI**, three works from his recent rep and a new duet and solo to live music by Andy Monroe (which seem destined to become part of a larger work) and he has beautiful, dynamic dancers to boot. He has distinctive, expressive women and three powerhouse guys (Zac Hammer, Christopher Ralph and Tommy Scrivens) and they all go at it full-tilt. Nick's choreographic style combines an unusually dynamic sort of lyricism with a dark edge. His musical choices - drawing on masters of the 20th/21st century like Steve Reich, Arvo Part and Philip Glass - weave an evening-long tapestry into which Andy Monroe's vocalism fits very well.

Tommy Scrivens opens the evening with a vibrantly danced solo in **WIRED**. From first moment to last tonight, Tommy's energy flashed thru the entire programme. He is a dancer who gives and gives and gives and he can be passionate and tender or wild and free. I love watching him. The four dancers swirl and leap with restless energy and the movement is so space-filling that you'd swear there were a dozen dancers involved.

In **PASSIO NOSTRI**, Nick Ross uses *Fratres* by Arvo Part to create a dark, unsettled world. The jagged opening segment of the music gives way to the pensive yearnings of the later passages. The seven dancers in long black flared trousers burst into agitated movement or sometimes stand still - but even in stillness their hands are trembling. The dancers interact warily...or strive to escape the darkness, reaching for the elusive light.

The newest work on the programme, **...and again** consists at the moment of a duet called **US** and a solo called **ME**. I believe it's Nick's plan to expand this into a longer collaborative piece with singer/composer Andy Monroe. The two parts of **...and again** shown tonight were danced to Andy's live performance of two very haunting *vocalises* with keyboard accompaniment. The songs do seem to have a language but it's elusive; Andy's vocal control and the colour of the music speak of loneliness and the underlying fragility of relationships. In **US**, Trista Jennings and Tommy Scrivens depict thru dance a relationship at once tender and tense...with the couple sometimes wary of one another...and sometimes striving to connect. The duet ends with the reconciled couple walking off slowly, though their conflicts remain unresolved. Of the many, many danced duets I've seen over the years which evoke the myriad aspects of a romantic relationship, this one - with Andy Monroe's intense yet wordless vocalism - seemed especially poignant. Cat Cogliandro's dancing in the solo **ME** has a wonderful natural quality...and a sense of spontaneity, almost of improv even though it's been mapped out for her by Nick Ross. She sometimes seems about to interact with the composer but that cliché is avoided, making the solo all the more powerful for its sense of an isolated soul. Cat looks superb in the simple soft shirt, her face and body expressive and captivating.

ELEGY continues the dark theme of the evening. Danced to music of Philip Glass, there are animated passages...interspersed with moments of reflective stillness. The ritualistic aspects of the work seem to foreshadow impending death. The work ends with Christopher Ralph arranging the bodies of the dancers in a private rite before kneeling in a solitary prayer.

The concluding work, **UNTIL BLUE** breaks away from the rather somber tone that has pervaded much of the evening; the atmosphere becomes spirited and alive thanks to the animated, folkish music of the Vitamin String Quartet. The dancers leap, flash and swirl to the joyous melodies and gypsy-flavored violin riffs. The dancing is playful and the energy of the dancers move the evening to an uplifting conclusion.

Nick Ross's troupe of well-contrasted dancers seemed particularly appealing tonight. They function as a strong team and they are able to seize individual moments with authority and grace. I look forward to seeing what Nick comes up with next.