

"Trace" shows off Ballet BC's strong storytelling and diversity



Andrea Rabinovitch | Mar 31st, 2015



Michael Slobodian, Dancers: Gilbert Small and Emily Chessa

There is no doubt that Ballet BC's dancers are artists of note and that Emily Molnar's vision is exemplary. With *Traces*, running at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre March 26, 27 & 28, showcasing three pieces of choreography from William Forsythe, Walter Matteini, and Medhi Walerski, Molnar pushes the company in a diverse program.

Beginning the evening with the Canadian premiere of Forsythe's *workwithinwork*, it is an abstract interpretation of Luciano Berio's *Duo for two Violins*. With no emotional subtext to the work, it is the relationship between the bodies in space and the lines and flow between the steps and gestures that make *workwithinwork* an intellectual exercise rather than a heartfelt journey.

Like watching a puzzle being solved, the highly imaginative partnering, which couples the very simple with the extremely difficult, is riveting. With shapes and lines connoting 20th century visual art, the work is a living, breathing, three dimensional version of modern art aesthetic that is still relevant today. Constantly surprising and endlessly inventive, it is a piece that warrants seeing again to understand it properly.

Requiring the women to be en pointe, and the men handling strenuous partnering, this abstract work requires pristine technique. The first time out on the work on Thursday night, the complexity warrants more runs to reach its full potential and truly live in the dancers' bodies. Solos by Darren Devaney, were thoroughly integrated creating an exciting abandon.

Matteini's World Premiere entitled *Lascia ch'io pianga* sits in Ballet BC's sweet spot. A brilliant portrait of the pull between isolation and connection in the unconscious mind, the piece employed the superb lighting of James Proudfoot and gorgeously designed costumes by Ina Broeckx. With the stage configured to suggest a passageway like one you'd find in a small street in a dense Italian town, the dancers would disappear upstage after pausing to reflect. Two rotating, suspended, upside down bodies gave the feel of a dream where space is not what it appears to be. The sound scape ranged from the sound of wind and drips of water with familiar pieces of music like Bach's Suite for Unaccompanied Cello No 1 in G major interspersed.

With each dancer telling their emotional journey with fearlessness, the grounded


choreography and the superb use of stage space, rendered the narrative of a journey of desolation brilliantly.

Of special note was Emily Chessa, the protagonist, whose quick silver dynamics including shifting from light darting to weighted power, led the cast with her clear, committed story telling. Judging by the bravos at the end, it was a great artistic collaboration that showed why Ballet BC 's growing reputation is at the forefront internationally.

Walerski's *Petite Cérémonie*, premiered in 2011, is being put to bed after Trace. An amusing study in silliness with a section that played with lighting effects that were more dancey, the dancers used their voices for texts and sounds. A diatribe on the difference between men and women and how their brains work delivered by Peter Smida, also gave a theatrical feel to the piece.

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