

Review: Ballet BC opens Pillow season with a bang

By Tresca Weinstein

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Ballet BC in Emily Molnar's "To this day."

BECKET, Mass. — How does Sharon Eyal do it? It's rare enough for a choreographer to create a few moments—even a few seconds—of dance that feels unlike anything ever seen before. Eyal, a veteran of Israel's Batsheva Dance Company, has made an entire piece like that: the mesmerizing, mysterious, gorgeous "Bedroom Folk," which Ballet BC performed Wednesday at Jacob's Pillow.

The Vancouver-based troupe, led by Emily Molnar, opens the Pillow season with its run in the Ted Shawn Theatre this week. "Bedroom Folk," set to a driving, percussion-heavy score by Ori

<https://www.timesunion.com/entertainment/article/Review-Ballet-BC-opens-Pillow-season-with-a-bang-14024681.php>

Lichtik, is the first piece on the program, and it will likely confuse anyone who bought tickets expecting to see traditional ballet. Working with co-creator Gai Behar, Eyal has developed a unique vocabulary, full of angles and quirks and odd gestures. You might call it mechanical if it wasn't so imbued with emotion, or describe it as insect-like if it wasn't so expressively human, or compare the dancers' jerking bodies to marionettes if they weren't so definitively self-powered. Moving en masse across the stage like a many-celled organism, the 14 dancers find new ways to locomote—with a series of tiny prances or impossibly deep plies, as their hands flutter beside their temples or are held cupped beneath one eye, as if to catch falling tears. When one dancer tries to break away from the group, he's quickly sucked into the circle again—and as a warning or perhaps a welcome back, another dancer bites him all over, from his neck down to his ankles. There is no moment or movement in this piece that isn't a surprise, and that is a singular achievement.

Molnar's "To this day," set to Jimi Hendrix classics, is a big, generous, exciting new work, but next to "Bedroom Folk," it looks a little comfortable and predictable. It's an embodiment of Hendrix's loose, powerful riffs: The dancers slide and leap and run across the floor, limbs whirling, and wrap themselves around each other in languorous duets. At one point, a single dancer (Scott Fowler) takes the pelvis- and shoulder-focused undulations to over-the-top heights in a silent solo. This is what every Hendrix fan imagines they look like while in the grip of the music.

The evening closed with Medhi Walerski's weird and wonderful "Petite Cérémonie," a signature work for the company. Dressed in black and white, the dancers arrive onstage from all directions (including the house) as if for a cocktail party. They move at first in a formal, almost polite cluster—but the tension builds and then explodes into a playful, bizarre dance/theater collage that includes a monologue on men's brains vs. women's, performed by Peter Smida (while juggling); an ensemble section for the women that incorporates their giant, elongated shadows; and some clever rearrangement of a dozen or so movable white boxes. It's a surrealist painting come to life.

Tresca Weinstein is a frequent contributor to the Times Union.

Dance review

Ballet BC

When: 8 p.m. Wednesday

Program: "Bedroom Folk," "To this day," "Petite C eremonie"

Length: Two hours, 10 minutes; two intermissions

Repeats: 8 p.m. tonight through Saturday; 2 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Where: Jacob's Pillow, 358 George Carter Rd., Becket, Mass.

Tickets: \$45–\$78; for ages 18–35, a limited number of \$35 tickets available

Info: (413) 243-0745 or <http://www.jacobspillow.org>

Also at the Pillow this week: Circa, 8:15 p.m. Wednesday–Saturday; 2:15 p.m. Sunday

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