

Ballet des Amériques - An Evening of Dance - February 27, 2016

At first there is the disorientation. The jazz? The pancake tutu?
Odd together.
Challenging our expectations.
Then, there are five whirling women en pointe. The beat is strong.
But these are ballerinas.
Where are the oboes and bassoons? The arpeggios, the triplets?
Here are classical ballet steps and positions.
And Latin percussion? Electric piano?
Bright colorful tutus and costumes, quick leaps on the beat, arms raised, upright lines.
Our eyes pulled this way and that by the beauty and the speed and the dazzling limbs.
Then, hips swivel gently, provocatively.
Did that really happen?
Did classical ballerinas just sway like island flowers in the breeze?
Ah.
This is fascinating.
Better pay close attention.

This is one of the new dances by Carole Alexis called Mazuk' - "Mazurka de L'Hibiscus" performed by Ballet des Amériques to the music of Mario Canonge and it takes your breath away.

At the Evening of Dance offered Saturday night at the studios of Ballet des Amériques in Port Chester, a program of dances was offered that elicited from the audience prolonged applause and occasional murmurs and gasps of surprise and enchantment.

A second new dance by Carole Alexis, Lentil Soup, to the music of the great fiddler, Jean-Luc Ponty, brought the company to such a pitch of mischief that they mugged at each other and the audience and spun in a circle facing inward like children enjoying an opportunity to revel in naughtiness. This dance was a strutting, wriggling, mildly threatening, sometimes preening, group celebration. Arms swept up and down, legs stretched, pouncing and sliding – a glorious display of the strength and agility of young artists devoted to the joy and the mystery of the most primitive art form, body movement.

There were seventeen dances performed Saturday night. All were brief enough to make one wish for more. Nine were choreographed by Carole Alexis. All were directed by her. Her art continues to blossom. The movement is organic and yet often startling, the musicality reaches inside and takes hold of you, the colors and gestures charm. Her dances evoke that deep wonder that takes us out of ourselves while we are in the very center of one magical moment after another.

The mantra of the evening was "your eye is pulled this way and that – you are so close that it is hard to take it all in." This is a consequence of being in the studio with the dancers, at their level and within touching distance. It is so exhilarating and yet it is such a challenge to the audience to be ever alert.

Art is happening here and it leaves us wanting more.

There are two more Evenings of Dance this season, April 2nd and April 30th, 2016.

Mark your calendars.

Stay alert.