



Performing Arts: Dance

BALLET HISPANICO

Thursday, April 20, 2017

Fabric and beefcake stood out as a recurring image for the three female choreographers featured in Ballet Hispanico's 2017 season at The Joyce. "Línea Recta" by Belgian-Colombian Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, opens with a sole woman facing upstage, wearing a red narrow bata di cola reaching downstage. Reducing the volume of the traditional flamenco skirt to a tail, 4 shirtless men in red pants could easily grab it, ensnare the woman, reel her in and out.

Michelle Manzanales's "Con Brazos Abiertos," a world premiere, plays off the iconic Mexican symbol of an enormous hat, giving each member of the cast a hat so large that it covers their face. Manzanales, who is also Ballet Hispanico's rehearsal director and director of the school, puts her female cast in enormous white skirts that billow around them as they twirl.

"Catorce Dieciséis" by Tania Pérez-Salas, is more about striking movement to Vivaldi and other Baroque composers, than fabric, yet skirts are ripped off to reveal another colored skirt making a bold statement about layers.

Pérez-Salas, considered Mexico's leading contemporary choreographer, keeps her dancers moving, striking out with energy and precision, rhythms punched out with sharp head snaps and hands by the face. Somehow her style brings out the animal as well as our common humanity. While the program was consistently entertaining, "Catorce Dieciséis" made in 2002 is breathtaking for its propulsion.

Breaking the "mambo identity," the nation's premier Latino dance organization is offering Latino choreographers a chance to question what is most important to them. Cheech & Chong, along

with Carla Morrison, Julio Iglesias, Edward James Olmos, Gustavo Santaolalla, Maria Billini-Padilla, Juan Carlos Marin Marin, and Daniela Andrada are all featured in the amusing score for “Con Brazos Abiertos.” Both "Con Brazos Abiertos and “Línea Recta” were developed through BH Instituto Coreográfico, a choreography lab launched in 2010 by Artistic Director & CEO Eduardo Vilaro. Ochoa’s flamenco inspired, showbiz flavored “Línea Recta” is set to an original guitar composition by Eric Vaarzon Morel.

One of the most memorable images in “Con Brazos Abiertos” speaks for women of any culture, that of a woman beating a man’s chest with her elbows. Manzanales disappointed her mother as a child growing up in Texas, when she expressed no interest in learning Mexican folk dance. She has more than compensated for her early dismissal by weaving folkloric couple dances, including some of the awkwardness between sexes, into her work.

EYE ON THE ARTS, NY - - Deirdre Towers

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