



REVIEW

# ProArteDanza dazzles with its challenging repertoire

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Comments

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ProArteDanza

- Harbourfront Centre Next Steps
- Choreography by Roberto Campanella, Robert Glumbek, Kevin O'Day and Guillaume Côté
- At Fleck Dance Theatre in Toronto on Wednesday

Since its founding in 2004 by artistic director Roberto Campanella, artistic associate Robert Glumbek and administrator Joanna Ivey, ProArteDanza has created a definite identity best described as kick-ass dance. The repertoire is

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physical and athletic, and the dancers eat up the stage.

Contemporary ballet is the modus operandi of PAD, and unashamedly so. Ballet is clearly at the heart of the choreography but permeated with modern dance attributes. The ballet language is reshaped and resized, deconstructed and fractured, but ballet it remains.

The popularity of PAD does not rest on its accessibility. In fact, the dances tend to be challenging because of the elevated thematic material. It's sophisticated stuff.

Audiences flock because the demanding repertoire tends to fit the dancers' bodies like glove to hand. You get well-crafted choreography that is superbly performed.

The company does not have a permanent roster of dancers, but always manages to attract the top of the line. And the 2011 company is filled with spectacular movers.

There is also the Ballet Mannheim connection. Kevin O'Day is the artistic director, and both his piece *Pearline* and Robert Glumbek's *Verwoben* premiered at Mannheim. Glumbek and PAD dancers Mami Hata and Louis Laberge-Côté (no relation to Guillaume) are former members of Mannheim.

Each PAD program always has its own character. This version tends to be abstract and philosophical.

For example, Glumbek's 2008 piece *Verwoben* (which means entangled or interwoven) explores the word from several aspects – in physical dynamics in terms of the interaction of bodies, the impact on human relationships, and as a response to the actual music.

The trio, performed by Marc Cardarelli, Brendan Wyatt and Hata, is set to a Beethoven cello sonata. The dance is made up of a series of vignettes, both duets and trios, each one addressing the concept of *verwoben*.

Glumbek has crafted intriguing choreographic encounters. His strength is in moving easily from pure physicality implied stories, always framing the bodies

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## HIGHLIGHTS

within the context of tapestry.

Campanella's en pointe duet *En Parallèle* (2011), performed by Tyler Gledhill and Marissa Parzei, takes on the theoretical topic of how blind chance operates in a universe of fixed physical laws.

Campanella uses music by Johann Johannsson and Marc Mellits. The first section, set to slow fragments of staccato chords, finds the dancers attracted to each other, but distanced, even distracted. Parzei seems the instigator, but she can't make headway.

The second section begins with a change of music. This is the fleeting moment of opportunity Parzei has been waiting for. The now driving percussion propels her into action. Campanella has given Parzei exciting choreography that turns her into a tornado, and she uses her pointe shoes as attack weapons. Gledhill doesn't have a chance.

Guillaume Côté is more than a danseur noble, here. The National Ballet superstar is becoming a choreographer of note. His work for eight dancers (Mata, Gledhill, Laberge-Côté, Cardarelli, Parzei, plus Johanna Bergfeldt, Valerie Calam and Ryan Lee) is a cyclone of gestures and movement.

The ambitious *Fractals: a pattern of chaos*, set to the dense electronica music of Venetians Snares, moves almost faster than the eye. A fractal is a geometric pattern that splits to produce identical copies of itself on a smaller scale, which Côté interprets in literal fashion.

The choreography is a series of complex physicalities, each gesture, muscle isolation and limb out-thrust become progressively smaller and faster until a new pattern takes over. The piece is both dizzying and dazzling.

O'Day's *Pearline* (2011) is a darling of a piece. The Son House blues music is the backdrop for a hillbilly romantic romp between Hata and Laberge-Côté. A round disc labelled "The Moon" sits above, beaming down on the couple and their raging hormones. This is the type of dance that you want to freeze-frame so you can savour the droll positioning of the bodies. O'Day has come up with some deliciously complicated physical manoeuvres.



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