

**KEITH GAREBIAN – STAGE AND PAGE WEBSITE****PROARTEDANZA**

At the Fleck Dance Theatre  
October 3-6, 2012



The disappointment is not in the actual dancing by an excellent company, but in the program itself. Of the four dances, only *Expire* (by Roberto Campanella and Robert Glumbek) is a world premiere, and, to my eyes, the least innovative in choreography. Perhaps the radical flaw is the concept



itself—the experience of stress and suffering in a world of environmental pollution—that is hardly new or insightful. That we take breathing for granted is hardly a revolutionary thought; that our physiological and psychological well-being have been severely damaged by pollution is a didactic truism. Yet *Expire* trots out hackneyed imagery and dance vocabulary to rehearse its clichés, beginning with a stage floor littered with paper bags and dancers' breathing into some of these bags as if sniffing glue, only to pop them with a bang, then falling to the floor. All the usual oppositions are operative: movement and stillness; slow and spastic rhythms; breathing and resting; backward and forward leanings; solos and groups; et cetera. One of the most intriguing images is that of a massive sheet wrapped tightly around the body of Mami Hata so that she becomes a sort of figurehead of a ship rolling in the breeze across water. It is an image that frames the piece, but it doesn't develop any clear palpable meaning. Set to electronic music and the excellent lighting of Arun Srinivasan, it is chiefly an amalgamation of vignettes, with a strong, wild dance of contestation, with choking hammerlocks becoming the prime vocabulary of physical strife. It uses absurdist expressionism at times, as well as comic relief, with some curious physical configurations. As the projected images of children gambolling in a field by a lake makes clear, this is a piece that has its heart in the right place, though its creativity falls into triteness. However, it is well danced, indeed, with a choreography whose dynamism impresses by smooth lifts, changes in direction, and inter-woven bodies.

As for the rest of the program, there is something for diverse tastes. *Decorum* (first performed in 2005) has a solid foundation in ballet, as Kristen Dennis dances almost entirely en pointe, with graceful, light lifts and landings, helped by her partner Tyler Gledhill. This is a duet that allows us a glimpse into some of the secret tensions in a relationship, with Dennis moving from many glissades to flutter and inverted suspensions in a scissor position. Gledhill's dramatic purpose is to restrain and control her—with decorum. Elegantly performed in the manner of classical ballet, it remains conventional nonetheless.



*We Will...* (2008), with choreography by Kevin O'Day, rehearses a contest of wills between Robert Glumbek and Mami Hata, but the sequence of starts, stops and re-starts is clichéd, mixing the serious with shtick, ending with—what else?—a final embrace. Glumbek continues to amaze, because his signature muscularity and flexibility remain

 untrammelled, while Hata shows us her own formidable strengths. But it is the content that disappoints.

The single piece in the program I would like to see again is *Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup>—1<sup>st</sup> Movement* (2009) because, apart from the excellent eight-member ensemble, it reworks a musical masterpiece with an intriguing point of view—a rear-view focus on dancing that takes almost operatic measure of human emotion arising out of a score. It is a dance with chairs, with dancers' bodies often seen from the rear, yet registering palpable emotional definition. Louis Laberge-Cote leads Johanna Bergfelt, Tyler Gledhill, Ryan Lee, Delphine Leroux, Erin Poole, Anisa Tejpar, and Brendan Wyatt in this homage to Beethoven's incomparable music.

*photos: Genevieve Caron*

*pic 1: Anisa Tejpar and Tyler Gledhil*

*pic 2: (seated) Louis Laberge-Cote, Johanna Bergfelt and Kristen Dennis in 'Expire'*

*pic 3: Delphine Leroux and Tyler Gledhill in 'Beethoven's 9th--1st Movement'*

**Go Back to: [Dance Reviews](#)**