

REVIEW: SEASON 2014 (PROARTEDANZA)

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ProArteDanza brings passion and high athleticism to their *Season 2014* showcase at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre

The dance company [ProArteDanza](#) follows a simple guiding principle: passion in performance. It sounds obvious and hardly worth noting, just an easy word for dancers to use. But with this company, passion really is the essence — each piece of choreography is animated by inner fervor breaking out into rapturous intensity.

ProArteDanza celebrates its ten-year anniversary at the [Harbourfront Centre](#) this week with a full-length performance of their Dora award winning work *...in between...* from 2010, followed by a nine-part sampler of their other works from the last decade. Titled [Season 2014](#), this show

satisfies that basic desire we all have to be blown away by excellence; it's a thrill to watch.

ProArteDanza blends peak, ultra-athletic ballet with expressive modern dance, so you get a compelling blend of grace and emotion. The choreographies combine ballet's reliance on storytelling, contemporary dance's preoccupation with psychology, and modern dance's focus on visual surprise.

In other words, the dances created by ProArteDanza are accessible, personal, and entertaining. There's no pretense in these constructions, just a plain thrust at ecstasy. Audiences can easily join them on that elevated plane and experience the high drama, soaring sentiment and sexy turmoil.

The program begins with *...in between...*, a collaboration between choreographers Roberto Campanella and Robert Glumbek. (All the choreographers represented in this program are men, including the National Ballet's Guillaume Cote, and the ethos of the company does seem to be infused with a particularly masculine type of showiness.) It's a beautiful piece and a real gift to have a chance to see it in full.

...in between... begins under stark lighting on a grey stage heavy with fog. Thrumming strings set a tone of melancholic searching, and in the dreamlike setting, we prepare for an inner journey. The languorous mood gives way quickly enough, however, and the work acquires a clanging intensity.

The set consists of two heavy mats, like Queen-sized beds, and the dancers use them accordingly, hopping and flopping about in degrees of playfulness and intimacy. It creates an interesting contrast to have these big squishy cushions on stage, because the dancers are so chiseled and precise. Realized as grey slabs, the softness itself becomes grand and monumental, as if drowsiness were an elemental force with which the dancers must continually contend.

Ultimately, the inner journey of *...in between...* turns out to be a collective process. With nine dancers performing, the strongest, clearest texture of the piece is the group dynamic. There's a lot of material in all these cross-currents, and even though the piece is quite long, most of it is really absorbing.

For me, the dancers themselves are almost better than the choreography. ProArteDanza makes rich, ambitious work, but when dancers achieve this level of physical, technical and aesthetic proficiency, it's hard to think about much else. They are all astonishing.

The second part of the program consists of various short snapshots of works from the company's repertoire, interspliced with clips from rehearsals over the years. It's interesting to watch, but the

medley approach jars with the intense emotion of each piece. All the same, the montage offers a worthwhile vision of what intense passion looks like, sustained over a decade.

Details

- [Season 2014](#) (ProArteDanza) is showing in the Fleck Dance Theatre at the [Harbourfront Centre](#) (207 Queens Quay West).
- Showtimes run Wednesday to Saturday, October 1 – 4, at 8PM.
- Regular tickets are \$20-\$40, with discounts available for students and seniors.
- Tickets may be purchased by calling the Harbourfront Centre Box Office at 416-973-4000, or online at proartedanza.com.

Photo of the ProArteDanza ensemble by Tyler Evan Webb

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