

DANCE » REVIEW

Fusion that burns up the stage

PROARTE DANZA

At Fleck Dance Theatre
in Toronto on Wednesday

BY PAULA CITRON

ProArteDanza's niche is strong ballet technique overlaid with contemporary dance sensibility. This is a company in which classical ballet is pushed to the body's outer limits, where the gravity of modern dance meets the upper body pull of ballet. Their latest show features premieres by Robert Glumbek, Emily Molnar and Kevin O'Day, and all three works include dancing that burns up the stage. That being said, the choreography is almost too generous — the pieces could all use an editor.

Glumbek is ProArte's artistic associate, and his *Re-Collections* is kick-ass dancing. There really is no other word to describe the intense physical workout Glumbek has given his five men (Louis Laberge-Côté, Ryan Lee, Jeremy Nasmith, Gilbert Small and Brendan Wyatt). The piece is built around a window that hangs at the rear of the stage and is a magnet that draws the men. Throughout the work, at least one dancer is gazing out that window, body frozen in sombre reflection.

The piece explores friendship, competition, play, and even homoerotic encounters. The dancers engage in everything from bone-crushing

fight to moments of exquisite tenderness. In solos, duets, trios and ensembles, the men demonstrate the strong bonds that are at the heart of their shared experiences.

Eric Cadesky has given Glumbek a droll original score that runs from eerie electronica to tango to peppy dance music. Bonnie Beecher's atmospheric lighting is stunning. Glumbek's triumph with his collaborators is fashioning a piece that captures memory while looking forward at the same time.

Molnar is a Vancouver-based choreographer who has a foot, so to speak, in two worlds. Her background is classical ballet (National Ballet of Canada), but she was also a member of Frankfurt Ballet, and iconoclast contemporary ballet choreographer William Forsythe's influence can be seen in her work. Her creation *as for it now* is set on nine dancers, five women (Johanna Bergfeldt, Michelle Cheung, Kate Holden, Rena Narumi and Julie Pecard) and four men (Lee, Nasmith, Small and Wyatt). A sign hangs over the stage bearing the word "Impossible." Molnar's choreography investigates the impact of the word on human nature.

Her modus operandi is physical metaphor. The work is episodic with a great deal of challenging partnering. The dancers do not represent real people as much as states of mind. It is an abstract dance

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exploring an abstract principle through concrete movement. Composer Larsen Lupin has given Molnar an abstract electronic score, while Beecher has provided moody lighting.

There is an ebb and flow to the piece. The movement is strong, bold and distorted. Both women and men are lifted at dangerous angles. When the dancers hoist up Lee to grab the "Impossible" sign, not surprisingly, "Possible" is written on the other side.

Molnar is an intellectual who works through a medium cool approach. It is a dance of challenge, where the art form itself becomes the symbol of what can be achieved. At several times during the piece, one woman on point emphasizes the unnatural/impossible. Built into the piece, however, is the idea that the body will wear out. In the mean time, or as the title says, *as for it now*, the dancers will perform to their limit.

American O'Day has had a distinguished career as both a dancer and a choreographer working with Twyla Tharp, William Forsythe and New

York City Ballet. He is currently artistic director of Kevin O'Day-Ballett Mannheim.

His intriguing duet *We will* for Molnar and Glumbek is geared to the dancers' experience. They can both convey depth and meaning behind steps while executing O'Day's challenging choreography. Both are imposing dancers who have strong, forceful and compact bodies that move with surgical precision.

The choreography is full of twists and turns. Patterns seem to curl in on each other as this couple in crisis works out its demons. O'Day has fashioned a powerful contest of wills where the two support, tease, destroy and desire each other in mercurial fashion. What is particularly fascinating is their coldness and dispassion, with the couple deliberating keeping their emotions simmering below the surface.

The dancers do speak. She suddenly declares, "Let's start over." Later, Glumbek more tentatively asks, "Should we start over?" They can't live with each other and they can't live apart.

The score is Almirante's lament from Handel's *Rinaldo*, the famous *Lascia ch'io pianga*, but O'Day has mutilated the piece. We hear the middle, the end and snatches of the beginning, all of which mirror the couple's fractured lives.

» ProArteDanza continues at Fleck Dance Theatre through tonight (416-973-4000).