



Review of Bucknell Dance Company's Fall Dance Concert (December 2011)

Reviewer: Elisha Clark Halpin, Associate Professor/Head of Dance, Penn State University

I found the Bucknell Dance Company Fall Concert to be very engaging. The concert highlighted the talents of the faculty and students. It is wonderful to see a dance concert that aptly showcases the ability of students. This is a true testament to the strengths of Kelly Knox and her faculty, not only in creating works that illustrate the capabilities but to have fostered those capabilities in the first place. My only overall note about the concert is that I would have liked to have more thorough information under music credits. I was extremely impressed with the costume designs by Paula Davis and Pam Miller. The lighting designs by Heath Hansum were amazing and of very high quality. His nuanced lights sculpted the body and created a wonderful environment for the dances to live within.

Inertia, an apt title for a piece set to Philip Glass, was the first piece on the concert. One of the strengths of this piece is the way the choreographer, Sarah Surber, was able to use many differing levels of dancers and make them look cohesive. In terms of structure and movement the piece was not able to meet or match the music. In terms of intricacy and complexity the music greatly overshadowed the dancing. It is always tempting to use strong musical compositions but without the same rigor of crafting the choreography the relationship is not equal. The piece needed to be more developed and crafted but was well danced and very pleasing.

A New Light was the highlight of the concert for me. Presumably a first or second piece from a young choreographer, this work shows tremendous promise. Well structured and well danced, this piece was truly captivating. The piece digressed in just a few places into a lyrical dance of tricks but for the most part was developed in a mature and organic way. The dancers were able to integrate their emotions into the movement truthfully allowing the audience to experience the seasons of the life cycle with them. The blending of dramatic intention and movement worked well. I hope to see more from this young artist.

imMERCEd was a wonderful piece, from concept to execution. A true strength of this show was the two pieces that brought dance history to life. Both *imMERCEd* and *Two Ecstatic Themes* allowed the students to experience the choreographic premise of two masters. This type of experience is invaluable. What a treat for the dancers in the *imMERCEd* piece to work in this manner. Knox and her student collaborator weaved together a wonderful tapestry of movement. To be pushed as performers out of their comfort zone will undoubtedly make these students stronger performers. The Humphrey piece, performed by Surber, was one of the strongest performances of a Humphrey reconstruction I have had the privilege to watch.



Unfortunately, the closing two pieces of the first half were the weakest of the concert. With *Synecdoche* it is easy to see the student is working on structure and movement development and will continue to grow with practice. In the case of *Hearth* it is more disheartening to see such an unsuccessfully choreographed piece by a guest artist. The piece was stale and lacking in personality. The content of *Hearth* lacked in context and the framework was lacking in cohesiveness. The movement vocabulary was undeveloped and inconsistent. The students performed with commitment and vigor but the piece was sorely disappointing.

The true gem of the night was the dance theatre piece *Lone Windows* by Dustyn Martincich. This piece has room to continue to grow. I say that not as a critique but from a place of excitement in wanting to see how all the pieces can continue to be pushed and developed. It is refreshing to see a jazz choreographer working within the realms of concert dance in a more traditional fashion. The structure of this piece flowed well. Some characters were more developed than others but it did not bother me. I enjoyed seeing glimpses into the lives of these people. The choreography stretched the student dancers without being too far beyond their performance level. It was such a treat to see the more experienced performers too. Knox showed all the qualities of a true star. Having the faculty perform with the students is a wonderful way to push the student performers to the next level. I hope to see the next version of this piece.

Overall this concert was a very strong showing from the College dance program. It is wonderful to see talent being fostered in the academic setting. I look forward to seeing more from the Bucknell Dance Company.


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