

TRANSPORTED AND DISCOVERED BY DIVERSITY

Duets Showcase

Royal NZ Ballet Company, Vivio & Greydis, TMC Dance Crew, TVNZ's 'Dancing With the Stars' Jonny Williams & Kristy Boyd and many more

at TAPAC Theatre, Western Springs, Auckland
3 Oct 2009

Reviewed by Celine Sumic, 5 Oct 2009 (www.theatreview.org.nz)

Ballroom: Quickstep and Waltz

With spirited panache, Jonny Williams and Kristie Boyd light up the floor with an elegant, lively quickstep, heralding the opening of the TEMPO 2009 Duets Showcase. Their engaging energy and sparkling footsteps have the audience glowing, with their similarly spectacular costumes contributing a glamorous "wow /if my friends could see me now" factor to the evening. Later Williams and Boyd return to complement the energy of their opening number with the romantic swoon of the much loved waltz.

Swing

In suave and cheeky style Julius Wendt and dancers announce a shift in rhythm with their Lindy Hop number *Scat*, to music by the Bell Airs. An excerpt from their full length show *Café Pasion*, *Scat* showcases the dancers' skill with light-hearted ease, recalling the levity of a past era. A playful exit of acrobatic push-me-pull-you formations completes the work with a surprising twist.

Tap and Hip Hop

Who needs music when you've got movement and style referencing a mix of Gene Kelly charm, Auckland Youth cool and KISS Rock energy? Welcome to TMC's percussive eloquence, as Andrew Cesan and Simon Watts confidently tap up a storm with their work *Feet With Heat*, transitioning easily between antiphonal antics and solidly delivered unison.

Punctuated by suspended body waves, foot driven drum rolls and their distinctive personal moves, TMC is, in a word, gorgeous. Their partnering and individual talents are showcased again later in the Duets program with Hip Hop number *Memories*, an excerpt from their Tempo show *Under The Influence* playing later this month at the Concert Chamber.

Ballet

Two ballet works are included in the Duets Showcase, beautifully delivered by dancers Katie

Hurst-Saxton and Brendan Bradshaw. While the second work has its merits, choreographed by the renowned Sir Kenneth MacMillan, my favourite is the first; titled *Through to You* and choreographed by ex-RNZB dancer Andrew Simmons.

Glancing off each other's bodies with a delicacy and romantic accent that epitomises the magic of the balletic form, *Through to You* couples a swirling oceanic grace with an alternating exchange of male and female reflections within Simmons' poetic and lightly played duet structure. Music box references are filtered through a misty, nature-inspired lens in this sensitively delivered, ambient dialogue. Degrees of translucence to movement motif and theme are further echoed in the thoughtful costume design by Tracey Grant Lord.

Salsa

Providing a dynamic contrast to the ethereal remove of the preceding ballet work, Isbert Ramos (Vivio) and Greydis Montero bring an exuberance and earthy sensuality to the TAPAC stage that remind me of exotic flowers in full bloom.

Ramos' dignified, sculpted masculinity paired with Montero's curvaceous and playfully sexy style produce the magnetic duet *A Todos Mis Amigos (To All My Friends)*. Danced in the *Son* form (a music and dance style from Cuba considered to be the root of Salsa), this work combines the structure and flourish of the Spanish guitar with the grounded beat of African drums.

Later in the program, the traditional flavour of *A Todos Mis Amigos* is juxtaposed with the more contemporary salsa work *LQQD*, an original work of autobiographical nature choreographed by Ramos and Montero. Evoking the dancers' journey to New Zealand 7 years ago, *LQQD* features a distinctive score that seems to bridge time, space and motion through its unusual mix of musical, marching and machine-like sound.

Bollywood

Expressive detail and richly ornate costuming contribute to the nostalgic reference within *Apalaam Chaplaam*, a dance work celebrating classic Bollywood style. Choreographed and performed by Monisha Kumar and Akshata Singh, a palette of black, white and silver creates a contrast with the warmth of the dancers' skin, while the movement of hands and arms echo the leafy vine-like patterning of their skirts. Kumar and Singh's conscious embodiment of this historical form conveys a joyful sense of freedom and femininity that is captivating.

Ceroc

Dance daredevils Vanroe Stone and Alanagh Griffin combine expressive detail and risky moves in their humorous and impressive ceroc spectacle *Hot and Cold*. Opening the work with urban panache to Domino's *Business of Love*, this is a couple with personality plus. Transitioning with a change in music to reveal more leg and less costume, Stone and Griffin's business-like nonchalance, coupled with their playful and brilliantly juxtaposed moments of counterpoint, make *Hot and Cold* an eye-catching event and bring new zing to the familiar

story of a lover's tryst.

Flamenco

Painterly and historical, *Sevillanas* delivers a percussive possession of the stage with its floral explosion of castanets and dotty frills. Bringing the TEMPO 2009 Duets Showcase to a close, somewhere between Matisse's *Dance of Life* and Frida Kahlo's *Senorita Fiesta* these ladies appear to have leapt off the canvas and onto the TAPAC stage, leaving me with the somewhat surreal sense of sun-dappled dolls.

In Conclusion:

The TEMPO 2009 Duets Showcase is a very enjoyable show that celebrates the diversity of local dance culture. The duet form presents the provocation of considering who we are in relation to the partnering 'other.' Food for thought, if not dreams...

So, who am I, I wonder, as the Duet dancers gather on stage for their collective farewell. As I settle on the new identity of a painterly sun-dappled Matisse-Kahlo collaboration, I encourage you to see this show - you'll find yourself transported!