

THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 2010

LUMINARIO BALLET, Taking Flight, Happy Landings



HAPPY LANDINGS

picnic dinner on the shady terrace at the Ford, a perfect LA summer joy. Luminario's buzz sounded and looked visually interesting -

LUMINARIO BALLET OF LOS ANGELES

PRESENTS:

TAKING FLIGHT: NEW BALLET EN POINTE

Aug 06, 2010 8:30 PM \$25

What strange form conjured with gym equipment, toe shoes, and hula hoops would we see? The program music was eclectic, young, retro: everything was signalling brightly: This is so hip, gotta see it.

http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_7hSejMjpx7k/TG6MONlmXyI/AAAAAAAAA_s/twx3_4hSBOo/s1600/LumBalletJournalpage.jpg

It was cool, now, hip; I think deliberately so, and even with that intention visible, remained thus. The choreography's elements are forms from the gasping split-second dazzle of gymnastics performance, the whipping arcing reversals of ice-skating, (bad shoes) the dazzle and cool mystery of Cirque de Soleil, and the unique elegance of en pointe partnering from classical ballet (good shoes). A deeply interesting unity: I thought of the first time I saw La-La-La Human Steps and Pilobolus. (I should see more of Cirque du Soleil).

The dancers are all exquisite bodies, slipping into minimal costumes that silkily enhance and reveal the buoyant, shining life energy within them. Narrative structures and traditional gender partnering that reminded me of Twyla Tharp's "Sinatra Suite", told stories of flirtation, love-seeking, loss, rejection, heartache, and reunion, heating up the stage. It stayed that way most of the night, too; seeking, beautiful eroticism.

Aerial dances were performed on two high apparatus with suspended ropes, placed well back on the stage, imposing the necessity of frontality on the choreography, an interesting challenge, but which distanced the audience somewhat. It's time to hold your breath – will the dancers fall like performers in Olympic competition? Course not.

I calmed myself by deciding that the choreographer wouldn't stage risky business; it just looked that way: breath-taking swoops, ascents, split-second releases, the dancers folded in streaming scarves unfurling and cascading down the ropes. It was elegant, lyric, tension-filled – how would the dances end? Would they come down? Ascend to Heaven? Solo dancers began to climb, were joined by others, in an elevated complex variety of exchanged levels, extensions, and excitement, momentum sustained throughout the aerial work with its necessity of upward and downward mobility.

The program included a Bella Lewitzky dance called "Turf". I found this choice really an fascinating contrast to the other pieces. It had such heart, such warmth. It explored the possibilities of ascent without bootstraps, only dancers' bodies.

They struggled to control the stage's square footage, the air around them, and each other's spaces, too. The dance concluded with a pyramid of bodies, yearning upwards, an energy-built monument that earned and possessed the place.

It was fashioned after the Los Angeles riots of 1991, and Luminario Ballet is the only company that has ever performed it besides Lewitzky's.

The audience was receptive, supportive, and so am I, looking forward to seeing more from this engaging, experimental company. (www.luminarioballet.org)