

performance that blurs the borders between music and dance, where the two of them are so closely interwoven it is impossible to tell what generates what. Her piece speaks of unrestrained, self-confident women and the feminine body as an object. She moves somewhere between the archetype and beauty of feminine sexuality and dominant male-female relationships where women end up being puppets in their partner's hands. Her dancers throw their limbs and hair around in wild movement sequences, while she creates an almost architectonic symmetry, an order that emerges from chaos, opposing her dancers' bodies to the perfectly shaped curves of the hills.

On the other hand, chaos is an aesthetic choice for Lucas Condro and Natalia Tencer. *Immensidad Intima* is a complex structure of internal and external happenings that react to momentary impulses. They use daily actions and objects, as well as the space, the audience and unforeseen events in a humorous way. The chaos generates from the multiple actions that are being carried out simultaneously. It is really more performance than dance, in a way that reminds one of Constanza Macras, Argentine choreographer in residence at the Schaubühne in Berlin. The dancers seek the edge of the possible, of danger, rolling downhill at exceptional speed towards a concrete stair and, then again, they might stand there and spit water they sip out of a bottle. An absurd portrait of a city that knows well about absurdity and chaos.

Ciudadanza is a festival that at first sight seems to be a conglomerate of disconnected works, but what connects all of these pieces is how lively, how energetic they are and how much they mirror the soul and essence of Buenos Aires.



Parque Avellaneda - Ciudadanza - Miguel Robles' Call to Prayer

rehearsals. So he has a rule that he does not choreograph to his own compositions, but - as is the way with rules - there's usually an exception. The music he composed was meant to leave room for the dance, so much so that, if one were to hear the music without seeing the dance, it would feel like something was missing.

*Pas de...* was this work and, to my eye, the highlight of the evening. Virtuoso pianist Melody Fader sends out Magloire's generously-spaced chords, impelling dancer Emery LeCrone to fill the long silences with movement. Each dance phrase runs its course until, like a pause between breaths, the next piano burst sets her to moving again. Dancers Victoria North and Amy Brandt are introduced and the music gets fuller, cascading into repetitions that create a surreal atmosphere. This trio of women slides into a unison formation of deep lunges where they pause and then unexpectedly bob up

and down with little heel raises. Later, LeCrone poses with arms overhead while her hands, like small animals, seem to dart and wiggle on their own. This is quirky, high quality work which will no doubt grow into the larger audience it deserves.

## Dance Salad 2010

MAGGIE FOYER savours the unique festival in Houston

## New Chamber Ballet

TIM MARTIN appreciates Miro Magloire's elegant programming

**M**iro Magloire's presentations, given in the elegant studios of New York's City Center, feature finely-crafted choreography, excellent musicians, some compositions written expressly for the evening's dances, simple, tasteful costuming, and well-trained dancers. It's as though Magloire is not just a composer or a choreographer (he's both), but an impresario, a Diaghilev in miniature. With his unique, diamond-shaped cravats and his informative and humorous remarks, he doesn't just assemble the elements of a show, but, rather, serves them to us like an elegantly arranged dish.

In his remarks he joked that some have accused him of megalomania, that he composes music so he can then choreograph to it, thereby controlling nearly the entire production. Not so, he said: after struggling over a composition for so long, the last thing he wanted was to hear it played over and over during dance

**D**ining out in Texas, the portions are enormous and it's the same with Houston's famous Dance Salad. For three days you can seriously OD on dance - but what a feast. This year saw dancers from thirteen companies and a dozen different countries perform a tossed salad of fresh new works - too many to do justice to in one article.

The Royal Ballet of Flanders presented extracts from Christian Spuck's *Waiting for Ulysses*, a deep, dark work punctuated with witty light relief. The choreography is smart and innately theatrical, each move initiated by the dramatic imperative. Rejecting the exploits of the Greek hero in favour of his deserted wife, Penelope, Spuck has drawn a complex character out of this shadowy figure who makes a career of waiting. Her seven suitors, united in their ambitions as players in the marriage market, are by turns charming and cruel, attentive and brutal. Buffeted between the mellifluous voice of Perry Como in *Magic Moments* and Purcell's serious passion, the mood swings wildly in this elaborate game of courtship. A web is spun around Penelope, who, maddeningly, hardly seems to know her own mind. Eva Dewaele perfectly captures this complex woman in a marathon performance.

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's *Loin*, performed by the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, was mesmerising in a different way, as arms and hands spoke a mysterious language in the opening section. I



loved Yanni Yin and Gregory Deltenre's joyous love duet and the inventive waves of movement that Cherkaoui conjures up, culminating in an awesome tableau of finely balanced dancers.

A rare treat was the appearance of La Compañía Nacional de Danza from Mexico in three excerpts from Mark Godden's *Miroirs*. The watery strains of Ravel's piano poems were interpreted explicitly in a double duet, tinged with romanticism in flowing skirts against a turbulent backdrop. The opening duet, danced by Agustina Galizzi and Raúl Fernández, was sharper and more contemporary in mood and movement. The closing trio, where they were joined by Jesse Inglis, closed in a startlingly original picture of enfolding bodies. Godden has an excellent eye for interesting visual motifs and the dancers of this 74-strong company, well trained and with engaging stage presence, presented his work with self assurance and equanimity. A company to remember.

The comedy prize was a close contest between the Norwegian National and Gautier Ballet. Paul Lightfoot and Sol León's crazy, irreverent and very funny *Skew Whiff* was performed with a precision that drove the humour home. I predict a long and merry life as a gala favourite for Eric Gautier's *Orchestra of Wolves*. It is a cleverly choreographed comic gem that hints more than somewhat at the internequine warfare simmering beneath the surface in certain opera houses. Arnano Braswell's chicken conductor and the player wolves made effective use of their masks, provoking a frisson of laughter that bubbled through the length of this short piece.

Also from Lightfoot/León but on a more earnest level was *Softly as I Leave You*. The long angular frames of Drew Jacoby and Rubi Pronk raged against the constraints of the wooden box, their fraught relationship providing a catalyst for the complex choreography that shapes so finely to the beautiful melodies. The detailed choreographic construction of David Dawson's *Faun(e)* was given spirited performances by Raphaël Coumes-Marquet and Esteban Berlanga. This work, linking the past heritage to future possibilities, rewards repeat viewings as it unwraps its subtleties.

We were treated to two duets from Jiri Kylián. *Blackbird*, a quietly intense duet, was presented by the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève. It provided Texan dancer Prince Credell with the chance to perform before an appreciative home crowd in a finely judged interpretation. NDT's *Toss of the Dice* was riveting. Every element is so right in this interplay of male and female dynamics. Lesley Telford gave a performance of classical purity that found perfect balance in Medhi Walerski's explosive bursts of energy.

Ben Stevenson was also back on home ground, having directed the Houston Ballet for 27 years. From the Texas Ballet Theatre, his new company, he brought Leticia Oliveira and Carl Coomer to perform *From the Corner* to the second movement of Shostakovich's 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Concerto. It is a gentle work, full of charm, where

the emotionally charged musical highlights are complemented in the choreography by a glance or a touch. I hope in the future it is given with new designs, as the saccharine costumes threaten to drag it into sentimentality.

This side of the Atlantic and the Central Europe Dance Theatre, based in Budapest, gave *Carneval* by Éva Duda. It is a cunning exercise in stage fighting: three men, two guns and a battle of wits. For all its undoubted cleverness it lacked the killer touch, and I can't help thinking that a healthy dose of irony might have filled the void. Also from Budapest came the Hungarian National Ballet. Despite the fact that the choreography by Lila Partray (*Anna Karenina*) and Boris Eifman (*The Karamazovs*) is too melodramatic for current Western European tastes, the dancing was magnificent. Aleszja Popova, whose tiny frame seems barely able to contain her passionate spirit, has beauty of face and form and a formidable technique, and I hope we see more of her. However, in *Way of Words* choreographer/company member Levente Bajári, dancing with Kristina Pazar, showed innovative structure with clever use of space and lighting design. The dancers gave a bold showing of neoclassical choreography. If the duet tended at times to look manipulated, the solo work was most impressive.

I am exhausted, as I bet are the dancers and the management... but let's do it again next year. There isn't anything on the planet quite like Nancy Henderek's Dance Salad.

Compañía Nacional de Danza in *Miroirs*. Photo: Guillermo Galindo

