

Pole Dancing With the Jose Limón Company

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The Jose Limón Company has always been a class act. Under Carla Maxwell's capable leadership, it has marshaled its strength and energy long after the passing of its founder, continuing to present his work, as well as new pieces, with integrity and grace. At the Baruch Performing Arts Center on January 19, the company danced a revival of Limón's 1958 *Mazurkas*, set to music by Frédéric Chopin. These turned out to be as sweet, lyrical, and perfectly thought-out an adaptation of a traditional dance form as I have seen by any modern choreographer. Limón composed this set of dances after a 1957 trip to Poland as an homage to the Polish people who at the time were living under communist dominion. Ten dances in all, each one lovelier than the next. The work has been out of repertory for some 20 years, so it was a particular treat to see them so ably performed after such a long hiatus. The entire ensemble deserves praise for its light-footed and precise renditions, though Kathryn Alter and Belinda Mcguire in particular seemed to positively glow as they delivered their performances.



Set to music by Henry Purcell, *The Moor's Pavane* (subtitled "Variations on a Theme of Othello") provides a stunning example of how dance can tell a narrative story as well as any other artistic medium. Bringing Shakespeare -- or in this case a Shakespearian theme or conceit -- to life onstage without dialogue is a tall challenge indeed and rarely has it been done in recent memory with such subtlety and aplomb. Raphaël Boumaïla as the Moor (Othello) perfectly alternates between confident lover and jealous husband roles, while Dante Puleio delivers a bravado performance as his friend (Iago): at one point he literally snakes around Boumaïla's body as he

whispers his cabalistic untruths into the all too believing Moor's ears. Roxane D'Orleans Juste as the trusting Moor's wife (Desdemona) and Kristen Foote as the Moor's friend's wife (Emilia) also delivered stellar performances. The handling of the handkerchief motif in particular was wonderfully executed as it floated from one dancer to another like so much semiotic poison. The pavane itself, a delicate high renaissance art form, was danced with grace and mastery by all four performers.

The last piece of the evening *Come with Me* by choreographer Rodrigo Pederneiras was an unfortunate choice. This combination of classical, jazz and latin dance ensemble piece, set to music by Paquito D'Rivera, simply went on for too long. One can see the logic in choosing an airy, breezy counterpart to the pavane in particular. And although there were some fine elements to the dance, including some lovely puppet-like release movements and wonderful leg/lower body work, it possessed too much of a gaudy cha-cha-cha feeling -- in comparison to the artistic delivery of the other pieces that night, it possessed an almost cheap cabaret feel at times. As the Martha Graham Company has also found out in recent years, finding talent that measures up to its namesake isn't always easy, and perhaps that isn't a fair comparison. With some judicious editing and bit more complex movement, *Come with Me* might have lived up to this task.