

Flight of Fancy

December 12, 2013

Aerial Arts of Utah performed Flight of Fancy to a sold out Rose Wagner audience. The company's debut was a showcase of the dancers' impressive skills off the ground. I saw a lot of variety between the different pieces, and the performers were able to capture the nature of each apparatus for the audience. It was also refreshing for me to witness shorter pieces (11 dances in 90 minutes!) with a full range from serious to lighthearted themes. I also want to acknowledge the seamless tech team behind the scenes for a show that must have been complicated to rig and negotiate during the live performance.

There were a variety of apparatus on display, with some dancers performing on several over the course of the show. Elizabeth Stich and Amy E. Olson opened the show with the intricate Salty Sisters Trapeze. They performed in excellent unison with a variety of impossible poses that required increasingly complex partnering while one dancer was suspended from the trapeze while supporting, lifting, or being climbed upon by the other. The equally impressive duet of Stich with Trisha Paulos on fabric was able to emphasize a distance between the dancers as one performed high above the audience, and the other closer to the ground. The two dancers would also meet in the middle of the piece of fabric they shared in this mysterious piece that demonstrated strength and endurance.

To keep the program light, there was a fun performance by Nancy Simpson Carter on the aerial hoop, wearing bright colors in a reflection of childhood fantasies. Adriane Colvin was playfully awkward in her solo. It was a nice change to see her fabric moving and swinging towards the audience to begin the dance, breaking the dynamic of a purely vertical plane of movement. And Carter returned to the stage with Mikael Thelin in Just a Little Ditty, an amusing take on acroyoga and an ironic look at a partnership built on trust. I was confused about their simple choice for costumes in subdued grey that did not seem to compliment the comic mood of the performance.

A few performances were also of a more sensual nature. Amy E. Olson and Nicholas Irwin Kubilius wowed the audience while suspended from a rope. Amy danced a beautiful solo to begin the piece, but it took on new life when Nicholas joined her on stage and the two demonstrated their partnering skills. I found it interesting that the show's female/female partnerships were equally impressive with the skills that were being performed, but the male/female duet automatically had dramatic sexual tension, either through choreographic choice, or through my own interpretation.

My favorite performances of the evening were solos by Jenny Lucas and Elizabeth Stich. Lucas was accompanied by musician Margaret Lewis on cello. Not only did the live music enhance the piece performed on fabric, but Jenny's timing, fluid movement, and specificity were captivating. It was a beautiful performance with sudden drops, slow methodic climbing, and seamless transitions from one idea to the next. Stich mesmerized the audience with her final trapeze solo, Shedding Skin. Her choreography had a graceful strength that gave her a quality of being unreachable as she hovered above the audience, both physically and on an emotional level as well.

The final piece by Anne Kocherhans and Deborah Eppstein concluded the evening in a fitting way. The two owners of the company performed Duo Celeste on fabric. Each dancer was suspended on their own apparatus, donning sunburst unitards, designed by Valena Magill. The dance had a very ethereal quality and I was surprised at how easily I was taken into the world that these dancers created.

For me, the evening was a successful fusion of circus arts with a choreographic focus. Hopefully, the next performance will run for more than one night, and if the chatter during intermission was any indication, Aerial Arts of Utah will be getting a surge of new students soon.

Erin Kaser Romero is a local choreographer and dancer who can often be seen performing with Movement Forum.

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