

**Enrico Labayan's
Carmina Burana: Revisited**

” is powerful, gritty, and inspirational, a true gift to Bay Area audiences.

By: Catherine Pawlick

“Those who go round & round are all maidens; they want to do without a man all summer long.” – Lyrics from Carmina Burana, music by Carl Orff

Enrico Labayan's summer dance offering, "Carmina Burana: Revisited," performed three nights in a row at Dance Mission's intimate theatre, is a cohesive work that draws on the choreographer's international experience, infusing a range of fierce, mostly female emotions into his unique movement lexicon. Initially based on the Southeast Asian "Tadtarin" ritual of sorority and fertility in which women reign supreme for three days, this ballet uses the theme of female identity and roles as the starting point for a series of short dancing sequences that vary according to the score. As the music shifts, so does the movement and emotion: we witness the sense of sisterhood among the group of seven women, their anger, hunger, passion, sadness, and triumph.



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At the head of the troupe is Daiane Lopes, a lithe Brazilian woman with slender physique and an innate sense for the pulsing rhythms and feeling of Carl Orff's sensual score. Her precise, clean movements lend a multi-dimensional layer to Labayan's choreography. In the allegro sections, Lopes dances with confident force, never apologetic. At times humorous, playing with her skirt,

and later, in a somber solo, thick with allegro dashes and attack, she draws you to the forefront of the movement.

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Of note also was Morgan Eichwald, whose expressive eye contact –along with the choreography's vigorous arm circles and hip swivels in certain sections-- emphasized the coexistence of community and individualism, another underlying theme of the work. The tiny Leda Pennell managed to emit considerable envy in the sections that focused on her own overpowering energies. Crystaldawn Bell and Diane Mateo, two of the strongest women in the group, carried several of the duet and trio sections with strength and certitude. There is not a dancer in the troupe who doesn't bring her own unique gifts to Labayan's community.



Labayan's movement itself suggests tribalism – plentiful shoulder movements, pounding on the floor, and impulses that come from the core of the torso. The steps are granular, earthy and real. Religious themes enter as well, with a deliberate and taffy-like sign of the cross, or Lopes atop a table, a red drape over her outstretched arms, reminiscent of Jesus on the crucifix. The implication of sacrifice comes across easily, women who give of themselves endlessly, and raises the question of the place of Self in a group setting.

In all, the troupe's warmth and emotion were palpable from stage to audience. That Labayan has put considerable time and thought into this production is readily apparent. Feminine strength is highlighted here, and what better vehicle for it than generous, truthful movement that expresses the range of gifts on offer from the fair gender. "Carmina" is powerful, gritty, and inspirational, a true gift to Bay Area audiences.

Catherine Pawlick is Former ballet dancer, trilingual (French/Russian/English) dance critic, turned book author (Univ Press of Florida, Oct. 2011).

Photo: Weidong Yang courtesy of Labayan Dance/SF