

Choreography of Enrico Labayen: High Level of Professionalism

Labayen at his most sophisticated, allowing the movement to be nuanced and textured while flowing organically from one choreographic idea to the next.

By Joe Landini, February 6, 2010

Esquisses featured the re-launched Labayen Dance/SF in a series of choreographic sketches that incorporated a music score written by Charles Valentin Alkan. With this work, Labayen utilized both performers that have worked with him for the last ten years, as well as a newer crop of beautiful dancers. The veteran dancers (Michelle Lohmar, Diane Mateo & Laura Bernasconi) provided texture, giving the work a technical gravitas while the newer dancers: Karen Meyers, Daiane Lopez, Morgan Eichwald, Leda Pennell, Diana Tkachenko performed brilliantly, energetically and exuded vitality in their solos, duets and trios. *Esquisses* showed Labayen at his most sophisticated, allowing the movement to be nuanced and textured while flowing organically from one choreographic idea to the next.



Daiane Lopez in Labayen's "Esquisses"

parallel, they alternately became obstacles and perches as Vienna Perreno's video created an ominous specter. The text, written by Labayen narrated the AIDS crisis and its pandemic ramifications, threatened to overpower the piece but Labayen's performance stood out, never giving ground and eventually standing triumphantly; the last man standing.

Flood Plains Series: 1-2: *Mugam Shiraz & Bhairavi Alap* was an intriguing collaboration between Labayen and long-time muse Laura Bernasconi. The new work was set to a Middle-Eastern score by Rahman Asadollahi and Ram Narayan and integrated the classical idiom with acro-yoga, an unlikely combination that worked surprisingly well. *Bhairavi Alap* is a neo-classical duet with two dancers (the majestically beautiful Diana Tkachenko with Joseph Copley) working on the vertical plane and *Mugam Shiraz*, where Bernasconi and a male partner developed a rolling puzzle, using contortion, acrobatics and inverted movement. At times it wasn't completely clear how the two duets related to each other but the culmination was provocative and elevated the acro-yoga material to a professional level.

Quirk was Labayen's final piece of the evening and was the most epic part of the program. Here is Labayen at his strongest, pulling out every classical cliché but tweaking the form so that it remains easily recognizable but distinctly his own vision. With *Quirk* we got soloists, a corps of neophyte technicians and a classical pas de deux that threatened to scorch the stage. The beauty of *Quirk* was the high level of professionalism that Labayen's company brings to the stage, the material was well rehearsed and choreographically complex

Labayen Dance/SF performed at Dance Mission on January 22-24, 2010 to a packed house according the company with foot-stomping, loud cheers and the long standing ovation, was well deserved.

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Flood Plains Series 1-2: Bhairavi Alap & Mugam Beyati Shiraz

Soothing the Enemy was Labayen's foray into neo-classicism, incorporating an electronic score by Leslie Stuck & Thomas Williams. The women's quintet juxtaposed groups and soloists while explosive angular movement permeated the stage. The work showed an uncommon sophistication, integrating a classical vernacular that appeared undeniably contemporary.

Two Barres, A Man & The Plague was probably the most personal piece on the program. The solo, choreographed and performed by Labayen, was poignant, as he navigated two ballet barres standing