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## Labayen Dance/SF revisits Carl Orff's iconic Carmina Burana:

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Enrico Labayen's dance company Labayen Dance/SF took a hiatus from 2005 to 2008 while Labayen was off studying traditional folkloric dances in Southeast Asia. Labayen may have been absent for a few years, but the world premiere of his *Carmina Burana, Revisited* at Dance Mission Theater (July 23-25) proved that Labayen Dance/SF is back in full force. Inspired by the Philippine matriarchal ritual Tadtarin and set to Carl Orff's iconic score, *Carmina Burana, Revisited* was a powerful and passionate celebration of female strength.

From the beginning the women dominated the stage. Dressed in long red skirts and red strapless tops, the dancers (Daiane Lopes, Alyson Abriel, Crystaldawn Bell, Diane Mateo, Leda Pennell, Morgan Eichwald and Lisa Lincoln) emerged into the light, one after another, to stand before the audience like regal

warriors ready for battle. As "O Fortuna" (perhaps the most well-known and dramatic movement of Orff's score) began, the well-rehearsed dancers moved perfectly in sync through a series of powerful shoulder shrugs as if tossing off anything that stood in their way. Such dramatic music has the potential to outweigh and undermine (even render silly) any kind of choreographed movement. Yet these women rose to the almost impossible occasion. They didn't simply own the music, they fed off of its intensity, eating up not only "O Fortuna" but every musical movement that followed, hyper-aware of the score's subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, emotive undertones.

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The women also fed off of each others energy. The full-length evening featured various solos, duets, and ensemble dances. While lacking a narrative base, these dances captured a wide range of feminine identities, issues, and emotions, from jealousy and rage to love and triumph. Even in the dances that depicted female rage and cattiness, it was obvious that underneath it all, the dancers were committed to inspiring each other to reach full potential. On Sat/24, after Mateo finished a truly mesmerizing solo to "Omnia Sol Temperat," she sat down aside Lopes, and I couldn't help but notice Lopes take Mateo's hand in her own as if acknowledging the spectacular performance. It's possible that this gesture took place within character, as part of the performative world the women created. But it just as likely might have been an impulsive moment between the two. Regardless, the act of acknowledgment was an intimate moment that felt characteristic of the powerfully female-centered evening.

The women's physical stamina was as impressive as their contagious energy. They moved through everything from extremely fast-paced jumps and leaps to slower, more lyrical, classical ballet poses with zest and playful charisma. Nothing seemed too difficult or too grand. Incorporating classical ballet, folkloric dance forms, and more sensual modern movement, Labayen's elegant and exciting choreography emphasized the women's versatile strength, but it was the all-female cast of badass dancers that not only brought *Carmina Burana* to life, but ultimately brought the admiring audience -- screaming and stomping -- to their feet.