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Nacre's "Dance in a New Light" @ the Universal Preservation Hall, 4/8/11

April 8, 2011 at 11:34 pm by [Tresca Weinstein](#)

by Tresca Weinstein

Special to the Times Union

SARATOGA SPRINGS – What ties together Nacre's "Dance in a New Light" program, on stage through Sunday at the Universal Preservation Hall here, are the echoes that resonate among the works, which come from four different choreographers and four different decades.

A circle of frolicking dancers in Isadora Duncan's "Roses from the South" (c. 1910) is reflected in a circle of men and women in



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May O'Donnell's "Dance Energies," from 1959. A graceful half-turn in Doris Humphrey's "Passacaglia and Fugue," from 1938, reappears in a new work by Caitlin Trainor, guest choreographer for the concert. Nacre director Beth Fecteau's artful selection highlights the diversity of the modern-dance legacy while gracefully tracing its through-line.

Since its formation in 2008, the company, which is dedicated to preserving historic dance and is now in residence at the Universal Preservation Hall, has done a consistently impressive job of recreating the look, feel and movement techniques associated with a wide range of classic works. On Thursday evening, the company members captured the buoyant, ethereal mood of Duncan's piece—all skips, leaps and curving arm gestures—and then switched gears, as they were joined by three visiting male dancers, to embody O'Donnell's precise, almost geometric choreography.

The seven sections of "Dance Energies," each accompanied by complementary music composed by O'Donnell's husband Ray Green, encompass kinetic tableaux performed by groups of men and women moving in counterpoint; a sassy, jazzy trio that reads almost like a slide show of pinup poses; and a sequence of sharp angles and scissoring arms perfectly synced to the percussive score.

Trainor's short and sweet "Archaic Awakening" looked almost old-fashioned after O'Donnell's inventive, still-fresh choreography. The piece, created in collaboration with the dancers, is reminiscent of Mark Morris' work, not only in the music choices (Bach and Vivaldi) but also in its satisfyingly balanced composition.

Composition also forms the monumental infrastructure of "Passacaglia and Fugue," an intricately choreographed masterpiece of stylized, stately movement set to J.S. Bach's solemn organ piece of the same name. With regal bearing, the dancers move forward and retreat in changing formations, as if enacting a court ceremony for the benefit of their king and queen, Deb Rutledge and Paul Dennis (a former member of the José Limón Company who also set the choreography on the company).

Also on the program: Humphrey's "Two Ecstatic Themes," from 1931, danced with laser-beam intensity by Rutledge, who curves into deep backbends and then uses her limbs like daggers. Despite the contrasting themes—downward spirals versus angular ascents—the choreography throughout creates the sense of a woman constrained by the space to which she has been relegated, yet determined to conquer those limitations.

Tresca Weinstein is a frequent contributor to the Times Union.

NACRE: "DANCE IN A NEW LIGHT"

Where: Universal Preservation Hall, 25 Washington St., Saratoga Springs

When: 8 p.m. Friday

Repeats: 8 p.m. Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday

Tickets: \$20; students and seniors, \$15

Info: 435-0510 or <http://www.nacredance.com>



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