

DANCE

Advertisement

Saturday, November 8, 2008

David Dorfman Dance

Thursday night's performance of "underground" by David Dorfman Dance was a brilliant think piece about the militant Weather Underground, a group whose member Bill Ayers was a controversial figure in the recent election. As the audience took a seat at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, Dorfman danced an aggressive solo riff on a dimly lit stage, accompanied by '60s rock classics.



Joseph Poulson in "underground," David Dorfman Dance's thought-provoking work about the militant Weather Underground. (By Gary Noel)

[Enlarge Photo](#)

Capturing the spirit of an era, the company of 10 dancers plus 20 community members stormed the stage with athletic kicks and falls to the ground, coalescing into protest mobs and onlookers. An apocalyptic media display conveyed urgency as the dancers asked: "Does what you do make a difference? Is violence ever justified? Whom would you die for?" The questions became a game, the dancers moving forward for "yes" and backward for "no." A clock ticked louder and louder, and then an explosion -- the dancers all fell to the ground.



Then, in a scene set in the present, a forgotten human monument to activism is discovered by group of dancers, who lift him up and hurl him toward the audience, repeatedly, with increasing force. Then, transforming into a passionate mob, the new dancer-activists turn to the darkened media wall behind them and throw LED light magnets toward it, illuminating it with sparkles: a new era, new voices.

-- Barbara Allen

Advertisement

'Romance of Dance'

It shouldn't have worked, but it did. A ballet dancer, a flamenco dancer and an Afro-fusion dancer improvised to industrial music by Steve Reich and George Antheil. Like the rest of the "Romance of Dance" program, that concluding improvisation was as good as it was odd.

The mix-and-match program of three D.C.-based artists Thursday at the Greenberg Theatre featured nationally recognized flamenco artist Edwin Aparicio, Washington Ballet principal Jonathan Jordan and Lesole Maine, who hails from South Africa. They couldn't have been more different from one another, and this could easily have sunk the program. Wisely, they alternated for most of the evening, sharing the stage only during the concluding improvisation and, even then, only sparingly. They even succeeded in retaining their disparate styles when performing to the brilliant but attention-wrenching music of Reich's "Different Trains (America -- Before the War)" and Antheil's wacky "Ballet pour Instruments Mécaniques et Percussion."

Aparicio is a superb musician, a natural conduit for flamenco's complex rhythmic cycles and patterns. Afro-fusionist Maine doesn't fuse anything. He is in the midst of creating an African-based movement language that is all his own. Jordan's elegance, precision and liquid jumps reflect his classical training at the District's Kirov Academy of Ballet.

This odd program worked because the dancers didn't budge from what they are good at: They were exceptional, and so was the music.

-- Pamela Squires