

Oberon's Grove

by Philip Gardner

TAKE Dance: Dark Mourning



Above photo by 'M' Apisak Vithyanond; Elise Drew and Kile Hotchkiss in the foreground

Friday September 27th, 2013 - TAKE Dance presented the premiere of Takehiro Ueyama's DARK MOURNING at Symphony Space tonight. The programme further featured a new duet entitled A BAITED SOUL created by Kazuko Hirabayashi and danced by Jill Echo and Take Ueyama, and a revival of Take's FLIGHT which was created in 2010.

I've been following TAKE Dance since 2008, when my friend Sophie Bromberg first mentioned the Company to me. Take was one of the first to bring dance bloggers into the fold, and he has often shared his creative process with me. In May 2011, Take's evening-length SALARYMAN seemed to have attained a peak - both theatrical and choreographic - for the Company. Tonight, watching DARK MOURNING, I felt that Take has surpassed himself yet again. This somber new work, in which movement, music, and silence are meshed into a cogent whole, expresses both the terror and tranquility of death, and presents a haunting view of bereavement.

To the tolling of bells, a black-clad dancers appear as shuffling mourners moving across the darkening landscape. We are reminded at first of Take's 2009 creation FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW; but DARK MOURNING takes a very different path. Take's musical choice of the Kronos Quartet's Lachrymae Antiquae gives DARK MOURNING a timeless spirituality. In structuring the work, silences are as profound as the Renaissance-inspired music.

Alternating ensemble passages - marked by fluid movement - with four solos, Take presents his dancers at their most compelling. Kile Hotchkiss, appearing nearly nude in a pool of dazzling white light - a sharp contrast to the prevailing gloom - appears as a fallen angel, his long limbs and expressive hands simply spellbinding. In a long black gown, Kristen Arnold evokes images of Martha Graham with her expansive gestures of mourning and supplication. John Eirich, showing his customary disdain for personal safety, gives a restless athleticism to his bold gymnastic combinations. And Gina Ianni ended the work as a broken spirit, her blonde vulnerability succumbing at last to the inevitable. Lynda Senisi, Elise Drew (now dancing with Limon) and Brynt Beitman completed the cast for this impressive new creation, a work which I hope to experience again soon.

Take Ueyama and Jill Echo performed the Hirabayashi duet, *A BAITED SOUL*, which was inspired by a Japanese ghost story. To the lonely sound of a flute, the two dancers appear in ritualistic moves in a state of courtly wariness that evolves into tempestuous conflict. Smoke wafts across the space, and Jill carries a decorative rose-hued parasol, sometimes hiding behind it. The back curtain is opened as Take begins a long, physically demanding solo to the sound of chant. As the voice becomes distorted the dancer's movements suggest he is trapped in a spirit world. It was of course wonderful to see Jill and Take dancing together, and Anthony Aiu as a mysterious black-clad attendant also made his mark here.

In a work inspired by flocks of birds banking or racing across the Roman sky, the revival of *FLIGHT* has taken on a new visual dimension: the costumes have been changed, so that the dancers who - at the premiere - appeared as brown-clad starlings, now look like doves in their gossamer white trousers and shirts.

Barry Wizoreck, a former Paul Taylor dancer, appears in *FLIGHT*'s opening solo which Take had originally danced himself. Projections of swarming birds appear, and the dancer casts a shadow as he moves in a state of quiet wonder. A quartet of dancers - Gina Ianni, Elise Drew, John Eirich and Kile Hotchkiss - dance the second movement, sometimes in unison and sometimes perched in their arrested trajectories; John Eirich again erupts with a dazzling combination. In a dynamic, turbulent build-up, more doves appear. Dancing to Philip Glass's *Meetings Along the Edge*, the large ensemble moves fast while the quartet moves slowly: a striking juxtaposition. Barry Wizoreck reappears, wandering cautiously among the fluttering doves as he scatters white feathers on the ground.

The performance was well-attended and well-applauded; among the audience were four beloved Taylor women from different generations: Linda Kent, Karla Wolfangle, Rachel Berman and Amy Young.

Performers: Kristen Arnold, Brynt Beitman, Jill Echo, Elise Drew, John Eirich, Kile Hotchkiss, Gina Ianni, Lynda Senisi, Marie Zvosec & Take Ueyama with Jesse Dunham, Jamison Goodnight, Jillian Hollis, Lauren Elise Kravitz, Anthony Aiu and Barry Wizoreck (Guest Artist)

Music by Philip Glass, Ana Milosavljevic, Kronos Quartet, Terry Riley, Aleksandra Vrebalov, Houzan Yamamoto

Lighting Design: Lauren Parrish

Costume Design: Jesse Dunham, Elena Comendador