

makes no sense to the story. The Queen (Alejandra Perez-Gomez) and her retinue descend a rickety set of steps hoisting up long and heavy skirts. Their entrance becomes a worry as we



Photo: Aleksandar Antonijevic, National Ballet of Canada

Swan Lake: Svetlana Lunkina and Evan McKie.

wait for someone to topple into the ugly landscape below. Even Siegfried's solo, made important in versions by Rudolf Nureyev and Erik Bruhn, has been weakened. The introspection and yearning these great choreographers saw in this important solo has been wasted.

The choreography from Kudelka is deliberately perverse. If the music suggests soft and lyric arms Kudelka substitutes an aggressive, spikey look that makes the corps of swans darker and more malevolent than the story would suggest. Although the White Swan pas de deux has been exempted from the most annoying reimagining there is still a lack of connection between Siegfried and Odette. Kudelka insists Odette is not a woman trapped as a swan – merely a bird. That notion just doesn't work. No wonder the courtiers and their ladies look askance when a big black bird appears at their palace later on.

And why doesn't Siegfried have that important moment of recognition when he realizes he has sworn love to the wrong swan? I

longed for the Freudian connection that Erik Bruhn provided in his 1965 version for NBC. It had a through line that worked. Not everyone liked it, especially the London critics. They longed for something more classical, like Anthony Dowell's staging for The Royal Ballet. Perhaps Kudelka's vision would work better if it were presented as an entirely different ballet. That's what Les Ballets de Monte Carlo did with their *LAC*. Even Cranko's version, with its rearranged score and interpolated music from *The Sleeping Beauty*, works better than this dark-hearted production. The ugliness of the storytelling is exacerbated by Santo Loquasto's dreary sets and unflattering costumes.

None of this criticism is intended to besmirch the dancing of The National's vital, energized corps. They dance as if their very lives depend on it. Their synchronized movement and passionate togetherness is exemplary. It has to be said the entire company dances with commitment. And the principal dancers are superb at doing what they have been asked to perform. Evan McKie and Svetlana Lunkina are beautiful figures of sculpted movement. What they aren't, and can't be in Kudelka's ragbag scenario, are committed lovers. They move as one, but alas their hearts never connect. For that we need to blame not the dancers, but the dance.

New York

Karen Greenspan

ZviDance's local 2014 season at New York Live Arts showcased *Surveillance*, a collaborative work reflecting on how pervasive, embedded surveillance has altered our society. Some of the issues the piece raises are how a society changes when it submits to constant monitoring, how those empowered with the task of screening are transformed, what happens to the mountains of data collected on each of us.

This hour-long, poignant, and mindful reflection on the enormous, unseen surveillance network that underpins life in America today

is a collaborative effort of Zvi Gotheiner and his dancers along with frequent co-creator Scott Killian, who composed a high energy, original score for the piece. Hertog Nadler's evocative visual projections, animations by Uri Hallel, and media programming by Jon Bremmer provide a technological presence that was essential to the dance.

Gotheiner shared with me that the piece had been brewing for four years. However, raising the funds to produce a work requiring this level of technology proved to be a challenge. Gotheiner remarked that the international collaboration that enabled the creation of the piece involving Amsterdam-based visual artists, an Israel-based animator, and a media programmer in New York City could not have even happened ten years ago because the technology for sending such large electronic files did not yet exist.

Thanks to a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, artistic residencies at Kaatsbaan International Dance Center and the Catskill Mountain Foundation provided a necessary incubation period and the space to break ground – generating concepts, material, and movement that would eventually be shaped into *Surveillance*.

The dance opens as the eight dancers, provocatively clad in various undergarment combinations and black dress socks and standing downstage in a row that stretches across the stage, each perform very sensual and personal movement explorations. At various points in their phrases, they retreat backward while choking and gasping for air. Then they return to the front of the stage and resume their individual movement sequences. It is as if the audience is the surveillance camera with visual access to material that should be private. Gotheiner revealed that this opening progression was a warm-up ritual they performed to begin each rehearsal. Dubbed “the red-light line,” by the dancers, Gotheiner used it as an

effective means to engage the audience members and pull them into the piece.

Once the initial tableau dissolves, the dancers reenter the stage with everyday clothing through which we can see the undergarments. Designed by MaryJo Mecca, the costumes serve the dance and the dancers well, reinforcing the theme of what must be revealed versus what may remain private.

The piece is punctuated by three separate “search” sequences. During the “First Search,” the dancers line up and undergo a prodding and manipulating body search routine performed by a screener. Each dancer has his/her own idiosyncratic response to submitting to this inconvenient invasion of personal privacy. During the “Second Search,” the screener is entirely naked and blind (blindfolded), perversely attempting to search the fully clothed, seeing (yet still submissive) subject. In the “Third Search,” the dancers line up and pro-



Zvi Gotheiner's *Surveillance*.

ceed to perform the screening ritual on themselves. The sequence provides a well-drawn statement on how the system has insidiously reformed our society's thinking, expectations, and behavior.

A memorable scene includes a colorful grid filled with descriptive words, or labels, projected on the screen that served as the backdrop of the stage. The dancers individually walk forward announcing one or more labels, as if categorizing themselves, in this theatri-

cal example of how the surveillance bureaucracy, obsessed with data collection, sorts humans into sometimes absurd categories.

In several sections, some of the onstage dancers use cameras to record the other dancers who are performing with the video-recorded images of their dancing projected on the screen behind them. At times the cameras are turned on the audience, causing images of the audience to be projected on the screen. The recording theme is explored until finally Tyner Dumortier performs a pitiful and chilling solo wearing a metal frame with four spokes, or arms, each holding a camera at the end. The dancer appears imprisoned in this camera contraption while his exquisite human form is reshaped into a strange, deformed mutation.

A stunning duet performed by Alex Biegelson and Tyner Dumortier, with their well-matched muscular physicality, explores beautiful lines and rhythmic weight shifts while displaying powerful control as the dancers accepted each other's weight. This cool and haunting beauty is followed by and contrasted with Chelsea Ainsworth and Todd Allen dancing a duet sizzling with electricity. The sparks fly as their bodies literally bounce off each other in a sometimes violent physicalization of a couple driven by their physical co-dependence.

Throughout the work the dancers exude a dramatic intensity as they carve through space with super-charged energy. Often the movements are developed from a rhythmic phrase. ZviDance members are fluent in both athletic, technical movement, as well as dramatic or character-initiated movement, displaying a wide range in their rich and exuberant performance of the piece. The inspired choreography and these capable dancers are free of predictable signature and style. The dancers simply move and the choreography speaks.

Projections, of floor plans and fire escape stairwells, on the screen behind the dancers and on the white flooring, resemble surveillance monitors, creating an edgy sense of being watched and monitored. At the end of the

piece, after the dancers have exited the stage, the dancers' shadows lined up in a row are projected onto the white floor in a subtle reference to the permanent residue of collected information that remains even after we are gone.

Zvi Gotheiner's *Surveillance* is a thoughtful, challenging, provocative dance with heightened visual, musical, and kinetic qualities that grab and hold you from start to finish. It doesn't get better than that, and I wouldn't miss an opportunity to see ZviDance perform Gotheiner's work – for the world.

Stuttgart

Gary Smith

Two important works premiered, with a dark and dramatic piece of dance history sandwiched in between.

Edward Clug's *No Men's Land* is a gender-specific, large-scale work for twenty-one male dancers. I doubt any other company around could field such handsome ones. In many ways, this reliance on masculine beauty is part of the ballet's fabric. Set to Milko Lazar's jazzy Ballet Suite for Cello and Orchestra in 5 Movements, it reminds you of the exotic chorus boys of the once glorious Casino de Paris.

Yet, this reliance on physical attributes is only part of the story. At its core *No Men's Land* is about the role of the male in modern society. Just what should he be? What persona can he wear comfortably? Movement here alternates between very sexy perambulation and strong shifts of stance, attitude, and overt dashes of airborne strength. There is much militaristic stomping of feet. Shoulders shrug in unison, creating a ripple effect. Heads swivel. Eyes stare. This is an aggressive attack. Testosterone rules.

In some ways it's a primary assault. Sudden quick motions startle. Hands and feet flick, as if out of control. Sudden bursts of speed disturb any sense of surface calm. Dancers frequently move in blocks, or phalanxes, something like the Bolshoi's *Spartacus*. But of course Clug's piece is nothing like that classic in its