

Review: Up Close puts ballet dancers in focus at High Performance Rodeo

BY JENNA SHUMMOOGUM, FOR THE CALGARY HERALD JANUARY 17, 2013

Presented By:



Women of the Alberta Ballet perform in a dress rehearsal of 'p.s. i love you', as part of the High Performance Rodeo's production Up Close, at Martha Cohen Theatre in Calgary, Alberta Tuesday, January 15, 2013. (Stuart Gradon/Calgary Herald) (For Entertainment story by Steve Hunt) 00042068A

Photograph by: Stuart Gradon, Calgary Herald

The [High Performance Rodeo](#) is bringing [Alberta Ballet](#)'s dancers up close and personal.

Up Close, the third collaboration between Alberta Ballet and One Yellow Rabbit, includes work from Yuchiki Hattori, Alex Ballard and Denise Clarke. It proves to be an evening of rising action that climaxes with riveting dance.

The show opens with the ladies of Alberta Ballet, in a piece entitled P.S I love you, choreographed by One Yellow Rabbit's Denise Clarke.

It is a short piece that allows the ballerinas to break tradition and delve into a softer style of dance. You won't hear the tapping of pointe shoes on stage and every dancer has a different style of black dress with a puritan collar.

The piece features very literal choreography from Clarke that explores heartache and rivalry. The piece allows the dancers to act and it's all done with a comedic and silly flair. Choreographed to the raw voice of Joana Newsom, with lines like, 'Your skin is something I stir into my tea', this piece is light, airy fair to warm the audience up.

The piece dancing in the middle is Alexandrous Ballard's *Ruin Time*, a charging duet featuring Reilly Bell and Kelley McKinlay.

Ruin time is described as a phenomenon in which cultural significance accumulates through the passage and weight of time. But one doesn't really have to grasp this concept to enjoy this piece. It's a pulsating, highly physical dance that incorporates both ballet and contemporary movement. It features Bell in a striking red top and pointe shoes, and a shirtless McKinlay.

Sandy Somer's lighting design highlights the falling red petals against the bare stage. Ballard's choreography is performed to David Lang's musical composition entitled *Pierced*, which features throbbing violin. The duet is strong and beautiful and includes some great lifts though sometimes the choreography seems not to match the pounding music.

The last piece, the longest of the three, is Yuchiki Hattori's *Dump the Physical Memory*, featuring the men of Alberta Ballet.

Originally it was this piece that inspired the entire presentation and it shows. Hattori's piece is complex and layered and a joy to watch, though it runs a little long.

It is a deep exploration of the balance between discipline and freedom, performed with a riveting display of strength and control of movement by the dancers. The show opens with the dancers, costumes in blue pants with flowing skirts, posing in moving light boxes. It looks like flash photography and is an intriguing opening sequence.

When the dancers bring in a red scarf, that's when the audience is in for a treat. This part of the piece features daring leaps and lifts, outstanding pirouettes and has pounding and wild, aggressive movement. It is highly physical, masculine and has overtones of the military and dominance.

It is fast and furious, incorporating Hattori's martial arts movement. The piece is interrupted by one of the dancers answering his phone, in which he makes up a song about calling someone back. It all alludes to masculinity and being a man in our society. *Dump the Physical Memory* is very well done and an opportunity for the audience to see the details of dance, to be able to watch the skin pulled taut over muscles and see the force of movement. It's all danced to music by Davidson Jaconello which ends with an excerpt from Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*: You are not machines, you are men. This is engaging and exciting dance — up close.

Up Close is at the Martha Cohen Theatre through Saturday.

Info: HPRodeo.ca

© Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald