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Performing Arts: Dance

GABRIELLE LAMB--Pigeonwing

March 12, 2018

After a lifetime of perfecting 180 degree extensions, effortless jumps, turns of every imaginable kind, a ballerina might yearn to get close to the ground, exploring whatever she hadn't done before. Sylvie Guillem felt the urge; so does Wendy Whelan. In a league of her own, Gabrielle Lamb is on a roll, having set up puzzles for the body to answer for a decade now.

Lamb, a dancer for years with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal and Morphoses, and a guest artist of such choreographers as Pontus Lidberg, has created a signature style honed through a string of commissions from no less than eleven ballet companies. Just as Yvonne Rainer and the Judson Church created a manifesto of what not to do, Lamb seems to thrive on the discipline of finding freedom within strict limitations.

In her hour long program as part of 2018 Harkness Dance Festival at 92Y, Lamb presented a solo, Torricelli's Theorem, commissioned by Chelsea Bonosky; a duet for Jane Cracovaner and Patrick O'Brien, Pathological Curves (World Premiere) and, most winningly, a dance for seven, Bewilderness, inspired by the historian and activist Rebecca Solnit. Bewilderness is set to the music of Joan Cambon, Henry Purcell, and Jozef Van Wissen, whose sounds differ so much as to divide the work into episodes that hedge between competition and cooperation. Ending with a drily witty cartoon, the dancers help each other one by one out of physical knots.

Each work on the program required precision and calm, torso dexterity, and often an air of wonder; some of Lamb's dancers seemed particularly suited to this work, Robin Cantrell being one. The costumes by Christine Darch were memorable for their design (Torricelli's Theorem) and their colors (Pathological Curves). The set by Topher Mikels, of laboratory vials and a hanging globe with liquid dripping from its center, stole the focus in Torricelli's Theorem.
EYE ON THE ARTS, NY --- Deirdre Towers

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