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Danse Danse brings the Brazilians (plus the return of Édouard Lock)

★★★★☆

By Rebecca Galloway, 30 April 2016

All of Montréal has been in a flap since the celebrated founder of La La La Human Steps, Édouard Lock, shuttered his company abruptly late last year and – seemingly – disappeared. A few months later, reports began to pop up of the Québécois choreographer residing in Europe. So what HAS he been up to then? Apparently transitioning to the life of a choreographic gun-for-hire, Lock collaborated on a new *Casse Noisette* for the Paris Opera Ballet earlier this year and spent some time brushing up a piece he made on *São Paulo Companhia de Dança* in 2014 called *The Seasons*.



The Season © Édouard Lock

São Paulo Companhia de Dança recently toured *The Seasons* to Canada alongside two other pieces, *Mamihlapinatapai* by Jomar Mesquita and *Gnawa* by Nacho Duato. Montréal was the final pit stop of a world tour that has taken the young Brazilian company to Europe.

The Seasons trades in the kind of lightning-fast gestural movement that has become a staple of the international dance scene in recent years (I call it Sign Language Hands when I get grumpy from seeing it all the time). The piece started well, with a single male dancer in a sheath of back-lighting, dripping with water and executing some flicky *développés*. His movement gained momentum and more dancers joined him, turning the solo into a myriad of duets and trios. The problem was, once the action sped up it wouldn't stop. The dancers were furiously gesturing, leaping, diving, extreme-partnering – working staggeringly hard but without much visual space in the piece for us to appreciate the hard'n'fast dynamics. Lock's work has always been angular and vivacious but I found this harder to get on board with than some of his earlier work. When I was asked what I thought of the piece after the show, all I could muster was "Busy. It was really... busv."

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"Gnawa was immaculately polished, a great vehicle to show off the dancers' ... a joy to watch"

Review of Théâtre Maïennonne Montreal on 28 April 2016

PROGRAMME

The Seasons (Édouard Lock)

Mamihlapinatapai (Jomar Mesquita)

Gnawa (Nacho Duato)

PERFORMERS

São Paulo Companhia de Dança

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MAY 2016

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Evening performance
Matinee performance

MORE DANCE REVIEWS

Hong Kong Ballet visits NY
Andrew Blackmore-Dobbyn, 18th March

The program that the Hong Kong Ballet presented at the Joyce Theater showed a company that is disciplined

There were some nice sequences with the male dancer articulating the woman's working leg in a kind of free circular *grand battement*; it had a lovely loose-in-the-hips swinging sensation to it, welcome in an energetic performance when every muscle is wound tight like a spring. The batterie from the men was very impressive as well, and likewise showed the dancers' skill in providing a little breathing room into a tightly-knit and choreographically dense piece. That extra half-second at the height of an *entrechat* makes all the difference. The music was a strong driving force in *The Seasons*. Lock revisited Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* in collaboration with composer Gavin Bryers. The music effectively divided up the piece into 12 parts evoking the 12 months of the year (with 12 dancers), and reworked the familiar melodies into something more contemporary, yet still a solid riff off the original. The lighting design was pitch black with strong panels of light dotting the stage and providing a visual structure to some of the partnering; dancers would be halloed in a spotlight and then suddenly leap off into darkness. It was very interesting conceptually but the lighting had the effect of reducing all the dancers to faceless silhouettes for the entire 50 minutes of the performance. I really struggled to find a connection or a visual foothold, especially given the white hot pace of the choreography and the duration of the piece.



Mamihlapinatapai

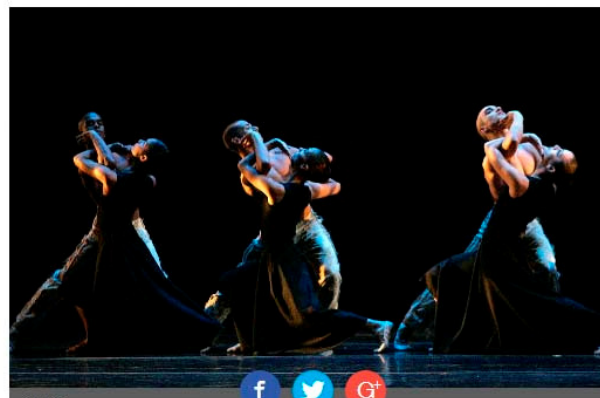
© Arthur Wolkovier

The dancers were lovely – great technique, gorgeous bodies, fully committed – but I would say *The Seasons* would have worked better if it was shorter. This piece, the great homecoming of the Montréal great, Édouard Lock, should have been raucously popular here but the curtain call barely went beyond a solid clap. It was a little awkward, to tell the truth.

After the intermission were two (blessedly) shorter works.

Mamihlapinatapai is a sensual piece built on a deconstructed ballroom dance vocabulary, dealing with the relationship of desire between a man and a woman. It was flirtatious, sexy, and quite moving, and the dancers seemed far more relaxed with the material. The title comes from the Yaghan dialect of Tierra del Fuego, and it means "A look shared by two people, each of them wishing the other to make the move to make something happen, but neither of them acts." Finally, a word for that! *Mamihlapinatapai* was a nice fit style-wise for the dancers and its intimacy provided a good contrast with the gestural detachment of *The Seasons*.

The third and final piece was, for me, the highlight of the evening, and one in which we see the true powers of this lithe, dynamic company emerge. *Gwana* by Nacho Duato was immaculately polished, a great vehicle to show off the dancers' extension and strength, and a joy to watch from start to finish. *Gwana* uses the four basic elements – water, earth, fire and air – to unpack the relationship between humans and the universe. The lighting was warm, the partnering fresh and the standing ovation at the end? Priceless.



★★★★☆ [READ MORE](#)

A Duato | Kylián evening with the Staatsballett in Berlin

Katja Vaghi, 30th December

In the relaxed time between Christmas and the New Year celebrations the Staatsballett Berlin brilliantly performs a the Duato | Kylián programme.

★★★★☆ [READ MORE](#)

PNB bids farewell to Carla Körbes and Kiyon Gaines

Pia Lo, 12th June

As the audience, our relationship with Körbes and Gaines as PNB dancers has ended, but the future holds new beginnings.

★★★★☆ [READ MORE](#)

The Mikhailovsky visits NY

Andrew Blackmore-Dobbyn, 20th November

Mikhailovsky Ballet's mixed program at Lincoln Center had something for everyone: an old classic, a showpiece, and a contemporary Nacho Duato work.

★★★★☆ [READ MORE](#)

Mind-blowing première from Duato kicks off Oregon Ballet Theatre's new season

Carla Escoda, 20th October

Nacho Duato's baffling and beautiful *Por Vos Muero*, little known in the United States, kicked off Oregon Ballet Theatre's first season under its new artistic director, Kevin Irving. The piece, originally set on Duato's *Compañía Nacional de Danza* in 1996, makes a deep visual and emotional impression, a shining rebuttal to all the tedious, empty acrobatics of much contemporary dance.

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Nacho Duato

Édouard Lock

Antonio Vivaldi



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