

Triumphant Performance!: REVOLVE's premiere filled the park with jubilation



It was a true pleasure to attend REVOLVE Dance Project's premiere show. I am always excited to see new shows and art, but this one came with a particular relief. The fact that it was happening at all, that I could arrive at such a beautiful place and see crowds of people gathered together, laughing, embracing, buying frozen lemonade and buzzing in anticipation, felt like a privilege. I'm sure I'm not the only one who felt like the isolating experience of 2020 made for a deeper appreciation for simple things like sharing public spaces and witnessing art. REVOLVE Dance Project's Premiere show was a jubilant celebration of all the things we missed.

The show kicked off with a duet for drums and dance featuring an original composition by Cameron MacIntosh and choreography by Jorge Rullan. The rhythm drew me in quickly and hooked me. There is such a primal connection between drums and dance that it is hard not to move to. You could almost feel the rhythm in your chest. In fact, one of my only complaints about the show was having to sit still the entire time. The energy of the following pieces kept par with this first one, but each brought new instrumentals and new, more intricate choreography. It is always wonderful to see a show that contains a series of interesting individual pieces that also flow and work well together. In some places, it even felt like each piece was built off the previous one. The show was also well balanced between music and choreography, going back and forth between instrumental solos and choreographed numbers. I loved that this gave each of the musicians their own role in the show, as opposed to being overshadowed by the dancers. This made for a great pace to the performance as well.

I was particularly enthralled by the violinist, Josh Knowles. Violin was never an instrument I gave much mind to, but his original piece, Ember, may have changed that. I was swept away by the haunting beauty in this melody and awestruck by all of the variations in sound that can be achieved by one

instrument. I commend him on his creative inclusion of some technology in his performance. I noticed that he used some kind of soundboard or foot pedal to create looping and warping techniques. The effect was excitingly unpredictable.

The dance number that followed this solo might have been my favorite number, though it was hard to choose. The piece, choreographed by Alex Lantz features dancers Brenna DiFrancesco and Kailee Felix who danced with a fluidity that perfectly matched the tone of the violin. I love watching a pair of dancers who are so in sync and know how to work off of each other. To achieve all of this in only two weeks is an additional incredible feat. The choreography was wonderfully balanced and told a beautiful story about love between women. It explores the nuances of a queer relationship wonderfully through the medium of dance. This story was felt and understood, more than directly interpreted. I experienced every ounce of love and pain and wonder as I watched the dancers perform. It was truly hard to take my eyes away from this one.

The show ended with a sparkling finale that can best be described as “triumphant.” The piece was introduced by cellist and composer Daniel Hass who shared with us the story behind it. Choreographed by Kurt Douglas, the dance represents the process of challenging oneself to reach your peak in your art form and outlines the struggle of reaching and falling and getting back up stronger. This piece was one of the best examples of storytelling through music and dance that I have seen in a long time. The dancers made great use of the entire stage, performing in rotating pairs and groups, using every ounce of their strength, balance, and emotion. I loved the way the dancers used every level of their unique stage as well, incorporating the structure of the temple in the dance like it was built for this setting. It was the perfect way to end such a unique vibrant performance and leave the audience energized and wanting more.

When I spoke with some of the performers after the show, the overall mood in the room was “gratitude.” Each of them spoke of the different aspects of this opportunity they felt lucky to be a part of, including the chance to continue to dance in what is normally the off season, as well as the collaborative conversations about art that working together allowed for. For Project Director Kirsten Evans, the experience was a dream come true that accomplished everything it was meant to.

REVOLVE seeks to attain nonprofit status and be able to continue with their educational outreach for young dancers. More information about what this includes can be found on their website. The REVOLVE Dance Project is only at the beginning of its journey and has many more exciting things in store. I can’t wait to see where they go next!

For more info, go to revolvedanceproject.com