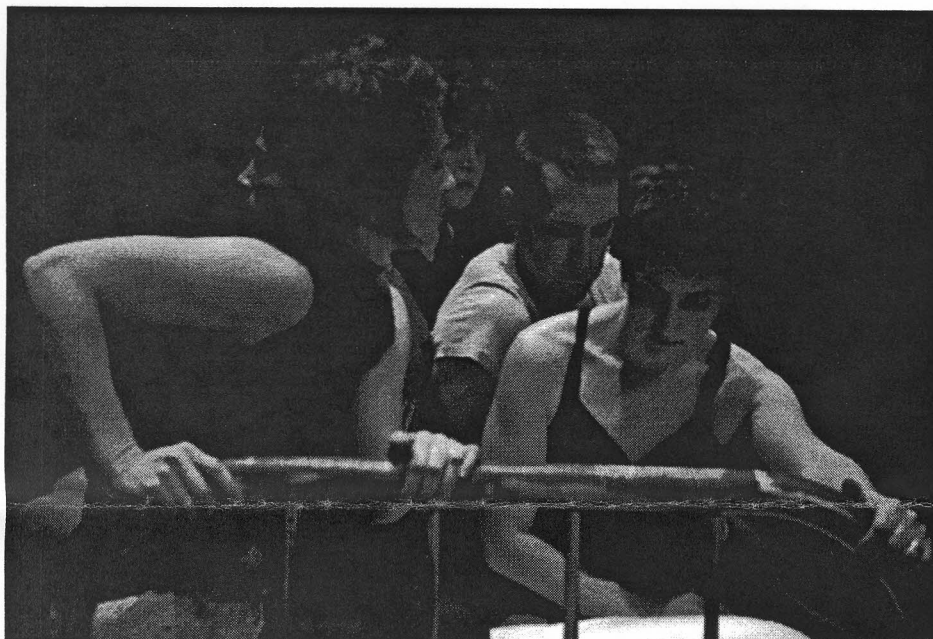


DANCEVIEW

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Cid Pearlman dancers: Damara Ganley, Sarah Day, David King, Nabsbon Marden, Molly Katzman. Photo: Beau Saunders.

older women who worked at the club as professional *ata* ("cry") singers. She put a structure together through which the women ever so slowly came to life - as if waking from a dream. At the beginning, they sat or leaned on sofas, rotund, fleshy and somnolent like odalisques waiting for a call that might never come. As they began to move - stepping on the couch, spreading into the four corners of the stage - their bodies acquired articulation. The arms became wings, the fingers fluttering birds. One of the woman began to chant - raw, guttural, primeval, and you remembered Flamenco's origins. But when they rolled themselves like logs, piling on top of each other, they seemed an inchoate mass of limbs and flesh. Yet they enjoyed each other's physicality. Donning ever so slyly a white suit, one of them took on the mannerism of a slinky nightclub patron. That's when you saw that these women controlled their lives, however, sleepy and acquiescent they might appear.

Under the direction of Carola Zertuche since 2008, **Theatre Flamenco** (November 11, 2012, Cowell Theater, San Francisco), one of the Bay Area's oldest troupes, has rejuvenated itself. Zertuche returned to Flamenco's roots as a solo form while extending its reach into new possibilities. The company's fall performance showed a spirit of adventure more usually associated with youth than middle age. Tabla player Sudhi Rajagopal added the luminous bell-like clarity of his percussion to the sometimes harsh-sounding guitars. Nol Simonse, a gifted and versatile modern dancer, stepped in as guest artist. Zertuche simply plopped him into the mix, letting him be who he was.

Barefoot and in jeans, Simonse added his muffled footwork to that of Antonio Arrebola who strode in like a stevedore and threw himself into an explosive Farruca that recalled hail on a tin roof. Commenting on his partner's fierceness, Simonse dropped to the floor or leapt like a gazelle. After intermission, in a black *bata de cola* skirt, he insinuated himself into the group, both

copying and altering dance gestures. He firmly pulled down the dancers' raised Flamenco arms. In a body-to-body duet with Nino de los Reyes, they melted into a single silhouette.

In his own solo, de los Reyes stepped from one spotlight to another, as if tasting different aspects of Flamenco. Starting quietly to finger-snapping *piños*, he built into a startling crescendo of footwork and body clapping. It culminated with his triumphantly waving his coat and strutting into the wings. Between the men's bravura machismo, Cristina Hall's take on the playful Guajira stood out as a tribute to Flamenco's connection with Cuba. Exuberantly dramatic, she partnered her fan. A lovely gown - blue in the back and tie-die in front - highlighted her half turns and eloquent back. With pianist Alex Condé, theirs became a jazzy encounter. Still it was Zertuche's grand *Solea*, severe and introspective, that closed this satisfying evening on a high note. Hers is truly Flamenco from the inside out.

Cid Pearlman/Performance Project's *Your Body is not a Shark* (Jan. 11, 2-13, ODC Theater, San Francisco) had advertised itself as examining restrictions - physical, emotional and psychological. The one-hour work was more than that - a finely crafted collaboration between Pearlman and her six dancers (aged 18-64); poet Denise Leto who has a dystonia, a neurological condition which sometimes prevents her from speaking clearly; and cellist/composer Joan Jeanrenaud whose performance career with the Kronos Quartet was ended by the onset of multiple sclerosis.

The idea of limitations floated like a soft sub-current

through *Your Body*. Of course, you saw that young Nashon Marden's attacks were different from middle-aged David King's. You noticed the way senior dancer Sara Wilbourne was carried, but so was everybody else. Yet the work spoke more strongly through the liquid physicality by which the dancers defined themselves and interacted with each other. The piece evolved into variations on numerous themes. Gestural language - lots of touching, and bodily manipulation - were in clear evidence. Falling and sliding off chairs in every each way, dancers oozed over each other. As if on shaky ground, they bounced in time, whether lying on the ground, a desk or a bed. Horizontal line-ups contracted and released into perpendicular patterns becoming a game of geometry.

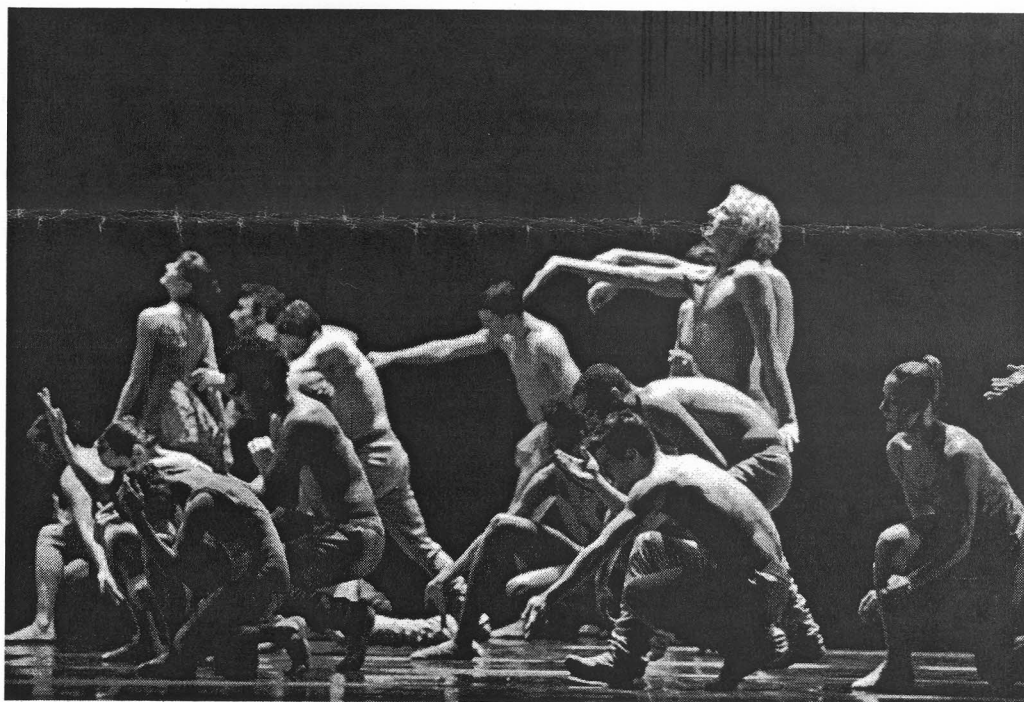
Your Body was based on ten of Leto's poems - each with a different formal structure. She recited them live and on tape. Periodically, the dancers drew her into the action. Unfortunately, on opening night a poor sound system reduced the poet's contribution to near unintelligibility. With her original score, performed by her and the Cadenza Chamber Orchestra (Maya Barsacq, musical director), Jeanrenaud made a major contribution. Stylistically, the music ranged from jazz to minimalism-influenced and the folklorically flavored. The Kronos may have lost a superb cellist, but the dance world has gained a theatrically savvy dance composer.

For the last thirty years, Alonzo King has imprinted his own, no longer idiosyncratic perspective on classical ballet. His works are well known as non-narrative, angular and fractured encounters. They strongly focus on individuals in which he seemed particularly interested. So *Asimuth*, for the combined forces of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago

and Alonzo King **LINES Ballet** (February 2, 2013, Cal Performances, Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley, CA), apparently, opened a whole new world for King. Gratifyingly, at the world premiere, all twenty-nine dancers looked at ease with King's choreography.

Asimuth turned out to be an exquisite essay in which stability and turbulence, key elements in King's choreography, held each other up in ways I don't remember having seen quite so explicitly. The choreography started with a sea of churning, close-to-each-other bodies who, however, pursued a common goal. Line formations snaked into whirling runs and reshaped into a circle dance. Male and female groupings melded into each other to then peel off in opposite directions. Sometimes the smaller groupings - several sets of unison quartets - seem designed to insure a spot in the limelight for each single dancer. In one section each woman helped a man curled around her feet into an upright position. They became couples with very different identities. Early on, in a section called 'Compass,' four men carried Karen Epperlein in a X-formation. In the way they lifted, soared and dove her, they seemed to explore three-dimensionality. *Asimuth* started as a mass of inchoate humanity; by the end it crystallized into one of King's most intricately design duets. Meredith Webster and David Harvey penetrated each other's space until they seemed to have reached a sense of balance with each other because of who they were.

Hubbard's resident choreographer Alejandro Cerruto's *Jump* proved to be pleasant opener with a fairly generalized



Members of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and Alonzo King **LINES Ballet**. Photo: Margo Moritz