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Hamlet

Local Arts Reviews

REVIEWED BY ROB CURRAN, FRI., NOV. 3, 2000

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Hamlet: Good Feeling

Bass Concert Hall,

October 29

How did it feel? A bolt of pleasure belted the heart like a big swig of tequila. Philip Glass' music melted the senses. Lisa Washburn walked on water, dancing with superhuman fluidity. Around her an effluvium of rose light created an atmosphere of dying beauty. Behind her, other dancers echoed her swirling motions, giving the impression of a single figure in animation. The death throes of Ophelia have never been this moving.

Rising above the rattling of jewelry in the Bass Concert Hall, Ballet Austin's world premiere production of *Hamlet*, choreographed by artistic director Stephen Mills, looked and sounded sublime. Tony Casati, as Hamlet, looked as natural after an hour-and-a-half workout as he had when the curtain rose. Casati blended dance and mime, writhing and leaping through a whirlpool of emotional collapse.

Stage designer Jeffrey A. Main, with Mills, came up with a *Star Trek* Elsinore replete with teleporter. Costume designer Christopher McCollum made the cast look hip. Lighting designer Tony Tucci helped the dancers shine.

In Casati's scene with Inga Loujerenko (playing Gertrude), son confronted mother, mother attempted to pacify son, son pleaded for reason, mother pleaded for mercy. After twirling incestuously, mother and son pushed one another away. All the guilt, accusations, and twisted love between Hamlet and his mother in her chamber emerged through body language.

Mills' genius as a choreographer became apparent in the scene featuring the traveling players. What could have been a dumb show within a dumb show looked like theatrical mime in the midst of natural movement. The use of the coat belonging to Claudius (played well by an unctuous Eddie Moffat) by the murderous mime-artist compensated visually for a thousand words. Hamlet's fencing match with Laertes was entertaining, thanks to the skills of Casati and Frank Short (as Laertes).

Stephen Mills played the ghost on Saturday night. To future generations, his ghost may be represented by the ballet as a whole. This version of *Hamlet* will live long after everyone in the Bass Hall on Saturday night has shuffled off this mortal coil. Let us hope it is always danced with the passion and expression of Saturday night.

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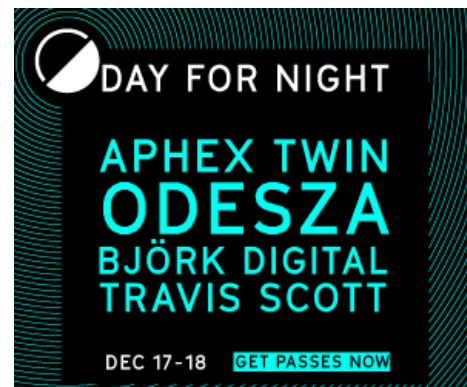


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KEYWORDS FOR THIS STORY

Hamlet, Ballet Austin, Stephen Mills, Philip Glass, Chris Hannon, Gina Patterson, Eddie Moffat, Margot Brown

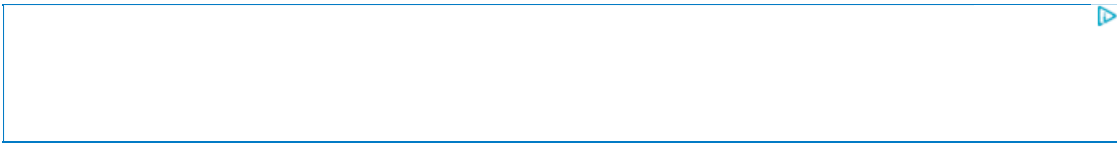
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