

New dance company offers choreography for grown-ups: Late Review

Company's inaugural show is short but packed with more real dancing and engaging content than is often seen in contemporary dance.



Sylvie Bouchard, Karen Kaeja and Claudia Moore in *Cloud 9/7e Ciel*, on at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts until June 29.

By **MICHAEL CRABB** Dance

Thu., June 27, 2013

Cloud 9/7e Ciel



Choreography by Susie Burpee and Tedd Robinson

Until 29 Jun.; Young Centre, 50 Tank House Lane; 416-866-8666 or www.youngcentre.ca

If ever proof were needed that fine dance artists get better with age, a new Toronto dance company called *Cloud 9/7e Ciel*, making its debut this week at the Young Centre, is all anyone should need to be convinced.

Founded and co-directed by dancer/choreographers Sylvie Bouchard, Karen Kaeja and Claudia Moore, the new organization hopes to provide a continuing framework within which senior dance artists such as they now are can continue to practise their art.

The inaugural show is short, little more than an hour, but packed with more real dancing and engaging content than one often encounters nowadays in the contemporary dance scene. But then, this is not your fashionable concept-heavy contemporary dance. It's the good old-fashioned kind, set to pleasing music and heavily invested in the belief that dance is a humanistic art form and that movement can reveal aspects of character that words never could.

There are just two works and, perhaps unintentionally, they complement each other in richly suggestive ways.

Local choreographer Susie Burpee deploys J.S. Bach's *Suite for Cello No. 2 in D Minor* — off a Yo-Yo Ma recording — for a dance that explores the frayed bonds that link a trio of women.

Titled *This Time Past*, Burpee's 20-minute work concentrates what is clearly a lifetime of shared experience. Bouchard, Kaeja and Moore might be sisters, briefly reliving ancient jealousies and shifting allegiances, yet still able to draw from a deep well of affection. Judging by the unflatteringly drab costumes, one senses they've all seen better days.

Burpee makes no apparent allowances for her cast's advancing years. They range in age from mid-40s to 60. This is full-out dancing in the traditional barefoot modern dance mode that conveys every agitated nuance of the characters' conflicted emotions.

The company's three co-founders, joined now by Michael Sean Marye and Ron Stewart, both powerful performers, return in much more elegant evening gowns for veteran choreographer Tedd Robinson's *Disconcertante*, a title that aptly conveys the confused relations within this gender imbalanced gathering.

Robinson has chosen various Chopin piano works to support his mini-drama of a formal evening party that is not ending well. He never spells out the exact nature of their relationships. They could be just friends but you sense we're dealing with something much more dysfunctionally familial. Again, the choreography is physically demanding but also calls on the experience of these fine artists to be able to convey a world of meaning through even the slightest gesture. It's almost impossible to imagine young dancers pulling it off. This is dancing and choreography for real grown-ups.

And, at the end of this short but satisfying evening, it's tempting to imagine if the female characters in Burpee's piece are actually the same as those in Robinson's, fallen on harder times, all now single and recalling the events of a social gathering where emotional hunger and scarcely concealed erotic yearning crackle close to the surface.