

Dance: A bravura 'Parts in Suite' from Boston Ballet

By Keith Powers/For The Patriot Ledger

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Continuing its commitment to contemporary choreographers, the Boston Ballet staged a bravura performance of three dances Friday evening at the Opera House.

The run — through April 7 — includes works by Jorma Elo, William Forsythe and Justin Peck, and each provides the dancers sophisticated movement and challenging ideas to explore. The troupe takes full advantage.

Elo's "Bach Cello Suites" premiered in the Opera House in 2015; it is one of 15 works Elo has created for Boston Ballet since being named resident choreographer in 2005.

The premise is simple: a cellist (the extraordinary Sergey Antonov, who also premiered the work) sits onstage, a visual fixture in the spotlight throughout. He plays the first two suites. Dancers interpret.

This simple construct leads to magic. Five pairs of dancers alternate through the movements (each suite has six). Antonov sets a commanding presence, performing alone for the Prelude to the first suite, before the dancers arrive onstage.

Elo has dramatically changed the work since its premiere, for the better. Three years ago, he inserted himself onstage as part of the performance, in a partially danced, partially metaphoric way. In that performance, he approached some of the dancers, almost like real-time choreography, moving them slightly and appearing to give advice.

Elo wisely has abandoned this narrative line in this version, not appearing at all. "Bach Cello Suites" benefits from that. Elegant and updated, philosophical but still athletic, with music and dancers alone Elo's personal classicism has no distractions. His physical language is the star of this work, after all.

All five pairs have their moments, but the matching of Addie Tapp and Lasha Khozashvili stands out — Tapp for the long, precise lines she unfolds, Khozashvili for his ease of power and his fluidity.

Peck's "In Creases" shows his own update on traditional movement. Its placement just after Elo's breathtaking "Suites" does the work no favors, but the brief work — set to sections of Philip Glass's "Four Movements for Two Pianos" — fills the stage with unique angles and ideas.

Often pitting one against the many, “In Creases” is nominally set for four pairs of dancers. At its climax though, soloist Irlan Silva dances boldly alone as the ensemble creates unusual geometries. Several semaphore-like lineups create criss-crossing effects, and there are also notable moments of stillness — a kind of reset button.

Costuming takes a bit to get used to. The men wear white, quasi-sailor outfits, with black socks. The women wear off-white leotards, with darker trim. Their initial appearance is comic; the movement does not explore the humor though, which leads to a disjunction between the antic appearance and the more serious subject matter.

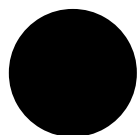
Forsythe’s reworking of his 1999 “Pas/Parts” closes the evening. A set piece for the troupe, it creates 20 overlapping episodes for solos, pairs and other couplings. A noise-sculpture score from Thom Willems propels the action.

Although “Pas/Parts” seems to be discrete dances, in fact the score and the ideas crescendo from jarring, visually challenging action into a swaying, foot-tapping swirl.

The stage is a cube — at first a huge, white, barren, empty cube. Emily Entingh braves the vastness with a brief solo, the music mechanical, confrontational. As the dances proceed, the music becomes more fluid, and the dancing more organic.

The work integrates delayed satisfaction with Forsythe’s gorgeous movement ideas. Costuming (Stephen Galloway) and lighting (Forsythe himself) are inspired: the women wear leotards with black fronts and colored backs, changing the visual landscape every time they turn. The cube never changes, but the lighting changes the cube: at first deep, empty and alarming, it becomes by the conclusion a kind of sanctuary.

Many of the short episodes are highlights. Tapp again has multiple moments to show off her development. Patrick Yocum dances a delicious uptempo solo. Yocum and Hannah Bettes have a duet that is simultaneously innocent and sexy. A duet between Ji Young Chae and Seo Hye Han is thoroughly engaging. Misa Kuranaga stands out, most notably in a concluding farewell gesture.



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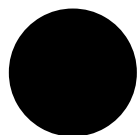
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