

about nature – specifically about water – and that she wanted the dancers naked because that worked better as a blank palette for the brown paper. She did not intend to use nudity for shock value or to make a political statement about nudity, even though that was the result in 1967.

## Washington, D.C.

Jay Rogoff

John Heginbotham's *Lola*, an exciting new commission for his seven-member company, Dance Heginbotham, festively concluded a recent National Symphony Orchestra performance at the Kennedy Center's Concert Hall. While the title of this collaboration with the NSO and Joshua Bell, to Édouard Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole* for violin and orchestra, mischievously scrambles the composer's vowels, the work itself shines, its choreography clear, exuberant, and seductive. The dance plays as happily as the Frenchman Lalo at masquerading in Spanish, with self-dramatizing backward flings of the head and the hand and little snatches of fandango and tango, and it affects an air as giddily Romantic as other Heginbotham works, like the 2012 *Chalk and Soot*, feel quirkily modern.

Creating *Lola* demanded that Heginbotham grapple with some serious staging challenges, most significantly that of space. Having a symphony orchestra onstage shrank the performing area to a Marleyed apron about one-hundred feet wide, but only fifteen feet deep. That kind of extreme horizontality can suit a classical pas de deux tweaked for performance in front of an orchestra but requires greater ingenuity for a thirty-five-minute work.

Heginbotham exploits the space's breadth – Macy Sullivan performs some spectacular, flexed-foot, horizontal jetés – and deals with its shal-

lowness by flattening circular formations into long ellipses, resulting in high visibility for every dancer. Since no one gets hidden, it's a marvelous way to showcase the company. He also periodically decentralizes the dance, stringing groups of three, two, and two, for example, across the proscenium, each performing sets of movement that may or may not fall into canon.

Since the troupe shared the stage not only with the NSO, but also, in this work for violin and orchestra, with Bell, a star meriting his own spotlight, Nicole Pearce's lighting avoided chiaroscuro in favor of clarity. Still, the dirgelike fourth of Lalo's five movements provided some darkly lit drama: with both Bell and former Mark Morris dancer John Eirich illuminated, the dancer periodically interrupted his melancholy solo variation – full of bowing arabesques, slow turns, and large sweeps of his arms – in order to stand and admire Bell's playing, a handsome tribute to Dance Heginbotham's collaborator.

But because most of the work lights the orchestra almost as brightly as the dancers, Maile Okamura, Heginbotham's regular costumer after her long career dancing with Mark Morris, has created high-visibility, sleeveless uni-sex coveralls with sexy, plunging necklines. The outfits have baggy legs, billowing down from the waist, like leotards crossed with clown suits, and most dancers' front colors contrast vividly with the back: when Lindsay



Sarah Stanley and Spencer Ramirez, with Joshua Bell, in *Lola*.

Photo: Scott Suchman, National Symphony Orchestra



Jones spins, for example, her clashing crimson and turquoise magnify her explosive force.

Only Sarah Stanley, all in green, and blue-boy Spencer Ramirez (yet another Morris graduate) wear a single hue, and their absorbing pas de deux centers the middle movement. It starts as a kind of habanera, though with no whiff of parody about it: Heginbotham takes Lalo entirely seriously, if wittily, and his playful devotion to the score gives *Lola* much of its power. Ramirez whirls Stanley, bent at the waist; she leans on him and wraps her leg around him. Jones enters and briefly shadows her in unison, then exits. By the time Stanley lifts and whirls Ramirez, the others have returned, dancing while Ramirez stands behind Stanley, inhaling the scent of her hair, before they dance intensely with each other as the section ends.

Heginbotham has constructed *Lola* with an eye on tradition, group dances in movements one and two yielding to the third movement's pas and the fourth's solo (actually a kind of duet for Eirich and violinist Bell). The marvelous unison dancing has performers sliding in and out of phase, and Heginbotham indulges us with the pleasures of watching five dancers spin like dervishes, or the whole company (which, in addition to those mentioned, included Courtney Lopes and Weaver Rhodes) running gracefully clockwise in their ellipse, thrusting hands in the air or out beside them to punctuate the music's Spanish-ish accents.

The glorious finale brings all the work's joie de vivre to fruition. The group moves in sinuous lines, with arms interlaced on each other's shoulders, or sashays left and right with little kicks back and forth. They even watch each other affect mock-Spanish styles, for this is very much a dance about performing. Sullivan pulls the section together with a big, bright solo, punctuated by a silly move in which she lies down and flutters her feet to Bell's violin trills, a flutter that spreads to her companions' hand gestures. The climax comes with her last, huge, horizontal leap, and after the music winds down and the others gradually exit, she gives a final backward fling of

her head and races off. In its not quite Iberian way, *Lola* is brilliant.

Bell began the evening by leading the NSO in a moving performance of Beethoven's Seventh, and his conducting looked positively pugilistic in its choreography. He bobbed and weaved, bounced lightly on his feet, and pounced on the music with jabs, uppercuts, and haymakers. It was a knockout.

## Miami

Michael Langlois

As the 2016-2017 Miami City Ballet season drew to a close, the company announced its plans for next season: After twenty-seven years, a new production of Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* with sets and costumes by Isabel and Ruben Toledo, Cuban Americans whose talents in the art and fashion worlds would seem to be a perfect fit for a tropical take on this winter wonder.

The season will also include Ratmansky's *Concerto DSCH*; every gem of *Jewels*; more Balanchine; six Robbins ballets to celebrate the hundredth year of his birth; and, finally, a world premiere by Brian Brooks, the choreographer in residence at the Harris Theater in Chicago who, since 2012, has been creating and dancing in various works with Wendy Whelan.

As for the triple bill that concluded the season (*Divertimento No. 15*, *Arden Court*, and *Who Cares?*), first impressions were far from Pavlovian. Men and women hopping out of double pirouettes in *Divert*. Lordy! Of the five principal women, Simone Messmer, as is her habit, took every syllable of Balanchine's 1956 choreography and put it through her tantalizing Twitter feed, proving once again that those classroom steps can become stage worthy in the right hands.

Among the men, Michael Sean Breeden was the finest example of what is required here – that is, legs, line, and élan that illustrate just how far male dancing has come in sixty years. Over the course of the last few seasons, Breeden has quietly grown into a superb dancer.