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Review: Art of the Pas de Deux – Dancers showcase an icon’s life and work

By **Eliza Ingle** Special to **The Post and Courier** May 25, 2018



A moment from a rehearsal of "Celebration: The Art of the Pas de Deux," a program from Miami City Ballet that pays tribute to Jerome Robbins.

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It was indeed a celebration on the opening night of Spoleto Festival 2018 as dancers from the Miami City Ballet and New York City Ballet presented "Celebration: The Art of the Pas de Deux," an homage to the life and work of Jerome Robbins in what would be his centennial year.

Moderated by the gracious Lourdes Lopez, artistic director of the Miami City Ballet, the evening included three of the Robbins' most revered dances interspersed with film, photographs and reminiscences of his career as a ballet and Broadway choreographer.

In "Afternoon of a Faun" (1953), NYCB dancers Unity Phelan and Chase Finlay exquisitely portrayed a brief encounter of two young dancers in the studio. The atmosphere was charged with erotic sensuality. The pair, facing the audience, was focused on an imagined mirror, blurring the boundary between observer and voyeur in this short dance stunning in its simplicity.

In "Other Dances" (1976), Simone Messmer and Renan Cerdeiro shared the stage with pianist Francisco Renno who expertly played the mazurkas and waltzes of Chopin, whose music often inspired Robbins. The lyrical sounds propelled the dancers in a swirl of joyous movement with classical steps mixed with folksy earthiness.

The final piece, "In the Night" (1970), also set to music of Chopin, was a meditation on the subject of love. Emily Bromberg and Kleber Rebello beautifully depicted young love, magical in its purity and idealism. Next, the NYCB dancers who opened the evening represented a more mature love with harder edges and more mechanical movements. Then, representing a more contentious stage of love, Katia Carranza and Reyneris Reyes danced a fiery duet inflected with tenderness.

The evening was a successful mix of past and present. Some of the dances are more than 60 years old but still fresh and vital. Robbins' special connection to Spoleto was brilliantly honored.

Reviewer **Eliza Ingle** is a dance writer and teacher in Charleston.