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## LACDC'S "Force Majeure" Triumphs at the Atwater Village Theatre

By Jeff Slayton · November 12, 2016 46

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The Los Angeles Contemporary Dance Company presented **FORCE MAJEURE** at the [Atwater Village Theater](#), premiering four works by four different choreographers. *Force Majeure* is a French term meaning superior or overpowering force. Latin defines it as "An overwhelming, unanticipated, and unpreventable event, usually caused by a natural force...." This was a powerful program where each work had that feeling of an opposing or outside force driving it. Each piece was performed with great passion, skill and presence by the LACDC dancer artists. In their 11<sup>th</sup> season, the program was strong in content and each work was enhanced by the talents of Lighting Designer Ric Zimmerman and costumes designed by Sami Martin Sarmiento and Genevieve Carson.



LACDC - Photo by Ruben Contreras

Genevieve Carson is the Artistic Director of LACDC and her work **EBBA** (Work in Progress) is stunning. *Ebba* is a feminine name meaning "strong". **EBBA** is a work about and performed by women, but it touches on the many aspects of humanity: fear, vanity, power, beauty, love, seduction, community and loss. The movement is awkward, angular, then sensual or in your face. Driven by the dynamic score of musician, songwriter and composer Robert

Amjarv, **EBBA** keeps the audience on the edge of one emotion after another. A dancer heads in one direction only to be jerked into another or pinned suddenly in place by an unseen element. Carson truly understands the power of unison movement and when to use it; and she knows better than to abuse it. The seven compelling women in **EBBA** are Kate Coleman, Hyosun Choi, Tess Hewlett, Ashlee Merritt, Drea Sobke, Tiffany Sweat and Angel Tyson. We see each of their strengths in Carson's work and she tests their limits. The movement is very feminine and yet requires them to dig deeper into physical areas defined by gender. They use their hair to entice, defy or hide behind, and their facial expressions to seduce or challenge. **EBBA** is a hard act to follow as it so well made and delivers such a powerful statement. It is filled with engaging, harsh and tender images, incredible partnering and inspiring performances. Two dancers that constantly drew my eye were Tess Hewlett and Hyosun Choi, but their talents were always challenged by the other five women onstage.



LACDC - Photo by Ruben Contreras

**Beauty/Fear** is also a work filled with intensity, strife and yet there is tenderness. Choreographed by Gregory Dolbashian to the music of German composer Marsen Jules and French composer/musician Colleen (Cécile Schott), this quartet felt like it was using a choreographic knife to dissect the psyche of the individuals involved. There are gestures that show a man's inner thoughts as he walks across the space; thoughts that seem troubling and/or emotionally crippling. Duets explore relationships and the complexities that come with them. **Beauty/Fear** is performed without hesitation or fear by Genevieve Carson, Nicholas Heitzeberg, Tess Hewlett, and JM Rodriguez. Dolbashian uses a

dancer's head tenderly touching another's body to demonstrate how people sometimes must tread lightly while helping someone in pain. At least twice, I saw a running figure stopped short by a net of other bodies. The one thing that found jarring was the poor editing job of the transition between musical scores, otherwise this was a very engaging work.

Micaela Taylor's **SPORTY** felt unfinished. The movement is quirky and the dance well structured, but I was unsure about the relationship of the people involved. Dressed in all white active wear, they moved through unison movements that suggest teamwork or competing athletes. A male figure (Andrew Pearson) appears to succumb to defeat with spasms of anger. Danced extremely well by Hyosun Choi, Andrew Pearson, Ryan Ruiz and Drea Sobke, **SPORTY** is a good dance, but it did not draw us in like the other works on the program. The music is by the Finnish electronic music group Pan Sonic. I look forward to watching Taylor find her own choreographic voice. **SPORTY** proves that she has the skills. Now, Taylor needs to dig deeper and show us who she is.

Christian Denice has a varied background working with and creating works for both modern and contemporary ballet companies. **Delicate Skins** artfully examines human emotions and relationships. We see a man, who feels like an outcast, welcomed, consoled and eventually saved by those around him. The music for **Delicate Skins** is beautiful, especially the music by Norwegian composer Erik K. Skodvin. His music is lyrical, yet dramatic; as is Denice's choreography. Denice's vision is realized by the strong performances of Christian Beasley, Ashlee Merritt, JM Rodriguez, Ryan Ruiz, Tiffany Sweat and Angel Tyson. JM Rodriguez excels in this dance. While dancing with a strong but delicate grace, he manages to express his feelings physically without emoting. **Delicate Skins** is a wonderful addition to the company's repertoire.

LACDC has become one of Los Angeles' leading companies. The artistic team has made smart decisions regarding who they hire as choreographers, designers and dancers. The two women leading that team are Genevieve Carson and Kate Hutter; both wonderful performers as well as very talented choreographers. I want to see this company in a larger venue. They deserve a venue that can hold their growing audience; an audience that was willing to weather dreadful parking conditions to see the company perform. Zimmerman deserves kudos for what he accomplished at the Atwater Village Theater. I would enjoy seeing what magic he could create in a fully equipped theater.

**FORCE MAJEURE** runs through Sunday, November 13, 2016 at the Atwater Village Theater. For more information, visit LACDC's website.

<https://www.lacontemporarydance.org/> . Tickets can be purchased at the door.