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L.A. Contemporary Dance Company Presents "SE4SONS"

By Jeff Slayton - November 13, 2015 777

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The L.A. Contemporary Dance Company premiered *SE4SONS* this weekend at the intimate, ninety-nine seat Atwater Village Theatre in Glendale. With choreography by Mecca Vazie Andrews, Rosalynde LeBlanc, Rebecca Lemme and Laurel Jenkins Tentindo, *SE4SONS* is just over an hour in length and performed to an ambitious music score by Eric Mason inspired by Antonio Vivaldi's most famous work *The Four Seasons*. The choreographers collaborated closely with Mason; each focusing on one season. Vivaldi published *The Four Seasons* in 1725 and it has been interpreted by several dance artists including Italian choreographer Mauro Bigonzetti and French choreographer Roland Petit. Eric Mason said he had "quoted familiar passages and flipped, chopped, deleted, shuffled, and re-written them, alongside original material." The results is inventive and powerful. With the addition of the Projections by Erik Speth, Lighting by Ric Zimmerman and Costumes by Kate Hutter and Mecca Vazie Andrews, *SE4SONS* is, for the most part, a success.

Laurel Jenkins Tentindo has performed with such notables as Trisha Brown, Vicky Shick and Sara Rudner, and I found out, studied at Sarah Lawrence College with the late Viola Farber. Tentindo obviously paid attention because she has become a very strong artist with a choreographic voice all her own. Her work in *SPRING* is beautiful not only because of the movement she has created, but because of how she interprets Eric Mason's music. Tentindo doesn't simply follow

Mason's melody; she moves her dancers in and out of it, challenges it, and breaks it apart in a very musical way. A term that I use, with great admiration, for the style that Tentindo has mastered is organized chaos. Her movement is powerful, sometimes stark, but subtly lyrical. She weaves the dancers in and out of each other with phrases that will come together, clash and splinter off into even more wonderful thematic ideas. Her use of the walking at the beginning of *SPRING* introduces us to the dancers and to how



LACDC - Photo: Eric Mason

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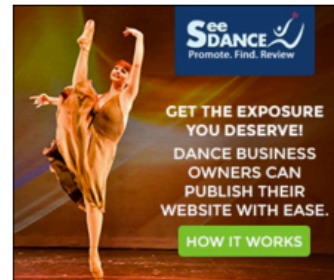
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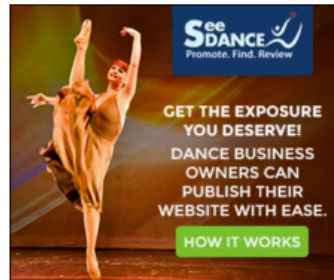
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they will interact, and her relationship with the floor is luscious. The entire cast of *SPRING* is strong, but my eye was constantly drawn to the commanding performances of Tess Hewlett and Hyosun Choi.

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Mecca Vazie Andrews is the choreographer who chose or was allocated the season of *SUMMER*. Eric Speth's projections took us to the ocean side and Andrews' characters conjured up characters encountered at Venice Beach. There was the beauty trying to score, the beach bum, a woman talking to herself and other personalities vying for our attention. This section stood apart from the other three and, unfortunately, not in a positive way. Andrews tries to portray humor and her characters are coy at times, but sadly, they come across as merely clichéd. It takes specially trained dancers to pull off speaking onstage. Kate Andrews and Tiffany Sweat were able to fully develop their characters but were weakened by the other performances. *SUMMER* got stronger when it dropped the cuteness and took on the more straight forward movement elements that dominated the rest of the evening. Andrews has good structural ideas, but doesn't appear to trust they would work without all the superficial window dressing.



LACDC - Photo: Eric Mason

Strong dancing and choreographic voices returned in the last two sections of *SE4SONS*. Rebecca Lemme's choreography of *FALL* showed off the talents of the LACDC dancers that she selected. Genevieve Carson, Tess Hewlett, and JM Rodriguez absorbed her movement, made it their own and ran with it. Carson and Hewlett are both powerful dancers who demand one's attention with their presence onstage and Rodriguez is truly amazing. The way he uses

his back and torso, and his connection to the floor is a modern dance choreographer's dream. Lemme manages to visualize Mason's music very beautifully and totally draw the audience into her work.

The final section, *WINTER*, is vigorous choreography by Rosalynde LeBlanc. There is a remarkable duet in this section that brings out the best in Gakenia Muigai and JM Rodriguez. Genevieve Carson also give a commanding performance in this section. These two move with the power behind LeBlanc's interpretation of winter's harsh elements; wind, snow and freezing cold. Kate Andrews gives a formidable performance as the angry, sometimes destructive and life ending figure Mother Nature. She commands the winds to encircle the dancers, swirl them around like tiny snowflakes and then mercilessly heave them to the ground. She seems to feel painful anguish from her role in life's cycle but aware that she is unable to change her destiny. Rapid movements, incredible floor work and a well-rehearsed ensemble make Lemme's choreography a forceful ending to *SE4SONS*.

This was a big project for LACDC to undertake, and the performances are uneven. A couple of the transitions between sections need tightening, but overall *SE4SONS* is a very solid work. I look forward to seeing it improve with time and experience, and it would benefit further presented on a spacious proscenium stage.

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