Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Spellbound by Spellbound

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, November 12th, 2014

Except for a backdrop of rapid-fire movement that is at once clever, deft, and lyrical, “Lost for Words / The Invasion of Empty Words” begins in silence. After several seconds, a soft but haunting music score becomes audible. Continuing as such for a while, we hear a man speaking softly and reflectively, in a voice completely devoid of artifice, apparently about a working group’s strike. The voice continues without any apparent relevance, the movement builds from two men, to a man and a woman, to a small group of dancers, and is entirely in black and white. It is **Spellbound Contemporary Ballet**, and I am spellbound.

Founded in 1994 by Artistic Director Mauro Astolfi, **Spellbound** is acknowledged as Italy’s premiere contemporary dance company and is “rooted in poetic, emotive, and dynamic bodies creating shifting geometries through space with equal amounts of athleticism and elegance.” I had only learned of the company’s existence recently and always heard them spoken about with great reverence, so when I saw this short I understood why.

A moment in Spellbound’s “Lost for Words”

While “Lost for Words” is mostly shot frontally on a proscenium stage (with tree lights and wings visible in many shots) and clearly was not created specifically for film per se, it acts as another example of how the medium of film/video can serve beautifully as marketing and promotion for dance. The color and lighting is both stark and lush, with dancers alternately emerging from and disappearing into black. With choreography that is clean, precise, and emotive, supported by editing that amps up the pace and pares down the movement to its most exciting bits, this piece serves the gutsy quality of this company very well. There is a longer and equally beautiful cut of this dance viewable in color on the web, *Enjoy.*

http://youtu.be/qGD87NfigiQ

This entry was posted on Wednesday, November 12th, 2014 at 3:10 pm and is filed under Film, TV, Dance, Discourse
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