

## All-Tudor program is treasure to behold

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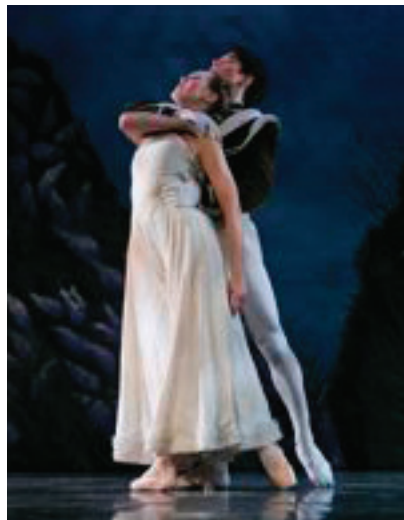
TIVOLI – New York Theatre Ballet is a small ensemble that serves the dance community in a big way – mainly by preserving important works that are rarely seen or are in danger of being forgotten.

And the company, founded and directed Diana Byer, curates its repertory with love and respect. That care was obvious this past weekend at Kaatsbaan International Dance Center where the chamber ballet performed a beautiful all-Antony Tudor program.

The late Tudor was a master choreographer of the mid-20th century He created for his native Vic-Wells Ballet (which became the Royal Ballet) and then later for American Ballet Theatre. HE was known for his “psychological ballets,” as they explored the psyche of the characters they created. Yet his ballets were so much more. His works like “Jardin aux Lilas” and “Judgment of Paris”, two very different ballets, demonstrate Tudor’s fascination with humanity – its desperate longings and foibles. He could shape, in ballets of perfect dimensions, the human heart and soul. Tudor had insights that many of us have. But he could transfer them to stage and share them with a world.

Many ballet fans know his “Jardin aux Lilas”, a ballet in which a betrothed couple encounter their lovers at an engagement party. And Kaatsbaan audiences have seen “Judgment of Paris,” a hilarious, modern take on the Greek myth.

But few have witnessed the hoys of Tudor’s “Soiree Musicale”, “Romeo and Juliet” and “Little Improvisations”. Best performed was “Little Improvisations” to music by Schumann (performed live by pianist Mariko Miyazaki) with dancers Young Wha Lim and Mitchell Kilby. This was such a sweet work – natural and playful –depicting two young dancers in a studio who are role playing, imagining their future on the stage. Lim was adorable as the coy girl who flitted about pretending to be a mother, a princess and a horse. Kilby was her perfect mate,



teasing her or whisking her about as her cavalier. The rapport between the two was affectionate and thus endearing.

Elena Zahlmann and Kyle Coffman were also terrific as the ill-fated Shakespearean lovers. The couple danced the bedroom farewell from the

full-length ballet with moving tenderness. While some of the lifts were awkward, making Zahlmann look distracted, their chemistry was genuine. The young, earnest Coffman, as Romeo, was especially convincing as he tried to comfort the distressed Juliet.

“Soiree Musicale”, to music by Rossini as arranged by Benjamin Britten, was a cheerful opening. The six-part piece featured some lovely dancing – delicacy in the canzonetta with Lim and Joshua Andino-Nieto and abandon in the bouncy tarantella with Rie Orura and Steven Melendez. Dimming this rendering, however, was the stiff bolero with Amanda Garrett, Tanya Chumak and Danielle Shupe.

Certainly, the program highlight was Tudor’s masterpiece, “Jardin aux Lilas.” The ballet is a heartbreaker. Zahlmann played Caroline, who wants to steal a minute with her lover, danced by Coffman, but never finds the chance. The regal Terence Duncan was marvelous too as Caroline’s fiancé, who tries to rebuff his former lover, danced with tempered anxiety by Ogura. This wonderful ballet is born anew, happily, in this treasure of company.

Those who missed this performance will have another chance to see New York Theatre Ballet. It will perform “Jardin aux Lilas” along with works by Frederick Ashton and Merce Cunningham at 8 pm Friday, at The Egg, Albany.