

'Valentine's Dance Trilogy: Angels, Demons, and Savages' at The Phillips Collection

by Breena Siegel

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DC Metro Theater Arts

What do painters Jackson Pollock, Alfonso Ossorio, and Jean Debuffet have in common? The current exhibit Angels, Demons and Savages at The Phillips Collection explores the relationships between these well-known artists.

CityDance Conservatory seized the opportunity to capture this artwork through dance in a dance trilogy that was presented last night in The Phillips Collection Auditorium in reaction to the current exhibit. The small stage with bright, simple lighting created an intimate and somewhat formal setting.

The performance included work by Lorraine Spiegler, Artistic Director of CityDance, Robert J. Priore, CityDance Conservatory Choreographer-in-Residence and Christopher K. Morgan, Artistic Director of Christopher K. Morgan & Artists. The dancers themselves range in ages from 14-18 and are part of the CityDance School and Conservatory. The overall performance was heartfelt and collaborative.

The dance pieces flowed succinctly into one another creating a uniform collection of six total distinct dances. This was an intentional choice, as the dancing itself did not last longer than twenty-five minutes. 'The Prelude' was co-choreographed by Lorraine Spiegler and Robert J. Priore. Strathmore Artist in Residence Wytold played live musical accompaniment on his six-string electric cello. The dancing in the Prelude was elastic and highlighted the technical and athletic strength of each of the dancers.

Throughout the performance, it became clear how influential each of the choreographers were for each other. Though they each had their own distinctions, there was a lot of overlapping movements and themes. Robert J. Priore's selections, Savages, Demon Spirit and My Heart Has Four Corners involved everything from strict, serious movements to fluid partnership amongst the dancers. My Heart Has Four Corners was an honest and elegant duet performed by Matthew McLaughlin and Dana Pajarillaga.



Photo by Theo Kossenias – Media 4 Artists.

The strongest piece in the selection, *Brutal Beauty*, choreographed by Christopher K. Morgan, felt like a molding between contemporary ballet and modern dance. The piece was wonderfully engaging and visually strong. The movements were sharp and unusual and the choreography was highly imaginative. It was exciting to witness collaborations on stage amongst choreographers whose work was created in reaction to partnerships and overlapping styles amongst painters.

Running Time: 25 minutes.

Valentine's Dance Trilogy: *Angels, Demons, and Savages* played at The Phillips Collection on Thursday, February 14, 2013 at The Phillips Collection Auditorium – 1600 21st Street, NW, in Washington, DC.