

# A provocative and technically exquisite performance

## REVIEW BY LOUISE FOISTER

Celebrated modern dance choreographer Pascal Rioult and his company, Rioult, made a welcome return to the Bermuda Festival this week with a stimulating and provocative two-night run at the Ruth Seaton James Centre.

Mr. Rioult brings a lyricism and musicality to the structure, dynamism and geometry of his unique choreographic interpretation of well-known classical compositions which has the viewer seeing things from a different angle.

To choreograph to classical masterpieces such as Stravinsky's *Les Noces* or Ravel's *Bolero*, here selected by Mr. Rioult for his work, seems a brave, if not foolhardy thing to do, as such compositions are complete and perfect entities. But in viewing this performance the answer is clear. Rioult does not seek to embellish, but rather to illustrate, using the vocabulary of dance to add clarity and focus to one's appreciation and understanding of them.

## Clarity of movement

There were three pieces included in the Bermuda Festival programme and each quite different in theme and mood. However, one element was common throughout and that was a clarity of movement with clean, unshakable lines which were technically exquisite in their execution.

Without exception from the company of just nine dancers the balance and seamless movement from one phrase to the next was silken and unbroken; a rare delight to behold.

Opening the programme was *Views of the Fleeting World*, a new piece developed just 18 months ago

and set to J. S. Bach's *The Art of Fugue*. It is a meditative piece broken up into what Mr. Rioult terms "vignettes", giving each a name derived from a natural phenomenon.

A parallel is drawn between this subject matter and the pattern of human life experience. Both share an apparent transience and universality.

## Effective

Set against a backdrop of projected paintings inspired by Japanese woodblock prints and simple yet effective costuming, again inspired by the Far East, the work is used by the choreographer to paint through human form and movement, an abstract expression of the import and emotion evident in Bach's music. All was subtly enhanced by David Finley's effective, yet unobtrusive lighting.

Particularly memorable was *Dusk* featuring Marianna Tsartolia and Michael Spencer Phillips who brought a compelling lyricism to its purity of line and structure.

Although markedly different in mood and theme the second piece presented; *Les Noces* (The Wedding) set to Stravinsky's work of the same name, is, like the first, solidly grounded in the tradition of mainstream modern dance while revealing a new and insightful edge.

*Les Noces* is Mr. Rioult's reinterpretation of Stravinsky's masterpiece, but a more sexually charged take on the ritual of marriage. And in tune with Stravinsky's work, which was pretty avant-garde for its time, Mr. Rioult explores new ground.

Men and women appear on separate sides of the stage in their undergarments and dress for their wedding day expressing through



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**RIOULT** performed a two-night run at City Hall Theatre as part of the Bermuda Festival of the Performing Arts.

movement both the excitement and anticipation of the event and ultimately sexual fulfilment. As before, the presentation is technically polished and the vocabulary of movement deftly woven on delivery. There is a progressive almost alarming urgency to Stravinsky's music with which the dancers toy.

*Bolero*, set to Ravel's composition of the same name, provided the programme's closing number. Abstract and athletic in nature, it has become one of Mr. Rioult's signature works. Like the second piece of the evening this is a challenging work to perform with the entire company dancing throughout its near 20-minute duration.

Clad in silver unitards the dancers perform a series of cycli-

cal mechanistic movements echoing the repetitive construct of this minimalist composition with individual performers breaking from the uniform pattern to highlight changes and developments in instrumentation and the work's ever-building crescendo.

As "cogs in the wheel" the dancers perform this perpetual motion with critical timing. Fluidity on delivery shows this to be a well-oiled machine.

An enthusiastic audience brought the house down as the curtain fell.

To see some true, undiluted, non-fusion modern dance so exquisitely presented is a treat indeed. ■

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