

daring dance troupe breaks rules

Gymnastics, body language, powerful visuals and sound are all elements of the dynamic performance by La La La Human Steps.



by Laura Martins

What were your first words as a child? "La la la" maybe? Well, those were choreographer Edouard Lock's first words, and thus the inspiration for the unusual name of his uniquely talented dance troupe La La La Human Steps.

New Demons, Lock's latest offering, opened last Wednesday night at the St. Lawrence Centre. I was in my seat, full of anticipation, when the show came to an abrupt stop. Technical difficulties of some sort caused a 20-minute delay. As the house lights dimmed once again, the Indo-rock score accompanied by East Indian singer Psiya Khajuria's sinewy vocals ushered in the dancers; Louise Lecavalier, Marc Beland, Francine Liboiron and Donald Weikert.

In the strictest sense, a night of dance in not what followed. But then again, Lock's vision of dance breaks all rules of conventionality. According to Lock, "It's better then (just) looking at pretty bodies or cute people." The traditional definition of dance just doesn't sit well with Lock.

"Innovation in painting is reworking form, the subject matter itself is unimportant," he said. "The human form has got its shape already defined and you have to work with it. But when it's moving it has no shape — or a very weird one. If the dance moves quickly enough, the audience can be made to forget the empirical body and start seeing just flux or will."

In *New Demons* Lock expresses the vitality and strength of the human body as well, he incorporates primal sounds, thundering guitars and powerful visual images in his work. The performance was riveting. Quick intricate movements, alternating between the hands, arms and legs (resembling an entirely new sign language) turned to wild leaps and twirls into the air, and unhurried walks across the stage. The daring and vigorous gymnastics on stage were accentuated by images of lions and birds projected on a screen covering the entire stage.

The animal imagery was befitting as the lion is the epitome of strength in the animal kingdom, while the bird symbolizes freedom. What the dancers achieved on stage is a combination of both.

There was nothing predictable about the dancers' interactions on stage. Outstretched arms were withdrawn at the last moment, causing the other dancer, usually Lecavalier, to land on the floor. In other instances, a dancer would run across the stage to prevent the inevitable fall, only to drop the unfortunate partner to the floor.

At irregular intervals during the performance, Lock amused the audience with his innovative "side-shows." At one point, he approached the audience with an audio device that amplified the sound of a heart beat. Lock asked several people in the front row to participate in his "experiment," while the dancers resumed their frenzied movements on stage. As the willing "subject" became increasingly embarrassed, his amplified pulse quickened to create a perfect background for the dancers.

I was especially impressed by Lecavalier's striking stage presence and physical endurance, enabling her to lift her male partner with ease. Again Lock casts conventional notions of femininity to the wind. The entire evening was a non-stop spectacle of brilliant, risk-taking movement, with powerful visuals and sound. At the end of the performance, La La La received a well deserved standing ovation.

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