

# Toronto Dance Theatre: WOW!

**Toronto Dance Theatre  
SUB Theatre  
Sunday, February 5**

review by Rosa Jackson

The Toronto Dance Theatre's performance at SUB Theatre Sunday night was a near-perfect display of dance expertise with a theatrical element which left the audience both stunned and moved. This company, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, proves that modern dance at its best is far from inaccessible to the masses. The chor-

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eography, which borrowed from classical ballet, was highly original and aesthetically appealing, making the most of every inch of the stage and showing off each dancer's skills to the fullest.

"Baroque Suite", the opening number, was the most balletic of the show's pieces. To the music of Corelli and Bach the performers danced in pairs, slowly and sensually, extending every movement to its maximum. As the pace picked up in a

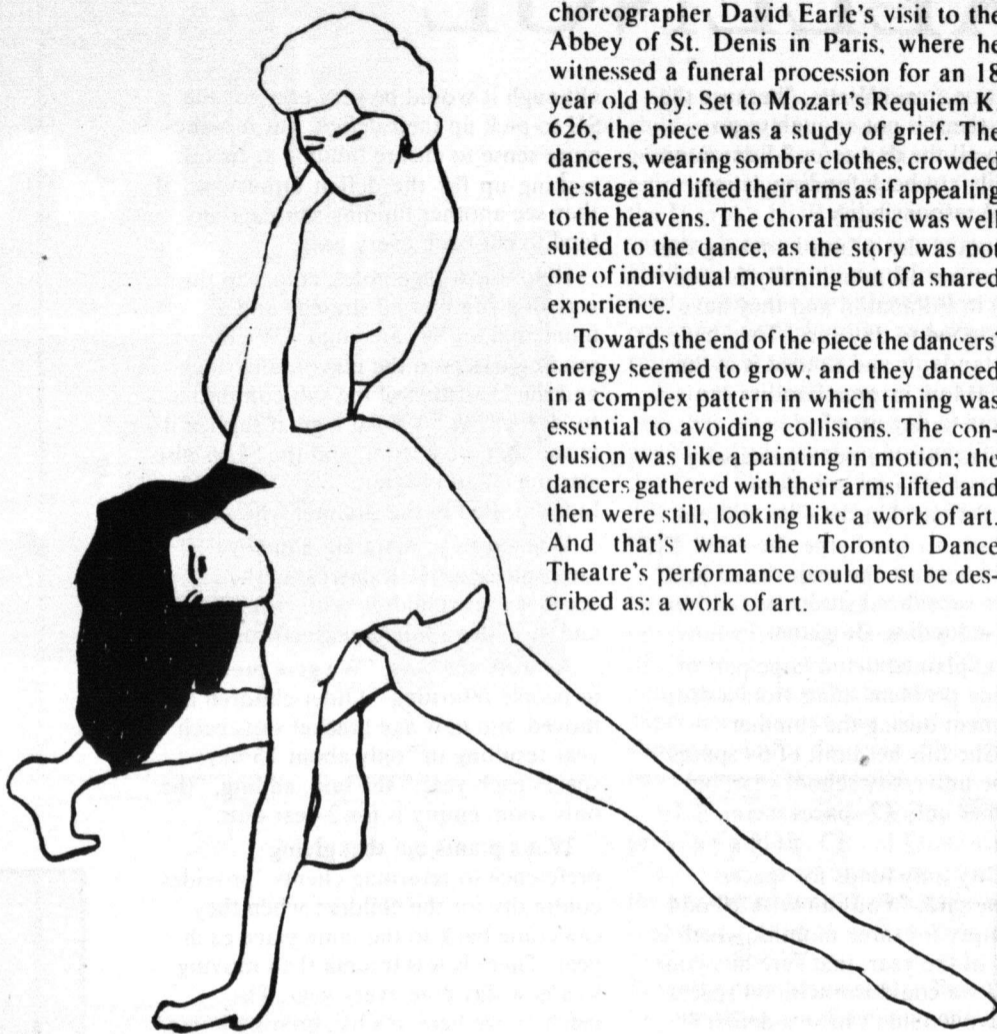
piece by Vivaldi, the dancers seemed to personify the musical notes, moving their legs in perfect time to the music and rarely using their arms. The bright costumes which the dancers wore were perhaps a reflection of the colourful aspects of Baroque music: its flamboyance and emotionality.

On a more serious note was "Radical Light", a piece which explored the theme of oppression. With four sticks, some rope, and a wooden platform, first a prison was created, and then a wall. The dancers represented two facets of the same person: "The Victim" (Almond Small) and "His Courage" (Karen duPlessis). In an intricate, powerful dance, duPlessis repeatedly coaxed Small out of his cell. They struggled with each other, and then danced as one. Small was impressive for his athletic leaps, duPlessis for her grace, strength and feeling. The music, by Carlos Chavez, was a tribal drumbeat which grew increasingly frenzied. As a whole, the piece had a dreamlike effect.

"Animated Shorts" was a well-ordered confusion of sound and movement. The dance, like the music by modern composer Michael J. Baker, was full of variety and unexpected turns. Any synchronicity was short lived; something inevitably disrupted the order, such as a solo dancer leaping across the stage while a group danced in unison. There were also well-timed pauses, during which the dancers simply stood leaning on each other in couples. The changing rhythm of this piece was its greatest strength; it never became lulling. Unfortunately, "Sacra Conversazione",

while brilliantly expressive, suffered from a too-regular pace in contrast to "Animated Shorts." This number was inspired by choreographer David Earle's visit to the Abbey of St. Denis in Paris, where he witnessed a funeral procession for an 18 year old boy. Set to Mozart's Requiem K. 626, the piece was a study of grief. The dancers, wearing sombre clothes, crowded the stage and lifted their arms as if appealing to the heavens. The choral music was well suited to the dance, as the story was not one of individual mourning but of a shared experience.

Towards the end of the piece the dancers' energy seemed to grow, and they danced in a complex pattern in which timing was essential to avoiding collisions. The conclusion was like a painting in motion; the dancers gathered with their arms lifted and then were still, looking like a work of art. And that's what the Toronto Dance Theatre's performance could best be described as: a work of art.



## R.A.T.T.

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