

La La La: Human Steps



Is it theatre? Is it dance? Is it music? Perhaps sport? Now and again a show comes along that defies all categories. Indeed, the Montreal dance troupe La La La: Human Steps is quite unlike anything seen or heard before.

Founded in 1980 by choreographer Edouard Lock — Canada's post-punk ambassador — La La La has been making international headlines with its daring lunges, heart-stopping crashes and the offbeat humour that have become its trademarks. Giving more than 60 performances each year, the company has toured extensively and successfully throughout Europe and North America.

Lock's choreographies for the company include *Lily Marlene in the Jungle* (1980), *Oranges* (for which Edouard Lock received the prestigious Chalmers Award

in 1982), *Businessman in the Process of Becoming an Angel* (1983), and *Human Sex* (1985). La La La's most recent show, *New Demons*, has received accolades in Montreal, Los Angeles, Ottawa and Calgary.

New Demons is an ambitious and elaborate piece which comes complete with two musicians, four dancers, a female Indian vocalist, videos and a dazzling arboreal backdrop. On tour for the next two years, the work is scheduled to appear throughout Canada and the United States, Europe, Asia and Australia. The European tour is particularly ambitious as it includes performances in major cities across France, the Netherlands, West Germany, Spain and Italy, and at such top international dance events as the Zurich Festival and France's Festival Rouen.

As in La La La's earlier works, the mainstay of *New Demons* is the unique Lock dance-style: frenetic, high-energy movement characterized by bodies crashing and whirling through the air, on stage and against each other. Because of the extraordinary demands made on the four members of the dance troupe, these sequences are alternated with interludes of music, talk and video. Part aerial ballet, part contact sport, the dance portion of the show discounts classical ballet technique in much the same way that punk-rock music discounts traditional instrumental techniques.

The displays are constant challenges to the limitations of the human physique. Lock's dancers walk to centre stage with the composure of athletes about to run a marathon, stand stock-still for a millisecond and then burst into whirling-dervish choreography. Their steps are hardly human: snatches of hurling bodies that defy gravity, catching one another, falling, turning in mid-air, rolling and crashing again.

The style of costume is as innovative as the dance and a far cry from the traditional ballet tutu. Skin-tight black shorts, a black-leather bustier, a mop of bleached-blond hair and a pair of sensible shoes is the ensemble worn by Lock's "prima ballerina," Louise Lecavalier. One thing is certain: no one is going to confuse La La La with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Creator Edouard Lock, 33, has been on the choreographic scene for some time. Born in Casablanca, Morocco, Lock came to Canada with his parents when he was two years old. After studying cinema at Concordia University in Montreal he began to gravitate towards dance. His association with the Groupe de la Place Royale and later with Les Grands Ballets and Nouvelle Aire were steps in the search for a style of dance with which he could identify. In 1980 he formed Lock Danseurs to pursue his own vision, and with the evolution of this group into La La La:



Human Steps, has created an entirely individual dance vocabulary.

As his international reputation spreads, Lock finds his unique talents in ever-increasing demand. Currently, he is choreographing a new work for Amsterdam's Het Nationale Ballet which will premiere at the prestigious Holland Dance Festival in June.

Lock deals in intellectual dance as do many of his contemporaries. He defines his work in terms of movement rather than sociology. "Their object is to destabilize, to surprise: they embody risk, which creates passion because it stimulates hope. The dancers are not in a state of stimulation or ease but in one of vitality and volition." "Dance," says Lock, "is above all a question of will."

The key to his success is working in the space where the art world and popular culture overlap — taking everyday movement and pushing it to the brink, taking a techno-pop sound and giving it a razor-edge.

In the past eight years Edouard Lock and company have become a highly provocative and successful challenge to the traditional dance establishment. Each work is a surrealistic voyage into the realm of expressionism. Lock's dances are always unique, invariably unforgettable, and above all, brilliant theatre.

From Montreal to New York, from Paris to London, the performances of La La La: Human Steps have been unanimously praised by the critics: "a brand new movement language" . . . "a genuinely original dance style, gift-wrapped in bright imagery."