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Mocean dances through its past in spectacular fashion

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Mocean dances through its past in spectacular fashion

Andrea Nemetz Entertainment Reporter

Dance fans got to relive some of their favourite Mocean memories as the Halifax contemporary troupe presented Decennium, in honour of its 10th anniversary, at Alderney Landing Theatre, Dartmouth.

Appropriately enough, the show, which wraps up a three-night run tonight at 7:30 p.m., contained 10 works.

The first act was an imaginative remounting of founding member Lisa Phinney Langley's Beside Myself, Gaspung, set against the backdrop of an evocative movie by award-winning filmmaker Rohan Fernando, with otherworldly music by Philip Glass and the City of Prague Philharmonic.

The second act, entitled Final Set, featured excerpts from nine works dating back to the troupe's premiere, danced by founding members Carolle Crooks Fernando, Alica Orr MacDonald and Sara Harrigan, and new member Tania Jean of Quebec. Melanie Ferro appeared in a humorous non-speaking role and the quintet was flanked at its final bows by founding member Sarah Rozee, with her newborn strapped to her chest, Phinney Langley and Fernando.

Beside Myself, Gaspung, was an emotional tour-de-force, accentuated by the power of the gorgeous black and white film, with its quick cuts between scenes creating the

semblance of memories too painful to examine at length and intense closeups of the faces, and sometimes just the eyes, of dancers Crooks Fernando and Orr MacDonald.

The duo's dance was interspersed with the film, with the pair at times becoming part of the film, stepping into and out of the frame. In one moving scene, the dancers embraced at length on screen before the spotlight turned on the embracing dancers onstage.

Orr MacDonald often seemed to be frantically searching with her more frenetic movements, incapable of stillness of body or thought, while Crooks Fernando seemed to be searching for peace through her anguished and more lyrical actions.

Audience members could create their own narrative from the rapidly paced scenes, which showed a couple with a young child, a bird taking flight, a romantic seaside embrace, tearful goodbyes, a heart-wrenching fight and young hands clasping old.

The gentle lyricism was interrupted when the vision of a rain-slicked empty street was ripped apart by the sounds of a crash. Paper flew everywhere on screen and on stage, and the dancers gathered and clutched it to their chests.

The 55-minute Final Set was linked through recurring characters created

by Crooks Fernando and the comic Ferro. Crooks Fernando brought back her physically wrung-out, emotionally strung-out rock star from Cory Bowles Live from the Flash Pan that debuted earlier this year, while Ferro created a kind of life coach/groupie urging Crooks Fernando to relax and focus through a series of dubious though humorous exercises.

At times, Ferro picked up Crooks Fernando off the stage, helped her dress and called out to stagehands for lights, living the dream herself.

The pieces - which include Lesandra Dodson's You Tackle A Staircase Face On, Roger Sinha's 5 Breaths, Allen and Karen Kaeja's Laced Rain, Andrew Leigh-Smith's When the Levee Breaks, Sharon Moore's Our Unfortunate Deaths, Susie Burpee's Rescue Left Her to Her Plight and Howard Richards's Almost Not Even Fun and Breathing Place - highlighted the dancers' energetic athleticism, a precision of movement whether dancing solo, in pairs, trios or quartet and a sheer delight in movement.

Among the most beautiful moments were when the dancers worked in pairs, showcasing a high level of trust, of strength and a sense of fun.

Sinha's 5 Breaths, blending contemporary and East Indian dance, was spellbinding, while the inclusion of Almost Not Even Fun, "the

infamous red dress piece," was most certainly fun, showcasing elegantly Crooks Fernando, wearing only nude booty shorts, backs to the audience, while they played and grasped at the shiny red dresses on hangers in front of them.

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