

Review: Aspen Santa Fe Ballet kicks off Jacob's Pillow season in style



Craig Black and Emily Proctor in Alejandro Cerrudo's "Silent Ghost."
(Photo by Hayim Heron, courtesy of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival)



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BECKET - Some dance companies seem frozen in time.

Others seem to have no distinct style of their own.

Then there's Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, who kicked off this summer's Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival this week with several performances through Sunday.

The popular dance company also has the distinction of performing the first week at The Pillow this season under the leadership of its new director, [Pamela Tatge](#), who took over in

April for Ella Baff, who previously served as the Pillow's executive director and artistic director starting in 1998.

Like Baff, Tatge introduced [Aspen Santa Fe Ballet](#) to the audience before Thursday night's performance in the Pillow's Ted Shawn Theatre. Then again, this dance company needs no introduction. Ever since they first performed at the Pillow in 2003, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet has been a crowd favorite.

What makes this beloved dance company so popular?

Part of it stems from the uniqueness of their programs. Instead of relying on a several, old warhorses that fans love, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet has the audacity to present programs that feature almost entirely new pieces. The same was true Thursday night.

And while the dance company frequently presents new pieces by a wide range of choreographers, the dances they perform seem to have distinct, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet style.

What's the group's style?

They're athletic, adventurous and add a touch mysterious at times. And they thankfully never seem to take themselves too seriously.

On Thursday, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet did all of these things exceptionally well. And as always, they made everything look graceful and elegant, even when they were a little goofy at times.

The dance company performed three, newer pieces created by three different choreographers - "Silent Ghost" by Alejandro Cerrudo, "Re:play" by Fernando Melo and "Huma Rojo" by Cayetano Soto.

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet started out the program with its strongest work, "Silent Ghost." There's no apparent plot in this simple, elegant piece create in 2015. That's part of what's great and slightly frustrating about this work. At times, parts of "Silent Ghost" can feel like a series of unrelated segments.

But within those segments, Cerrudo's engaging choreography perfectly matched the moody, smokey lighting and slightly muffled music, which sounded like it was being played through an old fashioned radio.

The second piece, "Re:play," also had similar, smokey lighting. During most of the piece, the lights kept going off every 2 or 3 seconds. So instead of seeing everything without interruption, we only catch glimpses of what's happening, like the light of a lighthouse passing by every moment or two.

There's a woman in white and several other, mysterious figures. But what they were doing didn't add up to me. Then I simply stopped worrying about trying to invent a plot and simply enjoyed the simple, stark choreography created this year. That's when the piece came to life for me, although I still enjoyed "Silent Ghost" more. "Re:play" was beautiful, but it didn't have the athletic energy or elegance of "Silent Ghost."

"Huma Rojo," which was first performed this year, definitely took a more athletic approach. Soto's choreography also had a goofy, silly side that I found refreshing. There were also elements of Bob Fosse's, strutting, popping choreography in this piece about machismo and exuding confidence - all done in an ironic way.

Far too many dance companies take themselves far too seriously. That's why it was such a delight to kick off another season at Jacob's Pillow with a dance company that knows how to have fun.

http://www.masslive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2016/06/review_aspen_santa_fe_ballet_k.html

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet performs through Sunday in the Ted Shawn Theatre at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, 358 George Carter Road, Becket. Remaining performances are Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets range from \$40.50 to \$75. To order tickets or for more information about these performances, contact Jacob's Pillow or call the box office at (413) 243-0745

Juan Siddi Flamenco Santa Fe performs in the Doris Duke Theatre through Sunday. Remaining performances are Friday at 8:15 p.m., Saturday at 2:15 and 8:15 p.m., Sunday at 2:15 p.m. Tickets range from \$25 to \$45. Discounts available. For more information, contact Jacob's Pillow or call the box office at (413) 243-0745.