

not the ballet's ending. How can this go on? Then at the actual ending, an intentionally deflating one, the company quietly files out and walks up the steps behind the scrim, leaving only the first woman.

The eclecticism of *Archiva* carries a possibility of disintegration that it has not avoided. (The music by Troy Herion is equally eclectic.) A review of the past has the capacity to be universal. But how to make it so? That's not clear from *Archiva* as it exists now. Rather, this work makes me wonder what it is about the inherited past that a choreographer with Neenan's impressive record of works is seeking to sort through?

In the third ballet, Liam Scarlett's *Asphodel Meadows*, it is refreshing to see a foundation of conventional symmetry from which different possibilities develop. Three couples, one in each movement of Poulenc's Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra in D minor, are backed by seven couples in the corps, making an even twenty dancers. Despite this formal footing, some things puzzle, all the more because Scarlett's subsequent work has been viewable in the United States.

This was another title that sent me hunting for meaning. *Asphodel Meadows* is the Greek underworld, but which aspect of it? "A pale shadow realm," the program tells us. This elusive realm is well brought out by the choreographer's arrangements for the corps. Dressed in neutral tans, they often stand in stillness, faced away from the audience. Toward what? They seem to belong to a world beyond their gaze, which we can only sense from watching their attentive stillness. Sometimes they dance with their backs to us to the same effect as the stillness. Title and corps each illuminates the indefinable (though the backdrop of black drip painting, now opened, now occluded by black panels, feels out of place).

Along quite different lines are the costumes of the three female principals. Each a dark, rich color (midnight blue, reddish brown, black), quite the opposite of neutral tan, the bodice is cut with a deep V right down to the waist, rather like a dance hall get-up. (The

corps women have the same bodice, but theirs is less noticeable given the neutral tone of their costumes.) This worldly bodice is perhaps consistent with Poulenc's music, whose moods are not those of a pale afterworld.

The three couples each has a pas de deux infused with the tensions of our human world. In the cast I saw, Lillian DiPiazza and Arián Molina Soca, in the first pas de deux, were electric in the fast lifts and their surprising endpoints. In the second movement, Amy Aldridge and Ian Hussey slowed down those lifts and endpoints for even greater tension. While in the third duet, Evelyn Kocak and Craig Wasserman returned us to the barely restrained violence for which Scarlett seems to employ tour de force dancing.

These are humans scarcely ready for a pale shadow realm. Where we do see their readiness is in the concentration and intentness that are needed to perform the lifts, tosses, carries, and one-handed supports. This intentness melds well with the abstracted tension of the corps' backs as they face away from us.

In today's connected world, it is a thought-provoking experience to have a chance to see the first work (although it is only six years old) of a much-acclaimed choreographer after having already seen some of his subsequent ones. In a sense, we were also given Balanchine's, in his case, of eighty years ago. It is good to have a constantly renewed sense of the past.

New York

Karen Greenspan

At an event celebrating the fortieth anniversary of Pentacle hosted at the Rubin Museum of Art, one by one, dancers and choreographers came forward to toast this organization that has provided the administrative backbone that allowed them to produce their art. The outpouring of allegiance and appreciation by such artists as Gus Solomons Jr., Ze'eva Cohen, Margaret Beals, and many more who occupy the pages of dance history books was moving. Pentacle has also been the training ground for many arts administrators.

In honor of the occasion, Ivan Sygoda, Pentacle's founding director and a former Wheaton College professor, penned a few thoughts in which he reminisced that from its inception forty years ago, "Pentacle's constituency was the very special universe of 'single choreographer companies.'" Many of their early "names" such as Mark Morris and Ohad Naharin have over the years grown to be acknowledged as today's artistic masters. Pentacle was and continues to be an incubator for new talent.

Pentacle's current director, Mara Greenberg, joined the start-up a couple of years later. She had been looking for a way to combine her love for dance and business as she completed an MBA in finance at NYU's Stern School of Business while performing with the Nancy Meehan Dance Company. She explained, "In 1976 we opened our doors with a staff of four, providing what we called 'cluster management' to four companies." Pentacle's mission – to provide flexible and affordable management support to small and mid-sized companies and project-based artists working in dance and theater – innovated the concept of "outsourcing" before the word was coined.

Today Pentacle serves more than 125 artists providing a menu of administrative services – booking representation, fiscal management (nonprofit and arts-specific accounting), grant writing, and marketing. It also cultivates leadership by matching interns with participating dance organizations. Pentacle remains vital because it identifies, responds to, and adapts to the changing needs of the performing arts community, and offers innovative services.

Performing her hilarious piece *Fund Raiser*, performance artist Claire Porter introduced the reception and toasts. Dressed in the corporate attire of a development officer, she danced and delivered a comedic fundraising *shpiel* spoofing the endless repetition such a job demands. Each repetition of her pitch got wackier and wackier as she resorted to singing, high kicking, pleading, and finally cursing in her desperate efforts to cajole the audience to part with its money for the un-

named cause. She had the packed room in stitches and giggles.

Capping the celebratory offerings was a performance of excerpts from *Under the Skin*, choreographed and performed by Myrna Packer and Art Bridgman, the co-artistic directors of Bridgman/Packer Dance. This partnership is known for its innovation in integrating live dance and multilayered video technology populating the performance space with fantastic and powerful images and relationships.

In the Rubin's galleries, amidst the Himalayan Buddhist art on display, a dedicated group of past and current Pentacle artists volunteered their time and talent and performed a site-specific event called *Body Wisdom*. Curated by dancer/choreographer Keely Garfield, the artists' performances were organized around the idea of the body as a vehicle of transformation. Since this is an essential concept in Himalayan Buddhism, which regularly employs the physical body – through sacred dance, *mudras* (sacred encoded gestures), and even as a focus of some meditations – as a conduit to spiritual wisdom, action, and realization, this was a sublime environment for such investigation.

The artists had previously visited the museum to select a particular work of art as inspiration and the proximal space in which to perform. The guests were given program maps with the location of the various performers and an assigned starting point in the museum. As in a circuit-training fitness class (with an Asian flare), the sound of a live gong periodically directed us to move on to the next performance location.

In the Rubin's lobby, against a wavy bronze wall, Eiko Otake's video, *A Body in Places*, was playing. It consisted of a trilogy of performances shot in three locations – Hong Kong, Miami, and Wall Street. Eiko demands the gaze of her audience – often *because* she presents herself in unexpected places. With her iconic appearance – white skin, long black hair, harrowingly expressive face and gestures – she manipulated large and small pieces of ver-

million fabric to dramatic effect, always drawing a group of fascinated onlookers.

A few steps away, surrounding the museum's central spiral staircase with its 108 steps to the upper five levels, Keely Garfield and Molly Lieber performed a duet from Garfield's piece *Pow*, to folksy music written and performed live by Matthew Brookshire. Though not created for the specific space, the excerpt embodied a sense of "spiral-ness," as the two dancers lithely ran circles together around the circumference of the staircase then dropped to the floor sweeping huge arcs back and forth with their bodies. With each verse of the song, they sprang to their feet for another trip around the staircase, with slight variations. The most memorable was when they faced and clasped each other in ballroom stance for a final skitter around the stairs.

On the next level, in a hall dedicated to explaining Buddhist, sacred art-making processes, next to a thangka (Tibetan Buddhist painting on fabric) of the Hindu goddess Saraswati, Doug Varone danced a solo called *The Fabulist*. As he described in the program notes, it is "a journey into my dance making past and the sense of mortality I am feeling as I enter into my sixth decade of life." Varone embodied the dancer's art-making process as he carved through the gallery space sculpting lines and circles. Informing his movement with mudras and flexed feet, typical in Indian classical dance, he created an intimate relationship with the pictured goddess of knowledge, wisdom, and the creative arts.

With another sound of the gong, I climbed to level three and found an excerpt from Melanie Maar's *Our Other* performed in a roped-off gallery with small stone and metal sculptures of the Buddha, standing in the classic teaching posture, draped in his flowing robe. Just below one sculpture was a bench over which a female dancer was draped, her body inverted in a kind of reflection of the sculpture above. The dancer's naked buttocks and legs (flexed in a wide plié) were extending upward while her waist, arms, and head were hidden beneath the folds of a metallic,

golden skirt, supported by the bench and floor.

The renovated fourth floor Tibetan Shrine Room, with its walls raised up (to open up the space) was the site for another excerpt from Garfield's *Pow*, in concert with musician Jeff Berman. They performed amidst a cluster of flickering butter lamps, Garfield finally partnering with another dancer for a ballroom number between the lamps. Garfield described in her program notes that *Pow* is "an invitation to wake up." I would add that observing all of these dances in the context of this museum setting afforded an invitation to wake up!

Vicky Shick performed *small dance for floor 5* in a gallery filled with images of Lakshmi, Hindu goddess of prosperity and wealth. Shick brought a focused and assured skill to her movement exploration as she drew attention to various body parts and gestures, always with a sensitivity to the images and the space, creating interesting relationships to each.

Finally, upon reaching the top level of the museum, we encountered the choreography *Nymph* by Brooklyn-based Raja Feather Kelly and his company the feath3r theory. Four fully covered dancers in head-to-toe, solid-colored body stockings of green, red, orange, and pink posed in front of a large screen on which a video of pilgrims in Lhasa, Tibet, was projected. The pilgrims' prostrations and other actions portrayed in the video created an interesting juxtaposition with the dancers prancing around with arms upstretched and then loping in a circle as they counted out loud. As we viewed footage of the multicolored Tibetan prayer flags fluttering in the wind that is believed to carry their prayers out to all, the dancers spun around and then gradually disappeared into the crowd milling about within the galleries.

One of the most exciting aspects of the evening was a successful collaboration between the two organizations – Pentacle and the Rubin Museum. I have for several years wanted the Rubin to produce dance events in their inspiring space. Hopefully, with this success in the museum bag, it will open the floodgates for more.