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REVIEW

ballet.*magazine**Diablo Ballet**'A Midsummer Night's Dream',
'A Path of Delight Or...'**March 2009**Walnut Creek, Dean Lesher Center**by Renee Renouf*

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Little needs adding to Rachel Howard's San Francisco Chronicle assessment of the Julia Adam version of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Diablo Ballet's revival of the 2003 production for Marin Ballet. The Egyptian-like profile does have its limitations and Christine Darch's jelly-fish tutu dangles might have been better served had the tutu disk had not been so stiff. Muriel Maffre handled a similar costume in *Carnival des Animaux* with considerable success, though she did not have to be lifted.

The feeling was like Charles Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* rendered in cardboard cut out fashion, an elegant exercise for children, which was Rachel Howard's point. Evening performances are intended for adults, not just parents. Adam's use of the stage and the children was effective, with perhaps the exception of Erika Johnson's Puck, and the required stiff-but-expressive Tina Kay Bohnstedt, there was little stimulus. The lovers, Mariko Takahashi, Mayo Sugano, Edward Stegge and Jekyns Pelaez are capable of much more.

I suspect in the choice of this Adam work exigency and economy played their parts. That's not bad in itself, but better programmed as a matinee, like other programs Diablo finds burgeoning in popularity, rather than carrying it over into the evening.

Tina Kay Bohnstedt's combination of Massenet's *Meditation from Thais* with Mozart's *Concerto No. 23 in A Major* was the anomaly behind her second choreographic essay for Diablo with the title *A Path of Delight Or....* Using Johnson, Sugano, Pelaez and Stegge, she created an off-center, extended pas de quatre, arms upraised, hands drooping, feet in minor a la seconde, torso undulating series of challenges with the upper torso, both with or without



partnering. I almost felt Bohnstedt had gone through an Alonzo King apprenticeship, except her rigorous Munich-based classical training kept shining through in the security of passing movement resolutions. It was interesting to see a pair of dancers stand observing another couple in action as if in rehearsal, emphasizing collegial interest in the process. Confusion commenced in the extended coda to Massenet's Meditation where Edward Stegge flailed around the stage in some world of his own as first Johnson and Pelaez and then Sugano left the stage, leaving him alone, apparently quite frustrated.

While I question the musical juxtaposition, the piece might nicely have finished when the last note of Mozart's concerto was heard. Bohnstedt's second effort is a far more serious, considered work than her debut in crafting movement. She is definitely on her way.

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