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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Shifting Lines

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Tanz Company Gervasi's Shifting Lines is a thoughtful, quietly radical homage to the postmodern revolution in dance, and to the worlds opened by Trisha Brown and Merce Cunningham. Rather than quoting their works directly, Elio Gervasi invites eight dancers into an environment where their principles—non-hierarchical space, flow without narrative, movement as its own meaning—can be experienced anew.

The result is a piece that feels less like an historical tribute and more like a lucid continuation of a way of thinking about choreography. Gervasi begins from a deceptively simple premise: to step outside the “matrix of storytelling” and to trust that dancing bodies, in music, space and time, will generate their own sense. You feel this trust in the way Shifting Lines treats the stage as an open field rather than a front-loaded picture. Dancers traverse diagonals, curves, and quiet centres with equal weight; key moments do not cluster around a single focal point, but appear and recede across the full width and depth of the space.

This echo of Cunningham's de-centralised composition frees the eye: there is no “correct” place to look, only multiple possible lines of attention, all valid. At the same time, Gervasi's phrasing clearly listens to Brown's distinctive movement flow, where one gesture melts almost inevitably into the next. The eight performers navigate sequences that seem to grow organically, with weight shifting off axis, arms and torsos spiralling, and small, almost casual transitions knitting larger phrases together. Even in complex group structures, there is a sense of unforced continuity: pauses feel like suspensions rather than stops, and changes of direction carry a soft, elastic rebound rather than sharp rupture.

The piece invites the viewer to notice how coherence can arise without narrative, simply through the way one movement leans into another. What is striking is how Shifting Lines resists nostalgia. Gervasi does not stage Brown and Cunningham as distant “light figures” on a pedestal; instead, he uses their ideas to ask very present-tense questions about how we organise bodies and perception today. The dancers' trajectories cross, diverge and recombine in ways that recall the complexity of contemporary social space—multiple paths, overlapping rhythms, no single centre. Music functions not as emotional underscore but as another structuring element within which timing and alignment constantly shift, as if testing how far autonomy and togetherness.

The title proves apt: lines—of motion, of sight, of relation—are continually drawn, bent and redrawn. A

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duet emerging in one corner may mirror or quietly counterpoint a trio elsewhere; an ensemble canon may suddenly flatten into unison before dissolving back into individual tracks. Through these compositional choices, Shifting Lines stages the very act of shifting as its core concern: how bodies can inhabit non-linear, non-narrative time and still offer us a sense of meaning.

Ultimately, the piece feels like a generous invitation. For dancers, it is an opportunity to inhabit a lineage that freed dance from the obligation to “tell a story,” and to test that freedom in their own bodies. For audiences, it offers the pleasure—and gentle challenge—of watching movement on its own terms: not as illustration, but as thinking in space. In doing so, Elio Gervasi affirms that the worlds Brown and Cunningham opened are not closed chapters in history, but living terrains in which today’s choreography can still, quietly and courageously, shift the lines.

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