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Dance review: Lauda Adrianna/Lachrimae

23rd June 2015

THEATRE

By **Mary Brennan**

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DANCE

Lauda Adrianna/Lachrimae

Cottier's Theatre, Glasgow

Mary Brennan

FIVE STARS

Afterwards, it really sinks in: how much of a joy and privilege it was to be at such close quarters to these marriages of sublime music-making and profoundly responsive dance at Cottier's. For the premiere of Lauda Adrianna, choreographed by Stephen Pelton on a group of five dancers, the Gavin Bryars Ensemble played ten of the composer's Laude Cortonese live. Like Bryars' music - which sets 12th century religious songs within a subtle, uncluttered framework of viola, cello and double bass - Pelton's movement vocabulary brought images of religiosity into the flow of contemporary dance. Little "mea culpa" fists beat on breasts, bodies sank in devotion or perhaps penance, arms and eyes lifted upwards with yearning reverence - five eloquently lissome forms questing after inner peace, while the voices of soprano Peyee Chen and tenor John Potter floated out around the space like spiralling incense. At times, the dancers' cruciform arms or clasped hands echoed the figures in early stained glass windows, or the sombre drone of strings hummed of monks at prayer, but this was no calculated pastiche. Even without the church setting of the venue, the whole feel of this exquisite piece was of a meditative spirituality both medieval and modern. It needs to be seen again, and more widely.





Yet another instance of inspired programming in this current Cottier Dance Project season was the UK premiere of Lachrimae, played live by the Hathor Consort (from Bruges) with Femke Gyselinck dancing her own choreography. For this piece, the Dowland music had been expanded with short "interludes" by contemporary composer Annelise van Parys. These varied from near-abrasive pizzicato pluckings on viols, to tonalities and tempi that, by intervening in the rich amber glow of Dowland's music, heightened it by re-tuning one's ear. A black-clad Gyselinck entered the music by first edging round the periphery, before stepping on-stage and into the seated arc of the Consort. Her small, slight frame responded as if it too was a stringed instrument, with limbs twitching and stretching with wonderfully detailed articulations of hand, arms, shoulders or little flicks of feet and legs. For those interludes, she prefaced appropriately different movements with deep, visible inhalations that announced "breathing spaces" in Dowland's sweet melancholy. As with the music, these contrasting phases alerted our eyes to the recurring motifs she brought to the Lachrimae themselves. Brilliant playing, intense dancing - and again, all within arm's reach of a spellbound audience.

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